

Introduction to Obadiah

Author	Obadiah, a prophet that cannot be positively identified with any of the various persons called by this name in the Old Testament
Date	Unknown <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scant internal evidence is available to pinpoint the date of Obadiah’s prophecy. Those who view the minor prophets as being arranged in chronological order date Obadiah to the mid-ninth century BC. If this assumption is unfounded, the book could be dated as late as Edom’s fall to the Nabateans circa 500 BC (Watts 574).• Merrill places Obadiah in the “mid-to-late ninth century” (382). Geisler suggests a date around 840-830 BC (231).• Hill posits a date in the early sixth century, assuming that verses 11-14 describe “Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion, siege, and sack of the Judean capital” (638).
Kings Mentioned	
<i>Judah</i>	None
<i>Israel</i>	None
Nation(s) Targeted	
<i>Primary</i>	Edom (1:1; 1:8), as evidenced by the book’s references to Esau (e.g., 1:6), Mount Esau (e.g., 1:8-9), and a familial relationship with Israel (e.g., 1:10)
<i>Secondary</i>	None
Representative Texts	2-4; 8-12, 15, 18, 21
Core Message	<p>Judgment is surely coming to the nation of Edom. Its present power and security, sources of evident pride, will be reversed through a complete and humbling destruction. Edom’s fall is justified by the nation’s violence toward Israel—a stance made all the more heinous by virtue of their common ancestry. Edom has expressed its opposition to Israel’s God by tolerating, celebrating, and assisting in a devastating attack on Judah and its capital.</p> <p>Yahweh will judge Edom in accordance with its actions, reflecting a more general pattern of divine retribution: “the day of the LORD is near upon all the nations” (v. 15, ESV). Indeed the nations will drink the cup of divine wrath, Israel will be restored to full possession of its land, and God’s kingdom will be established.</p>
New Testament References	None
Features	Obadiah is the shortest book of the Old Testament, yet it contains a variety of interesting literary features. Verses 1b-6 overlap significantly with Jeremiah 49:9-10, 14-16, leading scholars to speculate about authorial dependence or the possibility of a common source (Hill 639; Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman 601). The

Hebrew text of verses 12-16 contain alliteration that is invisible to the English reader: the eight lines of 12-14 all begin with the letter aleph, “abruptly interrupted by the fourfold repetition of the harsher palatal consonant *k* in verses 15-16” (Hill 642).

Sources

Geisler, Norman L. *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*. Baker Book House, 1977.

Hill, Andrew E. “Obadiah.” *Baker Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Walter A. Elwell, Baker Books, 2000, pp. 638-43.

Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. Baker Books, 1996.

Ryken, Leland, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. InterVarsity, 1998.

Watts, John D. W. “Obadiah, Book of.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, fully revised, vol. 3, Eerdmans, 1986, pp. 574-76.