

OBADIAH

Introduction

Author. Personal information about this prophet is completely missing. The book is too brief to be of any help. His name is a popular one meaning "servant of Yahweh."

Date. While it is difficult to establish the date of the book with certainty, it is clear that Edom is to be judged for rejoicing over the captivity of Jerusalem. Among the invasions of Jerusalem in ancient times to which Obadiah's prophecy could refer are either that of Shishak of Egypt in Rehoboam's reign in 926 B.C. or Nebuchadnezzar's in 586 B.C. While it could have been either time, the most likely date seems to be the latter.

Historical Background. The Day of the Lord (DOL) was an ominous concept in the times of the prophets. Before Amos the DOL was conceived as a time of judgment--for Israel's enemies. Amos, however, taught that all the unrighteous, whether Jew or Gentile, had much to fear from it and that it was surely coming if rampant disobedience continued. That disobedience did continue and in 722 God proved that His covenant was not inviolable. The unjustified optimism of Judah with her possession of the temple, the Torah and the Davidic throne was not shattered by the fate of the northern kingdom. Isaiah and Jeremiah continued to preach the coming of the DOL for the southern kingdom. The author of Lamentations acknowledged that that day had finally arrived and prayed for God to judge Israel's enemies as well. Obadiah considers the destruction of Jerusalem from the vantage point of the DOL and prophesies that God will execute his vengeance in a coming Day of the Lord for the nations and Edom in particular. Far from being a fluke of history, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 was a manifestation of the Sovereign of the universe who would likewise execute justice among the nations.

The Edomites are of course descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. While there had been animosity between the two groups dating from the exodus, Judah had reigned over the area of Edom much of the time since David.

Content. Some of the contents of Obadiah are found elsewhere. Much of Obadiah 1-9 is very similar to Jeremiah 49:14-16, 7-11. It may well be that both Jeremiah and Obadiah used an earlier source. In addition, four other oracles against Edom occur in the prophets: Amos 1:11-12; Isaiah 21:11-12; Jeremiah 49:7-22 and Ezekiel 25:12-14. No elements are common to them all but a vengeful spirit of Edom against Israel is found in Amos, Ezekiel and Obadiah and Edom's false sense of security is condemned in Amos, Jeremiah and Obadiah.

Message Statement. The message of Obadiah is a tightly focused condemnation towards Edom. Its benefit, however, is clearly directed toward the comfort of the exiles (assuming a late date). Having experienced a Day of the Lord, it was important for the remnant to understand that they had not been treated unfairly by Yahweh, or worse yet, that Yahweh had been overcome by Babylonian gods. Another Day of the Lord was yet on the horizon which would spell destruction for Israel's enemies and the inauguration of messianic blessing. The message may best be expressed: *God's covenant loyalty (Genesis 12) toward Israel is seen in his destruction of Edom.*

Argument

- 1A THE DOOM OF EDOM 1-9
Edom's doom is announced as an envoy is sent among the nations. Although Edom considered her home invulnerable her doom is announced as certain in 3-4. The completeness of her doom is taught in 5-9. The concept is introduced with the simile of the grape harvest, continued with description of human participation and climaxed with a direct promise from Yahweh that he will destroy wise men from Edom.

- 2A THE DENUNCIATION OF EDOM 10-14
The reasons for Edom's treatment on the day of the Lord are delineated next. Although different in aspect, they each concern some kind of maltreatment of Israel.

- 3A THE DAY OF THE LORD 15-21
The final section describes what Israel can expect from the future Day of the Lord. There is a time coming when God will exact vengeance and execute justice among the nations and unrestrainedly bless his people. This short oracle of doom was necessary to teach the people that the horrors which they had experienced in 586 did not exhaust the contents of the day of the Lord. Much more was to come.

Outline

1A	THE DOOM OF EDOM	1-9
1B	<u>Superscription</u>	1a
2B	<u>The Certainty of it</u>	1b-4
3B	<u>The Completeness of it</u>	5-9
1C	The simile: like grape harvest	5
2C	The human participation	6-7
3C	The divine participation	8-9
2A	THE DENUNCIATION OF EDOM	10-14
1B	<u>Because of Harm Done to Israel</u>	10
2B	<u>Because of Gloating Over Israel's Misfortune</u>	11-12
3B	<u>Because of Looting and Murdering Judah's Survivors</u>	13-14
3A	THE DAY OF THE LORD	15-21
1B	<u>Its Effects for Edom: Justice to be Rendered</u>	15-16
2B	<u>Its Effects for Israel</u>	17-21
1C	Vengeance toward E dom	17-18
2C	Repatriation to the Land	19-21