

O B A D I A H

—prophet against Edom, early sixth century

1. Date of Obadiah

date not stated specifically

1) Parallels with other prophets

examples of parallels, especially in Jeremiah and Amos:

Obad. 1-6	Jeremiah 49:7-22
Obad. 4	Amos 9:2
Obad. 14	Amos 1:6
Obad. 19	Amos 9:12

The parallel with Jeremiah 49 is especially noticeable. The difficulty is determining which prophet wrote first. It is possible that Jeremiah quoted Obadiah (Keil, Archer, Freeman), that Obadiah quoted Jeremiah (Bewer in *ICC*; Armerding in *EBC*), or that both prophets employed a common source (Allen, Bullock).

The third possibility seems the most likely since Jeremiah and Obadiah are verbatim parallels, yet in a slightly different order. It is assumed that Obadiah followed the third source more closely than the looser Jeremiah text.

2) Historical information

Obadiah describes a terrible invasion and conquest of Jerusalem (esp. vv. 10-14), a great calamity in which the Edomites assisted the enemy. There were at least five serious invasions of Judah recorded in the OT:

1. under Rehoboam, by Shishak of Egypt (926 BC, 2 Chron. 12)
2. under Jehoram, by Philistines and Arabians (ca. 845 BC, 2 Chron. 21:16-17; cf. v. 8, Edom revolts)

2Chron. 21:8 In his days the Edomites revolted against Judah's authority, and made a king over themselves. 9 So Jehoram went out with his officers, and all his chariots with him. And he rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots. 10 Thus Edom has been in revolt against Judah's authority to this day.

—note the early canonical placement of Obadiah among the minor prophets

3. under Amaziah, by Jehoash of Israel (790 BC, 2 Chron. 25:20-24)
4. under Hezekiah, by Sennacherib of Assyria (701 BC, 2 Chron. 32:1-21)

5. under Zedekiah, by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (587 BC, 2 Chron. 36:17-19)

Comparing all these invasions with the description in Obadiah 10-14 seems to indicate that the great destruction described by Obadiah best fits with the final destruction of Jerusalem and its people in 587 BC:

- 1) Cataclysmic events of 586 portend “the day of the Lord”
- 2) Day of the Lord will come on Gentile foes; theodicy
- 3) See Ps 137:7; Lam. 4:20-22

Ps. 137:7 Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, "Raze it, raze it, To its very foundation!"

Note fugitives of v. 14 (cf. II Kgs. 25:4,5) not likely of earlier invasions. If that is the case, the book would have been written probably shortly after that time.

Still, we can only speculate on the date. Early daters note 1) no mention of temple destruction, 2) no mention of Babylon while other bad neighbors cited, and 3) and may be cited by Jeremiah, not vice-versa

2. Brief history of Edom: “Red”

from Esau, Jacob’s twin brother

- mixed with other Edomites (Gen. 36:20)
- promise to Esau (Gen. 27:39-40)
- Esau moves to Edom, Seir (Gen. 32:3)

chiefs include Teman (Gen. 36:15, 31)

- home of Eliphaz (Job 2:11)
- reputation for wisdom (Jer. 49:7)

three fortified cities: Selah (Petra), Teman, Bozrah

- perhaps included city of Uz (Lam. 4:21; Job 1:1)

refused passage to Moses and Israelites (Num. 20:14-21; cf. Dt. 2:1-8; Jud. 11:17-18; see MBA #52)

were fought by Saul (1 Sam. 14:47)

were brought under subjection by David (2 Sam. 8:14)

unrest increased under Solomon (1 Kings 11:14-22)

successful revolt under Jehoram, 845 BC (2 Kings 8:20-22)

(some suggest Obadiah written at this time)

rejoiced in Jerusalem’s downfall in 587 BC (Ps. 137:7; cf. Lam. 4:20-22)

(suggested occasion for Obadiah’s prophecy), v. 8

were pushed out of Petra by Nabataean Arabs by 312 BC

- Greeks called them Idumaeans
- lived south of Judah

were pushed further south from the Negev by Judas Maccabee, 164 BC

forced into Judaism by John Hyrcanus, ca. 120 BC

produced Herod the Great

destroyed by the Romans in AD 70

- disappeared from history

3. Simple outline of Obadiah

1) Edom's coming doom, vv. 1-9

“wisdom irony” where terms like “pride” and “height” are used in conjunction before the demise of the worldly wise

complete destruction comes after the time of the Idumean Herod: 70 a.d., vv. 10, 18

18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau shall be stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, And no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau," For the LORD has spoken.

2) Edom's great sin: treachery, vv. 10-14

cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:17; 24:60

3) Judah's eschatological triumph, vv. 15-21

v. 16 “Retribution justice” — “only repentance breaks the vicious cycle of evil” — Craigie

v. 20 “Sepharad” — phps ancient Jewish idea of Spain; modern scholarship suggests Sardis in W. Turkey

NT Usage: Rev. 11:15 cf. Obadiah 21:

vs 21 Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

Rev. 11:15 "...The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"