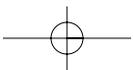
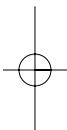
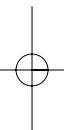


TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 26

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OBADIAH, JONAH AND
MICAH



TYNDALE OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 26

GENERAL EDITOR: DONALD J. WISEMAN

OBADIAH, JONAH AND MICAH

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

DAVID W. BAKER,
T. DESMOND ALEXANDER,
AND BRUCE K. WALTKE



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GENERAL PREFACE

The aim of this series of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, as it was in the companion volumes on the New Testament, is to provide the student of the Bible with a handy, up-to-date commentary on each book, with the primary emphasis on exegesis. Major critical questions are discussed in the introductions and additional notes, while undue technicalities have been avoided.

In this series individual authors are, of course, free to make their own distinct contributions and express their own point of view on all debated issues. Within the necessary limits of space they frequently draw attention to interpretations which they themselves do not hold but which represent the stated conclusions of sincere fellow Christians.

The books of Obadiah, Jonah and Micah cover an important but turbulent epoch in the history of Israel in which prophets warned of coming judgment if Israel refused to turn back to God from her apostasy and to practise effective social justice. This culminated in the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC and in the exile in Babylon.

In the Old Testament in particular no single English translation is adequate to reflect the original text. The version on which these three commentaries are based is the New International Version, but other translations are frequently referred to as well, and on occasion the authors supply their own. Where necessary, words are transliterated in order to help the reader who is unfamiliar with Hebrew to identify the precise word under discussion.

It is assumed throughout that the reader will have ready access to one, or more, reliable renderings of the Bible in English.

Interest in the meaning and message of the Old Testament continues undiminished and it is hoped that this series will thus further the systematic study of the revelation of God and his will and ways as seen in these records. It is the prayer of the editor and publisher, as of the authors, that these books will help many to understand, and to respond to, the Word of God today.

D. J. Wiseman

CHIEF ABBREVIATIONS

Bible translations and versions

AV	Authorized Version (King James), 1611.
<i>BHS</i>	A. Alt et al. (eds.), <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> (Deutsche Bibelstiftung Stuttgart, 1967/77).
EVV	English versions.
GNB	Good News Bible, 1976.
Heb.	Hebrew.
JB	Jerusalem Bible, 1966.
LXX	The Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament).
MT	Massoretic Text.
NAB	New American Bible, 1970.
NEB	New English Bible, 1970.
NIV	New International Version, 1973, 1978, 1984.
RSV	Revised Standard Version, 1952.
RV	Revised Version, 1885.
Syr.	Syriac.
Vulg.	Vulgate.

Other reference works

<i>ANET</i>	J. B. Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton University Press, ² 1955; ³ 1969).
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- CAH* *Cambridge Ancient History* (³1970—).
- G-K* Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Hebrew Grammar*, ET, 1910.
- HDB* J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh, 1898–1904).
- IBD* J. D. Douglas et al. (eds.), *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 3 vols. (IVP, 1980).
- IDB* G. A. Buttrick et al. (eds.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Abingdon Press, 1962).
- IDBS* K. Crim et al. (eds.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary volume (Abingdon Press, 1976).
- NBA* J. Bimson et al. (eds.), *New Bible Atlas* (IVP, 1985).
- NBC* D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer (eds.), *New Bible Commentary* (IVP, ³1970).
- NBD* J. D. Douglas et al. (eds.), *The New Bible Dictionary* (IVP, ²1982).
- POTT* D. J. Wiseman (ed.), *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (Oxford University Press, 1973).
- TDNT* G. Kittell and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., trans. G. W. Bromiley (Eerdmans, 1946–76).
- TDOT* G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vols. 1–2, trans. J. T. Willis (Eerdmans, ²1977); vol. 3, trans. J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, D. E. Green (Eerdmans, 1978); vol. 4, trans. D. E. Green (Eerdmans, 1980); vol. 5, trans. D. E. Green (Eerdmans, 1986).
- THAT* E. Jenni and C. Westermann (eds.), *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 2 vols. (Chr. Kaiser Verlag and Theologischer Verlag, 1971–76).
- TWOT* R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, B. K. Waltke (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Moody Press, 1980).

Journals

- BA* *Biblical Archaeologist*.
- BAR* *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica.</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift.</i>
<i>BZAW</i>	<i>Beihfte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly.</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>Expository Times.</i>
<i>EvTh</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie.</i>
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review.</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual.</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal.</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation.</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature.</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society.</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies.</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society.</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament.</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies.</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies.</i>
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studien.</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly.</i>
<i>PTR</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Review.</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique.</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses.</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology.</i>
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin.</i>
<i>TrThS</i>	<i>Trierer Theologische Studien.</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum.</i>
<i>VTS</i>	<i>Supplement to Vetus Testamentum.</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</i>

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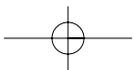
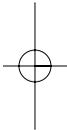
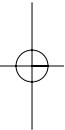
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Commentaries and works on Micah

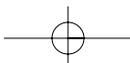
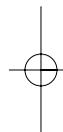
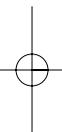
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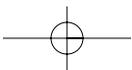
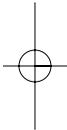
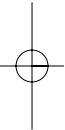


Obadiah

An Introduction and Commentary

David W. Baker

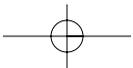
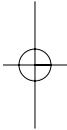
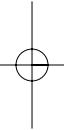




AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The truism that 'good things come in small packages' was driven home in the attempt to 'unpack' God's message to his people as contained in this, the smallest Old Testament book. For the privilege of undertaking this study I thank Professor D. J. Wiseman, as well as for his instruction and counsel in so many ways. For help in overcoming some of the infelicities of style I thank the editors and readers of Inter-Varsity Press. For giving up their valuable play time so I could work, I thank two very special 'small packages' to whom this work is dedicated, Adam and Emily.

David W. Baker



INTRODUCTION

1. Edom in space and time

The land of Edom, also called Seir (Gen. 32:3; 36:20–21, 30; Num. 24:18), lay south and east of the Dead Sea from the Wadi Zered to the Gulf of Aqabah. Straddling the Arabah rift valley running south from the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqabah, on the east it was rocky and mountainous, at times reaching c. 1,070 metres in elevation. Through it passed two major traffic routes, the King's Highway and the road along the Arabah. Its control over much of the north-south trade fed its coffers and made it a target for attack.

The Bible portrays the Edomites as descendants of Esau (Gen. 36, esp. vv. 1, 9), although archaeological excavations indicate earlier inhabitants of the land. Among the earliest extra-biblical mentions of the area are one in the Amarna letters from Egypt, dating from the fourteenth century BC (see *IBD* 1, pp. 37–39) and several references during the reign of Ramses II (late thirteenth century BC) to people of Seir.¹ The

1. *POTT*, p. 231.

biblical record itself shows continued, though not always amicable, contact between Edom and the Israelites.

After the exodus, Israel was denied passage through Edom (Num. 20:14–21; Judg. 11:17–18) and shortly thereafter Balaam predicted Edom's conquest (Num. 24:18). Battle was joined with Edom under Saul (1 Sam. 14:47) and the area was conquered under David (2 Sam. 8:13–14 with RSV, NIV marginal emendations; 1 Kgs 11:15–16) and exploited under Solomon (1 Kgs 9:26–28), though not without Edomite opposition (1 Kgs 11:14–22). In the ninth century, Edomites, in confederation with Moabites and Ammonites, raided Judah during Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Chr. 20:1–2). Edom more successfully rebelled against Jehoram (Joram) and enjoyed relative freedom from Israelite domination for about forty years (2 Kgs 8:20–22; 2 Chr. 21:8–10).

Early in the next century, Judah under Amaziah retook Edom with great slaughter (2 Kgs 14:7; 2 Chr. 25:11–12), advancing as far as Sela. Some time later, when Judah was itself under pressure during Ahaz's reign, Edom raided Judah, taking captives (2 Chr. 28:17), and shook herself loose from Israel, never to be subjugated to her again.

During the Assyrian period, from at least 734 BC, Edom was a vassal of Assyria² and subsequently also of Babylon. At times they at least planned rebellion (Jer. 27), though there is no evidence of trying to realize these plans. The situation at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (587 BC) is not clear from either biblical or extra-biblical sources. 1 Esdras 4:45 blames the Edomites for burning the Jerusalem temple, but this is unconfirmed (cf. Lam. 4:21–22).

In the sixth century, Edomite power waned, as indicated by archaeological remains, with an apparent abandonment of some towns and migration of population³ (cf. 1 Macc. 5:65). From the late sixth to the fourth centuries BC, Arab influence in the region was predominant (for indications of their presence in this period, cf. Neh. 2:19; 4:7; 6:1). This was brought to bear especially by the Nabataeans. Edomites were displaced. Some Edomites settled in the Negev in

2. *ANET*, p. 282.

3. *POTT*, p. 243.

southern Judah, which became known by the related name Idumaea (1 Macc. 4:29).⁴

Much of this reconstruction is based on conjecture and secondary sources, since documentation and archaeological evidence from the area itself are sparse and ambiguous.

2. Obadiah: the man and his time

Writing prophets in Israel are regularly identified by a notice of the period in which they prophesied, their hometown (or at least the place where the prophecies took place), and their father, or any combination of these. One is identified simply as a prophet (Habakkuk). Only two prophets are not given any contextual framework and not only are they ‘without father and mother’, they might even be without proper names of their own. Malachi, ‘my messenger’, could be a designation of the prophet’s role as intermediary, and Obadiah, ‘servant/worshipper of Yahweh’, could indicate the same role. Prophets were often referred to as ‘servant’ (e.g. 1 Kgs 14:18; 2 Kgs 17:23; Jer. 7:25; Zech. 1:6). Obadiah is a common Israelite name in the Old Testament, however, so it is probably the name of the prophet.

Nothing further is known about the prophet; not even his time period is mentioned, so our dating of the book must come from clues within the book itself. Since the prophecy concerns Edom, and especially its treachery during an attack on Jerusalem (vv. 10–14), a synoptic study of the histories of Edom and Judah must be done to determine the periods referred to in the prophecy.

The outline of Edomite-Judean contacts (pp. 21–23) shows that there were several periods when Obadiah would have been relevant. If the canonical sequence of Obadiah among the pre-exilic prophets is seen as significant, the background against which the book is set could be that of Jehoshaphat or Jehoram or Ahaz. The first does not fit the biblical evidence, since 2 Chronicles 20 pictures a victory for Judah through God’s intervention rather than the defeat described

4. For a detailed study of Edomite history, religion and culture, see *POTT*, pp. 229–258.

in Obadiah 10–14. The rebellion against Jehoram mentions nothing of the attack on Jerusalem which is of importance to Obadiah (2 Chr. 21; cf. Obad. 11). Neither is it explicitly mentioned as suffering during Ahaz's reign (2 Chr. 28:16–18), although other towns are listed as being taken.

A suggested date in the fifth century BC, based on Arab raids dispossessing the Edomites during that period (see p. 22), is not necessary, since the Arab presence in the area was known as early as the ninth century BC.⁵ The most satisfying setting is shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, when refugees were captured in mid-flight (2 Kgs 25:4–6). Although Edom is not explicitly linked with this catastrophe in the canonical text, its satisfaction at the outcome would have matched that of other nations who had opposed Judah in the past.

3. The book

Obadiah, the fourth of the Minor Prophets, is the shortest book in the Old Testament, consisting of one chapter of twenty-one verses.

The short book is divided into two main sections. The first is particular and specific, consisting of oracles directed against Edom. The second is more general, being oracles concerning Israel and the nations.

Some have proposed that the oracles derived originally from more than one source and were joined for this book. One argument for this is that there are strong resemblances between Jeremiah 49:14–16 and 49:9 and Obadiah 1b–4 and 5 respectively. Rather than proposing a literary dependence of one upon the other, which would be difficult to verify, an independent source could have been used by both. This would account for the variations, especially as regards the order of the elements within the two books.⁶

Some (e.g. Wellhausen, Rudolph, Wolff) have proposed a reversal of the two halves of verse 15, since 15a mentions 'the Day of

5. *POTT*, p. 290.

6. See Allen, pp. 132–133, for further discussion. Pages 133–136 discuss the unity of the book.

Yahweh' in relation to 'all nations'. The more universal message of the prophecy is found in verses 16–21. Verse 15b is directed specifically to Edom, however, the subject of verses 2–14. In order to place these two half verses close to the related contexts, the reversal was proposed. There is no apparent reason why such a dislocation might have been deliberately done. A scribal error has been suggested, but it is not necessary to suppose any dislocation if the book is from one hand.

Recent research on transitional techniques between paragraphs, by which they are united, has shown that common methods for linking involved repetitions of key words, grammatical forms, or other linguistic material.⁷ The latter portion of Obadiah, dealing with 'all the nations', has that as a key concept in verse 16, and it is also found in 15a. This could thus serve as a deliberate transition between the two paragraphs. The direct address, second person singular form 'you', is characteristic of the 'Edom' portion of Obadiah (see all vv. except 1, 6, 8). This is not used in verse 15a, which uses the more impersonal, third person form 'they', 'he', etc. The 'you' form is used in verses 15b and 16a. These shifts in person also serve as links, binding together the two paragraphs. Therefore, rather than indicating a plurality of sources for the prophecy, with a misplacement in verse 15, the evidence more convincingly argues for a deliberate structure. The existing form of the verse shows the unity of the book and of its parts. This is indicated in this commentary by having the discussion of verse 15 in two parts, closing section 2 and also opening section 3 (see pp. 41–42).

There are other lexical and theological indicators of unity within the book. A key word throughout is 'day'. Edom can look forward to a 'day' in which she is judged (v. 8), since she stood by on the 'day' that her neighbour, Judah, was attacked (vv. 11, 12 [three times], 13 [three times], 14). Also, on a wider scale, there will be a 'day' which will involve all nations (v. 15) in either judgment or deliverance. All three sections are thus bound by their respective 'days'. Another uniting feature is Edom and Judah being 'cut down' (vv. 9, 14). Finally,

7. See H. van Dyke Parunak, 'Transitional Techniques in the Bible', *JBL* 102 (1983), pp. 525–548.

the prophecy begins and ends with Yahweh (vv. 1 [twice], 21) and he appears throughout, as speaker (vv. 1 [twice], 4, 8, 18) or actor (vv. 15, 21). His mountain, Zion (vv. 17, 21), will gain the ascendancy over the mountain of the enemy of his people, Edom (vv. 8, 9, 19, 21; cf. vv. 3–4).

A theological unifier is the concept of *lex talionis*, or the correspondence and appropriateness of the punishment to the crime. This is spelt out explicitly in verse 15b, but can also be seen in examples where the proud (v. 3) is humbled (v. 2), those who passively watched the pillage of a nation (vv. 11–14) will themselves be pillaged (vv. 5–9), those harassing survivors (v. 14) will themselves have none (v. 18) and those who participated in a dispossession (v. 14) will themselves be dispossessed (vv. 7, 19).

4. The message

Obadiah presents a message of hope to God's people. This is done in two different stages, corresponding to the two major divisions of the prophecy. Firstly, Judah can be assured of God's justice in that Edom, a nation who took part in her own humiliation whether as an observer or as a participant (vv. 11–14), would herself be humiliated (vv. 2–10, 15b). This judgment is due not only to Edom's gloating, but also to her arrogance. She perceived herself as relatively superior to and unassailable by the surrounding nations (vv. 2–4), but forgot the absolute transcendence of Israel's God. Secondly, this can be seen on a wider scale, where all the nations will be judged and Judah will get back from them all that which was taken (vv. 15a, 16–21). God has not forsaken his people, as might have been feared when they suffered defeat. He will continue to support them because he is their covenant God, Yahweh, who met them at Sinai.

Not only is Yahweh willing to help his people, he is also able to do so, since he is sovereign, Lord (v. 1) and king of nations, and not simply of Israel (v. 21). His sovereignty is also shown by his direct intervention in history. While using human agents to carry out his plans for judgment and for blessing, Yahweh is the one who controls these agents and sets them on their path, even though they might not acknowledge him as God (cf. v. 7). As Yahweh has fought beside and on behalf of Israel in the past (e.g. in the conquest of Canaan), so

he will withstand the warriors of her enemies in Obadiah's day. Whether they are relatively minor, such as the Edomites, or major, such as the Babylonians, all are among the nations under Yahweh's power. Nothing now remains of these two particular peoples, Edom and Babylon, but the descendants of those whose capital, Jerusalem, they destroyed survive still.

All of these points have relevance to the contemporary reader of Obadiah. While neither Edom nor Babylon are with us any longer, enemies of God's people are still too evident and sometimes apparently all powerful. The same God, whom the prophets proclaimed as not only willing but able to stand on the side of his people and deliver them, is to be declared today.