

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

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

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

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

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

בְּנֵי	יֹאבֵד ב	עֹבַדְיָה	בְּנֵי	יְחִיָּאל ל	וְעַמּוּ
Of the sons	of Joab	Obadiah	Of the sons	of Jehiel	
H1121	H3097	H5662	H1121	H3171	H5973
וּמֵאִתּוֹ	וְשִׁמְנֵה	עָשָׂר	הַזְּכָרִים:		
and with him two hundred	and eighteen		males		
H3967	H8083	H6240	H2145		

