

Obadiah Chose God

(Lesser Known Characters)

Աբդիա՝ Ընտրեց ԶԱստուած

(Ոչ Հանրածանօթ Նկարագիրներ)

1 Kings 18:1-19

We live in a world where it is commonly **believed that the ends justify the means.** **Machiavelli's ideology** is not too far from our world. For example, you can cheat in your taxes so that you can give the money to the church. (Really? please return that to the "Caesar"). Israel faced a situation when they needed to choose their God. "Make up your mind, people." How true is this today for us.

Have you been in a situation when you realized that you needed to act right now and do the right thing? And sometimes doing the right thing turned out to be costly.

Let us study today's story and the background:

The land of Israel was going through a severe drought. The Israelites were being punished for their disobedience to Yahweh.

Now Elijah ... said to Ahab, "**As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word**" (1 King 17:1 ESV).

Instead of learning from this punishment and turning to God, they start seeking new gods to provide for their needs. They thought, "It is a drought, so let us turn to the gods of storm and rain."

-Ahab was the king of the Northern Kingdom. He was a wicked king and disloyal to Yahweh. Moreover, he married Jezebel from Lebanon.

-Jezebel (from Sidon, Lebanon) was a worshiper of **Baal (a male god, the god of fertility) and Asherah (a female god, the goddess of rain and storm)** Jezebel brought with her into the palace **the prophets of Baal and Asherah.** Ahab, in order to please his beloved wife, even built a house and an alter for Baal. These people never learn!

Today I would like to introduce you another not well-known character from the Bible **called Obadiah**. This is not the prophet Obadiah as in the book of the Minor Prophets. **This is the servant of King Ahab.**

Who is Obadiah?

His name means: "servant of God" or "worshiper of Yahweh".

We read about him:

Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, (1 King 18:3b ESV)

-Obadiah was the chief of staff in the palace (high position)

In Hebrew it literally means: who was over [*in charge of*] the house/palace',

And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (1 King 18:3a ESV)

-Obadiah was a believer of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, (18:1)

Saying to Elijah: **I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. (18:12)**

Can you see the dilemma that this man was facing? This man is living in two worlds. On the one hand, he is serving King Ahab (and his wife Jezebel) who do not worship Yahweh, the God of Israel. On the other hand, he is man of God, devoted to Yahweh, and he finds out the queen's plan to kill the prophets of God. What should he do? Loyalty to king, who is against God, or loyalty to his God, Yahweh.

-Obadiah was a wise man.

I believe this wisdom is from God (like Abigail, last Sunday).

Obadiah noticed how the wicked Jezebel wanted to get rid of God's prophets.

Obadiah has a strategy.

-First he disobeys the command and hides one hundred prophets.

-Next he uses different caves to hide them in 2 groups of fifty each. (Don't put all your eggs in one basket). By the way, "There are more than two thousand caves in the limestone Carmel range dating from palaeolithic times and later" (Tyndale Commentary).

-Obadiah fed them by taking food and water to them. I mean he needed a lot of food and water for two groups of fifty men.

-Obadiah did not ignore his king Ahab.

Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals.”⁶ So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself. (1King 18:5,6 ESV)

Notice, he obeys his king to find grass and save horses and mules from the famine. Yet, he picks and chooses where to obey and where to disobey his boss. I see that his priorities are in order. Also he is serving the king without creating unnecessary tensions. That is wisdom from above.

- Obadiah is an ordinary man.

While he was obeying the command of his king, on his journey he sees Elijah. Elijah received a new word from God:

After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.”² So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. (1 King 18:1,2a ESV)

For three years, Elijah had been hiding and was fed by God. God told him it is time to go and face Ahab. Time to go and challenge this wicked king that rain is on its way. While Obadiah was obeying the order of King Ahab, he met Elijah on his way. The discussion between them reveals more about Obadiah. It **reveals he is an ordinary human**. Elijah asks Obadiah to be his messenger telling Ahab to come and see the prophet Elijah. Obadiah did not like this command. He was afraid that king would kill him because Elijah will not be found. Elijah made sure that he would not disappear and he would surely meet Ahab. Obadiah did his part. He did inform the king where Elijah was, and the king met prophet Elijah.

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?”¹⁸ And he answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. (1 King 18:17-18 ESV)

Rest of the story is very important. Elijah challenges Ahab and Jezebel’s gods and please read the Word of God to see how it ends.

How does this story apply to us?

a. Stop being double minded; choose your God

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word (1 King 18:21 ESV)

Israel had to choose between two gods:

Yahweh, the Lord, the “I AM”, the One who liberated them from Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land, the One who promised them to protect them, the One who made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

or

the god of the Canaanites, Baal, the god of rain and fertility. They were ready to compromise their faith in order to get rain for their dry lands.

Obadiah was living in two worlds. In the two worlds, he stayed faithful to God. Obadiah chose God. Also there is consistency in his faith (not double mindedness). He says **I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. (18:12)** From his young days he consistently followed the Lord. How often we forget who God is? How often we can fall in the trap of finding “cheap” gods thinking they will provide our needs; in reality, they are false gods. How often we forget the promises of God who is faithful in keeping His word. I love Elijah’s questions: how long you will limp between two different opinions? (vs. 21)

b. God chose you to be His ambassador.

Obadiah serves the Lord from the inside the palace while Elijah serves the Lord from the outside. *God has His faithful servants everywhere.* This is very important for me to articulate to you, to my congregation. **Not all of us are called to full time ministry. But all of us are called to be ambassadors of Christ all the time,** at any location, **“inside and outside.”**

Where is your location?

C. We need to be bold and take risks to defend our faith:

One can think Ahab and his followers would have learned their lesson after 3 ½ years of drought. Please notice the difference between Ahab and Obadiah.

Ahab, concerned only for the economy, wants to save the mules and horses (vs. 5), while Obadiah is saving the prophets, risking his life for them.

To be bold and take the risk when danger comes concerning our faith. Obadiah took the risk and hid 100 prophets of God. **He chose God.**

Illustration: I was looking to AMAA monthly magazine and I saw in the back an interesting photo. The Gedik Pacha First Armenian Evangelical church was built in one night (August 27, 1895). Unable to obtain a building permit, the church members constructed their humble building overnight, thus complying with a law that said anything built in one night did not require a permit. They chose God.

D. You may be alone in your walk with the Lord

I don't know if Obadiah had a support group. He was alone.

I don't know if Elijah had support group. But I find them standing alone. We should be careful, not always to majority are right.

Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.” (1 King 18: 22)

I love this story in the bible, where Joshua challenged the Israelite to chose whom they should serve:

“And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15 ESV)

How about us here in the US where no one is threatening our faith. Can we stay bold and firm in our faith when we are a minority in our society? Can we witness Jesus Christ our Lord without fear?

I know, I chose God. I like to see my congregation chose God.

1, <https://marathonmeh.com/meh-keflezigih/>