

OBADIAH

STUDY GUIDE

This study will take a slightly different form from our studies in the past. One of the goals of this discipleship course is to instill skills for studying the Bible on your own. The shortness of this book creates opportunity for you to dig a little deeper in your reading and learn (or review) some skills which will prove helpful to you in the future.

BACKGROUND OF OBADIAH

Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, consists of 21 verses, but this tiny book packs a punch! Remember, the message of Obadiah applies to us today as much as it did to the people back then. So, read with that in mind and take note of Obadiah's clear warning.

What we know about Obadiah is ridiculously small. His name means, "servant of Yah," or "servant of God." Because of this, some scholars think it might be a reference to a title rather than an actual name. For our purposes here, we will assume it naming a person, and he lives up to the meaning of his name! He faithfully appears to deliver the message of God, then as silently as he came on the scene, disappears.

Accurately dating Obadiah's vision is a bit difficult because no kings are named and he speaks of an attack which historically fits two different time spans. Some believe Obadiah was active between 841-825 B.C. while others believe a more accurate dating of 626-585 B.C. The lack of named kings may be a simple omission because Obadiah did not feel it important, or it may be there was no king in place at that time, which certainly describes the overtake of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Obviously, the accuracy of the book's date is not ultimately important, for the book's inclusion in our Bible is because of its timeless message. However, it is good to understand the background and reasoning. On the next page is a chart further explaining reasons behind the different date ranges.

841 – 825 B.C.	626-585 B.C.
Edom revolted against Jerusalem in King Jehoram's day (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-17)	Vividness of description in Obadiah 11-14 best fits the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
Obadiah 12-14 suggest directives for the future	Edom extended hostility toward Judah & Israel for centuries
Jeremiah seems to have borrowed from Obadiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 49)	Similarity to Jeremiah 49, which was written at the time of Judah's fall to Babylon, demonstrates similar time or Obadiah borrowing from Jeremiah
Joel 2:32 seems to borrow from Obadiah v. 17	Obadiah 19 mentions possessing Ephraim & Samaria, which suits a later date since Israel was still in existence earlier
Locations mentioned in Obadiah are different than where exiles were taken in 586 B.C. (Babylon)	Reference to "sons of Israel...exiles of Jerusalem (vs. 20) imply both the Assyrian & Babylonian captivity took place
Placement in the canon argues for an earlier dating	Canon placement is due to the theme of "day of the Lord" rather than chronological placement

EDOM AND ISRAEL

To further understand the relationship – or lack thereof – between Israel and Edom, one must look back all the way to Genesis. To gain some historical understanding of these two nations, look up the following verses and take note of what you learn.

- Genesis 25:19-34; ch. 27
- Genesis 36:1-2
- Numbers 20:14-21

- 1 Samuel 14:47
- 2 Samuel 8:13-14
- 1 Kings 11:14-25
- 2 Chronicles 21:8-10
- Ezekiel 35:3-9

In the story of these nations you also have the extended story of these two men, Jacob and Esau. God, in a sense, has put Jacob and Esau into an enlarger and blown them up to national size. As the prophet discusses this, you can see that the story of these two men continues; Israel is still Jacob and Edom is still Esau.

Jacob and Esau were in perpetual antagonism. We read in the book of Genesis that even before they were born, they struggled together in their mother's womb. That antagonism marked the lives of these two men, and consequently, the lives of their descendants, the two nations of Israel and Edom.

As you recall from Genesis, Jacob was mother's darling and Esau was daddy's little man, and there was one unending conflict between the two of them which did not end with the lives of these men. The nations carried on this same conflict, and all the way from Genesis through Malachi there is the threat of struggle and unbroken antagonism between them. In the book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, God says, "I have loved Jacob but I have hated Esau" (Mal. 1:2). Why does the story of these two men come to a focus here in this little prophecy of Obadiah? What is so important about these two men and these two nations? Well, that is what the book of Obadiah makes very clear to us. In the New Testament we discover that there is a perpetual antagonism within the nature of the Christian. In Galatians 5:17 we are told that the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; they are opposed to one another.

He has taken these two men and the subsequent nations that came from them and used them through the Bible as a consistent picture of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit – Jacob and Esau, Israel and Edom. These two men, Jacob and Esau, and the nations Israel and Edom, always appear as a picture of a struggle between the flesh and the spirit that is going on in our own lives as believers. Esau lusts against Jacob, and Jacob against Esau; the two great principles are irreconcilably opposed to one another.

-- Ray C. Stedman, *Obadiah: Death to Edom!*

A FEW MORE NOTES ABOUT EDMOM

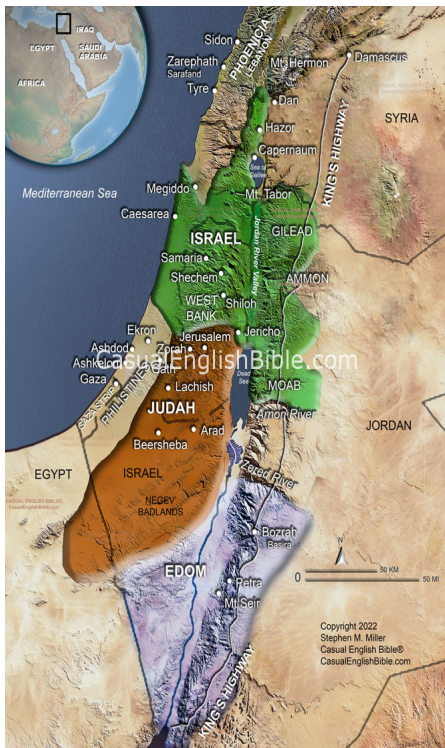


"The Treasury" in Petra

The people of Edom lived in and near the mountains. Later, Petra became its capital – easily defended due to a narrow canyon entrance. Located near the mountain range containing Mount Seir, Petra also became known by that mountain name, symbolizing its strength and lofty position. Over the years, several Arab groups, one being the Nabataeans who carved Petra's now famous structures out of the sandstone walls, gradually overtook Petra and Edom. Today, Edom is known as the country of Jordan.

READING AND OBSERVATION OF OBADIAH

Read the book of Obadiah inductively, allowing the text to speak and reveal its message to you. Follow the process as listed below. If you get stumped, contact your leader or Shannon at shannon@globaloutreachfoundation.org.



Read Without Marking Anything. Just read and get the basic idea of the book and flow of thought.

Complete A General Outline of the Book. Fill in the blanks below based on your reading (or create your own outline).

- I. Predictions of Judgment on _____ (1:1-9)
 - II. Reasons for Judgment on _____ (1:10-14)
 - III. Results of _____ on Edom (1:15-16)
 - IV. Possession of Edom by _____ (1:17-21)
- (Basic Template by Dean Niforatos)

Read Again and Identify Observation Words. These will be words that are important to the book, often repeat themselves, or reveal important themes. List your observation words below.

Read Again, Marking and Taking Notes. Mark your observation words and take note of what you learn about them. Also look for and mark symbols, types, and references pointing to or mentioning **God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.**

Chart Your Observations. Complete the chart below based on your discovery in the book. Remember, we're at the "What Does It Say?" stage. Just observations. Use another sheet if needed.

WHO is the author & target audience?	
WHAT sins & promises are there?	
WHEN do things take place?	"In that day...";
WHERE do things happen? Locations?	
WHY was the book written? Main theme?	
HOW will things be accomplished?	
KEY VERSE reinforcing main theme or lesson	

Chart Your Theological Truths. Now we look at **“What Do We Learn?”** about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, humankind, and any other important lessons from the book. Put your truths in such a way that they speak of universal truths, not just specifics to the book. We’re broadening the focus here.

GOD	
JESUS	
HOLY SPIRIT	
HUMANKIND	
OTHER TRUTHS	

Chart Your Applications. It's time to answer the question "How Does It Apply To Today?" Log which verses are tied to the lesson and practical ways to apply the lesson in your own life. Add as many lessons as you want!

LESSON #1	
LESSON #2	

Summarize Your Study. Condense and put into your own words all you've learned from the book.

- Key Word and why:

- Key Verse and why:

- Key Chapter and why: Kind of a no brainer on this one!! I'm just putting it in here so you learn the process.

- List and answer some summary questions you would ask if you were leading them through this study. Your questions should come mostly from your theological truths and application for today. **Here are a few examples (do answer them!) and add AT LEAST ONE MORE OF YOUR OWN:**
 - What do you learn about relationships from this book?

 - Whom are you tempted to treat poorly or with unforgiveness, and what do you need to do about it?

 - **Your own summary question:**

CONGRATULATIONS!!
YOU JUST FULLY COMPLETED AN INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY ON YOUR OWN!