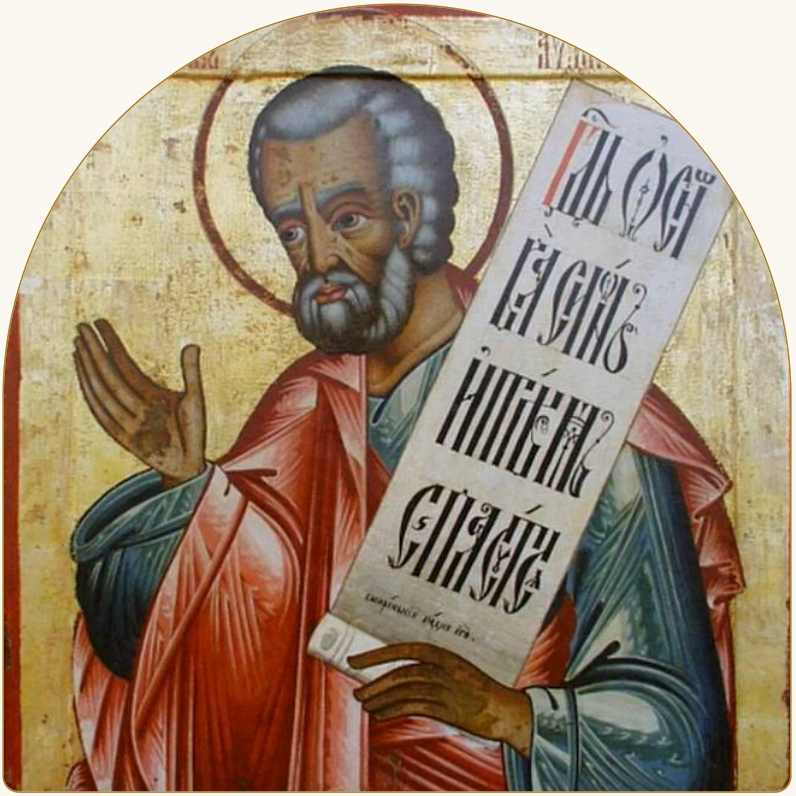


BOOKLET TO PRINT

Saint Obadiah the Prophet

Life, prayer and novena

Feast day: November 19

IN BRIEF

Saint Obadiah the Prophet

Fourth of the twelve minor prophets of the Bible, author of the shortest book of the Old Testament.

Feast day	November 19
Era	5th century BC

In this booklet

Life

Prayer to Saint Obadiah for Reconciliation

Novena to Saint Obadiah the Prophet

Credits and sources

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LIFE

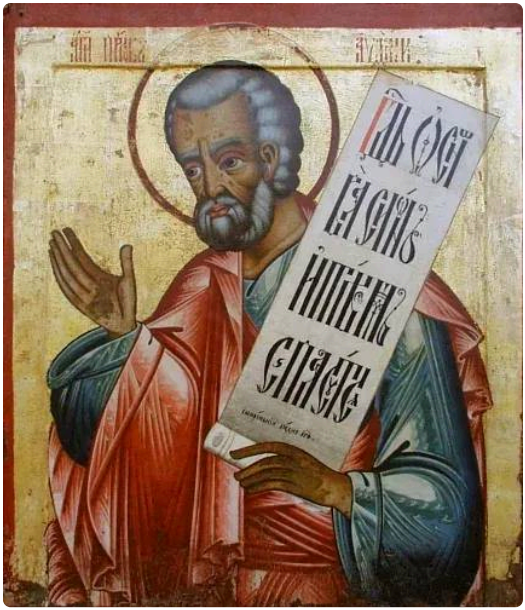
Saint Obadiah the Prophet

Saint Obadiah (called Abdias in Latin and French tradition) is the fourth of the twelve minor prophets of the Bible and the traditional author of the book that bears his name. It is the shortest book of the whole Old Testament: a single chapter of twenty-one verses. In it he announces the downfall of Edom, the neighboring people and "brother" of Israel, who rejoiced at the ruin of Jerusalem. The Church commemorates him on November 19.

Who was Saint Obadiah?

His name, *Ovadyah* in Hebrew, means "servant of God" or "one who worships the Lord." The prophet says almost nothing about himself: not his family, not his town, not the date of his preaching. The book opens simply with the words "The vision of Obadiah."

The content of his oracle suggests that he lived, like the prophet Jeremiah, at the time when Jerusalem and the First Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, around 587 BC. Some passages of the book remain hard to place, however, and scholars do not all agree on its date. What is certain is that his voice belongs to a people in mourning, crying out to God after the loss of its city.



The prophet Obadiah, eighteenth-century Russian icon.

Key dates of Obadiah's time

No date of his life is known. His book is best understood in the light of these events:

- **597 BC**: First capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
- **587 BC**: Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple; part of the people is taken into exile in Babylon.
- **After 587 BC**: The most likely period of Obadiah's oracle against Edom.

An oracle against a brother

According to the Bible, the Edomites descended from Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. Their kingdom, southeast of the Dead Sea, was therefore a brother people of Israel. This is what makes their behavior so serious in the prophet's

eyes. On the day of disaster, Edom did not merely watch from a distance: it rejoiced, looted, and handed over those who tried to flee.

Obadiah reproaches Edom for this hardness toward his brother. He announces that its pride, the pride of a people entrenched in its mountains and rock fortresses, will not protect it. The Lord brings down those who think themselves out of reach.

"As you have done, it shall be done to you"

The heart of the book fits into one sentence: "As you have done, it shall be done to you" (Obadiah 15). The prophet then widens his gaze to the "day of the Lord" over all the nations. He closes with a promise: saviors will go up to Mount Zion, "and the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (Obadiah 21). The last word of the smallest prophetic book is a word of hope.

Obadiah in tradition

A tradition reported in the Talmud and taken up by Christian writers identifies the prophet with another Obadiah in the Bible: the steward of King Ahab's palace. In the days of the prophet Elijah, when Queen Jezebel was persecuting the prophets of the Lord, this Obadiah hid a hundred prophets in caves and fed them with bread and water (1 Kings 18:3-4).

This identification is not historical: the two men seem to be separated by nearly three centuries. It does say something, though, about how believers have read this name: that of a faithful servant in the midst of a hostile power.

Another Jewish tradition makes Obadiah a convert from Edom, and therefore the best placed to speak to his own people. Here too, this is a pious reading, not an established fact.



The mountains of Edom, in present-day Jordan.

Why is Saint Obadiah honored?

Obadiah has no traditional patronage. He is honored as one of the prophets through whom God spoke to his people, and his book is part of the Scriptures read by Jews and Christians alike. The Roman Martyrology commemorates him on November 19. For Catholics, he belongs to the long line of prophets who prepared the coming of Christ by calling Israel to justice and hope.

What his holiness teaches us

The Book of Obadiah is harsh, and it must be read in its context: that of a humiliated people crying out to God after the ruin of its city. Yet it raises a question that runs through the centuries: what do we do with our brother's misfortune?

For the prophet, gloating over another's fall, indifference, or profiting from his distress are faults that God does not forget. Christians hear in this an echo of the parable of the Good Samaritan and of the Golden Rule of the Gospel: "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Obadiah is also a witness that God has the last word over history, even when everything seems lost.

To pray with him, see the prayer to Saint Obadiah and the novena to Saint Obadiah, prayed from November 10 to 18.

Symbols and how to recognize Saint Obadiah in art

- **A scroll**, like the other prophets, sometimes bearing the opening words of his book.
- **The features of an old man with a beard**, as in the Russian icons of the prophets.
- **A dream or vision**: medieval illuminations show God appearing to the sleeping prophet, illustrating the first words of his book, "The vision of Obadiah."

Where to pray to Saint Obadiah

No shrine or relic of the prophet is widely known today. The simplest way to pray with him is to read his book: twenty-one verses that can be read in a few minutes, ideally around his commemoration on November 19. You can also pray for peace between neighboring peoples in the region of ancient Edom, in present-day Jordan, and in the Holy Land.

PRAYER

Prayer to Saint Obadiah for Reconciliation

The prophet Obadiah left no prayer of his own, but his short book contains words that can be prayed today: a warning against pride and indifference, and a promise that the kingdom belongs to God. You will find two verses below to meditate on, followed by an original prayer to Saint Obadiah for reconciliation and for those who suffer while others look away.

Words from the Book of Obadiah to meditate on

> *"You should not have gloated over your brother on the day of his misfortune."*

Source: Book of Obadiah, verse 12 (Saintspedia translation). A word against the secret joy we can feel at the failure of others.

> *"Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's."*

Source: Book of Obadiah, verse 21 (Saintspedia translation), the last verse of the shortest book of the Old Testament.

Prayer to Saint Obadiah for reconciliation

Saint Obadiah, servant of God, you who saw a brother people rejoice at the ruin of Jerusalem, keep my heart from gloating over the misfortune of others.

You who denounced the pride of those who thought themselves safe in their mountains, free me from the illusion that I am out of reach, and teach me humility before God and before my neighbor.

Pray for families divided by old quarrels, for brothers and sisters who no longer speak to each other, and for neighboring peoples who cannot live in peace. May they find the path of forgiveness and justice.

Pray for refugees and for all who flee war, that they may find open doors and not closed borders. I entrust to you my intention: (name it in silence).

Prophet of hope, help me to believe, even in the darkest hour, that the last word belongs to God and that the kingdom is the Lord's. Amen.

This prayer is an original text by Saintspedia, free to use for personal and community prayer.

When to pray this prayer

The Church commemorates the prophet Obadiah on November 19, close to the end of the liturgical year, when the readings turn toward the coming of the Kingdom. You can also pray with him:

- when a conflict divides your family or your community;
- when you are tempted to rejoice at the failure of someone who hurt you;
- for refugees and for the victims of wars between neighboring peoples;
- when everything seems lost and you need to remember that God has the last word.

For a longer time of prayer, follow the novena to Saint Obadiah, and read the life of Saint Obadiah.

NOVENA

Novena to Saint Obadiah the Prophet

This novena is an original composition by Saintspedia, built on the short Book of Obadiah. It is not an official liturgical text. To finish it on the eve of his commemoration, begin it on November 10 and pray the last day on November 18, so that you reach November 19 with him. Because Obadiah speaks of brothers turned against each other, this novena can also be prayed at any time for a reconciliation.

How to pray this novena

Each day, entrust your intention to God, read the meditation and, if you can, the verses of the Book of Obadiah it refers to. Then say the prayer of the day and an Our Father. The small act suggested for the day helps you carry the prayer into your life. The whole book is only twenty-one verses long, so you can read it every day of the novena. If you pray in a group, one person can read the verses aloud and everyone can share in silence the name of a person or a people to pray for.

You may begin each day with this opening prayer: "Lord, through the intercession of the prophet Obadiah, your servant, I bring you this intention. Free me from pride and indifference, and teach me to love my brother. Amen."

Day 1: A servant of God

Obadiah's name means "servant of God." We know almost nothing else about him. His life disappears behind the word he carried, and that is enough.

Prayer: Lord, make me your servant. May my life point to you rather than to myself. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Do one good thing without telling anyone about it.

Day 2: The vision

The book begins with "The vision of Obadiah" (verse 1). Before speaking, the prophet listens and looks at the world with God's eyes.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to see the people and events of this day as you see them. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Take ten minutes of silence before reading the news or checking your phone.

Day 3: The pride of the heights

Edom thought itself safe in its rocky heights: "Who will bring me down to the ground?" (verses 3-4). Pride makes us believe we are out of reach.

Prayer: Lord, bring down in me everything that thinks it has no need of you or of others. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Ask someone for help or advice that you would normally be too proud to ask for.

Day 4: Your brother Jacob

The prophet reproaches Edom for its violence against "your brother Jacob" (verse 10). The fault is all the greater because it wounds a brother.

Prayer: Lord, heal the wounds in my family and among those closest to me. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Pray by name for a family member with whom relations are difficult.

Day 5: Standing aloof

"On the day that you stood aloof" (verse 11): Edom's first fault was to watch and do nothing. Indifference is already a choice.

Prayer: Lord, do not let me look away from those who suffer near me. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Contact someone who is going through a hard time and whom you have been avoiding.

Day 6: Not gloating

"You should not have gloated over your brother on the day of his misfortune" (verse 12). The prophet names a secret sin: the joy we feel at another's fall.

Prayer: Lord, purify my heart of all bitterness and of all joy at the misfortune of others. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Refuse to take part in gossip or mockery about someone.

Day 7: At the crossroads

Edom stood at the crossroads to cut off those who fled (verse 14). Today, too, many people flee war and violence and find doors closed.

Prayer: Lord, protect refugees and all who flee. Make me a person who welcomes rather than a person who closes the way. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Learn about or support a work that helps refugees or migrants.

Day 8: As you have done

"As you have done, it shall be done to you" (verse 15). The Gospel turns this warning into a call: do to others what you would want them to do to you.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to treat others as I would like to be treated, and to forgive as you forgive me. Saint Obadiah, pray for us.

Today: Make an examination of conscience and, if you can, go to confession.

Day 9: The kingdom shall be the Lord's

The smallest book of the prophets ends with hope: "The kingdom shall be the Lord's" (verse 21). Whatever happens, history belongs to God.

Prayer: Lord, I place in your hands the intention of this novena. Through the intercession of Saint Obadiah, give me unshakable hope in your kingdom. Amen.

Today: Pray slowly the words "Thy kingdom come" in the Our Father, thinking of a situation that seems hopeless.

Closing prayer

Saint Obadiah, servant of God and prophet of the day of the Lord, at the end of these nine days I entrust to you the intention I have placed before you. Pray for divided families and for peoples at war, for refugees and for all who are left alone in their distress. Obtain for us a humble heart, free of pride and indifference, and a firm hope that the kingdom belongs to the Lord. Amen.

To go further, read the life of Saint Obadiah and pray the prayer to Saint Obadiah.

CREDITS

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