

Nehemiah Chapter 3

Verses 3:1 – 7:3: A detailed account of rebuilding the wall is given.

Nehemiah 3:1 "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel."

“Eliashib the High-Priest”: The grandson of Jeshua the High-Priest in Zerubbabel’s era. He was the High-Priest (compare 12:10; Ezra 10:6), and in later years caused much trouble for Nehemiah by allowing alliances with the Samaritans (13:4).

The “sheep gate” was in the northeast corner, close by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2). Nehemiah lists in this chapter eight different gates and their attached sections of wall, together with the men who repaired them, beginning at the northeast corner of the city and moving in a counterclockwise direction.

The “tower of Meah” was the “Tower of the Hundred” right next to the sheep gate; the “tower of Hananeel” was a little further west. After these buildings were finished they were “sanctified”, or “consecrated” to the Lord. Many different groups were involved in the work. Some labored as family units, others by towns, crafts (e.g., the goldsmiths and the apothecary of verse 8), trades (the merchants, verse 31-32), and callings (the priests, verses 1, 21-22, 28; Levites, verse 17); temple servants or “Nethinim” (verse 26); and district officers (verses 9, 12, 15-17). One man even mobilized his daughters (verse 12).

The sheep gate seemed to be a gate in the eastern wall. It would have been appropriate for the High-Priest and priests to work on this wall. Not everyone wanted the wall built. Nehemiah would give credit to those who did help with the re-building. Probably the High-Priest was an over-seer of the work, rather than doing the actual work. It is interesting that as soon as the gate was finished, they sanctified it. They worked on the gate and the wall on the eastern side. This gate was called the sheep gate because it was the gate the sheep were brought through, before sacrificing them at the temple.

Nehemiah 3:2 "And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri."

The posterity of those that formerly inhabited that city; these began where Eliashib and the priests ended, and went on from thence.

"And next to them": Or rather "to him", the High-Priest.

"Builded Zaccur the son of Imri": Who probably was the chief of the men of Jericho.

These were men assigned to the northeast corner of the wall. Very little else is known of Zaccur, or Imri.

Nehemiah 3:3 "But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who [also] laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof."

"Fish gate": So named because merchants sold fish on the northern side of Jerusalem. Men of Tyre and other coastal towns routinely brought fish to sell (compare 12:39; 13:16). It was located in the northern section of the wall, just west of the tower of Hananeel.

The fish gate was in the northern wall. It was very near the gate that is called today, the Damascus gate. The fish were brought in this gate into Jerusalem from the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. They not only made the gate, but hung it for use as well. The bars were an extra precaution of locking the gates to keep the enemy out.

Nehemiah 3:4 "And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana."

"Meremoth" is important since he and Malchijah (verse 11), provide links between the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah. (In Ezra 8:33), Meremoth checked in the treasure brought by Ezra from Babylon. (In Ezra 10:31), Malchijah was one of those who submitted to Ezra's purge of mixed marriages.

This appears that these were working on the wall next to the fish gate.

Nehemiah 3:5 "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord."

Tekoa was the hometown of the prophet Amos, located about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. Their territory was on the fringes of civilization, adjacent to the area controlled by Geshem (2:19). It is encouraging to note that the Tekoites built an extra portion (verse 27). The phrase "put not their necks to the work" indicates petty pride rather than half-heartedness. The unbending neck is a standard picture of this stubborn attitude (Exodus 32:9; Psalm 75:5).

"But their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord": One explanation, beyond just the laziness of the rich, is that these nobles had been pledged to Tobiah for personal gain (6:17-19).

These were the people and not their leaders, working on the wall and gates. The working people helped with the building. It seemed the upper class did not try to stop the others from helping. They just did not work themselves.

Nehemiah 3:6 "Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof."

Which some think was so called because it led to the old city Salem. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it is the same with the second or third gate (Zeph. 1:10). According to Vatablus, it was the gate of the old

pool (Isa. 22:11), or rather, perhaps, it was the gate of the old wall Josephus speaks of. The “old gate” was on the northwest corner (compare 12:39).

"They laid the beams thereof (as in Neh. 3:3).

This is possibly speaking of the Damascus gate. This gate appeared to be still standing and was repaired to fit in with the wall. Again, they fixed it where it could be barred and locked in the event they were attacked.

Nehemiah 3:7 "And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river."

Which places were both in the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:25). And one of these men was of the one place, and the other of the other.

"Unto the throne of the governor on this side the river": Where the governor of those parts under the king of Persia had his seat, and now Nehemiah.

It appears that each group of people repaired the wall and gate that led to the town they lived in. Gibeon and Mizpah were north of the city of Jerusalem, so their people repaired the north wall and gate.

Nehemiah 3:8 "Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of [one of] the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall."

Or Tzorephim, which, according to Jarchi, was the name of a family so called from their trade and business.

"Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries": Or confectioners, which also might be the name of a family so called for the same reason.

"And they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall": Which reached from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, which was broken down by Joash, king of Israel. But was rebuilt so strong by Uzziah, king of Judah, that it stood firm to this time. Wherefore these men repaired up to it, but left that as they found it (see 2 Chron. 25:23), and were not careful to repair it, it not needing any repair. “Broad wall”: On the western side of the northern sector (compare 12:38).

Apothecaries made perfume and ointment. The repairs did not seem to be as extensive on this side of the wall. To fortify is to strengthen something that is already there. This possibly means the wall was not as destroyed here, and they just worked on it and made it stronger.

Nehemiah 3:9 "And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem."

That city belonging partly to the tribe of Judah, and partly to the tribe of Benjamin. One part of it was under a governor that was of the tribe of Judah, as this man seems to be; and the other part under one of the tribe of Benjamin (see Neh. 3:12).

These were people who actually lived within the city limits of Jerusalem. It would be of great advantage to them personally to have the wall and gates repaired.

Nehemiah 3:10 "And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah."

Requiring people to build the section of the wall next to their home was convenient; it also heightened their motivation: every household would have a personal stake in the work.

Again, it appears this repair was done near their home. They were wanting to help build the wall to help everyone, but would be personally benefited by protecting their own homes.

Nehemiah 3:11 "Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces."

The fathers of these were heads of families that came out of captivity with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:6).

"Repaired the other piece": Or second piece, below and next to that which Hattush repaired, the last builder mentioned.

"And the tower of the furnaces": Near to which were furnaces for the baking of bread, or of bricks. "The tower of the furnaces" was located at the southwest corner, just north of the valley gate (verse 13).

This seems to be the piece of the wall that was not repaired by those mentioned (in verses 10 and 11).

Nehemiah 3:12 "And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloheh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters."

So called, as Ben Melech says, from his being an enchanter of serpents, or a wise prudent counsellor.

"The ruler of the half part of Jerusalem": Of the other half (see Neh. 3:9).

"He and his daughters": Who were rich widows or heiresses, and employed men to build at their own expense. He seems to have had no sons.

It appears that Rephaiah and Shallum each ruled half of Jerusalem. He possibly had no sons, so his daughters worked with him on the repair.

Nehemiah 3:13 "The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate."

"The valley gate" (see note on 2:13, 15).

The "dung gate" was at the southern tip of the city near the pool of Siloam, as refuse was carted to the valley of Hinnom to be burned (see note on 2:13).

The 1,000 cubits means 1,500 feet. This would be a very large area for repair. They also repaired the valley gate. In this instance, it appears the inhabitants of Zanoah did the work. They were located on the west side of Jerusalem. There were probably a large number of people working on the gate and wall, making it possible for them to repair such a long span.

Nehemiah 3:14 "But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof."

If this was one of the Rechabites, they were forbidden to build houses (Jer. 35:7). But, perhaps, though they might not build private houses for themselves to dwell in, they might be employed in building walls and fortresses for public security. Though it is more probable that this man was not of that family.

"The ruler of part of Beth-haccerem": Or of the tract of Beth-haccerem, a place between Tekoah and Jerusalem (see Jer. 6:1).

"He built it, and set up the doors thereof" (as in Neh. 3:3).

This was a district located close to Tekoah. Again, they built the gate and fixed it to be locked in case of war.

Nehemiah 3:15 "But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David."

Of which (see Nehemiah 2:14).

"Repaired Shallum, the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah": Of a tract, district, town, or city so called. Perhaps that in the tribe of Benjamin (see Neh. 3:7).

"He built it, and covered it; roofed it": Which is not said of any of the other gates, whether because of the fountain at it.

"And set up the doors thereof" etc., (finished it completely).

"And the wall of the pool of Siloah, by the king's garden": Which was formerly without the wall, on the west, but afterwards taken in by Manasseh, who built it (see 2 Chron. 33:14). And from hence the king's garden was watered (see note on 2:14).

"And unto the stairs that go down from the city of David": Zion, which was built on an eminence, from which they went down by steps into the lower city Acra. "The "gate of the fountain" was just north of the southern tip of the city, near the pool of Siloam.

Shallum actually ruled the district around Mizpah. Again, each of them chose a portion of the wall and a gate that was on the side their area was located on. Perhaps it took less trouble to get to the work, since it was nearby. This fountain furnished water for the city in case of a siege. The king's garden had been watered by this fountain. The stairs could be speaking of those that had led to the temple at one time.

Nehemiah 3:16 "After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto [the place] over against the sepulchers of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty."

The "Nehemiah" is one of three people so named, including one of the first to return home with Zerubbabel, nearly a century before (Ezra 2:2).

The "sepulchers of David" is most likely plural to include those of his descendants. (1 Kings 2:10), teaches that David was buried in the city that bore his name, this southern part of the eastern ridge of Jerusalem. His traditional tomb, however, is on the western ridge.

"House of the mighty": This location is probably associated with David's mighty men (compare 2 Sam. 23:8-39).

This is another Nehemiah. "Beth-zur" means house of the rock. It is located between Hebron and Jerusalem. This is one specific area that Nehemiah had wanted to repair, because of the sepulchers.

Nehemiah 3:17 "After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part."

Who was one of them, as he that follows was another.

"Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah": A city of the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:4).

"In his part": Either with the men of that part of Keilah under his jurisdiction, or at the expense of that part of it.

We see from this, that nearly every class of people had a few who helped with the repairs. We can also see that not everyone helped. Again, Keilah here, is not speaking of a city, but of a region.

Nehemiah 3:18 "After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah."

Either the brethren of the two before named particularly, or the Levites their brethren in general, as Jarchi.

"Bavai, the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah": The other half of that place.

Verses 17 and 18 are companions. Bavai ruled one half of the region and Hashabiah the other half.

Nehemiah 3:19 "And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armory at the turning [of the wall]."

Either of another Mizpah, or of the other half of Mizpah (Neh. 3:15).

"Another piece": Or a second piece; one of the two pieces. For another is mentioned in the next verse.

"Over against the going up to the armory, at the turning of the wall": The western wall towards the south, near to which was a place where armor was laid up. Perhaps the same with the tower of David, to which there is an allusion (in SOS 4:4). "The armory": Located on the eastern side of Jerusalem.

We read earlier of the two who ruled one half each of Mizpah. Perhaps this is speaking of the town here, and not the region. The portion of the wall that he repaired was the northwestern angle. It appears in each of these corners, there was a place to easily get fighting gear. This is possibly, what this is speaking of as the armory.

Nehemiah 3:20 "After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning [of the wall] unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest."

Towards and next to that Ezer the last builder mentioned had repaired. And this he did "earnestly", or in anger as the word signifies. Being angry with himself or others that there was any backwardness shown to the work. And therefore, with all haste and eagerness imaginable, attended to it.

"From the turning of the wall": See the preceding verse (3:19).

"Unto the door of the house of Eliashib the High-Priest ": Of whom (see Neh. 3:1). Now either his house was upon the wall, or that part of the wall that was right against the door of his house is here meant.

It appears that Baruch was set aside as having a burning desire to finish the wall, as Nehemiah wanted to finish it. The word "earnestly" is the key to this. This is the second section that he had worked on. The house of the High-Priest had to be near the wall. The High-Priest and the priests

had worked on the eastern wall. The house of the High-Priest was probably on the eastern wall somewhere. "Eliashib" means God will restore.

Nehemiah 3:21 "After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib."

He had done before in another part (Neh. 3:4), but having finished that, he sets his hand a second time to the work.

"From the door of the house of Eliashib, even to the end of the house of Eliashib": The door of his house seems to have been at one end of it, and from that end to the other was a considerable length. He being a great man, the High-Priest, had a large house.

Meremoth was a priest of a family of priests. He worked on the wall that was adjacent to the house of the High-Priest.

Nehemiah 3:22 "And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain."

Either of the plain of Jericho, where, in later times at least, there was a station of the priests. Or of the plain about Jerusalem. Those also assisted in the repairs of the wall.

This is speaking of the priests who settled in the Jordan valley.

Nehemiah 3:23 "After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house."

The last of the priests before mentioned.

"Repaired Benjamin, and Hashub, over against their house": As much of the wall as the length of their house, or houses, were.

"After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, by his house": As far as that reached.

This Azariah was the same one who helped Ezra teach the law. He was a Levite, as were all of the others mentioned in this verse. They had houses near the house of the High-Priest, and they repaired the portion of the wall near their houses.

Nehemiah 3:24 "After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning [of the wall], even unto the corner."

Beginning where Azariah ended.

"Unto the turning of the wall, even unto the corner": The corner where the wall turned from the south to the east.

This is speaking of an area of the wall from the house of Azariah to the corner of the wall. Binnui is believed by some to be the Levite Bavai.

Nehemiah 3:25 "Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning [of the wall], and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that [was] by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh."

Who dwelt there, and so repaired what was right against him.

"And the tower which lieth out from the king's high house": Which might be built for prospect, or his upper house.

"That was by the court of the prison": And we often read in Jeremiah of the court of the prison being in or near the king's house (see Jer. 32:2).

"After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh": Went on from hence with the repair.

The king's house here, is speaking of the old palace of David. Each palace had its own prison. This would have been in the court of the palace.

Nehemiah 3:26 "Moreover the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel, unto [the place] over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out."

"Ophel" means a "Swelling" or "Eminence" and was the beginning of the temple hill. Thus, it was a convenient place for the "temple servants" or "Nethinim". It went up toward the north end of the eastern ridge of Jerusalem. It was also known as Zion, and was the site of the Jebusite stronghold that David captured and made his capital (2 Sam. 5:6-10).

The "water gate" was most likely opposite the Gihon spring, the city's main water supply, along with rainwater cisterns.

We remember that the Nethinim did servile work in the temple. They would have lived close to the wall as well as the priests. Ophel was a ridge in the city of Jerusalem. It actually was located toward the Kidron valley on the edge of town. The water gate was speaking of the gate the water drained away from the temple area. There was a tower on each corner of the wall to help see intruders from a distance before they got to the wall.

Nehemiah 3:27 "After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel."

Having finished what they undertook in another part of the wall (Neh. 3:5), they engage in this part of it. Which shows their great zeal and diligence, when their nobles were so backward to it, and withdrew from it.

"Over against the great tower that lieth out": The same as in the preceding verse (3:26).

"Even unto the wall of Ophel": From right against the great tower unto the wall the Tekoites repaired.

The Tekoites started their repairs at the spot where the Nethinim had stopped. It seemed all of these were spoken of as they took up the repairs, where the other stopped. This was going all around the city wall explaining, as they came to them.

Verses 28-32: The "horse gate" was near the temple on the east. The "gate Miphkad" is a reference to the "inspection gate" or the "muster gate" where the people or men may have been mustered for conscription. It would be near the present golden gate. Jesus may have entered Jerusalem in His triumphal entry through this gate or the east gate (Matt. 21:10). With the "sheep gate" being mentioned at the outset in verse 1, we are brought back to the starting point.

Nehemiah 3:28 "From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house."

So called, either because near it were stables for horses. Or through it horses were led to be watered at the brook of Kidron, to which it was near. Or to be exercised in the valley. Josephus speaks of the "hippie", or horse tower, which might be near it.

"Everyone over against his house": For it seems there was a row of houses in which the priests dwelt. And each of them repaired as much of the wall as was right against his house.

This gate was in the eastern wall, where horses could enter the city. This would have been near the palace for the convenience of seeing David. It appears, that each priest repaired the portion nearest his own house.

Nehemiah 3:29 "After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate."

After the last of the priests, this begun where they ended, and repaired as far as his house reached. And being, perhaps, a person of some note, his house might be a large one.

"After him repaired also Shemaiah, the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate": That is, of the temple. For the gates of the city having been burnt so long, it cannot be thought there should be a keeper of any of them.

Zadok was a priest. Shemaiah was a priest also. His distinction was that he was a keeper of the east gate. They repaired the wall at the location of their own houses.

Nehemiah 3:30 "After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber."

This last man had six sons; but only his youngest son wrought at this work. Which is observed to his great commendation.

"After him repaired Shelemiah the son of Berechiah, over against his chamber": The same as in (Neh. 3:4), who having finished what he engaged in there. Took his part where his chamber was, and repaired over against that.

These were possibly chief men who worked on the wall. These were not the same as the verses we just read, who repaired the wall near their own houses. These seemed not to have a house near the wall.

Nehemiah 3:31 "After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinim, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner."

Or the son of Tzoreph, as some, so called from his business.

"Unto the place of the Nethinim, and of the merchants": He repaired up to the place where these dwelt.

"Over against the gate Miphkad": Where some think was a house of visitation or correction. And others, where the Sanhedrim sat, tried causes, and exercised justice.

"And to the going up of the corner": From the east to the north.

The goldsmith would be a very respected man in the community. He worked on the eastern wall near the corner.

Nehemiah 3:32 "And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants."

"The sheep gate": Having traveled around Jerusalem in a counterclockwise direction, the narrative ends where it began (compare 3:1; 12:39).

"Repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants": Or druggists; which was done at their expense. And so the wall all round, with the gates of it, were rebuilt and repaired, which was all done in fifty two days (Neh. 6:15).

These were not priests, or high government officials. They were just average citizens who were respected, because of their businesses.

Nehemiah Chapter 3 Questions

1. Who built the sheep gate?

2. What portion of the building did the High Priest probably do?
3. Why was the gate called the sheep gate?
4. The men, in verse 2, worked on the _____.
5. Who built the fish gate?
6. Why was it called the fish gate?
7. What were the bars on the gate for?
8. Who, of the Tekoites, did not work on their portion of the gate?
9. Verse 6 is, possibly, speaking of the _____ gate.
10. Each group of people repaired the part of the gate that was nearest their _____.
11. Apothecaries made _____ and _____.
12. What is different about verse 8?
13. Rephaiah ruled the half part of _____.
14. How would some of the people be personally benefited by the repair of the wall?
15. Who ruled the other half of Jerusalem?
16. 1,000 cubits is _____ feet.
17. Who repaired the dung gate?
18. What does "Beth-zur" mean?
19. Who had a burning desire to finish the wall, as Nehemiah had?
20. Who was Meremoth?
21. Who helped Ezra teach the law?
22. Where were the priests' houses located?
23. The king's house, in verse 25, is speaking of what?
24. The Nethinim did _____ work in the temple.
25. The water gate is speaking of what?
26. Who was keeper of the east gate?

27. Who was the goldsmith's son?