

Obadiah

The Twelve Minor Prophets · Biblical Prophets

Obadiah's prophecy, the shortest book in the Old Testament at only 21 verses, is entirely devoted to pronouncing judgment upon Edom, the nation descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother.

Note: The 'clefts of the rock' likely refers to Petra, Edom's spectacular capital carved into rose-red sandstone cliffs in modern-day Jordan. These seemingly impregnable fortresses, accessible only through narrow gorges, fostered Edom's arrogant self-confidence. The prophecy against Edom was thoroughly fulfilled: the Nabateans displaced them in the 6th-4th centuries BC, forcing them into southern Judea (Idumea). The Maccabees later subjugated them, and they ceased to exist as a distinct people after Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70.

The ancient enmity between these brother nations, originating from their ancestor's rivalry (Genesis 25), culminated when Edom rejoiced over Jerusalem's destruction by Babylon in 586 BC, participated in the plunder, and cut off fleeing refugees. Obadiah's oracle declares that as Edom had done to Israel, so it would be done to them. The Edomites' pride in their seemingly impregnable mountain fortresses—'Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?'—would be their undoing, for God would bring them down. Though Edom thought itself wise and secure, divine judgment would strip away every refuge. The book concludes with eschatological hope: 'And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.'

Key Verses

Obadiah 1:3-4

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

Obadiah 1:10

For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

Obadiah 1:15

For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

Obadiah 1:21

And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

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