

# LIVING GODS WILL

## Prophet of God

### OBADIAH



Obadiah in the sacristy of St. Mark by Melozzo de Forlì

**Born:** Shechem, Ephraim

**Died:** Sebastia, Palestine

**Obadiah** was a **prophet** of **God** from 586 – 538 BC.

**Obadiah** lived during the **Babylonian** destruction of Israel.

**Obadiah** authored the **Book of Obadiah**.

**Obadiah** preached about **Edom** being guilty of **pride** before the Lord.

Thirteen different men are named **Obadiah** in the Bible, including the minor prophet who wrote the book of **Obadiah**. The name **Obadiah** was common in ancient Israel and Judah. It means “**the Lord’s servant**” or “**worshiper of Yahweh**.”

**One of the twelve minor prophets:** Other than what is disclosed through the book of **Obadiah**, nothing more is known about **Obadiah** the **prophet**. His book, the shortest of the Old Testament with only twenty-one verses, reveals that **Obadiah** probably lived in the harsh and bitter era after the capture and destruction of Jerusalem by the **Babylonians**. He was most likely a contemporary of **Jeremiah**, **Ezekiel**, and **Daniel**.

**Obadiah’s** prophecies focus on **God’s** judgment against the Edomites (a hostile neighbor of Israel) for their part in destroying Jerusalem. **Obadiah’s** message is that **God** will not forget His people even in their captivity but will accomplish His purpose through and beyond the appalling conditions they endure.

Some of **Obadiah’s** words are remarkably similar to a few verses in **Jeremiah 49**, leading some scholars to think that Jeremiah quoted or paraphrased some of **Obadiah’s** prophecy as he was writing his own oracle against Edom.

## **THE BOOK OF OBADIAH**

In this, the shortest book of the Old Testament, it seems the prophet **Obadiah** considered each word a high-priced commodity. Apparently, he was unable to afford any words describing himself or his family in any way. Therefore, while twelve other men named **Obadiah** appear in Scripture, Old Testament scholars cannot identify with certainty any of them as the author of this book.

Though the ultimate identity of this prophet is shrouded in mystery, **Obadiah’s** emphasis on Jerusalem throughout this prophecy of judgment on the foreign nation of Edom, allows us at least to presume that **Obadiah** came from somewhere near the holy city in the southern kingdom of Judah.

Dating the book of **Obadiah** accurately is nearly impossible due to the scant historical information contained in the book. While several options have been proposed by scholars, the best argument places **Obadiah** in the **840s BC**, making him the **earliest writing prophet**, a few years prior to **Joel**, and a contemporary of **Elisha**.

The biggest piece of evidence for this early date comes from **Obadiah 1:10–14**, which indicates an Edomite invasion of Jerusalem. While Edom was too weak a nation to ever invade Judah on its own, Edom no doubt participated with other nations when the winds of change blew in its favor.

In the **840s**, when Edom rebelled against **King Jehoram** of Judah, the **Philistines and the Arabians also invaded Jerusalem (2 Kings 8:20–22; 2 Chronicles 21:16–17)**. While **2 Chronicles** does not indicate the Edomites' participation in the invasion, **Obadiah 1:10–14** pictures the violent behavior that the Edomites carried out on their neighbors, waiting on nearby roads to cut down those fleeing from the invaders within Jerusalem.

The Edomites could have easily heard of Jerusalem's invasion by foreign powers and entered themselves into the fray so that they too might benefit from plundering their neighbors in Jerusalem.

**The majority of the book pronounces judgment on the foreign nation of Edom**, making **Obadiah** one of only three prophets who pronounced judgment primarily on other nations (**Nahum and Habakkuk are the others**).

While others of the prophetic books contain passages of judgment against Edom and other nations, **Obadiah's** singular focus points to a significant, albeit difficult, truth about humanity's relationship with **God**: when people remove themselves from or place themselves in opposition to **God's** people, they can expect judgment, rather than restoration, at the end of life.

**Obadiah's** name, meaning "**worshipper of Yahweh**," offers an interesting counterpoint to the message of judgment he pronounced on Edom, Judah's neighbor to the southeast. As a worshipper of **Yahweh**, **Obadiah** placed himself in a position of humility before the **Lord**; he embraced his lowly place before the almighty **God**.

That **God** sent a man named "**worshipper of Yahweh**" to the people of Edom was no mistake. **Edom had been found guilty of pride before the Lord (Obadiah 1:3)**. They had thought themselves greater than they actually were; great enough to mock, steal from, and even harm **God's** chosen people.

But the "**Lord GOD**," a name **Obadiah** used to stress **God's** sovereign power over the nations, will not stand idly by and let His people suffer forever (**1:1**). Through **Obadiah**, **God** reminded Edom of their poor treatment of His people (**1:12–14**) and promised redemption, not to the Edomites but to the people of Judah (**1:17–18**).

The nation of Edom, which eventually disappeared into history, remains one of the prime examples of the truth found in **Proverbs 16:18**: "**Pride goes before destruction, / And a haughty spirit before stumbling.**"

**Obadiah's prophecy focuses on the destructive power of pride.** It reminds us of the consequences of living in a self-serving manner, of following through on our own feelings and desires without considering their impact on those around us. Do you struggle to set aside your own wants and desires for those of **God** and others?

Though such pride has been part of the lives of fallen human beings since the tragedy of the fall in **Eden**, **Obadiah** offers us a stark reminder to place ourselves under **God's** authority, to subject our appetites to His purposes, and to find our hope in being His people when the restoration of all things comes.

### **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE**

**OBA 1:1** The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the Lord, And a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, "Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle"): **2** "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You shall be greatly despised.

**OBA 1:3** The pride of your heart has deceived you, You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, Who will bring me down to the ground?

**OBA 1:9** Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, To the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau May be cut off by slaughter.

**OBA 1:13** You should not have entered the gate of My people In the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction In the day of their calamity, Nor laid hands on their substance In the day of their calamity.

**OBA 1:15** For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.

**OBA 1:18** 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.

**OBA 1:21** Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the Lord's.



**The Prophet Obadiah by Nanni di Bartolo**