

Jehoram's [Judah] Early Reign Characterized by Murder, War and Idolatry (848n/848t BC)

2 Kings 8:18–22

2 Chronicles 21:4, 6–11

Jehoram Murders His Brothers

God Has Mercy on Judah in Spite of Jehoram's Wickedness

18 He followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel, just as Ahab's dynasty had done, for he married Ahab's daughter. He did evil in the sight of the LORD.

19 But the LORD was unwilling to destroy Judah.

He preserved Judah

for the sake of his servant David to whom he had promised a perpetual dynasty.

With Jehoshaphat Dead, Edom Rebels Against Judah

20 During his reign Edom freed themselves from Judah's control and set up their own king.

21 Joram crossed over to Zair with all his chariots. The Edomites, who had surrounded him, attacked at night and defeated him and his chariot officers. The Israelite army retreated to their homeland.

22a So Edom has remained free from Judah's control to this very day.

Libnah Also Rebels

22b At that same time Libnah also rebelled.

Jehoram's Idolatry

4 Jehoram took control of his father's kingdom and became powerful. Then he killed all his brothers, as well as some of the officials of Israel.

6 He followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel, just as Ahab's dynasty had done, for he married Ahab's daughter. He did evil in the sight of the LORD.

7 But the LORD was unwilling to destroy David's dynasty

because of the promise he had made to give David a perpetual dynasty.

8 During Jehoram's reign Edom freed themselves from Judah's control and set up their own king.

9 Jehoram crossed over to Zair with his officers and all his chariots. The Edomites, who had surrounded him, attacked at night and defeated him and his chariot officers.

10a So Edom has remained free from Judah's control to this very day.

10b At that same time Libnah also rebelled and freed themselves from Judah's control because Jehoram rejected the LORD God of his ancestors.

11 He also built high places on the hills of Judah; he encouraged the residents of Jerusalem to be unfaithful to the LORD and led Judah away from the LORD.

Jehoram [Judah] Receives Elijah's Letter (c. 848 BC)

2 Chronicles 21:12–15

12 Jehoram received this letter from Elijah the prophet: "This is what the LORD God of your ancestor David says: 'You have not followed in the footsteps of your father Jehoshaphat and of King Asa of Judah,

13 but have instead followed in the footsteps of the kings of Israel. You encouraged the people of Judah and the residents of Jerusalem to be unfaithful to the LORD, just as the family of Ahab does in Israel. You also killed your brothers, members of your father's family, who were better than you.

14 So look, the LORD is about to severely afflict your people, your sons, your wives, and all you own.

15 And you will get a serious, chronic intestinal disease which will cause your intestines to come out."

Judah is Pillaged by the Philistines and the Arabs (c. 845 BC)

2 Chronicles 21:16–17

16 The LORD stirred up against Jehoram the Philistines and the Arabs who lived beside the Cushites.

17 They attacked Judah and swept through it. They carried off everything they found in the royal palace, including his sons and wives. None of his sons was left, except for his youngest, Ahaziah [aka Jehoahaz].

Obadiah's Prophecy Against Edom (c. 845 BC)

Obadiah 1

Yahweh Promises to Destroy Edom

1 The vision that Obadiah saw. The Lord GOD says this concerning Edom:

We have heard a report from the LORD.

An envoy was sent among the nations, saying,
"Arise! Let us make war against Edom!"

2 The LORD says, "Look! I will make you a weak nation;
you will be greatly despised!

3 Your presumptuous heart has deceived you—
you who reside in the safety of the rocky cliffs,
whose home is high in the mountains.
You think to yourself,

'No one can bring me down to the ground!'

4 Even if you were to soar high like an eagle,
even if you were to make your nest among the stars,
I can bring you down even from there!" says the LORD.

5 "If thieves came to rob you during the night,
they would steal only as much as they wanted!
If grape pickers came to harvest your vineyards,
they would leave some behind for the poor!
But you will be totally destroyed!

6 How the people of Esau will be thoroughly plundered!
Their hidden valuables will be ransacked!

7 All your allies will force you from your homeland!
Your treaty partners will deceive you and overpower you.
Your trusted friends will set an ambush for you
that will take you by surprise!

8 At that time," the LORD says,
"I will destroy the wise sages of Edom!
the advisers from Esau's mountain!

9 Your warriors will be shattered, O Teman,
so that everyone will be destroyed from Esau's mountain!

Edom's Wrongs against Judah

10 "Because you violently slaughtered your relatives, the people of Jacob,
shame will cover you, and you will be destroyed forever.

11 You stood aloof while strangers took his army captive,
and foreigners advanced to his gates.
When they cast lots over Jerusalem,
you behaved as though you were in league with them.

12 You should not have gloated when your relatives suffered calamity.
You should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah when they were destroyed.
You should not have boasted when they suffered adversity.

13 You should not have entered the city of my people when they experienced distress.
You should not have joined in gloating over their misfortune when they suffered distress.
You should not have looted their wealth when they endured distress.

14 You should not have stood at the fork in the road to slaughter those trying to escape.
You should not have captured their refugees when they suffered adversity.

The Coming "Day of the LORD"

15 "For the day of the LORD is approaching for all the nations!
Just as you have done, so it will be done to you.
You will get exactly what your deeds deserve.

16 For just as you have drunk on my holy mountain,
so all the nations will drink continually.
They will drink, and they will gulp down;

- they will be as though they had never been.
- 17 But on Mount Zion there will be a remnant of those who escape, [cf. [Joel 2:32](#)] and it will be a holy place once again. The descendants of Jacob will conquer those who had conquered them.
- 18 The descendants of Jacob will be a fire, and the descendants of Joseph a flame. The descendants of Esau will be like stubble. They will burn them up and devour them. There will not be a single survivor of the descendants of Esau!" Indeed, the LORD has spoken it.
- 19 The people of the Negev will take possession of Esau's mountain, and the people of the Shephelah will take possession of the land of the Philistines. They will also take possession of the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria, and the people of Benjamin will take possession of Gilead.
- 20 The exiles of this fortress of the people of Israel will take possession of what belongs to the people of Canaan, as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will take possession of the towns of the Negev.
- 21 Those who have been delivered will go up on Mount Zion in order to rule over Esau's mountain. Then the LORD will reign as King!

Elisha Raises the Shunammite Woman's Son (c. 844 BC)

2 Kings 4:18-37

The Boy Dies

- 18 The boy grew and one day he went out to see his father who was with the harvest workers.
- 19 He said to his father, "My head! My head!" His father told a servant, "Carry him to his mother."
- 20 So he picked him up and took him to his mother. He sat on her lap until noon and then died.

The Mother Goes to See Elisha

- 21 She went up and laid him down on the prophet's bed. She shut the door behind her and left.
- 22 She called to her husband, "Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so I can go see the prophet quickly and then return."
- 23 He said, "Why do you want to go see him today? It is not the new moon or the Sabbath." She said, "Everything's fine."
- 24 She saddled the donkey and told her servant, "Lead on. Do not stop unless I say so."
- 25 So she went to visit the prophet at Mount Carmel. When he saw her at a distance, he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, it's the Shunammite woman.
- 26 Now, run to meet her and ask her, 'Are you well? Are your husband and the boy well?'" She told Gehazi, "Everything's fine."
- 27 But when she reached the prophet on the mountain, she grabbed hold of his feet. Gehazi came near to push her away, but the prophet said, "Leave her alone, for she is very upset. The LORD has kept the matter hidden from me; he didn't tell me about it."
- 28 She said, "Did I ask my master for a son? Didn't I say, 'Don't mislead me?'"
- 29 Elisha told Gehazi, "Tuck your robes into your belt, take my staff, and go! Don't stop to exchange greetings with anyone! Place my staff on the child's face."
- 30 The mother of the child said, "As certainly as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So Elisha got up and followed her back.

Elisha Raises the Son from the Dead

- 31 Now Gehazi went on ahead of them. He placed the staff on the child's face, but there was no sound or response. When he came back to Elisha he told him, "The child did not wake up."
- 32 When Elisha arrived at the house, there was the child lying dead on his bed.
- 33 He went in by himself and closed the door. Then he prayed to the LORD.
- 34 He got up on the bed and spread his body out over the boy; he put his mouth on the boy's mouth, his eyes over the boy's eyes, and the palms of his hands against the boy's palms. He bent down over him, and the boy's skin grew warm.
- 35 Elisha went back and walked around in the house. Then he got up on the bed again and bent down over him. The child sneezed

seven times and opened his eyes.

36 Elisha called to Gehazi and said, “Get the Shunammite woman.” So he did so and she came to him. He said to her, “Take your son.”

37 She came in, fell at his feet, and bowed down. Then she picked up her son and left.

Seven Year Famine in Israel Begins (c. 844 BC)

2 Kings 8:1–2

1 Now Elisha advised the woman whose son he had brought back to life, “You and your family should go and live somewhere else for a while, for the LORD has decreed that a famine will overtake the land for seven years.”

2 So the woman did as the prophet said. She and her family went and lived in the land of the Philistines for seven years.

Elisha Cures the Poison Stew (c. 844–841 BC)

2 Kings 4:38–41

38 Now Elisha went back to Gilgal, while there was famine in the land. Some of the prophets were visiting him and he told his servant, “Put the big pot on the fire and boil some stew for the prophets.”

39 Someone went out to the field to gather some herbs and found a wild vine. He picked some of its fruit, enough to fill up the fold of his robe. He came back, cut it up, and threw the slices into the stew pot, not knowing they were harmful.

40 The stew was poured out for the men to eat. When they ate some of the stew, they cried out, “Death is in the pot, O prophet!” They could not eat it.

41 He said, “Get some flour.” Then he threw it into the pot and said, “Now pour some out for the men so they may eat.” There was no longer anything harmful in the pot.

Elisha Feeds 100 People (c. 844–841 BC)

2 Kings 4:42–44

42 Now a man from Baal Shalisha brought some food for the prophet—twenty loaves of bread made from the firstfruits of the barley harvest, as well as fresh ears of grain. Elisha said, “Set it before the people so they may eat.”

43 But his attendant said, “How can I feed a hundred men with this?” He replied, “Set it before the people so they may eat, for this is what the LORD says, ‘They will eat and have some left over.’”

44 So he set it before them; they ate and had some left over, just as the LORD predicted.

Elisha Heals Naaman (c. 844–841 BC)

2 Kings 5

Naaman’s Disease

1 Now Naaman, the commander of the king of Syria’s army, was esteemed and respected by his master, for through him the LORD had given Syria military victories. But this great warrior had a skin disease [*tsara*; leprosy].

2 Raiding parties went out from Syria and took captive from the land of Israel a young girl, who became a servant to Naaman’s wife.

3 She told her mistress, “If only my master were in the presence of the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his skin disease.”

4 Naaman went and told his master what the girl from the land of Israel had said.

5 The king of Syria said, “Go! I will send a letter to the king of Israel.” So Naaman went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten suits of clothes.

6 He brought the letter to king of Israel. It read: “This is a letter of introduction for my servant Naaman, whom I have sent to be cured of his skin disease.”

7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God? Can I kill or restore life? Why does he ask me to cure a man of his skin disease? Certainly you must see that he is looking for an excuse to fight me!”

8 When Elisha the prophet heard that the king had torn his clothes, he sent this message to the king, “Why did you tear your clothes? Send him to me so he may know there is a prophet in Israel.”

The Jordan River

9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood in the doorway of Elisha’s house.

10 Elisha sent out a messenger who told him, “Go and wash seven times in the Jordan; your skin will be restored and you will be healed.”

11 Naaman went away angry. He said, “Look, I thought for sure he would come out, stand there, invoke the name of the LORD his

God, wave his hand over the area, and cure the skin disease.

12 The rivers of Damascus, the Abana and Pharpar, are better than any of the waters of Israel! Could I not wash in them and be healed?" So he turned around and went away angry.

13 His servants approached and said to him, "O master, if the prophet had told you to do some difficult task, you would have been willing to do it. It seems you should be happy that he simply said, "Wash and you will be healed."

14 So he went down and dipped in the Jordan seven times, as the prophet had instructed. His skin became as smooth as a young child's and he was healed.

Elisha Will Not Accept Naaman's Gifts

15 He and his entire entourage returned to the prophet. Naaman came and stood before him. He said, "For sure I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel! Now, please accept a gift from your servant."

16 But Elisha replied, "As certainly as the LORD lives (whom I serve), I will take nothing from you." Naaman insisted that he take it, but he refused.

17 Naaman said, "If not, then please give your servant a load of dirt, enough for a pair of mules to carry, for your servant will never again offer a burnt offering or sacrifice to a god other than the LORD.

18 May the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to worship, and he leans on my arm and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this."

19a Elisha said to him, "Go in peace."

Gehazi's Greed

19b When he had gone a short distance,

20 Gehazi, the prophet Elisha's servant, thought, "Look, my master did not accept what this Syrian Naaman offered him. As certainly as the LORD lives, I will run after him and accept something from him."

21 So Gehazi ran after Naaman. When Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from his chariot to meet him and asked, "Is everything all right?"

22 He answered, "Everything is fine. My master sent me with this message, 'Look, two servants of the prophets just arrived from the Ephraimite hill country. Please give them a talent of silver and two suits of clothes.'"

23 Naaman said, "Please accept two talents of silver. He insisted, and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, along with two suits of clothes. He gave them to two of his servants and they carried them for Gehazi.

24 When he arrived at the hill, he took them from the servants and put them in the house. Then he sent the men on their way.

25 When he came and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" He answered, "Your servant hasn't been anywhere."

26 Elisha replied, "I was there in spirit when a man turned and got down from his chariot to meet you. This is not the proper time to accept silver or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, sheep, cattle, and male and female servants.

27 Therefore Naaman's skin disease will afflict you and your descendants forever!" When Gehazi went out from his presence, his skin was as white as snow.

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Chronological Notes

1) The date of Obadiah.¹

A) Since we do not know who the author of Obadiah was (there are many Obadiah's mentioned in Scripture²), it is difficult to date this prophecy. Archer remarked, "This shortest book in the Old Testament, consisting of only twenty-one verses, bears the distinction of being the most difficult of all the prophecies to date."³ There are three clues concerning when Obadiah was written:

¹ Most of this material is sourced from Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Obadiah, 2012 Edition" and Allan P. Brown, "Introduction to Obadiah."

² Tradition connects this Obadiah to the Obadiah who protected God's prophets during the reign of Ahab.

³ Gleason L. Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 299.

B) Internal references to historical events.

- (1) Obadiah referred to a time in the apparently recent past when the Edomites gloated over a successful invasion of Jerusalem (1:10–14, esp. v. 11). There are several occasions mentioned in Kings and Chronicles in which Judah was defeated and Jerusalem invaded:⁴
- (a) Shishak’s invasion during Rehoboam’s reign (927t BC; 1 Kgs 14:25–28; 2 Chr 12:2–12).
 - (b) Philistine/Arab invasion during Jehoram’s reign (c. 845 BC; 2 Chr 21:16–17; 22:1).
 - (c) Jehoash’s [Israel] invasion during Amaziah’s reign (c. 790 BC; 2 Kgs 14:13–14; 2 Chr 25:23–24).
 - (d) Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion during Jehoiakim’s reign (609t–598t BC; 2 Kgs 24:1–4; 2 Chr 36:6–7).
 - (e) Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion during Jehoiachin’s reign (598t BC; 2 Kgs 24:10–16; 2 Chr 36:10).
 - (f) Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion during Zedekiah’s reign (9 Tammuz, 587 BC; 2 Kgs 25:3–7; 2 Chr 36:15–20).
- (2) Of these invasions, the two that best fit the descriptions in Obadiah are the Philistine/Arab invasion during Jehoram’s reign (c. 845 BC) and the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar at the end of Zedekiah’s reign (587 BC). Currently most scholars favor a date of 587 BC,⁵ but the 845 BC date also has many adherents.⁶
- (a) Arguments for the Early Date (c. 845 BC).⁷
 - (i) Edom had revolted during the reign of Jehoram and was a bitter antagonist of Judah at this time (2 Kgs 8:20–22; 2 Chr 21 :8–20).
 - (ii) There is no mention in Obadiah of the deportation of the entire population which was part of the Babylonian invasion of 587 BC.
 - (iii) The captives were not taken to Babylon as in 587, but to Phoenicia and the West (Obad 1:20).
 - (iv) All the later prophets who speak of the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity mention the Chaldeans, often including the name of Nebuchadnezzar himself, whereas Obadiah leaves the enemy unidentified.
 - (v) No reference is made to the total destruction of the city and temple which took place in 587. Verse 13, “Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity; do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity” (ESV) is hardly appropriate if Jerusalem were already a desolate heap of ruins, as the 587 date would imply.
 - (b) Arguments for the Late Date (587 BC).⁸
 - (i) During Nebuchadnezzar’s invasions, the city suffered seizure of its “wealth” and wholesale deportation of its

⁴ I am excluding the Edomite invasion of Judah during Ahaz’s reign (732t–716t BC; 2 Chr 28:16–18) since no mention is made of Jerusalem.

⁵ E.g., Watts, pp. 8–9, 19, 27, 54; Allen, pp. 129–33; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, pp. 403–4, 416; Thomas J. Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, p. 340–42; Billy K. Smith, “Obadiah,” in *Amos, Obadiah, Jonah*, p. 172; David W. Baker, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 23; Carl E. Armerding, “Obadiah,” in *Daniel–Minor Prophets*, vol. 7 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p. 337; Frank E. Gaebelien, *Four Minor Prophets [Obadiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, and Haggai]: Their Message for Today*, pp. 13, 28; G. Herbert Livingston, “Obadiah,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 839; Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 898, 902; John Bright, *A History of Israel*, pp. 356, 417; Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “A Theology of the Minor Prophets,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 418; idem, *Handbook on the Prophets*, p. 403; *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 939; and Waltke, p. 845.

⁶ E.g., Keil, 1:341–49; Walter L. Baker, “Obadiah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 1454; Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, p. 136; Archer, pp. 299–303; Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 262–64; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Israel: A History of Old Testament Israel*, p. 382; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, p. 186; Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 277; Charles H. Dyer, in *The Old Testament Explorer*, pp. 765–66; and Warren W. Wiersbe, “Obadiah,” in *The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets*, p. 371. See especially Jeffrey Niehaus, “Obadiah,” in *The Minor Prophets*, pp. 496–502.

⁷ Cf. Freeman and Archer.

⁸ Cf. Armerding and Allen.

population (2 Kgs 24:13–16; 25:4–17; 2 Chr 36:18, 20).

- (ii) In 587 the city was virtually burned to the ground, including the temple (2 Kgs 25:9, 10; 2 Chr 36:19), and many of its inhabitants were massacred (2 Kgs 25:8–21; 2 Chr 36:17; cf. Jer 6:1–9:22; Ezek 4:1–7:27). There is specific reference to unsuccessful “fugitives” in the account of the king’s escape with his retinue (2 Kgs 25:4–5).
- (iii) Of particular significance are the accounts of Edom’s conduct at this time. There is evidence for its participation as an ally in a coalition of Palestinian states against Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27:3; 40:11); yet it was later accused of taking vengeance on Judah (Ezek 25:12), and of delivering the Israelites “over to the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time their punishment reached its climax” (Ezek 35:5–6; cf. Lam 1:17).
- (iv) Edom was equally guilty at this time of rejoicing in Jerusalem’s destruction (Ps 137:7; Lam 2:15–17; 4:21; Ezek 35:11–15; 36:2–6); and it is therefore at this time that the prophetic announcements of Edom’s annihilation reached a climax (Jer 9:26; 25:21; Lam 4:21–22; Ezek 25:13; 32:29; 35:3–4; 7–9, 11, 14–15; 36:7). Specific correlations include numerous points of contact in Jeremiah 49:7–22 and in Ezekiel 35–36.

C) The book’s placement in the Hebrew canon.

- (1) The Jews put all 12 of the Minor Prophets on one scroll for convenience sake and to keep them from getting lost. The order in which they appear in the Hebrew Bible is basically chronological, and this order continued in later translations of the Old Testament, including English translations. This would lead us to conclude that the ancient Jews regarded Obadiah as one of the earlier prophetic books.
- (2) The order is not completely chronological. Freeman comments, “In the arrangement of The Twelve in the Hebrew Bible the chronological principle which seems to have determined the over-all order was as follows: (1) the prophets of the Assyrian period were placed first (Hosea to Nahum); (2) then followed those of the Babylonian period (Habakkuk and Zephaniah); (3) the series closed with the three prophets of the Persian period after the exile (Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi).”⁹

D) Possible quotations/allusions to the writings of other OT prophets.

- (1) There are similarities between Obadiah 1:1–6 and Jeremiah 49:9 and 14–17 and between Obadiah 1:10–18 and Joel 1:15; 2:1, 32; 3:3–4, 17, and 19.¹⁰ There are also similarities between Obadiah 1:9–10, 14, 18, and 19 and Amos 1:2, 6, 11–12, and 9:13. However, in all these instances it is really impossible to determine if Obadiah referred to the other prophets, if they referred to Obadiah, if they all depended on another common source, or if the Holy Spirit simply led each prophet independently to express himself in similar terms.

E) At this time I personally favor an early date of c. 845 BC and so Obadiah will be placed in today’s reading.

⁹ Freeman, 135. See also Greg Goswell, “The Order of the Books in the Hebrew Bible,” *JETS* 51:4 (Dec 2008): 673–88.

¹⁰ For a defense of the priority of Obadiah to Jeremiah, see Niehaus, 501.