

# Ezra 8:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males.

## Analysis

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**Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males.** The Joab family brought 218 males—specific number suggesting careful record-keeping. Obadiah means 'servant of Yahweh' or 'worshiper of Yahweh,' combining ebed (servant) with Yah (abbreviated divine name). This name confesses both submission (servant) and devotion (worshiper), capturing proper covenant relationship. Jehiel means 'God lives,' a confession particularly meaningful for exiles who might question whether God abandoned them during Babylon's seventy-year dominance.

The precise count—218, not rounded to 200 or 220—indicates meticulous census-taking. This precision served practical purposes (resource allocation, settlement planning) and theological ones (demonstrating that each person mattered individually to God and community). Every male counted wasn't generic 'population' but named covenant member with specific identity and role.

Obadiah's name—'servant of Yahweh'—defines proper human posture before God. Not autonomous agents or divine equals, but servants whose highest calling is worshiping and obeying the living God. This servanthood isn't demeaning slavery but dignified purpose: created beings fulfilling their design by serving their Creator.

## Historical Context

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The Joab family (named after David's military commander?) sent 2,818 with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:6, though textual variants exist). The 218 males with Ezra represented continued commitment eighty years later. The precision of genealogical records indicates that scribes maintained careful documentation throughout exile. Archaeological discoveries of Neo-Babylonian business documents show Jews engaged in commerce, agriculture, and skilled trades—success that made return costly.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does Obadiah's name ('servant of Yahweh') challenge contemporary Christianity's emphasis on personal fulfillment over faithful service?
2. What does meticulous counting (218 males, not rounded) teach about God's concern for individuals, not just aggregate numbers?

## Interlinear Text

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וְעַמְּךָ וְיִחְיָא לְבָנֶךָ עֲבָדֵךָ הַיּוֹאָב בְּנֵי  
Of the sons of Joab Obadiah Of the sons of Jehiel H5973  
H1121 H3097 H5662 H1121 H3171

מֵאַת מִן הַשְׁמִינִי עָשָׂר זָהָר מְזָכְרִים:  
and with him two hundred and eighteen males  
H3967 H8083 H6240 H2145

