

Obadiah 1:1

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The prophet Obadiah receives God's revelation in a vision. In this message, God announces the defeat of Edom and calls the nations to arise to fight against her.

The book begins with a title identifying the nature of the prophecy and its author. The book's title classifies it as a *vision* ["hāzôn" in Hebrew]. The term *vision* comes from a verb meaning "to see" or "to behold." It is a term used for one form of divine revelation (Ezekiel 12:27; 13:16). It refers to some visual representations of God's will (Amos 7). It tells us that the prophet saw and heard what God communicated to him.

The author of *the vision* is *Obadiah*. The name *Obadiah* means "servant of Yahweh," suggesting that the prophet came from a godly family. There are several men in the Bible named *Obadiah*, making it difficult to determine the prophet's personal life and family (See, for instance, 1 Kings 18:3; 1 Chronicles 3:21; 7:3; 2 Chronicles 17:7; Ezra 8:9, etc.). However, one thing is certain: *Obadiah* was a true prophet because God spoke to him in a *vision*. Thus, the prophecy of this book is a description of *the vision of Obadiah*.

After the title identifying the nature of the prophecy and its author, the book identifies the origin of the message with the formula *Thus says the Lord GOD*. The term translated as *Lord* here is "Adonai" in Hebrew, which means "master" or "ruler." The Hebrew word translated as *GOD* is "Yahweh," the covenant name of God (Exodus 3:14–15). The prophet *Obadiah* used the names *Adonai* and *Yahweh* together to tell his audience that his *vision* was not the product of his reflection. Rather, what he saw came directly from *Yahweh*, his master. Simply put, *Obadiah* was God's herald or messenger.

The *vision of Obadiah* was a prophecy concerning *Edom*, a country situated east of the Dead Sea and south of Moab (see map on side bar). The Edomites were kinsmen to the Israelites since they were the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, who was later renamed Israel (Genesis 25:19–26; 36; Deuteronomy 2:1–7). Similar to the relationship of the founders Jacob and Esau, the nation *Edom* had a mixed tradition in how they interacted with the Israelites. *Edom* often treated Israel as a traditional enemy (Numbers 20:14–21; Amos. 1:11–15). However, on rare occasions they were allies (Deuteronomy 2:2–6; 2 Kings. 3:9). In *Obadiah's* prophecy, *Edom* fell under God's judgment for her mistreatment of God's covenant people (vv. 10–14).

Obadiah then placed God's message on hold to provide his listeners with some important background information. He used the first-person plural to include the people of the southern kingdom of Judah in his speech. He said, *We have heard a report from the LORD*. The pronoun "we" implies that both *Obadiah* and the people of Judah had *heard* the *report*.

The term translated as *report* can be rendered as "news" (1 Samuel 4:19; 1 Kings 2:28). The news or *report* that *Obadiah* and the people of Judah *heard* was important because it came *from the LORD*, their Suzerain (or Ruler), with whom they had entered into a covenant agreement

(Exodus 19:18). Obadiah *heard* it and quickly realized that the LORD had spoken to comfort His covenant people. But what was the *report* about? Obadiah told the people of Judah that *an envoy has been sent among the nations*.

The word translated *envoy* occurs only six times in the Old Testament. It refers to a messenger who travels from place to place to deliver a message (Proverbs 13:17; 25:13). In the ancient world, when nations engaged in war, they often called on all covenant partners and vassal (subordinate) states, asking them to send troops and supplies for a combined effort. Messengers would then be sent among the allies to encourage them to honor their treaty commitments (1 Samuel 11:3–4). Here in Obadiah, the LORD *sent an envoy among the nations* to rally support against *Edom*.

The *envoy's* message is short yet powerful. It is summarized as follows: *Arise and let us go against her for battle*. To *arise* means to get up or to stand. In our context, it means to be ready for war. The command to *arise* shows the urgency of the situation. Since the nation *Edom* was guilty, the LORD was about to judge her. He would use a coalition of *nations* as His instruments to punish Edom. Therefore, the LORD commanded the nations to *arise* so that they could fight against *Edom* on His behalf.

Biblical Text

The vision of Obadiah.

**Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom—
We have heard a report from the LORD,
And an envoy has been sent among the nations *saying*,
“Arise and let us go against her for battle.”**