

# Obadiah

Fighting and feuding between twin brothers (Esau and Jacob, Gen. 27) leads to national enmity between their respective peoples (Edomites and Israelites). In an hour of need when Israel's enemies were knocking at the gates of Jerusalem, the Edomites came to the aid of the enemy. For their unwillingness to serve as their brothers keep; the Edomites would one day become extinct. Obadiah, an obscure prophet of unknown background, describes how Edom would be "cut off forever" (v. 10), God's people would be vindicated, and God would be recognized as Judge over all the earth.

## INTRODUCTION

A struggle that began in the womb between twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, culminates in a struggle between their respective descendants, the Edomites and the Israelites. For the Edomites' stubborn refusal to aid Israel, first during the time of wilderness wandering (Num. 20:14-21) and later during a time of invasion, they are condemned by Obadiah. This little-known prophet describes their crimes, tries their case, and pronounces their judgment... total destruction.

The Hebrew name *Obadyah* means "Worshiper of Yahweh" or "Servant of Yahweh."

## AUTHOR

Obadiah was an obscure prophet who probably lived in the southern kingdom of Judah. Nothing is known of his hometown or family, but it is unlikely that he came out of the kingly or priestly line, because his father is not mentioned (1:1).

There are thirteen Obadiah's in the Old Testament, and some scholars have attempted to identify the author of this book with one of the other twelve.

The four best prospects are:

1. The officer in Ahab's palace who hid God's prophets in a cave (1 Kin. 18:3).
2. One of the officials sent out by Jehoshaphat to teach the law in the cities of Judah (2 Chr. 17:7).
3. One of the overseers who took part in repairing the temple under Josiah (2 Chr. 34:12).
4. A priest in the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 10:5).

## DATE & SETTING

Obadiah mentions no kings, so verses 10-14 provide the only historical reference point to aid in determining the book's time and setting. Most likely the plundering of Jerusalem written of in Obadiah was by the Philistines between 848 and 841 b.c. This would make the prophet a contemporary of Elisha, and Obadiah would be the earliest of the writing prophets, predating Joel by a few years.