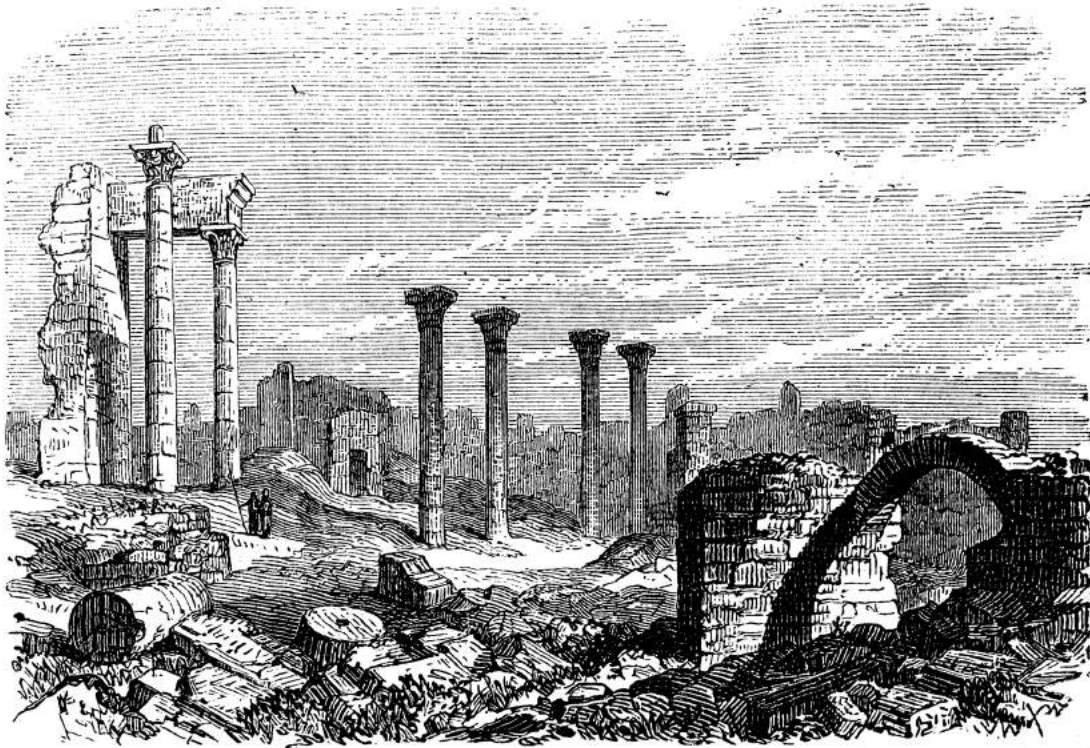


## Reflections on the Book of Obadiah

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© Shutterstock, Morphart Creation: Old engraved illustration of ruins of Bozrah, Capital of Edom, in the 1890s

Obadiah, a prophet from Judah, prophesied against Edom, probably just after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. This is the shortest book in the Old Testament.

Although the prophesy was targeted principally against Edom, God's sovereignty over international affairs and nations was highlighted in the announcement of God's judgment that would fall on the nations in the day of the Lord. The judgment and fall of Edom need to be seen as part of a larger judgment on nations associated with the Lord's day.

Obadiah singled out Judah's traditional enemy Edom as a special object of God's angry judgement. Israel and Edom have battled since their patriarchs Jacob and Esau wrestled in the womb (Genesis 25:19-34). Edom barred Israel from passing through during the wilderness period (Num 20: 14-21). King David conquered Edom but she revolted against Judah in about 850 B.C. (2 Kings 8:20-22). From a historical point,

Edom was a 'brother' to Israel. Yet when Israel was ransacked by Babylon, Edom just stood by and even gloated over the misfortune of Israel. Worse still, the Edomites rejoiced in Israel's downfall and cut down those trying to flee. They participated in the looting of Jerusalem and had dealt mercilessly with the Judahite refugees and shed blood of innocent people in the land of Judah.

Edom was arrogant, proud and self-assured because of its impregnable natural defenses – rocky highlands south east of the Dead Sea. However, Edom's pride had lulled it into a false sense of security. Despite its seemingly secure position, the Lord would tear Edom from its 'nest', making the proud nation an insignificant object of scorn. Verses 5-6 draw attention to the totality of Edom's coming destruction. God would repay Edom for her evil deeds.

Because Edom showed no mercy to Israel's survivors, they would have no survivors of their own. Because Edom "cut off" Israel's fugitives, she would be "cut off" forever. The very ones Edom attempted to wipe out would take possessions of the mountains of Esau. The Day of the Lord would fall upon them with full force.

There are certain spiritual principles for us to consider in this short book. The first is the reminder that God hates pride. Obadiah depicts Edom in a manner similar to Isaiah's description of Assyria. Other parts of Scriptures declare that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble; God dwells with the humble and delights in the humble. It is pride that causes the devil to rebel against God and it is also pride that causes man to seek to be independent of God and to be 'god' of his life. It is a solemn reminder to reject all forms of pride and to walk humbly with our God. Edom's ill-treatment of his 'brother' and his rejoicing over the misfortune of Israel brings out another principle. There should be love between brothers instead of hate, probably fuelled by jealousy, envy and self-life. The lack of love, the ugliness of jealousy and envy would incur God's judgement, especially if these are displayed between brothers.

More importantly, Israel is special to Yahweh; God's people are special to Him and He loves them. God fights for His people and He would fulfil His covenant to His people and judge all nations and peoples who are hostile to His beloved children. Edom becomes a symbol for all who oppose God's chosen people.

God's people who are suffering persecution and opposition in today's context can take heart that God sees all things and He will judge accordingly in His own time. Do not mistake God's "silence" as His ignorance of what is going on with His people. The sovereign God would act and the Day of the Lord would demonstrate beyond all doubt that God does not abandon His people.