

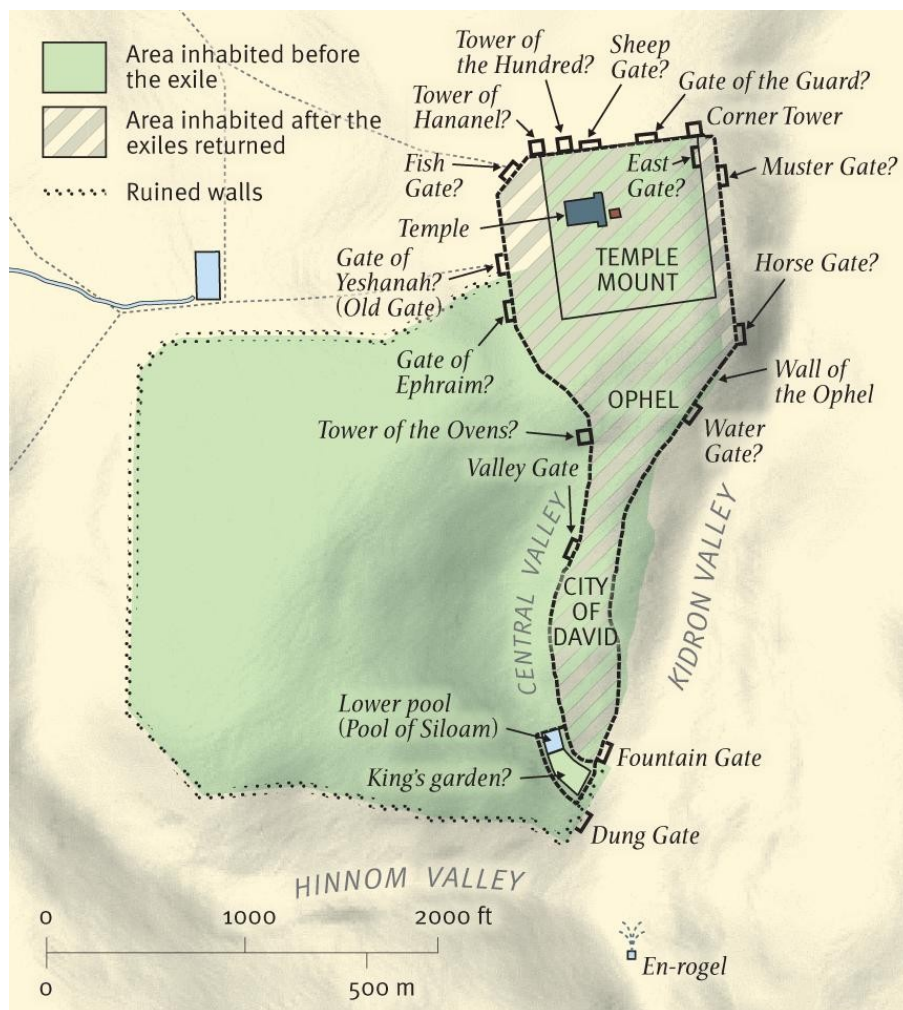
NOON BIBLE STUDY: NEHEMIAH 3&4

NEHEMIAH HAS ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM AND ASSESSED THE CONDITION OF THE CITY, THE WALL AND THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE. HE IS NOW PREPARED TO BEGIN THE WORK OF REBUILDING THE CITY WALL. HE WILL FACE SOME EXTERNAL THREATS BUT NEHEMIAH IS PROVING TO BE JUST THE LEADER BOTH THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD NEEDS FOR THIS TIME. THE PEOPLE WILL BEGIN TO REBUILD THE WALL BUT WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE HOW TO RESPOND WHEN THE ENEMIES TRY AND STOP THE WORK. NEHEMIAH HAS ALREADY CHARGED THE NATION:

"LET US ARISE AND BUILD...THE GOD OF HEAVEN WILL GIVE US SUCCESS; THEREFORE WE HIS SERVANTS WILL ARISE AND BUILD..."
(NEHEMIAH 2:18,20)"

AND NOW THE WORK BEGINS.

NEHEMIAH 3:1-32 - THE WORK BEGINS



THIS IS A GRAND PROJECT THAT INVOLVES NOT ONLY COMMON JEWS IN THE CITY BUT ALSO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS (PRIESTS & LEVITES) AS WELL AS SOME JEWS WHO WERE NOT FROM JERUSALEM SPECIFICALLY. THIS CHAPTER DETAILS THE REPAIRS TO THE WALL AS WELL AS WORK ON THE VARIOUS GATES IN THE WALL AND OTHER STRUCTURES (TOWERS, DOORS & CORNERS).

ESV STUDY BIBLE: "THE BUILDING WORK IS DESCRIBED, & THE WORKERS ARE NAMED, SECTION BY SECTION. THE POINT OF THIS ACCOUNT IS TO SHOW THAT THE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE RESPONDED TO NEHEMIAH'S CHALLENGE & BELIEVED THAT GOD WOULD GIVE THEM SUCCESS. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK DEMONSTRATES THE CONCERTED EFFORT OF THE PEOPLE."

V. 5 - TEKAITES - A GROUP OF PEOPLE FROM TEKOA, AN AREA SOUTH OF JERUSALEM JOINED IN TO HELP REBUILD THE WALL. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS FROM THIS NOTE IN VERSE 5 THAT WHILE THERE WERE SOME MEN WHO WERE SUPPORTIVE OF THE PROJECT, THEIR LEADERSHIP AT HOME WAS NOT SUPPORTIVE.

V. 10, 23-25, 28-29 - IN FRONT OF AND BESIDE THEIR HOUSE - THIS VERSE GIVES US A POSSIBLE HINT TO HOW SOME OF THE WORK WAS DISTRIBUTED AMONGST THE WORKERS. THESE MEN WERE ASSIGNED TO FIX THE PORTION OF THE WALL THAT WAS CLOSEST TO THEIR OWN HOME.

JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF NEHEMIAH (C. 444–420? B.C.)

Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Upon their return from exile in 536 B.C., the Jews, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, first restored the altar and then laid the foundation of the temple. Twenty years later, in 516 B.C., the temple was rebuilt. This time period is referred to as the Second Temple period. Later on, and under very difficult circumstances, Nehemiah restored the city wall. This is described in great detail in ch. 3. There is ample archaeological evidence, both positive and negative, to show that only the Eastern Hill of Jerusalem was fortified at that time and that the eastern wall of the city was built higher up the slope than the previous wall, so that the city was smaller than that of Solomon.

The Valley Gate (2:13, 15; 3:13), the remains of which were excavated in 1924, was part of the western city wall. The other gates and the Tower of the Ovens, mentioned in chs. 3 and 12, are unattested to in the archaeological record, but are placed in the drawing in the order in which Nehemiah records them.

The Western Hill was not occupied at this time. However, the ruins of the Broad Wall (3:8; 12:38), the Middle Gate (cf. Jer. 39:3), and the destroyed houses remained part of the landscape of Jerusalem. This area was not rebuilt until the middle of the second century B.C.

The Broad Wall (ruined)

Remains of the Middle Gate

Sheep Gate
(hidden from view)

Tower of the Hundred
(hidden from view)

Tower of Hananel

Fish Gate

Gate of Yeshanah (Old Gate)

Gate of Ephraim

Tower of the Ovens

Ophel

Wall of the Ophel

The Buttriss

Water Gate

Horse Gate

Muster Gate
(hidden from view)

Corner Tower

Gate of the Guard

The Temple Mount was restored by Nehemiah as part of the fortification of Jerusalem.

The Great Projecting Tower (3:25–27) was tentatively identified by Charles Warren in 1867.

Remains of ancient walls used to support agricultural terraces.

The central section of the eastern city wall was built higher up the hill than the wall that preceded it. The two points where the new wall diverged from its original course were each called “the buttress” (3:19, 24, 25).

The Buttriss

The stairs that go down from the city of David (3:15)

King’s Garden (3:15)

The Fountain Gate (2:14; 3:15; 12:37) was located in the southern part of the eastern wall, presumably close to the Siloam Pool.

The Siloam Pool was again used as the city’s water source. There is no mention in ch. 3 of the Gihon Spring, probably because it was no longer accessible after the Babylonians had destroyed its protective towers.

Dung Gate

Hinnom Valley

NEHEMIAH 4:1-3 - ENEMIES MOCK

WE MET SANBALLAT AND TOBIAH IN CHAPTER 2 AND NOW THEY REAPPEAR AS ADVERSARIAL VOICES AGAINST THE WALL REBUILD PROJECT. THEY MOCK THE WORK AND STRENGTH OF THE JEWS. SANBALLAT WAS LIKELY THE GOVERNOR OF SAMARIA, THE NATION NORTH OF JUDEA, NOW INHABITANT BY NON-JEWISH, NON-GOD FEARING PEOPLE. IT SEEMS THAT THEY ARE POSSIBLY THREATENED BY THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE JEWS AND ARE NOT HAPPY THAT THEIR CAPITAL CITY IS BEING REINFORCED. THEY ARE ALSO ANGRY (V. 1). THESE EMOTIONS AND WORDS ARE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF NEHEMIAH IF HE DIDN'T PERHAPS HEAR THEM HIMSELF.

NEHEMIAH 4:4-6 - NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER, THE WORK CONTINUES

NEHEMIAH PRAYS ABOUT THE WORDS OF SANBALLAT AND TOBIAH. HE PUTS THEM IN GOD'S HANDS BUT DOESN'T PRAY A "GOD FORGIVE THEM FOR THE KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO" KIND OF PRAYER. IN FACT IT'S PRETTY MUCH THE OPPOSITE OF THAT! "GOD DON'T FORGIVE THEM, CAUSE THEY KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THEY ARE DOING!"

NEHEMIAH WANTS TO KEEP WORKING AND KNOWS WHAT THE GOAL OF THESE ENEMIES REALLY IS. NEHEMIAH LIKELY SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS PRAYER BECAUSE HE IS WATCHFUL OF THE MORALE OF HIS WORKERS. HE WANTS TO SHIELD THEM FROM UNNECESSARY NEGATIVE INFLUENCES AND GUARD THEIR HEARTS. THIS IS ANOTHER GOOD LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTIC OF NEHEMIAH.

MORALE: THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL CONDITION (AS OF ENTHUSIASM, CONFIDENCE, OR LOYALTY) OF AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP WITH REGARD TO THE FUNCTION OR TASKS AT HAND (MERRIAM WEBSTER DICTIONARY VIA M-W.COM)

MORALE IS A BIG THEME OF THIS SECTION. IT'S ALSO NOT SOMETHING FOR US TO OVERLOOK IN OUR OWN LIVES. OUR ADVERSARY WOULD LOVE TO DEMORALIZE THE CHURCH OF GOD. FOR EXAMPLE, GOD WANT US TO LIVE HOLY, SPEAK THE GOSPEL, BE DEVOTED TO PRAYER, LEAD AND LOVE OUR FAMILIES, SERVE HIM AND OTHERS, ETC. BUT IF WE APPROACH THESE CALLINGS NOT SURE THAT WE CAN ACCOMPLISH ANY OF THESE THINGS, IT WILL BE UNLIKELY WE WILL! IF WE FEEL DEFEATED OR AFRAID, IT WILL BE HARD FOR US TO FOLLOW THROUGH IN FAITH.

HOWEVER, IF OUR MORALE IS HIGH, IF WE'RE ENTHUSIASTIC, CONFIDENT OR INSPIRED - WATCH OUT WORLD! OUR MORALE IS NOT BASED ON OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, OUR ABILITIES OR EVEN OUR TRACK RECORD - OUR MORALE IS BASED ON GOD'S PRESENCE, HIS FAITHFULNESS AND HIS POWER AT WORK IN US. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THEN TO ASSESS OUR MORALE (AND THE MORALE OF OUR FAMILIES AND FELLOWSHIPS) FROM TIME TO TIME. DOES SOMEONE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT? DO WE NEED TO SPEND SOME TIME IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE? DO WE NEED TO REMEMBER/BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT US RATHER THAN WHAT OUR ENEMY IS SAYING? PERHAPS THERE ARE SOME INFLUENCES IN OUR LIVES THAT NEED TO BE CHANGED SO THAT WHAT IS BEING POURED INTO OUR HEARTS AND MINDS IS OF FAITH AND NOT FEAR.

DON'T OVERLOOK THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING HIGH AND INSPIRED MORALE AND TAKE A "MORALE CHECK" FROM TIME TO TIME.

MEANWHILE, THE WORK CONTINUES AND THE ENTIRE WALL IS RECONNECTED AND THE STRUCTURE IS AT HALF ITS FULL HEIGHT. CLEARLY, PUTTING YOUR ENEMIES IN GOD'S HANDS ALLOWS YOU TO KEEP DOING WHAT HE WANTS YOU TO DO.

NEHEMIAH 4:7-9 - THE ENEMIES CONSPIRE

WHEN THE UNITED FORCE OF ADVERSARIES HEARD THAT THE WORK ON THE WALL CONTINUED, AND WAS PROGRESSING SO WELL, THEY WERE "VERY ANGRY" (V. 7). THEY DECIDED TO UNITE TOGETHER AND FIGHT AGAINST JERUSALEM AND CAUSE A "DISTURBANCE" IN IT (NLT: "THROW US INTO CONFUSION"). THEY ARE ON THE BRINK OF WAR, YET NONE OF THIS IS PROVOKED BY THE JEWS!

THIS IS SUCH A GREAT WINDOW INTO THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE: OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES ARE VERY ANGRY, CONSPIRING TOGETHER AND WANT TO COME TOGETHER AND FIGHT AGAINST US AND CAUSE A DISTURBANCE OR BRING CONFUSION IN OUR LIVES - AND THE ONLY THING THAT PROVOKES THESE THINGS IS THE FACT THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE DEVOTED TO DO HIS WORK! THEIR AIM AND GOAL IS TO GET US TO STOP THE WORK GOD HAS CALLED US TO DO!

CONFUSION IS ONE OF THE SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL BATTLE AND ATTACK. THE GOAL OF NEHEMIAH'S ENEMIES WAS "DISTURBANCE" (NASB), "CONFUSION" (ESV). (NEHEMIAH 4:8). REMEMBER THE LORD IS NOT A GOD OF CONFUSION (1 COR 14:33).

NEHEMIAH "PRAYED TO GOD" AND SET UP A GUARD AGAINST THE ENEMIES (V.9). GOOD LEADERSHIP YET AGAIN. GOOD ADVICE FOR US TOO. THE VERSES THAT FOLLOW WITH GIVE US THE DETAIL OF THESE ACTIONS.

NEHEMIAH 4:10-14 - THE PEOPLE & THE PLAN

INDEED THE MORALE OF THE WORKERS WAS AFFECTED BY THE LOOMING THREAT OF THE ENEMY - NOW NOT JUST A VERBAL THREAT, BUT A LITERAL AND MILITARY ONE. SOME JEWS WHO LIVED ON THE BORDER OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA BROUGHT A REPORT OF THEIR PLAN TO THE LEADERS IN JERUSALEM. NEHEMIAH RESPONDS BY PRAYING (WE SAW THIS IN V. 9) AND BY SETTING UP WATCHMAN AND GUARD STATIONS ALONG ALL OF THE EXPOSED PLACES IN THE WALL. NOTICE THAT HE TAKES INITIATIVE - ANOTHER KEY QUALITY OF A GOOD LEADER.

HOWEVER, EVEN AFTER SETTING THIS PLAN IN PLACE, NEHEMIAH RECOGNIZED THE MORALE OF THE PEOPLE WAS LOW. AND THE REMEDY FOR LOW MORALE IS ENCOURAGEMENT.

NEHEMIAH 4:14 (NLT) - THEN AS I LOOKED OVER THE SITUATION, I CALLED TOGETHER THE NOBLES AND THE REST OF THE PEOPLE AND SAID TO THEM, "DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE ENEMY! REMEMBER THE LORD, WHO IS GREAT AND GLORIOUS, AND FIGHT FOR YOUR BROTHERS, YOUR SONS, YOUR DAUGHTERS, YOUR WIVES, AND YOUR HOMES!"

NEHEMIAH 4:15-20 - THE "NEW NORMAL"

THE ENEMIES HEARD THAT THE JEWS KNEW OF THEIR PLAN AND WERE PREPARED TO RESIST THEM. AS A RESULT THE ENEMIES SEEM TO PUT THEIR ATTACK ON HOLD. HOWEVER, WHILE THE WORK ON THE WALL WILL CONTINUE - THE WORKERS WILL ALSO BE WARRIORS - NOT JUST CARRYING SHOVELS BUT ALSO HOLDING SWORDS. THEY WILL KEEP WORKING BUT ALSO BE WATCHING FOR A POTENTIAL ATTACK. A TRUMPET BLAST WILL SIGNAL A WARNING TO PREPARE TO FIGHT. BUT, THE PEOPLE ARE REMINDED THAT IT IS THE LORD WHO IS REALLY WATCHING.

NEHEMIAH 4:20 (NLT) - WHEN YOU HEAR THE BLAST OF THE TRUMPET, RUSH TO WHEREVER IT IS SOUNDING. THEN OUR GOD WILL FIGHT FOR US!"

THE WORDS OF THE PSALMIST SURELY WOULD BE RELEVANT TO THIS GROUP:

PSALM 127:1 - UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE, THEY LABOR IN VAIN WHO BUILD IT; UNLESS THE LORD GUARDS THE CITY, THE WATCHMAN KEEPS AWAKE IN VAIN.

NEHEMIAH 4:21-23 - THE WORK RESUMES

NOW ARMED WITH SPEARS, THE WORK CONTINUES. THOUGH THE IMMINENT THREAT MAY BE OVER, THE PEOPLE WILL STAY ON GUARD BECAUSE THEY KNOW THE ULTIMATE THREAT IS NOT. THEY SET UP A ROTATING SCHEDULE TO ENSURE THAT THE CITY IS UNDER 24 HOUR GUARD (THE MEN WILL EVEN TAKE THEIR WEAPON WITH THEM TO THE BATHROOM, JUST IN CASE). NEHEMIAH ARMS NOT JUST THE HAND OF THE PEOPLE WITH WEAPONS, BUT ARMS THEM MENTALLY TO BE READY AND ON THE ALERT.

FALLING ASLEEP OR TAKING A DAY OFF WOULD HAVE BEEN THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ENEMY TO SNEAK IN AND ATTACK. TRUE FOR THE JEWS OF NEHEMIAH 4 AND TRUE FOR YOU AND I IN THIS CURRENT DAY.

LET US TOO BE ON THE ALERT. LET US CONTINUE WORKING HEARTILY UNTO THE LORD IN OUR DAY. LET US NOT BE DEMORALIZED BUT VIGILANT AND INSPIRED TO CONTINUE ON LIVING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. WE TOO HAVE WORK TO BE DONE. AND WHILE WE HAVE OPPOSITION LONGING TO DISRUPT OUR LIVES, WE MUST HEAR NEHEMIAH'S CHARGE FOR US TODAY:

"DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE ENEMY! REMEMBER THE LORD, WHO IS GREAT AND GLORIOUS, AND FIGHT FOR YOUR BROTHERS, YOUR SONS, YOUR DAUGHTERS, YOUR WIVES, AND YOUR HOMES!" (NEHEMIAH 4:14, NLT)

AMEN.