

The Significance of the Names of the Builders of Nehemiah 3

by

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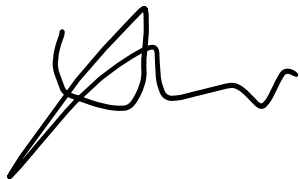
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Motivation/relevance

As a historical narrative, the books of Ezra-Nehemiah focus on the restoration and rebuilding, not only of the social and religious institutions of Jerusalem, but also the religious and ethnic identity of its community (Becking 2011:57-59). Ezra and Nehemiah recount the events that transpire after the Babylonian destruction (circa 500 B.C.E) when King Cyrus of Persia, allowed Jewish exiles to return to Yehud to salvage what was left of their heritage. In the text, a theological thread is found in the numerous punctuations of genealogical records and references to proof of descent, placing great emphasis on the importance of the community's identity as Yehudites.

According to Olyan (2004:2), the importance of genealogical purity in reforming the Jewish community follows in the Deuteronomistic line of prohibitions on intermarriage, as the means by which foreign syncretism and apostasy would be averted, an ideology motivated by texts such as Leviticus 18:24-30 and Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 23:4-9. Olyan (2004:2) further states: "Among the most significant tools used by the text to reconfigure the Judean community is an innovative and distinct purity ideology that draws upon a variety of precedents in what we might call the purity tradition."¹

Their devotion to the ideology becomes clear in Ezra 4:3; 6:6-7 and Nehemiah 2:20 when they firmly reject offers from 'the people of the land' to assist in building efforts. By implication, one would expect this ideology to have been extended to the selection of builders enlisted in Nehemiah 3:1-32. The problem with making this inference, is that the names of several individuals recorded in Nehemiah 3, reappear in other parts of the book as being amongst his adversaries (Lipschits 2012:94). This is a peculiar finding, in view of Ezra 4:3; 6:6-7 and Nehemiah 2:20.

¹ For more information on the concept of 'purity ideology', see Saul, M. Olyan, "Purity ideology as a tool to reconstitute the community" in *Journal for the study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*, 2-4.

Lipschits (2012:94) thoroughly analyzed the formulas used in the composition of the text and concluded that several facts point to the list as being inserted into the Nehemiah Memoir for literary and ideological purposes. In addition to this, Williamson (1985:69-70) maintains that the author of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah did not give particular regard to the chronological order in which the events were recorded. They appear to have been placed together with theological intent, with the purpose of presenting the development of the history of their salvation and would best be judged according to their theological significance.

Most scholars agree that the list contained in Nehemiah 3:1-32 is an original record, contemporary to Nehemiah, and constructed under priestly authority, but inserted into the Nehemiah Memoir by a later editor (Lipschits 2012:76). In Lipschits' (2012:74,82-83) analysis of the literary composition of Nehemiah 3, he found that specific verbs were used to place emphasis on the people and their role in the reconstruction of the wall.

Only a portion of the names were recorded with specificity (on occasion up to the third generation) while others were referred to in general, either by their settlement or craft. The question then presents itself, as to whether the author (who clearly placed great emphasis on identity) sought merely to honour these individuals (which would include those names repeated in other parts of the text as being amongst their 'adversaries') and their respective tribes, or whether he formulated the text in such a way as to draw the audience's attention to the theological meaning that lies beneath its surface?

1.2. Research Question

Findings made by scholars such as Lipschits (2012:94) and Williamson (1985:69-70) allude to the fact that Nehemiah 3 may contain theological undertones. Further research into the matter may yield new insights on the topic. This study will ask the following questions:

1. What is the meaning of the names listed in Nehemiah 3?
2. Was the order and inclusion of the selected names, settlements, and crafts significant in any way?

The research question is: "Is there any theological significance attached to the list of names, settlements and crafts in Nehemiah 3?"

1.3. Literature Overview and Research Problem

Many scholars are baffled as to the exact relationship of the list with the narrative in Nehemiah (Bolin 2012:32). Grabbe (2009) states:

... the list does not appear as simply a literary composition with a literary or theological aim. But if so, one must ask why it was taken up in the book of Nehemiah which clearly has a theological purpose—in its present context, the catalogue definitely has a literary and theological intent (p.14).

Scholars such as Lipschits (2012:92) assert that because of the broad range of people mentioned in the list, there could not possibly be any direct connection between their function, status, and position. Grabbe (2009:122-123) points out that many of the names listed were common amongst Jews of that period and only a small portion of them could be identified by patronymics. As a result, one cannot rely on the genealogies to trace their exact historical lineage.

The contribution of this study is an alternative perspective from which to consider the names found in the text, a vantage point that does not appear to have been explored extensively in scholarly research pertaining to Nehemiah 3. Williams (2005:22) indicates that in the First and Second Temple period, ancient Jewish names had specific meanings. In addition to this, Albertz & Schmitt (2012: 245-246) assert, that most of the Hebrew names in the Old Testament were theophoric, and possibly contain allusions to Israel's political and sacred history. The late Second Temple period is marked by an interesting transition into a new custom where children were named after their ancestors. During this period the practice of ponymy (the son is named after the grandfather) was most popular (Van Henten & Brenner 1998:86).

Is it possible that the personal names of the builders in Nehemiah 3 represent more than just their genealogy? In order to determine if this is so, the meaning of each builder's name (where possible) must be determined and examined within the backdrop of their socio-historical context. Reinhartz (1998:5) notes that in the absence of a personal name, the generality or anonymity with which some groups and/or individuals were referred to is not to be ignored and can be examined as an aspect of characterization (or a trigger of social memory).

1.4. Methodology

Insights will be drawn from a variety of approaches and exegetical methods that will include predominantly synchronic, and partially, diachronic elements. Exegesis is defined by M.J. Gorman (2009:12) as the systematic study of all the words and phrases related to the literary, historical, and theological aspects of a text in order to discern its most probable meaning.

Gorman (2009:69,75) asserts that responsible exegesis includes a contextual analysis of the historical and literary contexts of the text. Analyzing the historical context will provide the historical, sociopolitical, and cultural situation in which the text was produced. Examination of the literary context will tell us how the text fits into the larger literary units in which it occurs, and how this location may have affected its readers.

The primary section of the study is a detailed verse by verse analysis of the builders' names, settlements, and crafts, found in the text in its final form. Lexical and onomastic resources, as well as dictionaries and encyclopedias will be consulted for the examination of the proper names, settlements and crafts described by Nehemiah. The results will then be examined against known theological traditions that lie beneath the surface of the Hebrew text, to determine whether they resonate with the implicit meaning of any of the various themes.

The epistemology of this study is broadly based on the elements of exegesis as employed by M.J. Gorman. His method will aid in answering the research question as it takes an integrated approach that draws insights from both synchronic and diachronic clusters of methods (Gorman 2009:23).

1.5 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the research is to determine whether any theological significance is attached to the meaning of the builders' names, their settlements, and their crafts.

The objectives are to:

1. Examine the context that Nehemiah 3 refers to, by means of a literary and historical analysis.
2. Analyze all proper names, settlements, and crafts in the texts by consulting biblical dictionaries and encyclopedias, conducting a word study, and employing elements of onomastics, and lexical analysis.
3. Synthesize the findings with identified theological traditions of the Hebrew Bible.
4. Concluding remarks.

1.6 Hypothesis

Theological significance may be found in the list of builders of the Jerusalem wall in Nehemiah 3 and could offer new insight into the meaning and coherency of the text within its own context.

1.7 Chapter division

1.7.1. Introduction

The introduction provides a discussion of various aspects pertinent to the research process that must be addressed. These aspects include: the research question, the literature review, methodology, aims and objectives, hypothesis, and chapter divisions.

1.7.2. Theoretical framework

This chapter discusses the epistemology and theoretical framework of the study, as well as the approaches that are going to be utilized to achieve the intended aim and objectives.

1.7.3. Contextual analysis

The third chapter provides an overview of the literary and historical context in which the text is composed. Aspects concerning unity and authorship, date of composition, theological perspectives, as well as the structure and content of Ezra-Nehemiah are discussed. Lastly, the socio-political context of the text is elaborated on.

1.7.4. Exegesis of Nehemiah 3

The fourth chapter expounds on the genre, structure, and form of the text, followed by a lexical and onomastic analysis, and a word study of the personal names. Encyclopedias and biblical dictionaries are consulted to assist in the examination of settlements and crafts.

1.7.5. Synthesis of research findings

The fifth chapter presents a brief overview of the history of covenants. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of various theological traditions. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the research findings and the theological traditions.

1.7.6. Concluding Remarks

Chapter 6 presents the concluding remarks of the research findings.

1.8. Terminology

1. Diachronic: the study of the development of language across time.
2. Elephantine papyri: “Aramaic documents pertaining to a Jewish community in the south of Egypt in the fifth century B.C.E.” (Collins 2018:471).
3. Epigraphic evidence: ancient inscriptions as a source for ancient history.
4. Etymology: the study of the history of words (Hornby 2010).
5. Exegesis: careful analysis of the historical, literary, and theological aspects of a text (Gorman, 2009:10).
6. Festal names: a category of Jewish personal names that commemorate an event, mostly to mark an occasion of celebration (Williams 2005:21).
7. Golah: the Jewish diaspora community.
8. Ideology: a set of ideals or beliefs shared by the members of a social group that forms the basis of political or economic theory or policy (Hornby 2010).
9. Lexicon: a dictionary of (ancient) languages.
10. Masoretic text: traditional Hebrew and Aramaic texts assembled and codified in the Hebrew Bible of Rabbinic Judaism.
11. Nehemiah Memoir: the first-person account in the book of Nehemiah (Lipschits 2012:73).
12. Paleo demography: an examination of changes in pre-modern populations in order to determine aspects of lifespan and health.

13. Patronymics: a name derived from the name of a father or ancestor (Hornby 2010).
14. Purity ideology/tradition: the removal/exclusion of all individuals considered to be ‘alien’ by means of ‘moral’ or ‘ritual’ impurity.
15. Redaction: the alteration or modification of biblical texts.
16. Scribe: individuals (mostly male) who would learn to read and write.
17. Septuagint: the earliest extant Greek version of the Hebrew Bible that includes the Apocrypha, also referred to as ‘Old Greek’.
18. Socio-historical: inclusive term for socio-political, socio-cultural & socio-religious aspects of a context (Jonker 2011:4).
19. Source documents: original oral or written material.
20. Spatial analysis: a method used to analyze the use of space in the past.
21. Synchronic: “with[in] time,” i.e., “same time” (Gorman 2009:13).
22. Theophoric names: having the name of a deity embedded in a name (Williams 2005:21).
23. “The people of the land”: Jews who were not part of the elite who were exiled and remained behind in Jerusalem (Perdue 2008:122).
24. Topography: the detailed description of a place or region (Hornby 2010).
25. Utopian: “an ideally perfect place, especially in its social, political, and moral aspects” (Hornby 2010).
26. Yehud: Province of Judah under the Persian empire.
27. Yehudite: Aramaic term for ‘Jew.’

1.9. Orthography

The NWU Harvard referencing style is used. Various commentaries and books related to the literary, and historical study of the books of Ezra-Nehemiah will be consulted. Extrabiblical resources as well as dictionaries, concordances and lexicons include: *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English lexicon* to examine the meaning of words; *The Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* to locate and analyze the different uses of selected words in the text. Various books including: “*Old Testament Theology. Divine Call and Human Response*” that provide information on the theological traditions of the Hebrew Bible were consulted.

1.9.1. Abbreviations of Old Testament Books

Abbreviation:	Book name:	Abbreviation:	Book name:
Gn	Genesis	Ec	Ecclesiastes
Ex	Exodus	Can	Song of Solomon
Lv	Leviticus	Is	Isaiah
Nm	Numbers	Jr	Jeremiah
Dt	Deuteronomy	Lm	Lamentations
Jos	Joshua	Ezk	Ezekiel
Jdg	Judges	Dn	Daniel
Rt	Ruth	Hs	Hosea
1 Sm	1 Samuel	Jl	Joel
2 Sm	2 Samuel	Am	Amos
1 Ki	1 Kings	Ob	Obadiah
2 Ki	2 Kings	Jnh	Jonah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Mi	Micah
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Nah	Nahum
Ezr	Ezra	Hab	Habakkuk
Neh	Nehemiah	Zph	Zephaniah
Es	Esther	Hg	Haggai
Job	Job	Zch	Zechariah
Ps	Psalms	MI	Malachi
Pr	Proverbs		

1.9.2. Abbreviations

B.C.E.	Before the common era
BDB	Brown, Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon
Ch.	Chapter
DOI	Digital Object Identifier
HALOT	The Hebrew & Aramaic lexicon of the OT
ISBEO	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online
JSOT	Journal for the study of the Old Testament
LBS 10	Logos Bible Software Version 10
LHI	Lexham Hebrew-English Interlinear Bible
NSRV	New Standard Revised Version
OT	Old Testament

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

Lipschits' (2012:74,82-83) conclusion, that the literary composition of Nehemiah 3 was designed to emphasize the people who rebuilt the wall, delineates the focus of this study. A historical synthesis of the period reflected in the text is provided with the purpose of understanding the builders' political and social background. Gorman's (2009:12-16) method of biblical exegesis employs selected elements of literary criticism that were applied to understand the unique historical context in which the text was compiled, and the literary context in which it was situated.

In order to determine the theological significance of the Hebrew personal names, the meaning of each name had to be discovered. This was achieved by means of a word study that involves elements of lexical and onomastic analysis. To investigate the theological meaning of references to crafts and settlements, this study consulted encyclopedia's, dictionaries, and scholarly works. The findings of the study were examined to determine if they resonated with any of the theological traditions in the Hebrew Bible.

2.2. Historical context

Biblical texts cannot be interpreted unilaterally, they contain various forms and genres, address issues within different time periods and use different means of expression (Kessler 2013:18). Wilson (1984:2-10) adds that language, literary forms, and symbols commonly used in ancient societies are not commonly understood by the modern reader. Brettler (2005:37-38) stresses the fact that genre is key to the valid interpretation of a text, and that one cannot assume that an ancient text can be read in the same way as the contemporary genre it most resembles.

Interpreters have increasingly become aware of the value of applying data, methods, and theories from social sciences, such as anthropology and linguistics for a greater understanding of an ancient text's historical context.

2.2.1. Anthropology

Wilson (1984:17) describes anthropology as the scientific study of the different aspects of human experience. They can provide exhaustive coverage of a particular society's origins, social organization, customs, and beliefs. These methods facilitate the process of interpretation of a text within its contemporary social setting. It bridges the spatial, temporal, and cultural gap between the interpreter and the author by reconstructing the social identity, world view and cultural characteristics that governed the author's perception of reality. Data from these studies equips the interpreter to engage the text with an awareness of the social conventions employed by biblical author/s.

2.2.2 Linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of language that includes its structure, and characteristics in general. Beneficial to the onomastic and lexical analysis of a word is the insight provided by Benner's (2005:12-14) unique perspective on understanding Hebrew thought. Ancient Hebrews viewed the world in concrete terms, they expressed themselves through the five senses of touch, sight, smell, taste, and hearing. An example, is Psalm 103:8: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." (NRSV). The abstract word 'anger' in English, is the concrete word *aph* in Hebrew which literally means 'nose,' the word denotes anger in that when one becomes angry, one's nostrils flare. A literal translation would therefore not make sense to an English reader "slow to nose."

Benner (2005:13-14) explains that objects were described in terms of their function and not their appearance. For example, where ancient Greeks would describe a pencil in terms of its length and colour, a Hebrew person would describe it as something that is used to write words with. Hebrew thought is different to the Modern western language in that both verbs and nouns are *dynamic* (they are in motion). The difference is easily illustrated by means of the verb *malak* which means "the reign of the king" whereas the noun *melek* means "the king who reigns."

Benner (2005:15-18) explains that the Hebrew alphabet was an evolving script that belonged to the Semitic family of languages. In its earliest stages, the script was pictographic, each letter was a picture that signified meaning. Pictographs of the earlier stages of the script help to determine the original meaning of a word. When studying the Hebrew language, the simplest form of the word (the root) is first examined. Lexicons aid this process by classifying words

according to their stems (the root consonants of a word). The words that are derived from the root consonants of the stem help to reconstruct the most probable meaning.

2.3. Selected elements of literary criticism

2.3.1. Literary context

Gorman (2009:74-76) explains that an exegete must take cognisance of the fact that the larger literary unit within which a particular text is situated, will have bearing on how the text is interpreted. For effective exegesis, the text immediately preceding, and following the passage, must be examined. This can be done by creating an outline of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah and the major division of books in which it appears. Analysis of the immediate context will reveal how the material flows into the passage and whether they work together in communicating a particular rhetorical objective. Examination of the larger context will bring clarity to the function and significance of the work as a whole.

2.3.2. Form

As previously mentioned, the interpretation of a given text depends on its literary form or genre (e.g., historic, prophetic, or wisdom, poetry, or law, etc.). Gorman (2009:84-85,87) notes that the literary form of a text is determined by distinguishing features, principles and conventions commonly shared with other sets of texts. This is necessary because different forms or genres have different rules of interpretation. Some textual units contain shifts in theological emphasis and form. This could signify a segmented text that correlates to the different historical periods in the life of the author/s, it may also simply be a rhetorical device skillfully employed by the author to convey a message within a unified text.

2.3.3. Structure

Gorman (2009:88-93) describes the analysis of the structure of a text (its main divisions and subdivisions) as an equally important factor in the process of interpretation. In most biblical texts, the author/s appear/s to use a type of internal pattern of organization specific to the writing conventions of their culture. These types of structuring devices act as conduits to the meaning and purpose the author wishes to express, and it should be the intention of the interpreter to discover it.

Structuring devices include: the use of *repetition* of key words or phrases or grammatical features; *parallelism*, which is described as “the expression of similar, related or contrasting things in parallel ways” (Gorman 2009:91). *Inclusio* (“inclusion”) is also a form of parallelism that can be used to mark a unified text by beginning and ending it on the same note. When this type of pattern extends inwards, a chiasm is formed using inverted parallelism that makes the first and last sentence a mirror image of each other, the second sentence the penultimate sentence etc. At times, a chiasm may contain a central element without a parallel, this is done to emphasize the sentence as the focal point of the text. An aid in discerning the structure of a text is to look for main ideas (main subjects and verbs) and words that indicate a relationship between main ideas. Words such as “next,” “then,” “while,” “but” etc.

2.4. Detailed analysis of the text

2.4.1. Key ideas and phrases

In the detailed analysis of each segment of a text, Gorman (2009:103-105) suggests selecting key ideas and phrases for examination. To distinguish which features are significant and must be selected for further examination, the details of the text must be scrutinized. Examples of some basic but fundamental questions that can be asked during the examination include: what are the most important terms or images and what is their meaning?; what is the text communicating and how?; is the author making use of any literary or rhetorical devices and what effect do they have?; does the text allude to any traditions or scripture such as laws or beliefs?; how do the different parts of the passage relate to the whole?

Ancient Hebrew personal names are identified as *key ideas and phrases* because they had specific meanings attached to them at the time that they were given. This makes it possible to extract (to a limited extent) information such as status, prevailing or changing social situations and cultural origins.

The importance of meaning attached to personal names is clearly reflected in many passages of the Old Testament. In Genesis 17, Abram who is approximately 99 years old, is childless and his wife is barren. In vv.4-5 God reaffirms his covenantal promise with Abraham and states: “...As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have

made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.” (NRSV). The Hebrew name Abram (אַבְרָם) constitutes two words, *av* (אָב father) and *ram* (רַם high/exalted), meaning “exalted father,” and the name Abraham (אַבְרָהָם) is derived from the words *av* (אָב father) and *hamon* (הַמֹּן multitude/crowd) meaning “father of many” (Strong 2001:1468,1467). The new name has a *he*, which is one of the letters of the Tetragrammaton (the four consonants of the transliteration *YHWH*, used by Hebrews to avoid uttering Yahweh’s real name out of reverence), inserted after the third root consonant. Clark ([Clarke’s Commentary 1979](#)) comments that Clarius maintained that God was imparting a portion of his own name to identify himself with Abraham. Abraham’s new name, therefore, encapsulated the name of his God, the promise from his God, and his future role as the father of many nations.

Another example of the importance of names in antiquity is provided by Bardis (1972:102), who asserts that a name did not only identify its bearer but also denoted the individual’s essence. Namelessness was tantamount to non-existence; a man came into existence by the fixing of his name. This is illustrated in a segment of the Babylonian epic poem *Enuma Elish*, “When above the heaven had not yet been named, and below the earth had not yet been called by a name” (I, 1-2), the author was referring to a time before its creation. Myths of many Ancient Near Eastern cultures believe that names have the “power to establish a thing’s essence or being and thereby to order a previously unordered universe” (Seymour 1983:109).

2.4.2. Lexical analysis: meaning in smaller units

Gorman (2009:107) states that the interpreter must conduct a lexical analysis of words, examine phrases or utterances, segments of the text, and the text as a unit. Lexical analysis is used to define these words within their original language and will help to delineate the word’s lexical range. It is also important to locate the word in a concordance and analyze its occurrence and application in different texts. Once the information has been gathered, the usage of the word in question can be analyzed in relation to where and how it occurs elsewhere.

Onomastic analysis enriches the knowledge gained from lexical analysis. Bardis (1972:101) describes onomastics as the study of the etymology, history and meaning of proper names. Beaulieu (2011:245) states that Ancient Hebrew onomastics is part of the field of Semitic onomastics that prefers theophoric names. Theophoric names provide information on the relationship between deity and worshipper, and their preference for a particular deity.

Theophoros is the Greek word for “bearing or carrying a god.” Theophoric names were built from the name of a god, and at times, could be construed as an indication of religious attitude. It generally reflected attributes of God, or, what the individual bearing the name, expected from God. In the case of Nehemiah, if applied theologically, the choice of names used by the author would reflect what he was expecting from God. Hebrews used two denominations of God to create these names: *Elohim* and the Tetragrammaton. Bardis (1972:105) explains that *El* was the common Semitic term for god. The Hebrews added the *h*, and in the plural, it was *Elohim*. Haber (2001:56) illustrates how most names used the first two letters either at the beginning (*Eliashib*, *Elijah*) or at the end (*Meshezabel*, *Uzziel*). The first two consonants of the Tetragrammaton (*YHWH*) would be used, followed by either an “o” or “u” vowel (*Yehoram* or *Yehuda*). Some names incorporated the first and third consonants that were conjugated into a “yo” syllable (*Yoab*). Other names would end with the first two consonants of the Tetragrammaton (*Aviyah*), but at times only one consonant was used, such as with Abraham.

2.4.3. Meaning within context

The meaning of a word is context dependent, and the interpreter must be cautious of the semantic range (a range of possible meanings) of a word during lexical analysis. The context communicates the writer’s social location, rhetorical and literary setting, and will direct the interpreter to the most feasible meaning of the word. “The distinctive ways in which a word or phrase is used within a text impart distinctive contextual senses to that lexical item within the text” (Gorman 2009:107). The meaning of a word must be derived from both its lexical sense and its contextual sense.

Walton (1997:158) provides two guidelines conducive to meaningful word study. Firstly, during exegesis, the interpreter must understand that the author of any given text chooses specific words to communicate the specific meaning he intended. A synchronic approach will help to gain a better understanding of what the word under study meant to the author that used it. Secondly, to discern meaning accurately, the interpreter must understand the way the Hebrew verbal system works.

According to Mounce (2009: xxv), the Hebrew verbal system has 7 major stems, one simple stem known as ‘Qal’ that expresses a simple active statement, and 6 derived stems that can be used to modify the meaning of the simple stem by changing it into a passive, intensive, reflexive, or causative action. The Niphal changes the Qal into a passive or reflexive voice, for

example: “he ruled” changes into “he was ruled.” The Piel changes the Qal into an intensive type of action, for example “he broke” will turn into “he shattered into pieces.” The Pual expresses the passive form of the Piel, and the Hiphil, is used to express a causative action, for example: “he ruled” will change into “he caused to rule.” The Hophal expresses the passive form of the Hiphil, and the Hithpael communicates an intensive action with a reflexive voice, for example: “he stood” will change into “he stood by himself.”

2.4.4. Possible pitfalls

James Barr (cited by Gorman 2009:108) points out one of the pitfalls in taking a solely diachronic approach: *etymological fallacy*, this is when an interpreter frames a word’s meaning within the confines of its etymological roots. Words tend to evolve and spontaneously break away from their roots during different time periods in history, consequently they may only be vaguely related to their original meaning or bear new meaning. Walton (1997:162) stresses that this is especially relevant to the book of Ezra-Nehemiah because of the linguistic changes related to the development of late biblical Hebrew. The application of the word should be considered independently within their respective time periods. Walton (1997:162) further suggests making a distinction between various verbal stems. While stems exhibit a level of semantic interrelationship there are also instances where they have drastically departed from one another and should rather be investigated independently.

2.4.5. Connotation and imagery

Gorman (2009:109-111) explains that certain words have *connotations*. They function outside of their semantic range and have additional meanings, emotions and value judgements connected to them by their cultural or rhetorical environment. Connotations can only be appreciated by understanding the historical and social background of a text.

Similarly, figurative language or imagery can either be based on universal human experience or it can be culturally acclimated. The interpreter must therefore give special attention to the setting of the text when discerning the function of metaphors.

2.4.6. Intertextuality

Certain texts allude to other texts, and map reflections of their own cultural environment. Gorman (2009:119-120) proposes the exegete ask the following type of questions: “which biblical texts, themes and/or images does the passage quote, echo or allude to? If it cites a text, does it do so verbatim or does it appear to make changes?” At times, biblical authors may also draw on extratextual or socio-cultural realities in order to portray certain events or characters. By implication, once again, the importance of being familiar with the historical context of a text is underscored. The interpreter must be aware of the political realities, places, values, and beliefs to which the passage may allude.

2.5. Theology in the Old Testament

2.5.1. A short summary of the history of Old Testament Theology

Theology can be defined as an attempt to understand the Hebrew Bible or as the Old Testament’s proclamations regarding the person and nature of God and the relationship he desires to have with people (Kessler 2013: ix, 2, 523).

A brief outline of approaches to theology, that developed over the centuries, is presented by Snyman (2019:2-6):

Snyman (2019:2-3) explains that interest in Old Testament theology started with the Reformation that took place in the 16th century. Martin Luther was interested in discovering whether the OT contained any allusions to Jesus Christ. Consequently, a Christological interpretation was developed. The 17th century was characterized by a dogmatic approach that selectively emphasized biblical texts that authenticated the already existing dogma of the church. In the 18th century, reason and rationalism took center stage in scholarly circles. J.P. Gabler, enlightened by the philosophy of the era, was a catalyst to the birth of biblical theology when he made a clear distinction between biblical theology, that is historical in origin, and communicates what the authors experiences were on divine matters, as opposed to dogmatics where the theologian teaches, according to their own understanding, about divine matters within their own contemporary setting. Biblical theology is therefore predominantly a historical discipline.

The 19th century gave rise to the religion-historical approach, where the object of study was the development of religion throughout the history of the OT, beginning with Hebraism to Judaism through to Christianity. The 20th century was marked by three very important shifts that took place. The first movement was led by Eichrodt (1890-1978), he built on Gabler's initial idea that covenant was the basis of all OT texts. Instead of following the usual God-man-salvation division, Eichrodt structured his theology around the concept of the covenant as the binding factor in the relationship between God and humankind. He believed that any passage in the OT had its foundation in the concept of covenant. From his theology many other theories of "centers" of the OT developed, for example the center approaches of Kaiser "promise" and Vriezen "communion with God." Von Rad (1901-1971), who led the second movement, emphasized the fact that theological truths were expressed linguistically through narrative. They would take historical events and bring them in relationship with God, thereby creating divergent perspectives on similar issues, that were recontextualized to suit various contexts during various periods of time. Brevard Childs (1923-2007) concluded the third movement with his emphasis on approaching the text as scripture that forms part of a greater canon. Despite contextual differences in their composition, they stand in "organic relationship" with one another and can therefore contain relationships or connections that cross through the boundaries of independent textual units (Kessler 2013:57).

Snyman (2019:4-5) continues with a description of how the 21st century acknowledged and embraced the plurality found in the OT. An example was the new approach presented by Brueggemann, who likens OT theology to a lawsuit trial with the concept of testimony as its fundamental component. The theologian must rely on the testimonies offered by the OT: the core testimony, which is Israel's declarations about God; the counter testimony, which constitutes all the questions posed in the OT about the mystery, ambiguity and sometimes negativity of *YHWH*; and the unsolicited testimony which refers to *YHWH*'s four partners, the individual, Israel, the nation and creation, who offer more information than what is required; lastly, the embodied testimony, that refers to the practices used when God and his partners make contact.

In conclusion, Snyman (2019:7) adds that it is clear that the development of various approaches was influenced by the intellectual and philosophical climate of the day. Diverse approaches will continue to co-exist and evolve as new developments occur.

This study will broadly follow Kessler's (2013: ix, xi) core methodological starting points for the theological analysis of Old Testament texts that includes aspects of the methods employed by Childs, Von Rad and Eichrodt. His method emphasizes identifying theological traditions or streams that stress different aspects of the divine-human relationship. Understanding the human response associated with those traditions are crucial to a theological interpretation.

Kessler (2013: ix, 98-99) defines *theological tradition* as a loose term that includes: the stories or concepts related to events or specific settings in Israel's past (Sinai/wilderness traditions); cultic places (Zion/northern traditions); institutions or social groups (priestly/royal/prophetic/court or scribal); or genres and social settings (wisdom/scribal traditions). These traditions can be distinguished by the various related concepts that are organized systematically around a central ideological or theological belief, and the distinctive vocabulary they use. Each grouping, partially resembling actual human sociopolitical realities, has its own conceptualization of the type of response required by God.

2.5.2. Theoretical foundation

The theoretical foundation upon which Kessler's (2013:102-103) theological traditions or streams are built originates from the methodological approaches of Old Testament theology and traditions history. Old Testament theology identifies specific concepts and terms used by biblical authors, and traces how they developed over time; while traditions history examines how they were re-used by later biblical writers. Theological tradition expands on this by recognizing how biblical writers gradually re-contextualized the concepts, thoughts and ideas expressed by earlier prophets, lawgivers, and psalmists, to accommodate the vicissitudes of circumstance faced by the Israelites from generation to generation. For example, when Nehemiah (9:17) refers to God as *gracious* and *merciful, slow to anger*, he is recalling the memories connected to the ancient *character credo* of Exodus 34:6-7, but with emphasis on features relevant to his own socio-political context.

Kessler (2002:101) identifies some of the primary theological traditions functioning in the early Persian period: Zionism (corresponding to David); Priestly theology; Deuteronomism (corresponding to Moses and Mount Sinai). The meaning of the proper names in Nehemiah were examined within the paradigm of Kessler's theological traditions to determine whether they resonated with the implicit meanings of any of the themes mentioned. Similarly, the crafts

and settlements were examined for possible additional meanings, emotions and/or value judgements connected to them.

2.5.3. Limitations of the study

Kessler (2013:531-532) puts forward that the theological traditions he identified were chosen selectively. It was his conviction that the traditions he discussed was “closest to the core of Old Testament thought.” Not all biblical texts can fit into the molds he has described and serves only as a point with which to begin the journey of theological interpretation of the Old Testament texts. Kessler has simplified complex matters in order to provide a point of departure for the biblical reader to expand on.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

3.1. Introduction to the book of Ezra-Nehemiah

3.1.1. Literary context

The *Tanak* (Hebrew Bible) is divided into three sections: the *Torah* (Law), the *Nevi'im* (the Prophets), and the *Ketuvim* (the Writings). The *Ketuvim* is a collection of historical books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles), poetry (Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations), wisdom books (Job, Proverbs, Qoheleth), narratives (Ruth and Esther), and an apocalyptic book (Daniel). Different Biblical canons have the books ordered differently. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 & 2 Chronicles are placed after Ezra-Nehemiah, as the last three books of the *Ketuvim*.

3.1.2. Unity and authorship

According to the earliest traditions of the Babylonian Talmud, Ezra, a skilled scribe, was thought to be the author of 1 & 2 Chronicles, and the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. 1 & 2 Chronicles are treated as a single work and duplicate some of the contents found in the books of Samuel and Kings. The material, by means of genealogies, chronicles the sacred history of humanity from creation up to the moment of the author's writing. It therefore covers the same period as Genesis through Kings (Japhet 2006:38).

Ezra and Nehemiah were originally treated as a single literary unit and referred to as "The Book of Ezra" (Smith 2010:2). Williamson (1985:22) notes that Masoretic scholars, the earliest manuscripts of the Septuagint, and early Hebrew scriptures made no division between them. Most scholars agree that Jewish tradition and the manuscripts support the notion of a single editor, and that Ezra and Nehemiah are two parts of a single work (Smith 2010:32-33).

Scholars such as Blenkinsopp (1988:48-54) are of the view that Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah are originally parts of one work, with one author generally referred to as "the Chronicler." This view is based on the common vocabulary, syntax, shared themes, and style of the text. The conclusion of 2 Chronicles, and the beginning of Ezra share identical phrases.

Accepting Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah as one continuous work has major implications for a biblical scholar's understanding of the text's historical context. Japhet (1968) presents one of the implications:

The Chr.'s tendentious way of dealing with historical material is famous (although its extent is still in dispute) as is sharply stated by TORREY: "No fact of O.T. criticism is more firmly established than this: that the Chronicler, as a historian is thoroughly untrustworthy", *op.cit.*, p. 52. If *Ezr.-Neh.* was written or edited by the same author, how much can we rely on it as an historical source? (p. 331)

Japhet (1968:330-371) conducted a study concerned primarily with the differences found between the two books. The study revealed unique traits, linguistic disagreement, distinctive technical terms, and peculiarities of style. In addition to this, scholars such as Braun and Allen identified conflicting theological beliefs and concepts (Smith 2010:33). All the findings allude to the fact that the books may not have been compiled by the same author. Williamson (1985:23) and other scholars, in congruence with Japhet's argument, lean towards the separate treatment of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.

3.1.3. Date of composition

The exact date of the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah is unknown, there are advocates for both earlier and later dates. Smith (2013:308-309) states that the books were written in late biblical Hebrew, and that Ezra contains traces of Old Persian vocabulary as well as segments of Imperial Aramaic. The editor of the books made use of original documents, "memoirs" that were first person accounts of Ezra (*Ezr* 7-10 & *Neh* 8-10) and Nehemiah (1-7 & 11-13). The author/editor also inserted official governmental documents (*Ezr* 4:11-16, 17-22; 5:7-17, 6:2-5, 6-12; 7:12-26). The official governmental correspondence found in Ezra 1-6 most likely dates to the period of the Persian emperors they refer to: Cyrus (539-530 B.C.E), Darius (522-486 B.C.E) and Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.E). It is generally believed that the final editing and compilation of Ezra-Nehemiah occurred years after Nehemiah's ministry, circa 400 BCE (Collins 2018:461).

3.1.4. Theological Perspectives in Ezra-Nehemiah

No longer unified by political, geographical, and religious boundaries, the post-exilic community found themselves placed in a cauldron of diverse nations and cultures, each trying to settle their own communal roots within the Persian Empire. Eskenazi (2014:231) describes the book of Ezra-Nehemiah as a response to this challenge.

The influence of Deuteronomic theology in shaping the events that ensue appear ubiquitous. Blenkinsopp (2009:125-126) notes that the language and theme of the prayers in Ezra-Nehemiah, as well as the laws that Ezra enforced were essentially Deuteronomic. Moses addresses the nation in Deut 7, just before they were about to enter the promised land, he instructs them to drive out the nations before them and forbids them to make any covenants with them or to intermarry with them, for fear of apostasy and God's judgement. These concerns were reiterated both in Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9) and in the oath that Nehemiah (13:25) administered to men who had taken Ashdodite wives. Faithfulness to the law (Ezra 7; Neh 5 & 13) and prayer as a means of restoring their relationship with *YHWH* (Ezra 9; Neh 1) were major theological themes advocated by Ezra and Nehemiah throughout their journey, they considered them paramount to maintaining the community as a unified covenant people.

Historically, Israel and Judah distinguished themselves from the "Other" by standing in opposition to their neighbours and the religions they practiced (Boshoff *et al.* 2000:23). The context of Ezra-Nehemiah was, however, very different to that of their ancestors. Their concept of identity in terms of being set apart from others, had to be evaluated and later reformulated with a measure of fluidity to adapt to the constructs of their new (and evolving) *Sitz im Leben*. This fluidity became most apparent in their later conception of the "Other" as both friend and foe (Eskenazi 2014:237). Kaminsky (2011:18) referred to these two broad categories of the "Other" as being: the "anti-elect," enemies of God such as the Canaanites and Amalekites who had to be wiped out; and the "non-elect," foreigners and nations with whom Israel had a working relationship as active members of the divine economy.

Eskenazi (2014:236-254) identified three stages in the construction of their identity that were actualized by means of three sets of relationships:

In the first stage (Ezra 1-6), the Israelite/Judean relationship with the "Other" is acknowledged as being friendly, a "non-elect" foreign acquaintance who is instrumental in shaping the

community's sense of identity. At this point, a major theological emphasis is placed on the fact that God rules sovereign over all, he had control over the actions of his own people and of foreign nations and kings (Smith 2010:15). It is God who moved King Cyrus to provide for all their needs.

The Israelites perceive the edict of King Cyrus as binding the concept of being Israelite to the act of building the house of *YHWH*. He states: "you who are of his people...go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel..." (Ezra 1:3 NRSV). According to Eskenazi (2014:239) the question of who belonged to the category of "*YHWH*'s people" became the driving force behind all the actions that took place up to the completion of the House of God (Ezra 1-Neh 7). They continued with the understanding that God's people (the "Self") could be identified as those individuals who were called by his spirit to return to Jerusalem and rebuild *YHWH*'s house. Judah, and Benjamin, together with priests and Levites responded to the call and volunteered to be the returning community.

Upon their return to Jerusalem, the primary objective was to rebuild the Temple, that would assist in regaining their identity. Israel's entire religious cult was structured around the Temple, it served as a place of worship and provided the opportunity for individuals to offer sacrifices in atonement for their sin (Fensham 1982:17). They desperately needed to restore the building that would carry the load of their guilt. Those who assisted them with materials, and skills (Sidonians and Tyrians) were classified as the friendly "Other" (Ezra 3:7). Conversely, immigrants from a foreign land who referred to Israel's God as "your God," therefore, by their own declaration a people separate from *YHWH*'s people, were classified as foe (Ezra 4:1-23). Accordingly, the "Other" constituted both friend and foe.

During the second stage (Ezra 7-10), focus moved from building the Temple to building the community as the House of God (Eskenazi 2014:243). Both Ezra and Nehemiah emphasized the importance of following the ethical principles and legal prescriptions that were set by *YHWH*. Adherence to the covenant and its laws was the only way to guarantee that the promises linked to it would be brought into fulfilment by God (Fensham 1982:17). In view of this background, they took the stern step of adding the requirement of *purity* to their definition of "*YHWH*'s people." Only those who were able to prove their genealogy and who were committed to separating themselves from "...the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the LORD..." (Ezra 6:21 NRSV) would be included as *YHWH*'s people. In Ezra 7-10, the

construction of the “Self” by manner of separation from the “Other” was most exemplified in the rejection of foreign wives, as a prerequisite for membership to the holy seed of *YHWH* (Ezra 7-10). The definition of their identity took this rigid stance in response to new challenges posed by their own people who were already verified as pure Judahites and ran the risk of endangering their kind and diluting their pure bloodline when intermarrying with foreign women. As previously mentioned by Olyan (2004:2), the text advanced its purity ideology as a tool with which to reconfigure the Judean community.

In the third stage (Neh 1-7) emphasis is placed on the city as the House of God, and the reconstruction of its walls as the physical separation of the “Self” from the “Other.” They wanted to be identified as having a position of power amongst the nations. The root *קָטַן* “be/make strong” appears more than thirty times in Nehemiah 3 alone. Eskenazi (2014:255) comments that the repeated use of the word appeared to be connected to how the people were strengthened by the act of building the wall, rather than to the actual strength of the wall itself. The Judahite sense of “Self” had been firmly established, and they were consistently identified as a Judahite community. Eskenazi (2014:254) interprets the building of the wall “as an act of self-affirmation” projecting a sense of strength and pride in the fact that they were no longer the vulnerable people who were forced by the opposition to cease their building efforts (Ezra 4). As a community, they had become powerful enough to withstand and overcome opposition from the “Other.”

According to Smith (2010:19-21) it was Ezra and Nehemiah’s foundational belief in God’s daily providential care over all creation that gave them the courage to meet the challenges presented by their current situations. They emphatically acknowledged God’s hand and sovereignty in every aspect of their lives (Ezra 1:5; 5:12; 6:22; 8:21-23; Neh 1:8-9; 2:12,20; 5:13; 7:5), including the Babylonian exile and subsequent return and restoration of Jerusalem, and their relationship with God.

3.1.5. Structure and content of Ezra-Nehemiah

Ezra 1-10

Ezra-Nehemiah contains three parallel stories narrating the journey of three key leaders, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, who return to Israel to re-establish social order and to

distinguish themselves once again as Judeans. Themes common to both books are the return of people from the exile, threats to the community by ‘foreigners’ and the importance attached to genealogical lists (Grabbe 1998:99).

a) Return and restoration: Ezra 1-6

The author opts for a thematic rather than historical sequence of events that took place between 539 BCE to 515 BCE (Collins 2018:460).

Ezra 1-2 each includes a source document, the first is the Edict of King Cyrus of Persia commissioning the restoration of the temple. The second is the list of the first wave of exiles that returned with Zerubbabel. Ezra 3 narrates the laying of the temple’s foundation, and how worship is restored under the leadership of Zerubbabel and the high priest Jeshua.

In chapter 4, Zerubbabel and other leaders enforce social boundaries that distinguish them from all other people. They reject ‘the people of the land’ who offer their assistance in the temple’s reconstruction. The rejection leads to opposition, and accusations of rebellion are made against the Jews. King Artaxerxes of Persia is asked to intervene, and he orders the Jews to cease building. With the encouragement of the prophets Haggai, and Zechariah, restoration efforts resume in chapter 5. The temple is completed in chapter 6, circa 515 B.C.E, during the reign of King Darius, who gives his authorization in a decree based on the original edict of King Cyrus (Longman & Dillard 2006:207).

b) Ezra’s Memoirs: Ezra 7-10

The second key leader is Ezra. His mission is recorded in both first-and third-person narratives. Ezra is described as a skilled scribe, and the descendent of the chief priest Aaron who is set ‘to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel’ (7:10). Collins (2018:460) states that chapters 7, 8 and 10 each includes a source document. The first, is King Artaxerxes’ letter to Ezra, commissioning him to return to Jerusalem with the free-will offerings of the king, his counsellors, and of the priests and people of Babylonia (7:12-27). The second document is the list of exiles who returned with Ezra (8:1-14).

Ezra discovers that the holy seed of Israel had defiled itself by mixing with the people of the land (9:1-2). His response is one of extreme sorrow, he mourns deeply and prays a prayer of confession (9:3-15). In the first section of chapter 10, mixed marriages are denounced, and an

assembly is called urging the people to confess to their trespasses and to live according to the law. The second half of the chapter contains the third source document, a list of men who were sent away because they had married foreign wives (10:8-43).

Nehemiah 1-13

Nehemiah is the third key leader, a cup bearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes 1. Appointed governor over Yehud from the 20th to the 32nd year of the reign of Artaxerxes, he was concerned with the fortification of Jerusalem's walls and resolving complaints of social oppression.

a) Nehemiah oversees the rebuilding of the wall: Nehemiah 1-7

Scholars view the text as an autobiographical composition, and some regard the first-person account of the Memoirs to be apologetic in character, Nehemiah's own attempt at justifying his career (Collins 2018:470). Mowinckel (cited by Grabbe 1998:151) provides an alternative explanation, the memoirs have the character of a personal letter from Nehemiah to God and may have been stored in the temple for safekeeping.

Chapter 1 and 2 identifies the date of Nehemiah's mission to be 445 BCE during the reign of Artaxerxes 1 (Elephantine papyri corroborate the date with evidence that verifies figures such as Sanballat of Samaria). Demsky (1994:11), picks up an interesting difference between the text of Ezra and Nehemiah, where Ezra uses the Torah's nomenclature (numbered months), Nehemiah uses Babylonian calendrical names.

The story sets off in Susa, one of the capitals of the Persian Empire. Nehemiah is informed of the poor situation of the *golah* community in Judah (1:1-3). The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates consumed by fire (1:3). Being mindful of God's warning that disobedience to his laws would lead to the dissemination of the Jewish community, and that repentance and obedience would have them assembled in a place where his name would dwell, Nehemiah is impelled to spend time in prayer and fasting, confessing that they have not kept God's commandments (Grabbe 1998:38).

A few months later, Artaxerxes enquires into Nehemiah's saddened disposition. Upon hearing the cause, he authorizes him to return and rebuild the city of his ancestors (2:1-6). The king orders the keeper of his forest to provide building material, and the governors of the 'Province beyond the River' to ensure Nehemiah's safe passage to Judah (2:7-8). He arrives safely in

Jerusalem and waits for evening, and for some unknown reason, feels that he must inspect the wall in secret (2:11-16). The route he takes provides important clues as to the topography and range of the city during that time (Grabbe 1998:40). The decision is made to restore the damaged walls, but when the officials Sanballat the Horonite (governor of Samaria), Tobiah the Ammonite (slave of a Jewish family holding a Persian office), and Geshem the Arab (ruler) hear of it, they mock him and call him a rebel. Nehemiah responds, not by claiming Imperial authority, but by securing Judean identity and authority: “The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building; but you have no share or claim or historic right in Jerusalem.” (Neh 2:20 NRSV). Opposition and Nehemiah’s response to it, is a structural element that continues into chapter 6 (Blenkinsopp 1988:243).

The narrative describes how the builders were organized to work on various sections of the wall, and then catalogues them by name, craft, or location of origin (3:1-32). Grabbe (1998:41,154) suggests that the list of builders is most likely to be authentic, and was compiled to give honor, and demonstrate the civic rights of specific families because of the work they did.

The Jews experience renewed opposition in chapter 4. Sanballat and other enemies plot against them. Nehemiah thwarts their hostile plots by militarizing the building operation: “From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and body-armor; and the leaders posted themselves behind the whole house of Judah, who were building the wall” (4:16).

A new challenge (and topic) is introduced in the ensuing chapter when Nehemiah is confronted with accusations of oppression from the Jews against their own people (5:1-5). Separated from the indigenous natives (those who remained in the land) by religious differences and social status, the aristocratic deportees who had returned to Jerusalem retained their higher economic and social identity and appeared to be in control of society in general. The economic disparity between the *golah* community and the natives led some Judeans into taking loans from their wealthier Jewish brethren to keep up with imperial tax (Blenkinsopp 1988:68). The interest on these type of loans in Elephantine (essentially contemporary to Nehemiah) most likely ranged between 60 to 75 percent. Out of desperation, some Jews were reduced to selling their offspring to meet their tax obligations. Nehemiah ascribes the injustice of it all to the nobles and officials. He informs them of his plans to cancel the debt of the poor and instructs them to desist with

the seizing of people and their property when they defaulted on debt payments. According to Exodus 22:25 it was forbidden to treat the poor as a creditor would (Blenkinsopp 1988:257-259). The nobles and officials acquiesce and do as they are asked (5:12-13). Nehemiah is portrayed as being a noble and righteous man. Grabbe (1998:45) questions whether these events were possibly added at a later stage as they seem to interrupt the narrative of building the walls.

Nehemiah experiences both internal and external opposition as the story of the wall resumes in chapter 6. At this stage, all that remains to be done is the setting up of the doors and gates of the wall. Sanballat accuses Nehemiah of wanting to become king. According to Smith (2013:320), these accusations were well-founded, since Nehemiah's activities reflected the actions of one who had royal authority. Nehemiah dismisses Sanballat's allegations as fabrications (6:8). Sanballat retreats, but nobles of the Jews correspond with Tobiah in order to intimidate Nehemiah. Their efforts prove unsuccessful. Surprisingly, despite opposition the wall is completed in only 52 days, on the 25th day of the month of *Enlul*, the 6th month corresponding to August-September (Blenkinsopp 1988:273).

Chapter 7 continues in the first person and lists the returned exiles. Nehemiah places two men in charge of the city; his 'brother' Hanani (according to Grabbe [1998:48] the context suggests it was Nehemiah's real brother), and Hananiah the captain of the citadel. He also assigns guards to the gates and individual homes. Later, an assembly is called for the people to enroll their genealogies. Nehemiah states that he found the register containing the list of the first wave of exiles (7:5) and presents an almost verbatim repetition of Ezra 2:1-70.

b) Ezra's displaced memoirs: Nehemiah 8-10

The focus abruptly shifts from Nehemiah to Ezra in chapter 8 and has led scholars to agree that Nehemiah 8-9 are displaced, and more logically inserted before Ezra 9-10 (Smith 2013:320). In chapter 8, Ezra reads from the book of the law of Moses every day for seven days, as they celebrate the festival of booths in the square at the Water Gate. Sometime after the celebration a mass confession ensues (9:1-5). Ezra recites historical events of obedience, disobedience, and consequence, starting with Abraham through to the author's present day (9:6-37).

In chapter 10 the covenant is renewed; a written agreement is drawn up and signed by the people who pledge to uphold the law. The list of signatories starts with the priests, then the

Levites and all the heads of families (10:1-27). Grabbe (1998:153-154) notes a few peculiarities suggesting that the list was compiled from different sources. For instance, some of these names are also found in other lists, including the list of those returning decades earlier with Zerubbabel and Joshua in Nehemiah 12. He further remarks that these names may represent social relationships rather than indicate genealogical descent.

c) Nehemiah repopulates Jerusalem: Nehemiah 11-13

Lots are cast to get people from surrounding towns and villages to settle in Jerusalem, and blessings are bestowed on those who willingly offer to do so (11:1-2). The lists of settlers are divided into groups under the headings: the Judahites, the Benjaminites, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, and the temple assistants (Grabbe 1998:57). Chapter 12 continues with another list, many of the names being duplications of those found in chapter 10. It starts with the priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel and ends with a great celebration in dedication of the city walls.

A few years later, Nehemiah returns from his stay at Susa and travels around the city of Jerusalem, he finds some disturbing changes (Neh. 13). Firstly, Eliashib the priest has granted Tobiah, a chief opponent, to make personal use of one of the storerooms in the temple. Nehemiah's response in having Tobiah's possessions thrown out, reveals how, as a Persian governor, his authority superseded that of the temple personnel (Grabbe 1998:63). Secondly, the policies he had put in place were not being implemented. Temple contributions had not been received, forcing the Levites and singers to abandon their duties to go work in their fields. People were buying and selling on the Sabbath, and once again, Jews were selecting Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite wives (Grabbe 1998:64). He was furious, and proceeded to enforce social and religious reforms that would realign the people with God's law (Smith 2013:356).

The book concludes on a negative note and ends rather abruptly. It does not tell us that the people had a change of heart, or that Nehemiah was successful in his reforms. Ezra and Nehemiah's austere response to the sins of the community resonates with the Chronicler's theology of immediate retribution that warns against the assumption of deferred punishment.

3.2. Socio-political context

Reconstruction of the historical background is primarily based on the period of Nehemiah's service under the reign of king Artaxerxes 1 (465-424 B.C.E.), the historicity of which there appears to be minimal debate among scholars (Smith 2013:309).

3.2.1. Judah before the Persian empire: Neo-Babylonian rule, 586 – 539 B.C.E

Upon conquering Jerusalem (586 BCE), Nebuchadnezzar executed members of the royal family and deported some of the leading members of society to Babylon. Others chose to flee to Egypt with their families. According to Knauf and Guillaume (2016:139) the Jews deported to Babylon represented only a portion of the Jewish Diaspora, there were three other categories of Judeans in 582 BCE: Judeans, mostly Benjamites, who remained behind in Yehud; communities of migrant workers in Egypt, Transjordan, and Arabia; and the Judeans who settled in Hebron and the Negev, South of the kingdom.

Cuneiform tablets unearthed in Nippur, in central Babylonia gives us an indication of the living conditions of the exiles. Alstola (2017:6-7) states that in the 6th century, Southern Mesopotamia's propitious climate and political stability induced economic growth. This led to major upgrading of infrastructure and intensified agricultural farming. Instrumental to these developments were the deportees that were clustered in the marginal rural areas. They were incorporated into the 'land-for-service' sector of agriculture (where most of the cuneiform relating to the Judeans in Babylon originate). In return for plots of land they had to pay taxes, be available for various work details as well as military service. The Marašû archives describe the Marašû family as entrepreneurs in the land-for-service sector. In 64 of the documents, 61 distinctively Yahwistic names appear, and provide valuable information on their role in the economy, especially during the reign of Artaxerxes I when some Judeans seem to be of similar socio-economic standing to that of their Babylonian neighbours (Alstola 2017:164).

Oded (cited by Perdue 2008: 122) is confident that the Babylonians were not inclined to force their religious beliefs on others, and at the very least, the Jews would have had the freedom to give expression to their religion. Knauf & Guillaume (2016:154) comment that the deportees followed Jeremiah's instruction to settle down, find work, take wives, cause no trouble but rather seek the welfare of the city to which they had been exiled (Jr 29:4-7). The Jewish community would eventually integrate into their new surroundings but retain a communal

identity. Bloch (2015:119-172) notes that acculturation to their new context can be seen in the increased number of Babylonian names adopted by Judeans. Two name giving patterns become evident: firstly, Judean merchants in Sippar used Judean names in the first generation of the exile but opted for Babylonian theophoric names in the following generation; secondly, a group of individuals in Susa used Yahwistic personal names even though their fathers bore Babylonian theophoric names. These name giving patterns were a sign of growing instability or fluidity in their concept of identity. It appears that Judean experience of the exile was not necessarily catastrophic for all, stories such as those of Daniel and Esther imply that some embraced their new situation and prospered (Alstola 2017:25).

Archaeological findings indicate that the remaining population fell significantly between the end of the Iron II and the Persian period (Grabbe 2015:293). This was most probably due to famine and disease, collateral damage often brought about by the carnage of war. Excavations show that Judah suffered extensive damage. There is currently no epigraphical evidence that indicates any attempts at reconstruction (Perdue 2008:121). Jerusalem seems to have been uninhabited for most of the Neo-Babylonian period, presumably because a settlement was prohibited in the area. People migrated further up north, concentrating the bulk of the remaining Jewish population in the area of Mizpah, Benjamin the new administrative center of the province (Grabbe 2015:294).

3.2.2. Persian rule: 539-332 B.C.E

Historical reconstruction of major role players, institutions, social structures, and religious and spiritual aspects depicted in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah depend almost exclusively on biblical evidence and are the primary sources for the reconstruction of Jewish life in Judah (Levine 2002:3).

a) King Cyrus (539 – 530 BCE)

Cyrus conquered the neighbouring kingdoms of Media, Lydia, and Babylonia. Fitzpatrick-McKinley (2015:55-57) puts forward that the king's entry into these cities was peaceful. This is evident in the royal iconography of Persia that exhibits a different tone to that of their predecessors, the Babylonians, and the neo-Assyrians, and indicate a different type of rule. In the latter, kings are frequently pictured in graphically violent presentations of conquest, apparently to elicit a sense of terror and to discourage any potential challengers to imperial

rule. The iconography of the Persian king generally portrays him as a warrior with a kingdom at ease. At this point Jews were dispersed in surrounding regions such as Samaria, Galilee, the coastal region, Egypt, Transjordan and Babylon.

The Aramaic papyri discovered in Elephantine, consists of fifth century legal documents, accounts, letters, literature, and lists of names, that provide valuable information on the everyday practices and beliefs of the Jews that settled there. Cowley (1923: xvi-xviii) states that the Jews of Elephantine in Egypt appeared to be part of a military settlement. They were divided into companies, regiments or centuria and received rations and salaries from the Persian government. The papyri describe how Jewish mercenaries were employed in a campaign against Ethiopia, and later placed in charge of the strongholds of Elephantine and Syene to guard against Ethiopia's onslaughts. The letter indicates a date between 595 - 590 B.C. If this is correct, many Jews were already present in Elephantine just before the exile. They would eventually become a settled community of equal standing with the Egyptians. Many had bought property, intermarried, and bore foreign names.

Amongst themselves they referred to God as 'Ya'u' (an earlier form of *YHWH*) but in their correspondence to the Persians they would often speak of 'Ya'u the God of heaven.' Cowley (1923: xviii-xix) confirms that various documents, such as No. 22¹²³⁻¹²⁵ and No. 44³, of the Aramaic papyri, present the Jews as recognizing other gods besides Ya'u; gods that were brought in by colonists to Egypt. For example, mention is made of how the temple fund was to be divided between Ya'u and a deity named 'Anathbethel'. In another example, during a transaction with an Egyptian, a Jewess makes an oath in the name of an Egyptian goddess 'Sati'. Despite recognizing other gods, to the Jews, Ya'u remained pre-eminent as their national God. Cowley (1923: xix) suggests that "It was not a case of falling away from a monotheistic ideal, but a continuation of the pre-exilic popular beliefs". The religious practices of the Jews in Elephantine fit the description provided by Jeremiah in chapter 44:15-19, where the Judeans in Egypt continued with their idolatrous religion of old after the exile.

According to Cowley's study of the papyri (1923: xxii-xxviii), the Jews continued to offer sacrifices at their Elephantine temple, but there was no indication that they were performed by priests, as was traditionally the duty of the 'house of Aaron' and the Levites. There is also no

mention of observing the Sabbath, but this does not mean that it was not kept. The only festivals noted in the papyri is the feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover.

After the decree of Cyrus, some of the exiled Jews in Babylon chose to remain there under Persian rule (Blenkinsopp 1988:60). By now, second and third generation exiles born in Babylon held land grants and were not enticed to leave their homes. Others relocated to different parts of the empire and managed to attain eminent positions within the imperial court and the Persian army (Rose 2011:33).

Because of the enormity of the Persian empire, regional governors were appointed over large divisions that served as administrative districts known as satrapies (Grabbe 2004:132-144). According to Fitzpatrick-McKinley (2015:82-83) the Greek historian, Herodotus, recorded that there were as many as twenty. The satraps, usually of Persian origin and often of royal descent, held great authority. Their duties included governance, collection of tribute and payment of wages to garrisons.

Fitzpatrick-McKinley (2015:58-62) state: “conditions under the Persians varied according to regional circumstances with indigenous elite...and these local conditions were subject to frequent change.” Persian rule was not without its complications, and policy towards indigenous cults, when necessary, was one of dominance. In general, they were tolerant of the traditional power held by local elites (none of whom were entirely disempowered), and of the rights of the priesthoods who managed the cults. Persian officials were appointed to supervise the financial affairs of local sanctuaries. Imperial commands, especially those concerning resources, had to be complied with. On occasion, these officials were found to deal harshly with the temple personnel who were subject to them. This is evidenced in ancient sources such as the Persian Daiva inscription², where Xerxes I, who deviates from his predecessors’ values, victimizes certain foreign cults.

b) King Darius I (522-486 BCE)

During the rule of Darius I, major administrative advances were made. He was the third king of Persia, and the father of Xerxes I (485-465 BCE). He built interconnecting roads to all his territories. This simplified the exchange of information from anywhere within his empire. He

² See Brosius, *The Persian Empire from Cyrus to Artaxerxes II*, p. 89 for the inscription.

also facilitated trade by digging a waterway from the Nile River to the Red Sea. His innovative idea to coin currency enabled the implementation of systematized taxation (Middleton 2005:729). Grabbe (2004:151) remarks that Elamite, cuneiform Akkadian, as well as Demotic (and other forms of Egyptian) were found to have been used in Persian administrative documents. It was under Darius' rule that cuneiform writing was first adopted and Aramaic became the principal language.

The Persian empire and its bureaucratic system functioned on a multilingual level, there was no attempt to achieve cultural uniformity, it was a colorful montage of different cultures and social organizations that included the likes of nomads, semi-nomads, and mountain dwelling people (Fitzpatrick-McKinley 2015:87).

c) Artaxerxes 1 (465 - 424 B.C.E)

With the completion of the Temple, Jerusalem had assumed the status of a temple-city and was entitled to certain privileges (Levine 2002:18). Persian policy initiated and supported the rebuilding of their subjects social and religious institutions by providing financial aid, safe passage, and incentives such as tax benefits to Temple personnel. These privileges encouraged the full cooperation of the Jews and fostered positive relations with the Persian authorities (Levine 2002:4). Perdue (2008:159) states: "This assistance is not based on religious tolerance or recognition of the diverse religions and gods of the peoples conquered, but rather on the principle of expediency of ruling peacefully over the colonial kingdoms and nations that made up the empire." The Jewish 'elite' had been selected by the Persian government, specifically because of their loyal cooperation, to form part of the governance of Judah, which was '...in a politically sensitive area near Egypt' (Grabbe 2004:144). The Egyptians, who were in alliance with the Athenians, threatened to rebel against the Persians. Artaxerxes was trying to regain control after it had been lost by the Persians three times, it was therefore important for him to ensure the security of areas such as Yehud, in Western Palestine. It was at this point that the restoration of the city and its temple became high priority (Knauf & Guillaume 2016:159). The king ordered increased military presence along the Via Maris³, and Persian garrisons were stationed at Jerusalem to guard the routes leading to the coast from Ammon, Jericho, and Moab (Knauf & Guillaume 2016:169). In addition to this, there was a Judean military colony of three

³ The Via Maris, also known as the "Way of the Sea" was one of the most important trade routes linking Egypt to the Northern Levant and beyond (*Via-Maris*. 2023. [via-maris.com](https://www.via-maris.com). Available at: <https://www.via-maris.com/blogs/the-book/the-via-maris> Date of access: 15/01/2023).

to four battalions operative in Elephantine. Scholars such as Knauf & Guillaume (2016:177) suggest that the colony possibly originated as early as 582 BCE during the Assyrian empire, with the purpose of guarding the southern frontier of Egypt. Høglund (cited by Levine 2002:5) puts forward that both Ezra and Nehemiah's reforms and fortifications may have been partly driven by imperial agenda.

Office held by Ezra and Nehemiah

In the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424), the priest Ezra, who is given the administrative title "the scribe of the law of the God of heaven", was given the responsibility of appointing judges and magistrates to carry out the Law of Ezra's God over the people of the Trans-Euphrates (Perdue 2008:186). The law (of Moses), deemed part of Persian royal law, was to be adhered to under threat of punishment. The Jews had the official backing of the king who would protect their local customs, as long as it did not interfere with Persian interests (Middleton 2005:584).

Nehemiah, son of Hachaliah, served two terms as governor over Judah. At the time of Nehemiah's mission, Judah was a Persian province in the satrapy of Eber-Nari, referred to as Yehud. Fortifications brought about by him during his first term led to the repopulation of the city. Material culture evidence, such as fortresses that were constructed in the mid-fifth century BCE, and the increased number of seals and Attic ware found in the late fifth century, suggests major changes in the nature and status of Yehud during this period (Carter 1994:122). The villages listed in Nehemiah 3 have often been used to delineate the districts of Yehud: Mizpah, Jerusalem, Beth-Haccerem, Beth-Zur and Keilah. Jerusalem, Beth-Zur and Keilah were further divided into two sub-districts (Neh 3:9,12 & 16). Carter (1994:111) argues that it was not the intent of the biblical authors to provide the precise boundaries of the province of Yehud, but rather, to indicate the extent of the sites to which the Jews had returned. Of the sites identified, 41 % were in the tribal territory of Benjamin and 59 % in that of Judah.

Carter (1999:200-201) maintains that extensive archaeological data demonstrates, when utilizing a density coefficient of twenty-five people per one built up dunam (1000 m²), that Jerusalem at its peak, could not have had a population greater than 1250 to 1500, and no more than 20,000 people for the whole province of Yehud. Jerusalem's maximum size was estimated at 130 to 140 dunams after Nehemiah's mission during the Persian period (Carter 1994:129).

Society & Economy in Yehud

Carter (1994:119,130-135) indicates that the size of settlements in Yehud generally ranged between 2 to 25 dunams, with a population of under 125 people in smaller sites and just over 300 in the larger sites. Population size was estimated using spatial analysis, paleo demography, food remains analysis, water supply and a variety of other approaches that are partly based on applying ethnographic data to archaeological findings. Excavations and surveys show (provisionally) that 69% of the population was concentrated in the central hills, 18% in the western slopes, 12% in the desert fringe and 3% in the Judaeian desert. The concentration of people living in the central hills tells us that it could support traditional agrarian subsistence strategies.

As an agrarian society, most individuals were involved in agricultural farming on small holdings that they either rented or owned. Families generally produced what was necessary to sustain their basic needs, but in order to pay their taxes they were eventually forced to produce a surplus (Grabbe 2004:172-173). Only a small portion of people were classed as urban elites. Carter (1994:138) mentions that religious elites would often propagate an ideology that encouraged agrarian peasants to offer surplus produce in support of the cult and/or state. The types of elites active in Jerusalem at the time included: Aaronide and Levitical priests; singers; temple servants; gatekeepers; and scribes. There were also other professional guilds including: goldsmiths; perfumers; masons and carpenters.

Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem paints a grim picture of a struggling economy. The city walls were in a state of disrepair, and the Levitical priests, no longer receiving their portions, abandoned their duties in the Temple to find other means of provision. The citizens of Yehud appeared to have been subjected to unsustainable levels of tax and complained of administrative abuses. Carter (1994:140-143) explains, that fortunately, the Jewish community was part of the larger administration of Eber-Nari that was financed by the empire. Surplus flowed in from the Shephelah and the coastal plain and provided the economic support it required to remain viable. In addition to this, a network of economic exchange would have developed with faithful Jews who had returned to Yehud after the exile. Committed to their traditions of offering sacrifices, and celebrating major festivals at the Jerusalem temple, they ensured periodic injections of revenue. Financial support for the temple also included the one-third shekel temple tax that was imposed during Nehemiah's term as governor.

The importance of scribes

Grabbe (2004:152-155) explains that Persian officials were appointed to govern, but local scribes played a crucial role in assisting them by carrying out Persian administrative duties. The scribal Levites were particularly useful as they had the skills required to manage a community and the temple. They were educated, and very involved in cultic and religious activities. Perdue (2008:183-184) discerns two types of scribes that were active in two locales: in the temple under the Zadokite hierarchy, where they would be responsible for the management of sacrifices, taxes, composing and archiving various documents; and in the governor's office where they would be involved in the local internal administration, headed by the Jewish governors of the province of Yehud.

Scribes placed emphasis on the priestly Torah, which they would establish, interpret, and teach as the constitution for social life in Yehud. Their high regard of the Torah finds expression in the theological themes of the Second Temple period. The theology of the scribe "...was centered on creation, the revelation of the Torah (equated with wisdom), a universal deity ("God Most High"), the temple, and the sacred city of Jerusalem" (Perdue 2008:184). Scholars generally agree that the period is marked by substantial literary activity, with many who have suggested that this is when the Priestly editing of the official history of Israel took place (Carter 1994:137).

CHAPTER 4

EXEGESIS OF NEHEMIAH 3

4.1. Genre, structure, and form

Most scholars agree that Ezra-Nehemiah falls under the genre of historical narrative (Dillard & Longman 1994:209). Durken (2017: 673-674) states: “That history is only about the retelling of events in the order that they happened is a modern idea that often is at odds with how ancient authors wrote about the past”. For biblical writers, the moral or didactic purpose of a text was more important than its historical accuracy. Their main interest was to draw from Israel’s past traditions and present them as a pedagogical tool of instruction.

Scholars such as Blenkinsopp (1988:243) argue that the list of Nehemiah 3 is not part of the Memoirs and was skillfully incorporated into the autobiographical narrative (1-7). The prominence given to Eliashib the high priest (3:1) suggests that the catalogue was constructed under priestly authority and preserved in the temple archives. According to Williamson (1985:253), the text sets itself apart from other Nehemiah memoirs for three reasons: firstly, it states that the work on the wall is completed, including the doors, bolts, and bars of the gates, yet, in chapter 6 Nehemiah reports that “...I had built the wall and that there was no gap left in it (though up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates)” (6:1); secondly, Nehemiah’s accounts are all in the first person, but the list is narrated in the third person; lastly, two references are made that are in contrast with Nehemiah’s terminology elsewhere (3:5 “nobles” and, “their Lord” [in reference to Nehemiah himself]). Scholars agree that the list is most likely to be of independent origin, composed by an author contemporary to Nehemiah, but redacted and inserted into the Memoirs by a later editor (Lipschits 2012:76).

The builders are listed in an anticlockwise direction starting and ending with the Sheep Gate (Bolin 2012:32). Each section details its connection with the previous section, lists the names of those involved with the building and repairs, and mentions the points at which they started and finished. Notwithstanding ostensible similarities, too many variations exist to justify forcing a greater sense of uniformity than that which is provided by their geographical succession (Williamson 1985:251).

Despite describing a complete circuit of the walls, the list appears to be incomplete. Batten (1913:206) points out two occasions in which ‘a second section’ has been repaired without the antecedent first section being mentioned (3:11 & 20). According to Blenkinsopp (1988:231-232), there are scholars who argue in favour of a combination of two independent lists. The first half of the text (3:1-15), provides information, and lists topographical features pertinent to the wall’s northern and western sections. The second half (3:16-32), pinpoints the location of groups by referring to features (incl. housing) within the eastern section of the city, beginning with its southern extremity. Furthermore, the phrase *וְעַל־יָדוֹ* (at [his] hand) is used to join the sections in the first half, whereas in the second half, the preposition *אַחֲרָיו* (after him) is used (Williamson 1985:252).

Blenkinsopp (1988:232) rejects the notion of two independent lists by explaining that the changes in formula found after v15 could be indicative of a different scribe at work, or it can be attributed to the fact that it was impossible to continue along the contours of the old wall down the western slope of the Kidron Valley. To continue, Nehemiah had to follow a new higher line along the eastern side. Blenkinsopp adds that the majority of those who repaired two sections are mentioned in both halves of the text. Williamson (1985:252), in agreement with Blenkinsopp, holds to the essential unity of the list, and further remarks that typical words and phrases such as “ruler of half the district of” can be found in both halves.

Because the list is accepted by scholars as an original, it is an important source for the wider socio-political, and geographical situation of the province of Judah in the Persian period. Based on the word ‘ruler,’ Rudolph (cited by Williamson 1985:254) observes that the text reveals two aspects: firstly, the districts that were chosen by the Persians to serve as administrative areas after the conquest of Jerusalem: Jerusalem, Beth-zur, Keilah, Beth-haccherem, and Mizpah; secondly, that local leaders were appointed over them (Williamson 1985:254).

The text also provides information on nearby settlements by identifying five of the groups of builders by the towns in which they lived: Jericho, Hassenaah, Tekoa, Gibeon, Mizpah, and Zanoah (Batten 1913:206). The builders, who were divided into 41 work details, included both males and females, and were individuals of different social and professional standing: priests, Levites, gatekeepers, artisans, tradesmen, and private individuals (Blenkinsopp 1988:232). Many of the names listed, appear to be Levites and priests (Batten 1913:206-207). In 32

instances the father is identified and in 5 of these, either a grandfather or earlier relative is also mentioned.

For practical reasons, Blenkinsopp (1988:233) divides the work on the circuit of the walls into: the north with eight work outfits (Neh 3:1-5); the west with ten work outfits (Neh 3:6-13); the south with two (Neh 3:14-15); the east with twenty-one (Neh 3:16-32).

4.2. The four cardinal directions of the wall

4.2.1. To the North: Nehemiah 3:1-5

Verse 1

¹Then the high priest Eliashib set to work with his fellow priests and rebuilt the Sheep Gate.

They consecrated it and set up its doors; they consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred and as far as the Tower of Hananel.

¹נִקְּמוּ אֱלִישִׁיבִי הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאַתְּוֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת־שַׁעַר הַצֹּאן הַמֵּה קִדְשׁוֹהוּ וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָתָיו וַעֲד־מִגְדַל הַמֵּאָה קִדְשׁוֹהוּ עַד מִגְדַל חֲנַנְאֵל: 8

a) **Eliashib (God refresh/lead back)**

Name:	Eliashib (17)
Book/s:	1 Chronicles & Ezra-Nehemiah
Lemma:	אֱלִישִׁיב
Category:	Theophoric, verbal sentence name (Fowler 1988:95)
Translation:	Hiph. “God refresh/lead back” (HALOT 2000:57), “God restores” (Fowler 1988:362)
Root:	אָל + שׁוּב Qal “God” + “turn around, repent” (HALOT 2000:1427).
Cognates:	Old Aramaic <i>šb</i> “to turn back, around, repeat,”
Derived stems:	Po. “bring back” (BDB 1906:997.1)

Eliashib was the high priest of the Jerusalem temple that aided in the rebuilding of the wall during Nehemiah's term as governor. There is some confusion amongst scholars as to whether this Eliashib is the same Eliashib whose grandson marries the daughter of Nehemiah's opponent, Sanballat. What is known of this Eliashib, is that he must have been of high social standing, the distance between the work details close to his house, indicates that he was a man of great wealth and had a sizeable house (Wright 1992:460).

According to Fowler (1988:38,44,363) the distribution of names in the Old Testament compounded with the theophoric element *el* is most prevalent in the pre-Monarchical period. The second largest distribution is found in the Exilic and post-Exilic period and occurs predominantly in the Qal perfective.

El is a masculine noun that means 'god,' but can also be applied in a subordinate manner to denote might, rank, strength, or power, as well as angelic beings and deities (BDB 1906: 42.1). According to HALOT (2000:1427-1428) the word *šwb* in the Qal means "to turn around or repent," on a couple of occasions "rest" has also been ascribed to it.

Application in text: God turn back/return (Eliashib)

A morphological search on the verb *šwb* in the Hiphil, imperfect produced more than 2300 results in the Hebrew Bible. A word study of the same root with God as the subject produced approximately 174 results (LBS 10). Holladay (cited by HALOT 2000:1429) explains that the basic meaning of שׁוּב can be understood as someone who has "shifted direction" but is turning back to reach the "original point from which they departed." Although there is no Hebrew word that is an exact equivalent for repentance, theologically the word שׁוּב implies turning away from sin to righteousness, or from rebellion to obedience (Garrett 2000:1118). Another meaning of the word is provided by Noth (cited by Fowler 1998:95) who interprets it as a petition to have the diaspora return, or the re-establishment of Jerusalem to its former state. The general sense of the name Eliashib, as reflecting the importance of turning back to God, both geographically and spiritually, is most prominently expressed in the Hiphil stem during the post-exilic period. The word *šwb* also denotes a sense of restoration, in that *YHWH* allows his people to return to Jerusalem. In doing so, he was restoring his relationship with them, and returning that which rightfully belongs to them by means of his covenantal promise to them.

b) Fellow priests

The priests were responsible for overseeing the sacrificial system and performing liturgical duties. They were appointed to represent the people before God, and the divine will of God before the people. Duke (2003:651) explains that it was the duty of the high priest, as the chief spiritual leader, to re-establish the distinction between that which is holy and that which is common, in the same way that God made the distinction between his holy seed and other nations. According to the text, the Sheep Gate is the only gate to have been consecrated by the priests. The rite of consecration was performed to separate the secular from the sacred, to commit that which is made holy to God, and for his purpose. The wall marked the boundary between insiders and outsiders both literally and metaphorically (Durken 2017:673). The timing of the act seems peculiar since the doors had not yet been erected. Scholars such as Batten (1913:208) suggest that the words ‘he consecrated it’ (v.1) were used by a scribe showing priestly sympathy, as the act of consecration was more befitting of a priest than the laborious laying of beams. He proposes that the text be read as ‘they laid the beams’ as in v 3 and 6.

c) The Sheep Gate

The work on the wall had its beginning and ending at the Sheep Gate. Edelman (2011:50-51) situates the gate close to the temple, on the north-eastern corner of the city. The name of the gate implies that it was used as the main entrance for individuals who wanted to bring sacrificial offerings to the temple.

The syntax of Neh. 1:1 indicates that the Sheep Gate was close to the Tower of a Hundred and the Tower of Hananel. The Tower of a Hundred is mentioned only in the book of Nehemiah (3:1; 12:39). It is not clear what the “Hundred” refers to, but it may suggest a military unit of one hundred soldiers that formed part of the city wall’s defence system (Smith 2010:225). The Tower of Hananel is referred to again in the prophecies of Jeremiah (31) and Zechariah (14) concerning the new Jerusalem and the eschatological promise of God. The tower functioned as a fortified point of defence on the northern walls (Smith 2010:225). Edelman (2011:68), speculates that it may have been named after Hananiah, the commander of the fort at Jerusalem. The theophoric element of his name (*YHWH*) may have been changed to the generic ‘*el* (a more general reference to the divine), to make it more tolerable to the Persian officials. Hananel, meaning “God is gracious” could also have been used symbolically, as an appeal to the grace of God in times of attack.

Verse 2

²And the men of Jericho built next to him. And next to them Zaccur son of Imri built.

וְעַל־יְדוֹ בְנוּ אִנְשֵׁי יִרְחֹוּ ס וְעַל־יְדוֹ בְנֵה זַכּוּר בֶּן־אִמְרִי: ס

a) **The men of Jericho**

To the Hebrews, Jericho served as a memorial of great military victory. It was the first site they conquered when they entered the land of Canaan (Joshua 5-6). Perhaps indicative of a symbolic connection between the first gate being repaired by the men of Jericho and Jericho as the first entry point into the promised land. Schwartz (1988:24-25) indicates that by the time of Elisha and Elijah, the site had a school of prophets, and a large priestly population who maintained a special relationship with Jerusalem and its Temple. The fact that it was the men of Jericho who built the section next to Eliashib and his priests, may suggest that the men themselves were priests related to the priestly family of Jedaiah. Jericho was an attractive option for settlement in the Persian period because of its fertile tracts of land. The books of Ezra-Nehemiah describe how 345 people settled there during the time of Zerubbabel (Schwartz 1988:25).

b) **Zaccur (remember) s/o Imri (YHWH has spoken)**

Name:	Zaccur (8)
Book/s:	1 Chronicles & Ezra-Nehemiah
Lemma:	זכור
Category:	Theophoric (possible abbreviated form).
Translation:	“YHWH has remembered” (Fowler 1988:168).
Root:	זכר Qal "to remember" (HALOT 2000:269).
Cognates:	Akkadian s/zak/qāru “to say, name, invoke” (HALOT 2000:269).
Derived stems:	Hiph. “to name, mention, to call to mind”

According to Fowler (1988: 167-168), Zaccur can be interpreted as “He (the deity) has remembered.” It appears to be an abbreviated name that initially held a theophoric compound suggesting that the “deity is possibly semantically implied by the nature of the name.” The

name is a common post-exilic name derived from the verb זָכַר “remember,” (HALOT 2000:269).

The name of Zaccur’s father Imri אִמְרִי, is a short form of אִמְרֵי־יְהוָה derived from the root אָמַר + ״ that means “*Yahweh* has promised” (BDB 1906), or “*Yahweh* has spoken” or “created” (HALOT 2000:68). Blenkinsopp (1988:234) suggests that their position on the wall indicates association with people of the Jordan Valley.

Application in text: YHWH has remembered (Zaccur)

Verhey (1992:667) states that in scripture “remember, remembrance” is not just a neutral apprehension or preservation of images of the past but rather “typically constitutive of identity and determinative of conduct.” The term ‘remember’ with God as the subject, appears more than 70 times throughout the Old Testament. The term is applied in the sense of God remembering his covenant with his people, and that he remembered their faithfulness and not their sin. Praise for the “wonderful works” of God and how he remembers his covenant for “eternity,” is especially recited in the Psalms. When praise is offered to *YHWH* in Psalm 98 for remembering his “steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel” it recalls the divine self-revelation of God in Exodus 34:5-7. The implication is that when God *remembers* “it determines conduct and not only the great deeds of the past but also God’s works of judgment and mercy in the present and future.” According to Verhey (1992:667), in the covenantal history of the Priestly narrative the term is expressed several times in texts such as Genesis (9, 19), Exodus (2, 6, 32), Leviticus (26), and Deuteronomy (9). Evidently, recalling the covenant provides a basis from which to plead and appeal for deliverance (Ps 119:49), favour (Ps 115:12), mercy (2 Ki 20) and forgiveness (Is 43, Jer 31).

Verse 3

³The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars.

וַיֵּצְאוּ שְׁעַר הַדָּגִים בְּנֵי בְנֵי הַסְּנַאָה הַמָּה קְרוּיָהוּ וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דַלְתֹתָיו מִנְעוּלָיו וּבְרִיקָיו: ס

a) The Fish Gate

The Fish Gate is placed by most on the western wall due its connection to the Mishneh (cf. Zeph 1:10) section of western Jerusalem (Smith 2010:225). Longman III (2013:641) explains that the gates of Jerusalem were generally named in relation to their function, activity, or direction of travel. The Fish Gate was therefore probably a marketplace where people from the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean came to sell their fish (Smith 2010:225).

b) The sons of Hassenaah (to hate)

The name/place Hassenaah can be broken down into the definite article ה “the” & the word סנא (Senaah) which means “the hate.” Senaah is found in Jewish Aramaic of the Babylonian tradition. The Moabite, Egyptian Aramaic and Ugaritic cognates carry the same negative essence of hate, enmity, or separation. According to Ewing ([Bromiley 1979](#)) the sons of Hassenaah formed part of the first wave of returnees with Zerubbabel. They may be identified with the Benjamite clan Hassenuah (1Ch 9:7) or as alternate forms of the name Senaah which can be found in the sections of various geographical names. In the Onomasticon of Eusebius, it refers to a village called Magdalsenna approximately 7 miles North of Jericho, but the site is unknown. According to Bergdall (1992:25) many people are said to be associated to the clan or place but there is no information available on them. Scholars have suggested that it may have been used as a collective term to refer to the lower classes or those who had no affiliation to Judah or Benjamin.

Verse 4

⁴Next to them Meremoth son of Uriah son of Hakkoz made repairs. Next to them Meshullam son of Berechiah son of Meshezabel made repairs. Next to them Zadok son of Baana made repairs.

ועל־יגדֹם הַחֲזִיק מְרֵמוֹת בְּנֵי אֲוִרְיָה בְּנֵי חַקּוֹז עַל־יגְדֹם הַחֲזִיק מִשְׁלָם בְּנֵי בְרַכְיָה בְּנֵי מִשְׁשֵׁזַבֵּל עַל־יגְדֹם הַחֲזִיק צָדוֹק בְּנֵי בַעֲנָא: ע

a) Meremoth (Benjamite?) s/o Uriah (flame of YHWH), s/o Hakkoz (thorns/thorny bushes)

The meaning of the name Meremoth is of uncertain derivation. According to Ezra 8:33 he was a priest and a weigher of the gold and vessels within the house of God. He was one of the builders that helped to repair the wall in two different places (Neh 3:4 & 21). His name appears only 6 times, and only in the book of Ezra (8:33; 10:36) and Nehemiah (3:4; 3:21; 10:5; 12:3).

Meremoth was the son of Uriah, who was the son of Hakkoz. In 1 Ch 24:10 Uriah אֲוִיָּהּ was the head of the 7th course of priests appointed by David ([Wallace 2023](#)). His name is theophoric, with the suffix הָיָה and means “Flame of *YHWH*” or “*YHWH* is my light” derived from the root words אָוִר “flame” and הָיָה “*YHWH*” (Strong 2001:248). His name is also found in the Aramaic Papyri of the fifth century during the reign of Artaxerxes 1 (Cowley 1923:17).

Meremoth’s grandfather’s name Hakkoz חֲקֹז is derived from the root חָקַז “thorns/thorny bushes.” Hakkoz was not able to provide proof of descent but was seemingly permitted by the casting of lots to enter the priestly ranks (1 Chr 24:10; Wright 1992:25).

Upon reading the words of “flame” and “thorns/thorny bush” in the same sentence, one cannot help but recall Exodus 3 where God appears as a burning bush to Moses. Korpel (1999:859) indicates that Dt 33:16 refers to *YHWH* as “the thorn-bush-dweller,” and that Jdg 9:14-14 and Ps 58:10 ascribes the thornbush to *YHWH* symbolically. Of interest, and requiring further research, is the possible connection between the name of Meremoth (of unknown derivation), to the name of the ancient Egyptian god ‘Thoth’ (‘Djeheuty’ in Ancient Egyptian, also of unknown derivation). The names are orthographically quite close in translation and the Jews associated Thoth with Moses (Vos 1999:861-863). Hart (2005:156-158) explains that Thoth was a moon-god, the patron god of scribes and knowledge. He was ‘birthed’ from the head of Seth. Amenhotep 111 (14th century B.C.E) had established a major temple dedicated to Thoth that was damaged when Persians invaded Egypt. Petosiris, the high priest of Thoth, renovated and restored it in the fourth century B.C.E. The possibility of an etymological connection between Thoth, Moses, and Meremoth, requires further research.

b) Meshullam (restitution or given as substitute), s/o Berechiah (YHWH has blessed) s/o Meshezabel (God delivers).

Name:	Meshullam (25)
Book/s:	2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah
Lemma:	מְשַׁלֵּם Pual, participle
Category:	Secular
Translation:	Pu. “given as a substitute” (HALOT 2000:648) or “restitution” (Strong 2001:1533)
Root:	שָׁלַם Qal "to be completed, ready" pi. “to repay, restore,” hiph. “to hand over” (HALOT 2000:1532)

Two different men named Meshullam helped to rebuild and repair the wall of Jerusalem, Meshullam son of Berechiah (3:4 & 30) and Meshullam son of Besodeiah (3:6). Meshullam son of Berechiah was the father of the bride chosen by Johanan, the son of Tobiah, Nehemiah’s opponent (Neh 6:18). Many of the men who bore the name, were descendants of priests or Levites. Fowler (1988:127) notes that the name has a participle predicate and may be indicative of Aramaic or Akkadian influence.

Meshullam’s father Berechiah, is a theophoric name with the suffix *YHWH*. Berechiah בְּרַכְיָהּ which is an abbreviated form of בְּרַכְיָהוּ is derived from the root בָּרַךְ which means “to kneel, bless” (HALOT 2000:161). It is a verbal sentence name in the Qal perfect form, that describes what *YHWH* has done: “*YHWH* has blessed” (Fowler 1988:90).

Meshezabel, the grandfather of Meshullam also has a theophoric name but it is compounded with the suffix *El* (Elohim). It is derived from the root אֱל “God” and the Akkadian loan word שִׁינַב “delivers” (HALOT 2000:645). His name also appears to have traces of Aramaic influence, evidenced by the presence of the participle (Schmidt 1992:712).

Application in text: restitution, given as substitute (Meshullam)

A morphological search of the root שָׁלַם used as a Pual participle in the texts of the Hebrew Bible, produced no results. A word study of the root, applied in the sense of making restitution,

produced approximately 20 results. All were related to restoring to the rightful owner something that had been taken away: "...the owner shall restore ox for ox..." (Ex 21:36 NRSV); "...he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing..." (2 Sm 12:6 NRSV); "Yet if they are caught, they will pay sevenfold;" (Pr 6:31 NRSV).

c) Zadok (Just/righteous) s/o Baana (son of oppression?)

Name:	Zadok (52)
Book/s:	2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah
Lemma:	קִדָּץ (or possible short form of קִדָּץ)
Category:	Secular
Translation:	"just/righteous" or "what is correct, right, honest" (HALOT 2000:1001)
Root:	קִדָּץ noun "what is correct, right, honest" or קִדָּץ verb, Qal "to be right, to be just"
Cognates:	Ugaritic, Akkadian, Ammonite & Phoenician: "right," "just," and "legitimate" (HALOT 2000:1004).

Zadok is the name of 2 wall-builders, a name bestowed on many generations of Zadokites. Most historians agree that Zadok held a monopoly on the priesthood from the united monarchy until the exile (Porter & Ramsey 1992:1034).

Zadok's father, Baana, may be the same Baanah (variant spelling of same name) that returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Neh 7:7), or one of the leaders that signed the agreement to observe the law of Moses, during Nehemiah's term as governor (Neh 10:27). The name Baana/h is of uncertain derivation but the individuals who bore it appear to be of Israelite origin. Scholars have suggested that the name involves two elements, the first is בָּן "son of," and the second element is either אָנָה meaning "distress" or it is linked to an Ugaritic deity meaning "Anath" (Knobloch 1992:557).

Application in text: righteous, justice (Zadok)

According to Scullion (1992:724-726), there is a variety of words that can be derived from the root קִדָּץ, the meaning of which cannot be determined *a priori*. The noun occurs 119 times, more than half of which are found in the Psalms. Scholars have been able to distinguish many

nuances of meaning that include: the well-being of the soul, loyalty, order, and *YHWH's* loyal love, the order established by his loyal love, and his commitment to his covenant with his people, especially in times of distress. The general sense of the word advanced by scholars is that of *YHWH's* saving action toward a people in need.

The verbal form occurs 41 times, mostly in a forensic sense that expresses “how someone stands before the law or God” (Scullion 1992:726). The Psalms provide good examples: “the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (19:9); “Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment” (51:4).

Verse 5

⁵Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

וְעַל־יָדָם הִתְקַוּוּ הַתְּקוּעִים וְאֲדִירֵיהֶם לֹא־הִבִּיאוּ צַנָּוִם בְּעֵבֶרֶת אֲדִנְיָהֶם: 5

a) The Tekoites

The Tekoites repaired two sections of the wall (Neh 3:5,27). The nobles or prominent men of the area would not assist in rebuilding the wall, which indicates that the project was not necessarily supported by everyone (Blenkinsopp 1988:234). Axelsson (1992:344) indicates that their unwillingness to assist supports the notion of perpetual “conflict between city and countryside.”

Tekoa was a town situated in the highlands of Judah bordering between arable land and the desert. The town was not mentioned in Joshua’s catalogue of towns in Judah (15:49) but the LXX lists it as a district (v59). Axelsson (1992:343) suggests, that according to the genealogical lists found in the beginning of 1 Chronicles, Tekoa must have been established as a result of people integrating from the tribe of Ephrathah at Bethlehem and Calebites from the Hebron area. The importance of the area appears to be connected to the people, rather than to the events that took place there. Scholars have associated wisdom with the town, in view of

what transpired in 2 Sm 14:2. Joab, the commander of David’s army, called for a “wise woman” from Tekoa to reconcile David with his son Absalom. It was also the birthplace of the famous “Ira,” he was one of David’s thirty “mighty men” (2 Sm 23:26). The town is mostly renowned for being the birthplace of the prophet Amos. He was a “herdsman” and “dresser of sycamore trees” (Am 7:14) who went to the Northern kingdom to fulfil his ministry.

The message of Amos

Amos עָמוֹס “the one who is supported by YHWH” is a short form of a *qatil* pattern, that describes a state or quality of being, עָמַסְתָּהּ “YHWH has (protectively) carried” (HALOT 2000:847). The message of Amos centers around God’s fast approaching judgement against Israel. In the first two chapters, Amos brings accusations of violence and injustice against Israel’s wealthy inhabitants, and their surrounding neighbours. In the first part of the book (1-2), Amos alludes to Genesis 12, and reminds the Israelites that they are a nation chosen by God to be a blessing to all nations (cf. Gn 12). Their calling to be holy, and subsequent rebellion against God therefore warrants punishment. In the second part of his message (3-6) stress is placed on the words “righteousness” and “justice” and how the true worship of God is to “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Am 5:24). A real relationship with God will transform the Israelite’s relationships with their neighbours to reflect love by means of right and just actions. He announces the coming of the day of the Lord, which leads to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of their nation. He concludes the book with a vision of hope, Jerusalem will be restored, and the family of God will be rebuilt to include people from all the nations (7-9). Amos’ visions describe the events that brought the Israelites up to the point at which they found themselves in Nehemiah.

4.2.2. To the West: Nehemiah 3:6-12

Verse 6

⁶ Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars

וַיִּבְנֶה יוֹיָדָע בֶּן-פָּסֶחַ וּמְשֻׁלָּם בֶּן-בְּסוּדֵיָהָ הַמָּזָה קַרְוֵיהָ וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דַלְתֹתָיו וּמַנְעֻלָיו וּבָרִיקָיו: 6

a) The Old Gate or Mishneh Gate (the second)

Blenkinsopp (1988:234) contends that “the Old Gate” is an incorrect translation, and that it should read “the Mishneh Gate” which means “the second or to repeat” (HALOT 2000:650). In Hebrew, an attributive adjective must agree with the noun it is qualifying in gender, number, and direction (Prinsloo 2019:60). Here, we have a feminine adjective qualifying a masculine noun. Reading “the Mishneh Gate” seems logical when considering its natural association with the village of Jeshanah. The gate leads to the village which is situated just outside of the city. Unfortunately, the lack of the definite article (indicating determination) places some doubt on such an interpretation. To date, the gate remains a bit of an enigma (Liid 1992:12).

b) Joiada (YHWH [has known] knows), s/o Paseah (to become lame, limp)

Name:	Joiada (4)
Book/s:	Nehemiah
Lemma:	יְהוֹיָדָע = ידע + יהוה (developed from יְהוֹיָדָע)
Category:	Theophoric, prefixed <i>YHWH</i>
Translation:	“ <i>YHWH</i> knows” (BDB 1906:220.1)
Root:	ידע Qal “to know, notice, hear.”
Cognates:	Ugaritic <i>yd'</i> , Phoenician, Akkadian <i>wadū</i> , and Egyptian Aramaic “to recognize” (HALOT 2000:390).
Derived stems:	Niph. “to make oneself known, reveal” pu. “acquaintance, confidant.”

Joiada was a Levite who returned to Judah after the exile. Two people, both Eliashib and Joiada are listed as being the father of Johanan (Ezr 2:43; Neh 12:23). Williamson (1985) suggests that they were possibly referring to a different Eliashib and Johanan because they were very popular names. He adds that the word “son” was not always used in reference to a paternal relationship.

Application in text: to know, notice, hear (Joiada)

The words “to know” occur over 3000 times in the Old Testament. A word study of the root ידע with God as the subject produced more than a 110 results in the Hebrew Bible (LBS 10). Emerton (1991:153-156) conducted extensive research on the verb ידע and found that its meaning was at times determined by the needs of the context. Medieval Jewish writers such as

Ibn Ezra maintained that the verb sometimes meant “to break” or “to discipline, chastise,” especially in verses such as Jdg 8:16; Is 53:3 and Ezk 19:7. There are scholars who agree that Jewish tradition retained a rendering of the verbal root that was distinct to “to know.” An alternative explanation is that Jewish grammarians and commentators were predominantly concerned about the sense of a word. Emerton (1991) concludes:

“it is possible to claim that the meaning “to know” was found unsuitable by medieval rabbis in some contexts, that the meaning “to break” (*šbr*) was derived from the Tarhomic reading *wtbr* in Judg. Viii 16, and the meaning “to discipline, chastise” arose from exegesis of the *hiph* ‘*il* of *yāda* ‘ in the sense of “to cause to know, to teach.” (p.157)

Joiada’s father Paseah פסח is an adjectival *qatil* pattern name that means “limper.” It is derived from the root פסח “to pass over, jump” Qal; “to become lame” niph. (HALOT 2000:947-948). He was one of the individuals who came from Babylon to Jerusalem after the exile.

According to Jones (1992:135) the etymology of the word פסח (Paseah) is uncertain. In 2 Sm 4:4 the word is used in reference to physical trauma, but it is difficult to determine the sense of the word in 1 Ki 18:26 because it describes a type of ritual dance or ritual ‘faltering’ close to the altar of Baal. “Limping” has been employed in verses such as Ps 38:18; Jr 20:10; Job 18:12 in a figurative sense, to denote downfall or calamity. The word “lame” and “blind” are often presented together in a way that depicts the helplessness of the individual who is completely dependent on the general public for survival.

c) Meshullam (restitution or given as substitute) s/o Besodeiah (in YHWH’s council)

As per the previous comments on Meshullam in verse 4, the root מלם is applied in the sense of making restitution, and restoring to the rightful owner something that had been taken away: “...the owner shall restore ox for ox...” (Ex 21:36 NRSV); “...he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing...” (2 Sm 12:6 NRSV); “Yet if they are caught, they will pay sevenfold;”(Pr 6:31 NRSV).

Besodeiah בְּסוּדֵיָהוָה “in YHWH’s council” (בְּ + סוּד + הוָה) occurs only once in Nehemiah (3.6). The name is a noun in construct state with a preposition and a theophoric suffix. It describes the name-bearer’s close relationship with YHWH (Fowler 1988:117). According to HALOT

(2000:140, 745) it is derived from the root סוד “secret, council.” The sense of the word is the same in cognate languages: Ugaritic “secret place;” Arabic “confidential conversation;” and Old South Arabian “meeting of the council.” Kennedy (1992:679) proposes that the name brings to remembrance “the prophetic experience of being admitted to the divine council (1 Ki 22:19-23; Is 6; Jr 23:18,22).”

Verse 7

⁷Next to them repairs were made by Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah—who were under the jurisdiction of the governor of the province Beyond the River.

⁷ועל־יָדָם הַחֲזִיק מִלְטָיָה הַגִּבְעוֹנִי וַיְדוֹן הַמֶּרֶנֹּתִי אֲנָשֵׁי גִבְעוֹן וְהַמִּצְפָּה לְכֹסֵא פֶתַח עֵבֶר הַנֶּהָר: ס

¹²ועל־יָדָו הַחֲזִיק שְׁלוֹם בְּיַד־הַלֹּחֶשׁ שֶׁר חָצִי פָלֶה וְרוֹשֵׁלָם הוּא וּבְנוֹתָיו: ס

a) **Melatiah (*YHWH* has saved, delivered), the Gibeonite**

Name:	Melatiah (1)
Book/s:	Nehemiah
Lemma:	מלט + ״ = מִלְטָיָה (Fowler 1988:97)
Category:	Theophoric, suffixed <i>YHWH</i>
Translation:	“ <i>YHWH</i> has delivered, set free”
Root:	מלט Qal “to save” (Fowler 1988:97)
Cognates:	Arabian & Akkadian “to escape, to keep alive” (HALOT 2000:589).
Derived stems:	Pi. “to save someone, oneself,” “to leave undisturbed, at rest,” hiph. “to rescue, bring away”, “to bear, give birth to,” hithp. “refuge” (HALOT 2000:589)

Melatiah was a Gibeonite and most likely an official. His name is attested only once in Nehemiah (3:7). A word search indicates that the word occurs many times in different stems. Fowler (1988:97) notes that when a name expresses deliverance by a deity, it could be referring to events of national proportion.

Application in text: to save, deliver (Melatiah)

According to Fowler (1988:97) the Qal form of the word cannot be found anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. A word study was therefore conducted on the root מלט with God as the subject, the search produced several results: Is 31:5; 46:4; Jr 39:18; Ps 41:2; 107:20; 116:4 & Job 22:30 (LBS 10). In these verses, the word מלט expressed the need for salvation from either illness, the consequences of sin or some form of hostility.

The two verses in Isaiah share a similar theme in that the people were faced with hostility. Isaiah warned the people of Jerusalem not to put their trust in man (Egypt) or idols for protection against the enemy (Assyria), but to repent and trust in God who will fight on their behalf and save them: "...the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it" (31:5 NRSV); "...I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save" (46:4 NRSV). Jeremiah 39 then illustrates this principle when Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian who placed his trust in the Lord, is saved by God from being killed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar who besieged Jerusalem, because he helped to release Jeremiah from imprisonment.

In the context of the Psalms, the word relates to divine protection and restoration, blessing, refuge, strength, and relief from illness (41:2-3). In Psalm 107:20, it speaks of deliverance from destruction brought about by the consequences of sin and rebellion. Psalm 116:4 is a call for deliverance from death and calamity. The Psalm forms a chiasm in the central verse (8-11) expressing God's loyalty in making all things new when his people are able to keep their faith, even in the face of death. The expression in Job 22:30 that he will deliver "even those who are guilty; they will escape because of the cleanness of your hand" is understood to mean that God will allow the righteous to intercede for the guilty (cf. Gn 18), their prayers will be heard on their behalf, even if they didn't deserve it ([Barnes 2023](#)).

Arnold and Williamson (2005:851), contend that in the Historical books, people usually needed to be saved or delivered from a human enemy rather than natural disasters or the eternal consequences of their sin (they state that being saved from the eternal consequences of sin is "a concept foreign to Old Testament writers"). The Pentateuch taught that sickness, disease, and destruction was often inflicted by God as punishment for sin (Lv 26: 14-16; Dt 29:22-24). Delivering Israel from any form of trouble was an act of mercy, and one of God's main activities in the Historical writings (Arnold & Williamson 2005:852).

b) Jadon (frail one or *YHWH* rules?) the Meronothite

The name Jadon is only mentioned once and only in Nehemiah. Equally elusive are the Meronothites of which only two inhabitants are known: Jadon, and Jehdeiah. The latter was a civic official appointed by David (1 Chr 27:30). Jehdeiah too, is mentioned on only one other occasion as a Levite and head of the Shubael family. The location of Meronoth is unknown, it was somehow related to Mizpah, but the connection is unclear (Nysse 2000:887).

According to Noth (HALOT 2000:389) Jadon (יָדוֹן) could either be the short form of Yedoniah יְדוֹנְיָה found in the Aramaic papyri of Elephantine (No. 30¹ & 37^{1,17}), or the Arabic *waduna* “to be thin.” Strong (2001:1507) translates it to mean “frail one or *YHWH* rules.” In the Elephantine papyri dated to circa 410 B.C.E., Yedoniah is a chief priest and head of the community at Yeb (Cowley 1923:108).

c) The men of Gibeon

Gibeon was remembered as a sacred site on which many important events transpired. It was a royal city of Canaan; the residents were referred to as the ‘Hivites.’ The city was strategically positioned at the junctions of the central hill country, making it “a natural hub of conflict between Israel and Judah” (Schniedewind 2000:502). They initially deceived Joshua with an accord of peace (Jos 9). When their trickery was exposed, Joshua condemned them to be “hewers of wood and drawers of water” to the congregation of Israel forever (Jos 9:21). In the battle that ensued, Joshua was witness to the miraculous power of God, when upon his request “the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies” (Jos 10:13).

2 Sam 21:1-9 records a three-year famine during the reign of David which, upon his enquiry to God, attributed the event to “the bloodguilt on Saul.” Saul, during his rule, had broken the Joshua treaty by slaughtering the Gibeonites. David’s response in allowing the Gibeonites to kill seven of Saul’s offspring “underscores the impression that the Gibeonites were somehow considered a legally protected ethnic group within Israel” (Arnold 1992:1010).

Scholars such as Schniedewind (2000:502) suggest that Gibeon was most likely “the hill of God” (Gibeath-Elohim) the sacred place referred to in the Saul narratives and mentioned by the Chronicler as a tent for meeting with God (1 Chr 1:3). It was at this sacred place that God

appeared to Solomon in a dream and granted his request for “an understanding mind to govern [...], able to discern between good and evil” (1 Ki 3:9).

d) The men of Mizpah

Mizpah was situated within Benjaminite territory and held great political and cultic significance. Arnold (1992:879) describes how narratives of the pre-monarchical period repeatedly linked it with the theme of Israelite tribes coming together in prayer before engaging in a Holy War with an adversary. The book of Judges (19-21) presents Mizpah as a base camp where Israel could assemble before *YHWH* when dealing with the grievances concerning Gibeah. In Jeremiah 41:5 the cultic importance of Mizpah is emphasized when the text relates that it possessed a “house of the Lord.” Samuel (7:5-7, 11) gathers the entire Israelite community at Mizpah, to pray before *YHWH* who then answers their prayers with a miracle. It was also in Mizpah that Samuel elected Saul to serve as Israel’s first king (10:17).

Verse 8

⁸Next to them Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

עֲלֵי־יָדוֹ הַחֹזֵק עֲזִיאֵל בְּנֵי־חַרְהַיָּה צֹרְפִים ס וְעֲלֵי־יָדוֹ הַחֹזֵק חֲנַנְיָה בְּנֵי־הַרְקָתִים וְנִעְזְבוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם עַד הַחֹמֶה הַרְחֵבָה: ס

a) Uzziel (God is my strength or may God nourish), s/o Harhaiah (unknown)

Name:	Uzziel (16)
Book/s:	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and Nehemiah
Lemma:	עֲזִיאֵל
Translation:	Undetermined
Root:	Undetermined
Cognates:	Possibly Arabic <i>ghadhā</i> “to nourish” (Fowler 1988:100)
Derived stems:	Undetermined

The BDB (1906:739) describes the word זָרַח as a possible by-form of זָרַח meaning “strength, power, might” and translates the name with its theophoric element לֵאל as “my strength is *El*.” Fowler (1988:100) and many other scholars find this interpretation doubtful, and suggests another “may God nourish.” Her argument is based on a parallel form of Uzziel’s name “*ya ‘āzîyāû*” (the root זָרַח is not found in biblical Hebrew), and its Arabic cognate *ghadhā* that indicates the meaning “to nourish.”

The etymology and meaning of his father’s name Harhaiah חַרְחַיָּה are unknown and is not attested outside of Nehemiah 3 (BDB 1906:354). Unfortunately, a morphological search based on the suggested Hebrew root זָרַח as a noun, did not yield further passages to be studied to determine the word’s application in different contexts. The name was very popular amongst the Levitical leaders during the postexilic period. Its prominence originated from the important position that Uzziel’s son Elzaphan held in the temple (Hutton 1992:779). He was the “head of the ancestral house of the clans of the Kohathites” and part of his function was to take care of the ark of the covenant (Nm 3:30).

b) Guilds in ancient Palestine

Mendelsohn (1940:17) defines a guild as “associations comprising private citizens organized for mutual economic, social, and religious benefits...,” he further explains that ancient Hebrew guilds were operational long before the Hellenistic era. These guilds were usually located within proximity of the raw materials they required for production. For example, Edom, that was rich in ore, developed into a mining and smelting industry. In larger cities there would be sectors identified exclusively for tradesmen. This is evidenced in biblical texts referring to places such as “bakers’ street” (Jr 37:21) and the “Fuller’s Field” (Is 7:3).

Mendelsohn (1940:18) adds that it was customary for people to be identified by the profession they pursued or the guild they specialized in. For example, references such as “Harhaiah the son of a goldsmith” (Neh 3:8 LHI) and in later documents “sons of the prophets” (2 Ki 2:3 LHI) indicates, that in these contexts, the term “son” does not literally refer to a blood relation and is more appropriately translated to mean “member.” Individuals were often introduced with the words “the father of” and is most likely in reference to the person who was the founder of a place or a chief magistrate.

Goldsmiths had many uses which included hammering and casting golden shekels to be used as currency 1 Ch 21:25. Gold represented wealth and was used to produce jewelry, symbols of royal power, embellishments for the tabernacle, the temple, idols etc. The high priest himself, would have made use of a goldsmith to inscribe the words “HOLY TO THE LORD” on a golden plate that was fixed to his turban.

c) Hananiah (YHWH is gracious), s/o the ointment mixers

Name: Hananiah (29)
 Book/s: 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel
 Lemma: הַנַּחִיָּה = הָנַן + יָהּ
 Category: Theophoric, suffixed YHWH (Fowler 1988:82).
 Meaning: “YHWH has been gracious.”
 Root: הָנַן Qal “to favour, be gracious”
 Cognates: Aramaic *hanna* “to feel sympathy” (HALOT 2000:334).
 Derived stems: Po. “to have compassion” (HALOT 2000:334).

Application in text: YHWH has been gracious (Hananiah)

It is suggested by Kselman (1992:1085) that the recorded acts of God’s grace in the Hebrew Bible toward human beings, is so great that it does not allow for comprehensive discussion. When God revealed himself to Moses in Ex 33:19-34:9 it included the self-proclamation that he is compassionate (*’el rahûm*), gracious (*wěħannûn*), slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (*hesed*), and faithfulness. The application of the word grace in the Hebrew Bible is to be understood within the paradigm of God’s proclamation that encompasses the contributions of the terms *rahûm*, *ħannûn*, and *hesed*. This divine creedal proclamation is what Moses invoked when he intreated God for divine forgiveness on behalf of the people (Ex 34).

Kselman (1992:1085) further explains that the root *ħnn* “grace” (including its derivatives) is found approximately 200 times in the Old Testament and is characterized by the positive disposition of one being toward another (Ex 3:21). It is an unconditional gift, which can be requested, and which can be unilaterally granted, or denied. It is a call for God to act, to assist the poor, the oppressed, those in need of healing (Ps 9:14), or facing calamity (Gn 6:8) and those in need of forgiveness upon their repentance (Is 30:19). Kselman (1992:1085) defines

the second term *hesed* as “kindness,” “steadfast love,” and “covenant love,” and points out that it forms part of the “vocabulary of the covenant in Israelite religious thought.” In the divine-human relationship the concept of grace is denoted by the willingness of God to act for individuals and nations who appeal to God as their only hope of salvation, for deliverance in times of trouble. The last term *rahûm* “merciful” is attested 13 times in reference to God, 11 of which occur in conjunction with the word *hannûn* “gracious,” and denotes the compassionate or merciful act of a superior, that was provoked by their love or pity for an inferior.

d) Ointment-mixers

Achtemeier *et al.* (1996:773) explains that in the Ancient Near East, ointments and perfumes were commonly used to produce aromatic incense, it was used for medicinal reasons, for anointing individuals or kings, and for cosmetic purposes. The Egyptians were known to use it in their embalming process. Individuals would use spices such as myrrh, aloe, and cinnamon to scent their bodies, robes (Ps 45:8), and their linen (Pr 7:17). They were highly valued commodities that were made primarily from olive oil that was infused with aromatic spices sourced from plants such as frankincense. By anointing a guest’s head, it served as a sign of hospitality (Ps 23:5; 133:2), by anointing a king’s head, it served as a symbol of sacred consecration (Nm 35:25; 1 Sm 10:1).

Verse 9

⁹Next to them Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

⁹וְעַל־יְגָדָם הִתְחַזְקוּ רִפְיָה בֶן־חֹר שֹׁר תִּצִי פְלֹד יְרוּשָׁלַם :

a) Rephaiah (*YHWH* has healed), s/o Hur (white)

Name:	Rephaiah (4)
Book/s:	1 Chronicles and Nehemiah
Lemma:	רפא = רפא and רפיה
Category:	Theophoric, suffixed <i>YHWH</i> (Fowler 1998:105).
Translation:	“ <i>YHWH</i> has healed”
Root:	רפא Qal “to heal” (HALOT 2000:1278)

Cognates: West Semitic: *Ra-pa-a*, *Ra-pa-ia* (Tallqvist 1914:186), Phoenician *bʿl mrp* “Baal the healer,” Punic: *rp* “the physician,” Ethiopic and Old South Arabic *rafaʿa* “to preserve” (HALOT 2000:1272).

Derived stems: Qal “heal,” niph. “be healed,” pi. “to have healed,” hithp. “to get healed” (BDB 1906:950.2).

Application in text: YHWH has healed (Rephaiah)

A morphological search of the Qal verb produced more than 100 results in the Hebrew Bible. A word study on the same root רפא with God as the subject occurred approximately 26 times in the Hebrew Bible (LBS 10). The application of the word is related to the healing of: illness in the body (Is 19:22), in nature and the land (2 Ki 2:21; 2 Ch 7:14), faithlessness (Jr 3:22), idolatry (Is 57:18), apostasy (Hs 14:5), poverty and destruction (Jr 33:6), the brokenhearted (Ps 147:3), and the consequences of sin (Ps 41:5).

According to Longman III (2013:750-751), Jeremiah often employed imagery related to illness, to illustrate Judah and Israel’s disobedience and their religious and spiritual apostasy. Jeremiah states that they are wounded and in need of “balm” and a “physician” (Jr 8:22). In chapters 30-33 he then declares that there will be a period characterized by health and healing as the reversal of their experience of sickness with no healing (a symbol of sin and rebellion). Similarly, God uses the imagery of illness to convey the serious nature of Jerusalem’s spiritual state.

The name of Rephaiah’s father Hur appears to contain traces of the Egyptian influence related to the deity Hor (Kreuzer 2000:618). According to BDB (1906:301.1) and HALOT (2000:299) the name means “white, white stuff, fabric or linen,” and in the pi. “to make clear.” White linen is mentioned twice in the book of Esther, once during a lavish banquet (in which the white curtains of the citadel of Susa were described) when king Ahasuerus deposed queen Vashti for refusing to obey his orders (1:6); and then again, upon the vindication of the Jews, the author of the text describes Mordecai’s royal robes of blue and white as he “went out from the presence of the king” (8:15).

Verse 10

¹⁰Next to them Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house; and next to him Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs.

¹⁰ועל־יָדָם הַחֲנִיּוֹק יְדֵיָה בְּרוּח־הַרְיָמָף וְנִגְדָּ בֵּיתוֹ ס וְעַל־יָדוֹ הַחֲזִיק חֲטֹיֵשׁ בְּרוּח־שַׁבְנֵיָה:

a) Jedaiah (*YHWH* has shown kindness, has been beneficent, or *YHWH* has favoured or *YHWH* knows), s/o Harumaph (split nose).

Name:	Jedaiah (13)
Books:	1 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Zechariah.
Lemma:	יָדָה = יָדָה + ׀
Category:	Theophoric, prefix <i>YHWH</i>
Translation:	“ <i>YHWH</i> has shown kindness, has been beneficent” (Fowler 1988:91) or “ <i>YHWH</i> has favoured or <i>YHWH</i> knows” (Strong 2001:1507).
Root:	a) יָדָה Qal “to praise, confess one’s sins” (HALOT 2000:389). b) יָדַע Qal “to know, understand” (Strong 2001:1507).
Cognates:	Arabic <i>yadā</i> “to do benefits” (Fowler 1988:91).
Derived stems:	a) יָדָה - Hiph. “give thanks” (BDB 1906:393.1). b) יָדַע – Hoph. “made known” (BDB 1906:394.2).

The name Jedaiah is attested in several lists of priests that returned with Zerubbabel after the exile. There is some uncertainty concerning the Hebrew root from which the name originates. Fowler (1988:91, 347) translates Jedaiah to mean “*YHWH* has shown kindness, has been beneficent.” Her translation is based on the Arabic cognate *yadā* which means “to do benefits.” The application of the words, favour, kindness (mercy or favour), and to know have already been discussed.

Jedaiah’s father’s name Harumaph, also presents some analytical difficulties. Harumaph appears only in Nehemiah 3:10 and is of uncertain derivation. HALOT (2000:351) offers that the name may have developed from the words חָרַם אָף which means “slit nose.” The root חָרַם is defined by Strong (2001:1503) as “to be disfigured, mutilated, any split portion of the face.”

Their hypothesis is based on the Arabic *harama* and Akkadian *Hurummu* which means “to split, pierce” (HALOT 2000:354).

b) Hattush (of uncertain derivation, may mean “hand”) s/o Hashabneiah (YHWH has taken account of me)

Hattush is attested 5 times in the post-exilic books of 1 Chronicles (3:22), Ezra (8:2) and Nehemiah (3:10; 10:4; 12:2). The name is of uncertain derivation, but Tallqvist (1914:86) identified a possible Assyrian cognate in cuneiform *Ha-an-ta-hi* which means “hand.”

His father’s name Hashabneiah is mentioned only twice in Nehemiah, first as the father of Hattush (3:10) and then as a Levite who participated in the national confession that preceded the ratification of the new covenant (9:5). The name is derived from the verbal root *חשב* which is defined by HALOT (2000:359) as “to weave, to hold in high regard, to reckon.” Fowler (1988:98) translates the name with a first-person singular verbal suffix “YHWH has taken account of me.”

Verse 11

¹¹Malchijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens.

¹¹מִדְּבַר שְׁנֵית הַחֲזוּיִל מִלְּפִיָּה בְּרִחְוֵם וְחָשׁוּב בְּנֵי־פַתַח מוֹאָב וְאֵת מִגְדַּל הַמִּנְנוּרִים: ס

a) Malchijah (my king is YHWH), s/o Harim (dedicated)

- Name: Malchijah (6)
- Books: 1 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
- Lemma: מַלְכִּיָּהּ = מַלְךְ + ׳
- Category: Theophoric, suffix YHWH, divine appellation מַלְךְ (Fowler 1988:50).
- Translation: “my king is YHWH” (BDB 1906:575.2)
- Root: מַלַךְ Qal "to rule, be king" (HALOT 2000:590).
- Cognates: Ugaritic, Amorite, and Egyptian Aramaic “to rule, be king” (HALOT 2000:590).
- Derived stems: hiph. “to install someone as king,” hoph. “to become king”

Malchijah was either a layman or a priest, and most likely the same individual of Ezra 10:31 who had to divorce his foreign wife (Berridge 1992:486). The text (3:11) refers to Malchijah as repairing a second section without mentioning the antecedent first section “Malchijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens.” This has led many scholars to believe that the list may be incomplete. An alternative explanation that requires further research is that the text might be interpreted to mean that Malchijah and Hasshub repaired another section (the section located next to Hattush son of Hashabneiah) and (in addition to) the Tower of the Ovens. The name also appears in some of the Egyptian Aramaic Papyri, for example, No. 7² dated to circa 461 B.C.E. he is, “Malchiah son of Joshibiah,” a witness in a case of burglary at the fortress in Yeb (Cowley 1923:19).

The proper noun Harim appears 11 times at different places in the same pre-exilic books as the name Malchijah: 1 Ch (24:8), Ezra (2:32, 39; 10:21, 31), Nehemiah (3:11; 7:35, 42; 10:5, 27; 12:15). HALOT (2000:353-354) translates the name to mean “dedicated,” and BDB (1906:356.2) translates it as “consecrated.” The root חרם from which it is derived, means “to excommunicate, to dedicate.” Cognates of the root include the Arabic (*ḥaruma*) “to be forbidden,” and Ethiopian (*ḥarama*) “to exclude from secular use.”

Application in text: my king is YHWH (Malchijah)

God’s kingship (*El, YHWH*) over Israel (Ex 15:18; Nm 23:21; Dt 33:5; Is 43:15) and all the earth (2 Ki 19:15; Ps 29:10, 99:1-4; Is 6:5; Jr 46:18) is one of the main themes found in the Hebrew Bible (Longman III 2013:1006). According to Mounce (2009:378-379) the nature of his kingship is best expressed by the authors of the Psalter and Isaiah 40-44. In the Psalms (5:2; 44:4; 145:1) God is called upon as “my King and my God,” the “King of glory” (24:7-10), the “King over all the earth” (Ps 47:7), and the King above all gods (Ps 95:3; 97:9). Isaiah proclaims that he is Israel’s King, Redeemer, and Creator (44:6; 43:15).

Wagenaar (1999:483-484) notes that the epithet *melek* is applied to *YHWH*, specifically, 41 times in the Old Testament. The term is predominantly found in the Psalms that date to the exilic and post-exilic period. Throughout the ancient Near East, the supernatural realm of the gods was perceived as simulating the social order and structures found in human society. As such, the chief deity over the gods was designated the “king of gods” who has charge over the council of gods, and the earth and all its people. The kingship of *YHWH* is characterized by a

combination of traits exhibited by the chief deities who preside over the council of gods and the deities who become chief deities upon conquering their enemies. *YHWH* is said to have presided over the heavenly council, and he has a palace and a throne (Is 6; 1 Ki 22:19-23). Wagenaar (1999:484) contends that the perception of *YHWH* as “King of the gods” was a late conception as the national gods of Israel’s surrounding neighbours were not acknowledged to be the heads of the Pantheon. This is because the Old Testament was still weary of the fact that *YHWH* was originally one of the gods in the council of *El*. *YHWH* is gradually given the title of “King of the gods,” and later, the “gods” are demythologized to heavenly beings and *YHWH* becomes the “King of Israel.”

b) Hasshub (person to whom has been reckoned or esteemed/considered), s/o Pahath-Moab (Governor of Moab)

Name:	Hasshub (5)
Book/s:	1 Chronicles & Nehemiah.
Form:	הָשִׁיב
Category:	Secular name
Translation:	“person to whom has been reckoned” (HALOT 2000:361).
Root:	הָשִׁיב Qal “think, account” (BDB 1906:362.2).
Cognates:	Arabic, Ethiopian <i>has(a)ba</i> “to think, reckon” (HALOT 2000:359).
Derived stems:	Ni. “be accounted, thought, esteemed,” pi. “think upon, consider, be mindful of” (BDB 1906:362.2).

Application in text: person to whom has been reckoned (Hasshub)

The word הָשִׁיב with the “person” as the object was found only in Isaiah 53:3-4 in this study (LBS 10). The scripture relates to the Israelites as the *Suffering Servant* and his ultimate exaltation, “He was despised and rejected by others...and we held him of no account” (3 NRSV); ‘...yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted” (4 NRSV). Brueggemann (2003:208) notes that Isaiah 53 emphasizes the suffering caused by *YHWH*’s judgement, and the promise of the restoration of Jerusalem, and the reestablishment of the people of his covenant. In the context of understanding the meaning of the name Hasshub, it may be understood to mean that the ‘person to whom has been reckoned’ is no longer the despised and rejected one, but one who is worthy and has been accounted by God.

Coogen (2010:1039) maintains that more than one character has been labelled as the suffering servant. In Talmudic tradition, Moses is recognized as the suffering servant, because he endured suffering during the wilderness journey, and in Christian tradition Jesus is recognized as the suffering servant (Acts 8:32). Suffering was the penance imposed by *YHWH* to atone for the sins of the nation.

While both BDB (1906:808.1) and HALOT (2000:924) interpret Pahath-Moab “governor of Moab” as a personal name, Schley (1992:56) argues that it is best interpreted as a title. *פַּהַת־מֹאָב* appears to be a loan word from the Akkadian cognate *paḥātu/piḥātu*. If it was to be considered a personal name, it must have been an individual who was appointed governor under David (1 Sam 22:1-3; 2 Sam 8:2) and chose to assume his new title instead of his given name. The only information available on the identity of the individual is that he was a Judean tribal ancestor who returned with Zerubbabel from Babylon. Longman III (2013:1169) explains that Moab was known as the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites. In Genesis 19:30-38, after Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed by God, Lot’s two daughters lay with him while he was intoxicated and conceived offspring. Some Israelites intermarried with the Moabites after the exile (Ez 9:1; Neh 13:1).

c) Tower of the Ovens

The Tower of the Ovens was located between the Valley Gate and the broad wall. Mattingly (1996:1164) explains that towers were part of a city’s defense system, usually constructed as watchtowers, elevated positions from where soldiers could guard against approaching enemies. Towers were often large enough to provide a place of safety for the entire population in times of war. It was a beacon of protection and security, if a city’s towers were destroyed it was a sign to the enemy that the city had been defeated (Ezk 21:22).

Verse 12

¹²Next to him Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.

¹²ועל־ידו העזיק שלום בן־הלוֹהֶשׁ עֶשֶׂר חֲצַי פְּלֶה רְוִשְׁלָם הוּא וּבְנוֹתָיו: ס

a) Shallum (*YHWH* recompenses)

Name:	Shallum (14)
Book/s:	2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Jeremiah.
Lemma:	שָׁלוֹם
Category:	Theophoric, as possible short form of מְשַׁלֵּם (וי)
Translation:	“ <i>YHWH</i> recompenses” (Fowler 1988:152), “ <i>YHWH</i> gives a replacement” (HALOT 2000:648).
Root:	שָׁלַם Qal “to be complete, sound” (Fowler 1988:362), “to be completed” (HALOT 2000:1533).
Cognates:	Jewish Aramaic “to be completed, come to an end,” Ugaritic “to be unharmed, to repay;”
Derived stems:	Pi. “to repay, recompense” Hiph. “to hand over, to bring to an end” (HALOT 2000:1532-1533).

Shallum was the son of Hallohesh, leader of half of the district of Jerusalem. He and his daughters assisted in the rebuilding of the wall. Williamson (1985:259) notes that the recognition of Shallum’s daughters in the text is unusual. A possible explanation could be that he had no sons, in this instance, it would be natural for his daughters to assist as inheritors of his name and property. His name belongs to approximately 14 different individuals. Hallohesh only appears in Neh 3:12 as Shallum’s father and in 10:24 as one of the leaders of the people who signed the covenant. His name is translated as “the enchanter” from the root לָחַשׁ meaning “whisper, murmur, magician” (HALOT 2000:523, 527).

Application in text: to repay, recompense (Shallum)

The word מְשַׁלֵּם (ו) is a Piel stem derived from the root word שָׁלַם that is translated as “to repay, recompense” (Fowler 1988:362). A morphological search produced four instances in which this form of the word occurs in the Hebrew Bible (LBS 10). In three (Gn 44:4; Jdg 1:7; Is 65:6) of the four occurrences the word relates to a sense of retribution. For example, in Genesis (44:4 LHI) Joseph devises a plot to re-unite with his family by falsely accusing Benjamin of theft. He sends his steward to ask his brothers “why you have repaid evil in the place of good.” In Judges (1:7 NRSV) Adoni-bezek is captured by Judah, who proceeds to sever his thumbs and big toes. Adoni-bezek responds with “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has paid me back.” A word study with God as the subject produced more than 30 results containing the same sense of retribution “He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject him” (Dt 7:10 NRSV); “...and I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands” (Jr 25:14 NRSV).

The Hebrews lived by the principle of retribution which Zerafa (1973:465) defines as “reward for good done, punishment for evil.” There is no specific Hebrew word for retribution but many other independent terms such as *šlm* are commonly used to express a sense of recompense. The root in its Piel stem extends the original meaning of “soundness” and “completion” to include a causative touch, for example, compensation for injury or theft (Lv 24; Ex 21); and retribution, as the return of good for good actions and evil for evil actions (Gn 44:4).

Verse 13

¹³Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate; they rebuilt it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate.

13 אֶת־שַׁעַר הַבְּאֵר הַחֲזִיק חֲנוּן וְיֹשְׁבֵי זָנוּחַ הַמָּה בְּנוּהוּ וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָתָיו מִנְעָלָיו וּבְרִיתָיו וְאֶלֶף אַמָּה בַּחֹמָה עַד שַׁעַר הַשִּׁפּוֹת:

a) **Hanun (blessed), and the inhabitants of Zanoah**

Name:	Hanun (11)
Book/s:	2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles & Nehemiah.
Lemma:	חָנַן
Category:	Secular
Translation:	"blessed" (HALOT 2000:333), "favoured" (Strong 2001:1501).
Root:	חָנַן Qal "to favour, be gracious" (HALOT 2000:334).
Cognates:	Aramaic, Akkadian, & Arabic <i>ḥanna</i> "to feel sympathy, to have pity"
Derived stems:	Pi. "to make gracious," Po. "to have compassion on," Hithp. "to implore favour, compassion" (HALOT 2000:335).

The Valley Gate is one of the gates that opened to the Hinnom Valley located at the southwest corner of the city. Zanoah is the name of two tribal towns allotted to Judah, in the northern Shephelah that were re-inhabited by exiles returning from Babylon (Achtmeier *et al.* 1996:1235).

Application in text: to favour, be gracious (Hanun)

According to Brettler (1992:44) many names were compounded with the root *ḥnn* "to favour, be gracious" at various stages in biblical history. The prominence of the name during the postexilic period could be indicative of the gratitude they experienced toward God for their return to Jerusalem. The name Hanun was formed from the Qal passive participle translated "favoured."

Hanun is derived from the same root as Hananiah and is also to be understood within the paradigm of God's proclamation that encompasses the contributions of the terms *rahûm*, meaning "mercy," *ḥannûn*, meaning "grace" and *hesed* that is to be understood as "kindness," "steadfast love" and "covenant love."

4.2.3. To the South: Nehemiah 3:14-15

Verse 14

¹⁴Malchijah son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate; he rebuilt it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars.

¹⁴וְאֶת־שַׁעַר הַאֲשָׁפוֹת הִחְזִיק מַלְכִּיָּה בֶן־רֵכָב שַׁר־פְּלִדָּ בֵּית־הַחֶרֶם הוּא יִבְנֶנּוּ וְיַעֲמִיד דְּלֹתָיו מִנְעָלָיו וּבָרִיָּהוּ: ס

a) **The Dung Gate**

The Dung Gate, situated at the Hinnom Valley, was so named for the dump heap located just outside of it. Easton (1893:206) explains that the heaping dump would be used for refuse, and human and animal excrement generated from the sacrificial system. Sacred law required that all the parts of the sacrificial animal not burned at the altar, were to be disposed of outside of the camp. Figuratively, the word dung represented something that was rejected because it was counted worthless (1 Ki 14:10 and Ps 18:42).

b) **Malchijah (my King is YHWH), s/o Rechab (band of riders?)**

For an explanation on the application of “my King is YHWH” please refer to the discussion on the name Malchijah in verse 11. Malchijah was the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of *Beth-haccherem* “vineyard-houses” (HALOT 2000:127) and is therefore a different individual to the one mentioned in verse 11. Rechab’s name occurs 13 times in the books of 2 Samuel, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. HALOT (2000:1235) has deemed the name to be linguistically inexplicable. BDB (1906:939.2) offers, hypothetically, the translation “band of riders.”

The Rechabites, or “house of Rechab” can be traced back to the descendants of Jehonadab, a pious YHWH worshipper, and son of a Kenite (1 Ch 4). According to Frick (1992:631), the Rechabites were renowned for their asceticism, Jeremiah uses their discipline as an example to compare to the disobedience of the people of Israel (Jr 35:6-7).

Verse 15

¹⁵And Shallum son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate; he rebuilt it and covered it and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars; and he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David.

¹⁵וְאֵת שַׁעַר הָעֵיִן הַתְּחִיָּק שָׁלוֹן בֶּן-כּוֹל-חֹזֶה שָׁר פְּלֶה הַמְצָפָה הוּא יִבְנֶנּוּ וְיִטְלְלוּ וְיַעֲמִידוּ וְיִלְתְּמוּ מִנְעֻלָּיו וּבְרִיחָיו וְאֵת חוֹמַת בְּרֶכֶת הַשְּׁלַח לְגַן-הַמְּלָךְ וְעַד-הַמְעָלוֹת הַיּוֹרְדוֹת מֵעִיר דָּוִד: ס

a) Shallun (translation unknown), s/o Col-Hozeh (he sees everything?)

Shallun helped to repair the Fountain Gate, he was the ruler of half the district of *Mizpah* “watch tower” (Strong 2001:1530). The excess water from the Pool of Siloam was channeled to exit outside of the eastern wall, by means of a tunnel that ran under the Fountain Gate (Liid 1992:853). It was positioned at the southern tip of the city of David, the point at which Nehemiah had to continue his inspection on foot (Blenkinsopp 1988:237). The name Shallun appears only in Nehemiah 3:15. According to HALOT (2000:1511) the name is absent from the main text of the Septuagint, and lexicographers are unable to ascertain its etymology. His father’s name Col-Hozeh, is found twice in Nehemiah (3:15; 11:5), and most likely belongs to two separate individuals. It has been suggested by HALOT (2000:478) and Strong (2001:1516) that it may mean “every seer, he sees everything” if the name was indeed derived from the root כָּל “all, every,” and חֹזֶה “seer.”

4.2.4. To the East: Nehemiah 16-32

Verse 16

¹⁶After him Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired from a point opposite the graves of David, as far as the artificial pool and the house of the warriors.

¹⁶אַחֲרָיו הִתְחִיל נְחֵמְיָה בֶּן-עֲזֻבּוּק לְשָׂר תְּצִי פְּלֶה בֵּית-אֲצוּר עַד-נֶגֶד קִבְרֵי דָוִד וְעַד-הַבְּרֶכֶה הָעֲשׂוּיָה וְעַד בַּיִת הַגִּבּוֹרִים: ס

a) **Nehemiah (*YHWH* has comforted) s/o Azbuk (uncertain, may mean “Gad is strong”)**

Name:	Nehemiah (8)
Book/s:	Ezra-Nehemiah
Lemma:	נְחַמָּה = נחם + ם
Category:	Theophoric, suffix <i>YHWH</i> (Fowler 1988:107).
Root:	נחם pi. “to comfort” (HALOT 2000:688).
Translation:	“ <i>YHWH</i> has comforted” (Fowler 1988:107).
Cognates:	Ugaritic <i>munaḥimu</i> , Syriac “to resuscitate, raise to life”
Derivatives:	Niph. and Hithp. “to find consolation, regret” (HALOT 2000:688).

There is ambiguity amongst scholars as to whether it is Nehemiah (3:16) or his father, Azbuk, that is the ruler of half the district of *Beth-zur* “place of rocks” (HALOT 2000:128). The meaning and derivation of his father’s name are undetermined, it is mentioned only in Nehemiah. According to HALOT (2000:808) it may correspond with the Phoenician and Aramaic divine name נַחֲמָי meaning “Gad is mighty or strong” (Fowler 1988:64). Azgad was listed as one of the clan leaders whose descendants returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and Ezra (Ezr 8:12), and later signed the covenant established during Ezra’s mission.

Application in text: comfort (Nehemiah)

The word “comfort” is found more than 100 times in the Hebrew Bible. It illustrates the love, and many different forms of comfort that God and individuals provide to people in their time of distress, fear or need. The word in its Piel form is applied more than 50 times in contexts related to: the loss of a loved one, as an expression of compassion by sending comforters to the one in mourning (Jr 16:7); earthly pleasures, as a form of comfort by means of sexual relations (2 Sm 12:24); consolation by means of his presence in tribulation (Ps 23:4); and divine comfort, in the form of restoration, or the promise of restoration after enduring divine punishment (Is 51:12).

A word study of the root with God as the subject produced approximately 46 results and mostly relates to God who changes his mind, and brings comfort instead of calamity by means of: leniency in punishment “And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned

to bring on his people” (Ex 32:14 NRSV); “...your anger turned away, and you comforted me” (Is 12:1 NRSV), “...and the LORD will change his mind about the disaster that he has pronounced against you (Jr 26:13 NRSV).

Verse 17

¹⁷After him the Levites made repairs: Rehum son of Bani; next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district.

אַחֲרָיו הִתְּנִיקוּ הַלְוִיִּם רְחֹם בֶּן־בְּנִי עַל־יָדוֹ הַתְּזִיק חֲשַׁבְיָה שְׂרָר־הַצִּי־פְלֶה קַעִלָה לְפִלְקוֹ: ס¹⁷

a) The Levites

The Levites were one of the twelve tribes of Israel. According to Longman III (2013:1357) many passages in the Old Testament announce that priests were to come from the tribe of Levi. Confusion arises as to whether only those of the bloodline of Aaron qualified or whether any Levite could serve as a priest. Exodus and Numbers depict Levites as being of a lesser order than the priests, but Deuteronomy refers to the “priestly nature of the whole tribe of Levi” (Duke 2003:647). Ezra makes a distinction between the two when he lists the number of Levites and priests who returned from exile independently. The term “Levite” is therefore construed by some as being relatively fluid and can refer either to the non-priestly descendants of Levi or to the Aaronic priests (Longman III 2013:1050).

The Levites, who were sanctified for contact with the divine, assisted the priests in their duties. Their primary function was to guard against the defilement of holy objects of the cult, and to help with their transportation from one location to the next. Berry (1923:230) contends that while the priests and Levites were the only two classes of temple officials, the Chronicler adds a few more to include singers, porters (gatekeepers or watchmen), and Nethinim. The Nethinim meaning “those given” were temple slaves, and at times included “the children of Solomon’s servants.” According to Joshua 9:23,27 the Gibeonites also fall under the class of temple slave. Berry (1923:230) states that before the exile, it was customary for ancient temples to employ slaves of foreign descent (whom they would circumcise as per the usual handling of slaves of Hebrews) to perform subordinate services, the practice would have continued into the post-exilic period.

b) Rehum (compassion), s/o Bani (YHWH has built)

Name:	Rehum (8)
Book/s:	Ezra-Nehemiah
Lemma:	רְחִימ
Category:	Secular (possibly of Aramaic origin)
Translation:	“compassion, softness, gentleness” (BDB 933.2).
Root:	רחם pi. “to have compassion on, show mercy, take pity” (Strong 2001:1566), “to greet someone with love or to take pity on someone” (HALOT 2000:1217).
Cognates:	Old Aramaic <i>rhm</i> “well-meaning,” Ethiopic <i>maḥara</i> “to have mercy” (HALOT 2000:1216).
Derived stems:	Pu. “to find compassion, be loved” (Strong 2001:1566).

Rehum’s father Bani, is a post-exilic name found primarily in Ezra-Nehemiah. It appears to be a short form of the name בְּנֵי־יְהוָה that is derived from the root בנה + ״ which is a theophoric name meaning “YHWH has built” (HALOT 2000:140).

Application in text: compassion, mercy, pity (Rehum)

In the Piel רחם denotes “a sense of relationship affecting the object” (HALOT 2000:1217). A word study on the root רחם with God as the subject produced approximately 10 results: Dt 13:18; 30:3; 1 Ki 8:50; Is 14:1; 49:13; 54:8; Jr 31:20; 33:26; Ez 39:25; Zch 10:6 (LBS 10). In every context to which the word is applied in relation to the Israelites as object, it identifies with God’s self-proclamation as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...” (Ex 34:6-7) and is linked with the meaning of the root *hnn* “to favour, be gracious.” It expresses a sense of hope, and affirms that forgiveness and restoration after judgement is possible: “Do not let anything devoted to destruction stick to your hand, so that the Lord may turn from his fierce anger and show you compassion” (Dt 13:17); “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you” (Is 54:7); “... I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel” (Ez 39:25); “I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them” (Zch 10:6).

c) Hashabiah (Yahweh has esteemed/considered)

Name:	Hashabiah (15)
Book/s:	1 & 2 Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah
Form:	הַשְׁבִּיָּה = הַשֵּׁב + 'וּ
Category:	Theophoric, suffixed <i>YHWH</i>
Translation:	Qal “ <i>YHWH</i> has esteemed” (HALOT 2000:361)
Root:	הִשָּׁב Qal “to respect, hold in high regard”
Cognates:	Arabic & Ethiopic <i>has(a)ba</i> “to think, reckon” (HALOT 2000:359)
Derived stems:	Niph. “to be reckoned, be worth,” pi. “to think of”

Although Hashabiah is derived from the same root as Hasshub, *YHWH* is the subject in Hashabiah’s name and yields more than 15 different texts in the word study. The word denotes the sense of being accountable or answerable to God as the one who considers or regards his people and credits something for or against his people. When Abraham believed God’s promise of descendants, God credited it to him as righteousness “And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gn 15:6); ‘Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity...’ (Ps 32:2); “he counts me as his adversary” (Job 33:10).

Verse 18

¹⁸After him their kin made repairs: Binnui, son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah;

אַחֲרָיו הִתְנַיְקוּ אֶחְיָהֶם בְּנֵי בְּרִחַנְגָּד לְשָׂרֵי חֶצְיֵי קַעִילָה: ס

a) Binnui (unknown), s/o Henadad (uncertain, may mean “decline, bend down, encamp”)

The name Binnui (Bavvai) appears to be unknown, lexicographers have been unable to determine its etymology. BDB (1906:333.1) translates his father’s name Henadad, as being derived from the root הִנָּה which means "decline, bend down, encamp" but the translation is

uncertain. HALOT (2000:332-238) suggests that it may have developed from הַיְהוָה־קָדָד , the name of a Semitic weather god meaning “to crash, thunder.”

Verse 19

¹⁹next to him Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the Angle.

¹⁹וַיְחַזֵּק עַל־יָדוֹ עֶזֶר בֶּן־יֵשׁוּעַ שָׂר הַמְצָפָה מִדָּה שְׂגִיית מִצְפָּה עֲלֵית הַנֶּשֶׁק הַמִּקְצָע: ס

a) Ezer (help), s/o Jeshua (YHWH is salvation)

Name:	Ezer (10)
Book/s:	Genesis, 1 Chronicles, and Nehemiah
Lemma:	עֶזֶר
Category:	Secular
Translation:	“help” (Strong 2001:1546)
Root:	עזר Qal “help”
Cognates:	Can be compared with Ugaritic <i>plṭ</i> “to free, save” (HALOT 2000:810).
Derived stems:	Niph. “to experience help” (HALOT 2000:810).

Ezer was assigned to a widely recognized and important section of the wall located opposite the ascent to the armory and referred to as “the Angle.” Uzziah, who reigned as king of Judah from circa 783-742 B.C.E. had fortified the Angle, the Corner and Valley Gate with towers, as part of his defense system. All of which needed repair after the destruction wreaked by the Babylonian conquest (Mare 1992:255).

His father, Jeshua, had a very popular name that was born by many individuals in the postexilic period, and is especially found in the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Eskenazi 1992:769). The name also designated a geographical location in southern Judah. According to BDB (1906:221.2) the name originally developed from יְהוָה־שׁוּעַ meaning “YHWH is salvation.”

Application in text: help (Ezer)

The noun עזר (help) occurs more than 300 times in the Old Testament. Mounce (2009:331-332) maintains that the help is mostly in relation to the God of Israel, who provides help in a variety of ways: in the provision of protection against an enemy: "...a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph!" (Dt 33:29 NRSV); in the provision of military assistance to defeat an enemy: "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and named it Ebenezer, for he said, "Thus far the Lord has helped us." (1 Sm 7:12 NRSV); by the revelation of his glorious power, he helps to affect peace: "Peace, peace to you, and peace to the one who helps you! For your God is the one who helps you." (1 Ch 12:18 NRSV); as an ever-present helper in the form of his Spirit "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring." (Is 44:2 NRSV); as the one who helps to bring about justice: "But surely, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life. He will repay my enemies for their evil." (Ps 54:4 NRSV).

Verse 20

²⁰After him Baruch son of Zabbai repaired another section from the Angle to the door of the house of the high priest Eliashib.

אֲחֶרָיו הִתְחַרְתָּ הַחֲנִיק בְּרוּךְ בְּרוּזְבַי מִדָּה שְׁגִית מִן־הַמְּקָצוּעַ עַד־פֶּתַח בַּיִת אֶל־יְשִׁיב הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל:²⁰

a) Baruch (blessed) s/o Zabbai (YHWH has given)

Name:	Baruch (26)
Book/s:	Nehemiah and Jeremiah.
Lemma:	בָּרוּךְ
Category:	Secular
Translation:	"blessed" Qal passive participle (HALOT 2000:155).
Root:	Qal "kneel, bless" (BDB 1906:138.2).
Cognates:	Ethiopic <i>brk</i> , Old South Arabic <i>brk</i>

Derived stems: Niph. “to wish oneself blessing.”

The name Baruch has a prominent legacy that stems from Jeremiah’s close friend and scribe who was also named Baruch. Jeremiah’s scribe was active a few years before the Babylonian destruction when he wrote the first Jeremiah scroll (Lundbom 1992:617). Baruch’s father Zabbai is mentioned only twice and only in Ezra-Nehemiah. HALOT (2000:263) notes that it may have developed from זְבַיִךְ יְהוָה which is a theophoric name that means “YHWH has given.”

Application in text: bless, blessing, blessed (Baruch)

A word study of the root בָּרַךְ with the Israelites as object produced approximately 45 results distributed throughout the Hebrew Bible (LBS 10). According to Richards (1992:754) the concept of being “blessed” is primarily to be understood within the framework of the divine-human relationship. Longman III (2013:233-234) explains that God was seen as the ultimate distributor of blessings and the supreme judge who decides on its retraction or ban. God blessed his people in both material and physical ways with prosperity (Jr 29:11), power (Ps 68:35), and fertility (Ps 113:9) based on his relationship with them as individuals (Gn 12:1-3) or as communities (Dt 7:14-16). The focus was therefore on the favour one had while being in a relationship with God (Richards 1992:754). The book of Deuteronomy uses blessings and curses (within the framework of the covenant) as a structuring tool designed to compel obedience to God, with the purpose of ensuring continued relationship. The Psalms testify that God promises to bless those who fear him (Ps 112:1-2; 128:1). The term *brk* was also applied in a sense that expressed gratitude and praise for a favourable act that was done, and the establishment of the relationship between the two parties.

Verse 21-22

²¹After him Meremoth son of Uriah son of Hakkoz repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. ²²After him the priests, the men of the surrounding area, made repairs.

אֲחֵרָיו הַחֹזֵק מִרְמוֹת בְּיָדֵיהֶם מִדְּבַר מִלְּפָנֵי מִלְּפָנֵי בֵּית אֱלִישָׁב וְעַד־מִלְּפָנֵי בֵּית אֱלִישָׁב: ס

אֲחֵרָיו הַחֹזֵק הַפְּהָנִים אֲנָשֵׁי הַכֶּפֶר:²²

Verse 21 records Meremoth's second section of repair, please refer to the word study on Meremoth, Uriah and Hakkoz in verse 4. The second section repaired by Meremoth appears to be much shorter than the first and may be an indication of the extent of damage inflicted along the eastern side of the city (Williamson 1985:261). Williamson (1985:262) further adds, that the meaning of the distinction suggested between the priests of verse 1 and the priests of verse 22, by listing the latter as being "from the surrounding area," is uncertain.

Verse 23

²³After them Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them Azariah son of Maaseiah son of Ananiah made repairs beside his own house.

אֲחֵרָיו הַחֹזֵק בְּנֵימִן וְחַשְׁבֻּב בְּגֵד בֵּיתָם ס אֲחֵרָיו הַחֹזֵק עֲזַרְיָה בֶן־מַעֲשִׂיָה בֶן־עֲנַנְיָה אֶצֶל בֵּיתוֹ: ס

a) Benjamin (son of the right hand) and Hasshub (person to whom has been reckoned or esteemed/considered)

Name: Benjamin (162)

Book/s: Gn, Ex, Nm, Dt, Jos, Jdg, 1 & 2 Sm, 1 Ki, 1 & 2 Chr, Ezr-Neh, Ps, Jr, Ezk, Hs, and Ob.

Lemma:	בְּנֵימִן
Category:	Secular
Translation:	“son of (the) right hand; Southerner” (Strong 2001:1482).
Root:	יָמִין “right hand” (BDB 1906:411.2)
Cognates:	Akkadian, Aramaic, and Arabic (Drinkard 1992:724).
Derived stems:	Unknown

The name Benjamin primarily implies the territorial identity of the tribe of Benjamin, which can trace its ancestry back to Benjamin, the youngest of the twelve sons of Jacob. Mobley (2000:166) explains that the territory of Benjamin lay strategically between Judah and the southern tribe of Ephraim, hence their identification as “Southerners.” For the word study of Hasshub please refer to the discussion of his name in verse 11.

Application in text: son of the right hand (Benjamin)

The noun *yāmîn* was literally used to distinguish the right hand from the left and appears more than 400 times in the Hebrew Bible. According to Drinkard (1992:724) the Hebrews depict the right hand as being of superior strength and skill to that of the left: weapons are controlled by the right hand and supported by the left (Ezk 39:30); it is the right hand that would strum the strings of the lyre (Ps 137:5); it is the right hand of *YHWH* that delivers his people and acquires victory against the enemy (Ex 15:6; Is 41:10); the right hand was used to bestow a special blessing on someone (Gn 48:13-20).

Standing at the right-hand side of *YHWH* symbolized a position of honor and served as an acknowledgement of authority and closeness to him (Ps 110:1). At times, the right side had a moral connotation: “The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of a fool to the left.” (Ec 10:2 NRSV). The name Benjamin may denote special blessing or favour and/or righteousness.

b) Azariah (YHWH has helped), s/o Maaseiah (work of YHWH), s/o Ananiah (YHWH has heard me, YHWH is a covering)

Name:	Azariah (49)
Book/s:	1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel
Lemma:	יְהוָה עֲזָרָה = עֲזַר + יְהוָה
Category:	Theophoric, suffixed <i>YHWH</i>
Translation:	“YHWH has helped” (Fowler 1988:355).
Root:	עֲזַר Qal “help” (BDB 1906:740.1)
Cognates:	Can be compared with Ugaritic <i>pl̥t</i> “to free, save” (HALOT 2000:810).
Derived stems:	Niph. “to experience help” (HALOT 2000:810).

Azariah is derived from the same root as the name Ezer, for the word study on the root please refer to the discussion on Ezer in verse 19. The name of Azariah’s father, Maaseiah was especially common in the post-exilic period, and is found 25 times in the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Jeremiah. The name מַעֲשֵׂיָהוּ developed from a theophoric name that is in construct form מַעֲשֵׂיָהוּ meaning “work of YHWH” (Fowler 1988:116). Azariah’s grandfather’s name, Ananiah, was less common and occurs on only two occasions in Nehemiah. Scholars differ in their translation of the name, HALOT (2000:858) compares it to its Egyptian Aramaic cognate and translates the name as stemming from the root עֲנָה + ״ that means “YHWH has heard me,” whereas Strong (2001:1549) translates it to mean “YHWH is a covering.” Ananiah was also known as a geographical location, a village in Benjamin where the descendants of Benjamin returned to after the exile.

Verse 24

²⁴After him Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the Angle and to the corner.

אֲחֵרָיו הִתְזַיֵּק בְּנֵי בְּנֵי חֲנַדָּד מִדָּה שְׁנִית מִבַּיִת עֲזַרְיָה עַד־הַמְּקָצוּעַ וְעַד־הַפֶּנֶן²⁴

a) **Binnui (etymology unknown), s/o Henadad (etymology unknown)**

Verse 25

²⁵Palal son of Uzai repaired opposite the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah son of Parosh.

פָּלַל בְּנֵי אֲזַי מִמַּגֵּד הַמְּקָצוּעַ וְהַמִּגְדָּל הַיּוֹצֵא מִבַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ הָעֶלְיוֹן אֲשֶׁר לְחֻצֵי הַמַּטְרֵה אֲחֵרָיו פְּדַיָּה בְּנֵי־פָרְעֹשׁ: ס²⁵

a) **Palal (he [YHWH] has interceded), s/o Uzai (unknown - text corrupted)**

Name:	Palal (1)
Book/s:	Nehemiah
Lemma:	פָּלַל (short form of פָּלַלְיָה)
Category:	Theophoric
Translation:	“he (YHWH) has interceded” (HALOT 2000:934).
Root:	פלל “to pronounce judgement, arbitrate, intercede”
Cognates:	Akkadian <i>palālu</i> “to supervise” (HALOT 2000:933).
Derived stems:	Pi. “to investigate”

Application in text: YHWH as intercessor, judge (Palal)

A morphological study of the root פלל produced more than a 170 results in the Hebrew Bible (LBS 10). A word study of the root *pll* as a form of intercession, with God as the subject, generated only one result in 1 Samuel 2:25: “If one person sins against another, someone can intercede for the sinner with the LORD; but if someone sins against the LORD, who can make intercession?” The first section of the text is Hannah’s song in praise of God’s divine attributes (1-10). She acknowledges his sovereignty: “The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up” (6); she then sings of *YHWH*’s ability to protect and reward, intervene, and reverse the unfortunate circumstances of those who trust in him. Hannah’s song was a prelude to the narrative that followed (Brueggemann 2003:165). The second part of the text (11-17) was an illustration of the sovereignty of God, who passes judgement on the house of Eli for the sinful actions of his sons against him. The text denotes a sense of “giving in” to the divine will of God, who is the ultimate judge. They accept and expect his judgement for the sins they committed against him.

A word study of the same root, in relation to the Israelites, generated approximately 13 occurrences in the books of 1 Kings 8 (28, 30, 33, 35, 44, 48) and 2 Chronicles (6:21, 24, 26, 34, 38; 7:14). In every instance the word is translated as “pray.” Solomon lists the 7 occasions upon which God may be appealed to in prayer, and the Chronicler reiterates them. Brueggemann (2003:182-183) maintains that Solomon’s prayer of dedication in 1 Kings 8, acknowledges that *YHWH*’s palpable presence in the temple is not required to access the divine, and that their prayers could be heard in heaven. Allowing *YHWH* freedom from any form of royal domestication, enabled everything that was established in Solomon’s tradition, to be recontextualized as authoritative and relevant to the exilic community.

Durken (2017:640) explains that in 2 Chronicles, the Chronicler revives Solomon’s announcement of the seven distressful situations upon which God is to be approached: entering false oaths (6:22-23); when overthrown in war (6:24-25); during natural disasters (6:26-31); to answer the prayers of foreigners who pray towards God’s temple (6:32-33); upon engaging in war (6:34-35); and when committing sin against God (6:36-39). The message is best summed up in 2 Ch 6:38-39: “if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity, to which they were taken captive...³⁹then hear from heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their pleas, maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.” The

word is applied in the form of a petition to God for retribution, victory, and the forgiveness of sins.

b) Pedaiah (YHWH has ransomed [saved]) s/o Parosh (flea)

Name:	Pedaiah (8)
Books:	2 Kings, 1 Chronicles and Nehemiah
Lemma:	פָּדָה = " + פָּדָה
Category:	Theophoric, suffixed YHWH
Translation:	"YHWH has ransomed"
Root:	פָּדָה Qal "to ransom, to liberate" (HALOT 2000:911)
Cognates:	Arabic <i>fdy</i> "to ransom," Ethiopic <i>fadaya</i> "to pay, reimburse"
Derived stems:	Niph. "to be ransomed, be released" (HALOT 2000:911)

Parosh is a post-exilic name that occurs 5 times only in the books of Ezra-Nehemiah. His name is translated by BDB (1906:829.1) as "flea" which figuratively means that something is of insignificance.

Application in text: YHWH has ransomed (Pedaiah)

A word study of the root פָּדָה with God as the subject produced approximately 33 results in the Hebrew text (LBS 10). In most of the texts, the word is translated as "redeemed," and relates to: God's redemption of the Israelites from slavery in the land of Egypt (Dt 7:8; 9:26; 13:6 etc); redemption from adversity (2 Sm 4:9; 1 Ki 1:29; Jr 15:21); redemption from death and condemnation (Hs 13:14; Ps 49:16; Ps 34:23); and from oppression and iniquity (Ps 119:34; 138:8).

According to Mounce (2009:566) the verb is frequently used in terms of presenting money to buy something back. It often appears in a cultic context relating to the redemption of the firstborn sons (Ex 13:1-2; 34:19) which originated from the Passover when instead of killing

all the firstborn animals and sons as sacrifice to the Lord, they could redeem them by sacrificing sheep (Ex 13:13-15). Mounce (2009:566) states that this was a foreshadowing of God's only first-born son, Jesus, who would be sacrificed for the redemption of humanity.

Verse 26-28

²⁶and the temple servants living on Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower. ²⁷After him the Tekoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. ²⁸Above the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each one opposite his own house.

²⁶וְהַנְּתִינִים הָיוּ יֹשְׁבִים בְּעֶפְלָל עַד נֶגֶד שַׁעַר הַמַּיִם לְמִזְרַח וְהַמְגִדֵּל הַיּוֹצֵא: ס

²⁷אַחֲרָיו הִחְזִיקוּ הַתְּקוּעִים מִדָּה שְׁגִית מִנֶּגֶד הַמְגִדֵּל הַגָּדוֹל הַיּוֹצֵא וְעַד חוֹמַת הָעֶפְלָל: ²⁸מֵעַל שַׁעַר הַסּוּסִים הִחְזִיקוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים אִישׁ לְנֶגֶד בֵּיתוֹ: ס

a) The Ophel, Water Gate and Horse Gate

The proper noun *Ophel* means “swelling” (on the earth’s surface), with the use of the article in verse 26, it refers to the entire section including the houses and buildings of everyone associated with the ritual of the temple (HALOT 2000:861). Scholars have suggested that, for practical reasons, the Water Gate was located close to the Gihon spring with the purpose of functioning as an access point to provide for the needs of the temple, and perhaps the city (Suiter 1992:882). The Horse Gate was situated North of the Ophel and served as an entrance for the horses.

Verse 29

²⁹After them Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs.

אֲחֵרִיּוֹ הַחֲזִיק צְדוֹק בְּרֵאֵמֶר בְּגֵד בֵּיתוֹ ס וְאַחֲרָיו הִחְזִיק שְׁמַעְיָה בְּרֵשְׁכַנְיָה שְׁמֵר שַׁעַר הַמְּזֻרָח: ס

a) **Zadok (Just/righteous) s/o Immer (YHWH has spoken)**

This is the second of two different Zadok's, the son of Immer. As previously mentioned, Scullion (1992:724-726) suggests that there are a variety of words that can be derived from the root צדק. The many different nuances of the word include: the well-being of the soul, loyalty, order, and *YHWH's* loyal love, the order established by his loyal love, and his commitment to his covenant with his people, especially in times of distress. The general sense of the word advanced by scholars is that of *YHWH's* saving action toward a people in need.

The verbal form of the root expresses “how someone stands before the law or God” (Scullion 1992:726). The Psalms provide good examples: “the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (19:9); “Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment” (51:4).

Immer also appears to be a short form of אמריהו derived from the root אמר + ׀ that means “Yahweh has promised” (BDB 1906), or “Yahweh has spoken” or “created” (HALOT 2000:68). The proper noun is translated as “lamb” by Strong (2001:1474).

b) **Shemaiah (YHWH has heard), s/o Shecaniah (YHWH has taken up his abode)**

Name:	Shemaiah (41)
Book/s:	1 Ki, 1 & 2 Chr, Ezr-Neh, and Jr.
Lemma:	שְׁמַעְיָה = שמע + ׀ developed from שְׁמַעְיָהוּ (Fowler 1988:90).
Category:	Theophoric, suffixed YHWH
Translation:	“YHWH has heard” (Fowler 1988:90).
Root:	שמע Qal “hear” (BDB 1033.1).
Cognates:	Ugaritic, Aramaic <i>šm</i> ‘ “to hear” (Benz 1972:421).

Application in text: YHWH has heard (Shemaiah)

According to Mounce (2009:325-326) the meaning of the verb שמע (which occurs more than 1000 times in the Hebrew Bible) includes “to hear, listen, and pay attention to, perceive and understand.” The word implies acting on what has been heard, and because YHWH can hear, and then acts on what he hears, he is set apart from other gods as a living God: “There you will serve other gods made by human hands, objects of wood and stone that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell” (Dt 4:28). God hears the distressful cries of his people: “But truly God has listened; he has given heed to the words of my prayer” (Ps 66:19). But the opposite is also true, Isaiah 59:1-2 sends a warning to those who pray to God without repentance in their heart “See, the LORD’s hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

Shemaiah’s father’s name Shecaniah belongs to at least 8 different men. Occurring only in the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles, it was a popular theophoric name that developed from שָׁכַנְיָהוּ which means “YHWH has taken up residence” (HALOT 2000:1500). According to Fuller (1992:1173), names containing the root škn “to settle” was popular in the post-exilic period and was used as an expression of the need for YHWH to live amongst his people.

Verse 30-32

³⁰After him Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam son of Berechiah made repairs opposite his living quarters.

³¹After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the Muster Gate, and to the upper room of the corner.

³²And between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

אחריהחזיק חנניה בורשלימיה וחננו בורצלף הששי מדה שגיי ס אחרייו החזיק משלם בורברכה גגד נשפתו: ס

³¹אחריהחזיק מלכיה בורחצרפי עדבית הנתינים והרקלים גגד שער המפקד ועד עלית הפנה:

³²ובין עלית הפנה לשער הצאן החזיקו הצרפים והרקלים: פ

a) **Hananiah (YHWH is gracious) s/o Shelemiah (YHWH recompenses)**

Name:	Hananiah (29)
Book/s:	1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.
Lemma:	הַנַּנְיָהּ = הַנַּן + יָהּ
Category:	Theophoric, suffixed <i>YHWH</i>
Translation:	“ <i>YHWH</i> is gracious” (HALOT 1992:335).
Root:	הַנַּן Qal “
Cognates:	Aramaic <i>ḥanna</i> “to feel sympathy” (HALOT 1992:335)
Derived stems:	Po. “to have compassion”

b) **Hanun (blessed) s/o Zalaph (caper-bush)**

Hananiah and Hanun are derived from the same root. As previously mentioned in verse 13 Hanun is derived from the same root as Hananiah and is also to be understood within the paradigm of God’s proclamation that encompasses the contributions of the terms *rahûm*, meaning “mercy,” *ḥannûn*, meaning “grace” and *hesed* that is to be understood as “kindness,” “steadfast love” and “covenant love.”

Hananiah’s father, Shelemiah had a theophoric name that means “*YHWH* recompenses” (Fowler 1988:152). Hanun’s father, Zalaph, occurs only once in Nehemiah and is translated as “caper-bush” (HALOT 1992:1030). For the word studies on Meshullam and Berechiah, please refer to the discussion on verse 4.

4.3. Synopsis

The onomastic and lexical analysis revealed that 31 of the individuals mentioned in the building of the wall had theophoric names. Of the 31 theophoric names, two, Eliashib (God refresh, turn back, restore) and Meshezabel (God delivers) were compounded with the prefix and suffix of *El* (God). The remainder of the names were suffixed with the divine name *YHWH*. The theophoric suffix of *YHWH* was, most likely, implied semantically in 6 of the names, Zaccur

(remember), Bani (to build), Zabbai (to give), Shallum (to recompense, repay), Palal (to intercede, pray), and Immer (to speak, create, promise), as abbreviated names that initially held a theophoric compound. The most popular name amongst the builders appeared to be Malchijah (*YHWH* is my King) and was born by three different individuals. The translation of 10 of the names presented etymological and/or grammatical difficulties, and could not be determined with certainty: Meremoth, Uzai, Baana, Jadon, Uzziel, Harhaiah, Hattush, Azbuk, Binnui, and Henadad.

The word study shows that many of the names can be grouped together in clusters of related concepts. The names Melatiah (*YHWH* delivers, sets free), Meshezabel (God delivers), Jeshua (*YHWH* is salvation), and Pedaiah (*YHWH* has ransomed) all give expression to God's saving action in the past, present and future. The names Eliashib (God refresh, turn back, restore), Meshullam (restitution, given as substitute), Shallum (to recompense, repay) and Shelemiah (*YHWH* recompenses) are all related to the concept of restoring to the rightful owner something equal or better than that which had been lost or taken away, or to recompense good for good deeds and evil for evil deeds in equal measure. The names Hananiah (*YHWH* is gracious), Hanun (blessed, gracious), Jedaiah (*YHWH* has shown kindness, been beneficent, favoured) and Rehum (compassion, mercy, gentleness) relate to the concept of the *character credo* in Exodus 34:6-7, where *YHWH* describes himself as a merciful and gracious God who is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, "...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." The names Uriah (Flame of *YHWH*), his father Hakkoz (thorns, thorny bush), Zaccur (*YHWH* has remembered) and Shemiah (*YHWH* has heard) together trigger the memory of Moses' first encounter with *YHWH* in Exodus: "2There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush: he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 6...I am the God of your father the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 7...I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry..."(3:6-7 NRSV). Zadok (right, just), and Benjamin (son of the right hand) both relate to a sense of justice and righteousness. The names Hasshub (person to whom has been reckoned), Hashabneiah (*YHWH* has taken account of me), and Hashabiah (*YHWH* has esteemed, considered) express the sense that they have been accounted and considered by God to be righteous and worthy.

In the following chapter, the synthesis of the study will broadly follow (in an oversimplified manner) on Kessler's approach in combining certain aspects of Eichrodt, Von Rad, and Child's

viewpoints of the Old Testament. As its structuring device, Eichrodt's view on the idea of covenant as the binding factor in the divine human relationship, and the foundation of all Old Testament texts will be employed (Kessler 2013:54). Von Rad's view (Kessler 2013:55), that theological truths are expressed linguistically through narrative, and how biblical authors drew on earlier traditions and reconfigured them for their own contemporary audience will also be drawn upon.

A brief overview will be presented on the history of the theology of covenantal relationships up to the Persian period. The clusters of concepts, as well as the names, settlement and crafts that have not been placed into a specific category will be examined to determine whether there are any correlations, or if they possibly resonate with any of the implicit meanings of the themes presented.

CHAPTER 5

SYNTHESIS

5.1. Introduction

The research that was conducted, selected as key terms and phrases for study, the personal names, settlements, and guilds referred to in Nehemiah 3. The lexical and onomastic analysis revealed the most probable meaning of each name, and how they possibly relate to each other as concepts rooted in a central idea. As previously stated, Brettler (2005:37-38) stresses the fact that understanding the genre of a text is key to its valid interpretation. Engle (2000:87-88) puts forward that genre analysis investigates the ways in which people express their experiences linguistically. It is generally the intention of the author of a text to advance his or her own theological beliefs by placing emphasis on specific concepts and traditions.

In order to discern the author's theological intent, it is crucial to become familiar with the core concepts and traditions in Israel's past that found emphasis in the theology of Ezra-Nehemiah. Covenants played an important role in the development of theological traditions in the Hebrew Bible. Flanders *et al.* (1996:128), states: "The idea of covenant...became the basis of Israel's self-understanding and the key idea in defining its relationship to God." Four different types of covenantal patterns could be distinguished in the Ancient Near East: bilateral parity covenants, the bilateral suzerainty treaties, loyalty oaths and promissory covenants (Kessler 2013:178-179). Various traditions developed from these covenants including: the Torah (law or teaching/instruction) that can be traced back to the Deuteronomic tradition (relating to the Sinai Covenant); the Northern Traditions (relating to Davidic Covenant) and Priestly theology (relating to the new covenant with emphasis on the Torah). Understanding the historical covenants that formed during the pre-exilic period, will help to interpret their sociological and theological function during the Persian period, and how they were used as an expression of the divine-human relationship.

5.2. Covenants and Theologies in the Old Testament

5.2.1. An overview of the different types of covenants

Ancient Near Eastern treaties of the Late Bronze Age bore striking similarity to covenantal patterns in the Hebrew Bible. Scholars studied the covenantal vocabulary used in international treaties and found that biblical covenants had certain technical terms in common with them (Bautch 2009:14). Kessler (2013:178-179) distinguished four types of covenants that were made in the Ancient Near East:

1. Bilateral parity covenants: two parties of equal standing agree to certain mutual obligations and benefits. For example, Abraham and Laban (Gn 21:22-23).
2. Bilateral suzerainty (or vassal) treaties: two parties, unequally balanced in power, enter into an agreement, the lesser power (the vassal) have their obligations specified in detail, while the higher power's (the suzerain's) duties were presumed rather than listed as with the lessor party. For example, the Sinai covenant (most, but not all scholars agree on this).
3. Loyalty oaths: a superior ruler or nation forces an inferior counterpart into swearing allegiance to them under threat of punishment.
4. Promissory covenants: a unilateral promise that was unconditional and would benefit only one of the parties.

A covenant is understood to be a type of agreement that binds two parties (who would not necessarily have had a close relationship) to each other. Kessler (2013:183) shows that even though biblical covenants may have resembled Ancient Near Eastern treaties in a few respects, they also diverged from them in distinct ways. They would adopt some elements of international treaties and then customize them to suit their own socio-political, or religious purposes.

Some covenants, such as the bilateral suzerainty agreements placed stress on the *conditions* of the agreement that were to be upheld to ensure the continuance of the relationship between the parties, violation of set terms could result in the termination of the contract, or in disciplinary action. Promissory covenants, on the other hand, placed emphasis on the *faithful character* of the party who committed to benefit the other.

5.2.2. Covenants in the Hebrew Bible

5.2.2.1. Promissory Covenant of Noah

Bautch (2009:10-11) describes how the first of successive covenantal treaties in the Old Testament made its initial appearance in Genesis. In chapter 8 *YHWH* takes pity on Noah after the Deluge and makes the unconditional promise never to destroy the earth by flood again. Noah presents him with a sacrifice to which God responds in a vow to never again curse the ground, because the human heart is frail and harbors evil from its youth. Special emphasis is placed on maintaining the regular course of seasons and the agricultural cycle. Kessler (2013:284) notes that Noah's sacrifice pleased *YHWH* (8:20-22) and suggests that it could be seen as a form of pure worship that may have served to extenuate the consequences of the sinful character of the human heart before God.

In chapter 9, *YHWH* reiterates his vow to sustain humanity and never to destroy the earth by flood again. In this instance, the term covenant is repeatedly used (9, 12, 16, 17), and emphasis is placed on the rainbow that he provides as a symbol of his promise. Both chapters 8 and 9 reflect the idea, that despite the unchanged evil nature of the human heart *YHWH* will never again punish their actions by sending a flood and expects nothing in return from humankind. The vows made by *YHWH* appear to be a *promissory* type of covenant (according to Kessler [2013:181], not all scholars agree) that focuses on *future* blessings.

5.2.2.2. The Abrahamic Covenant

In the next covenant, focus shifts from creation and humankind to one individual family. God creates a new beginning with Abraham that eventually finds fulfilment in a universal community (Levenson 2012:26). Abraham inherited the same promise as Noah, with the addition of progeny and the land of Canaan (Gn15). Abraham will enjoy divine blessing and protection, unconditionally.

In Genesis 15 Abraham is childless and experiences doubt concerning his promised offspring. God reassures him by telling him that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. Abraham believes and God reckons it to him as righteousness. When Abraham asks God how he can know for sure that he will also possess the land of Canaan, *YHWH* proceeds to demonstrate his loyalty to his promise by performing a ritual of official ratification of his oath. He appears in the form of a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch that passes between the slain

animals that God had requested Abraham to prepare earlier. According to Arnold (1998:95-96) it was customary for both parties involved in a ritual to pass between slain animals so as to impose a curse on themselves. The slain animals represented the fate of the individual found to violate the agreement. This scene only involves *YHWH* and according to Kessler (2013:186) does not resemble a bilateral arrangement between parity partners, but rather a divine-human promissory type covenant with a benefactor (*YHWH*) who swore to perform his promises to his beneficiary. Kessler (2013:286), further observes that the covenant calls its partner to have *faith* and *trust* in *YHWH*, and to act on his instructions with the patient expectation that he will fulfil his promises. All Abraham had to do was to situate himself where the blessing was to take place.

5.2.2.3. Sinai Covenant

The Sinai Covenant, the next significant treaty to follow, had its origins in the emancipation of the Israelites from Egyptian oppression. The redemptive activity of *YHWH* during the exodus became one of the core events in Israel's religious history. Everything that transpired afterwards would be interpreted against the background of this significant event (Flanders *et al.* 1996:169). God heard the pleas of his people, and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He appears to Moses in a burning bush:

I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey... (Ex 3:7-8 NRSV)

Moses had been chosen by God as the instrument that would eventually declare God's will for the social, political, and cultic life of his people (Eichrodt 2004:52). He was the speaker in Deuteronomy, and the wisdom he offered served as a constant reminder of the events that lead to the formation of Israel as a nation (Blenkinsopp 1995:87).

When Moses was in the wilderness, Blenkinsopp (1995:87) notes how the Law was presented in the form of a guide to righteous living:

“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death, and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving

the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess” (Dt 30:15-16 NRSV)

Eichrodt (2004:53-54) maintains, that the way in which Moses mediated between God and his people served as the blueprint from which future generations would develop their relationship. Moses underscored that God’s demands in the Law, were his *personal will*. This elevated the legal regulation of conduct to the status of religious obligation.

YHWH renews the covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai and commits to fulfilling the promises he had made to their ancestors. The covenant, as described by Kessler (2013:196-197) was centered on the continued relationship between *YHWH* and Israel after they had been liberated. In the renewed covenant, another dimension is added, their continued relationship is now dependent on obedience to his commandments. The focus of the covenant is on the *present* and insists on *active obedience* (Kessler 2013:190). Adherence to the terms of the covenant will lead to the enjoyment of God’s steadfast love (חסד), up to the thousandth generation, in the form of protection against enemies, becoming inheritors of the promised land, and providential care for their daily needs and well-being in general. In turn, the Israelites had certain obligations and duties: they were to worship *YHWH* exclusively; and adhere to his statutes and commands. Failure to comply with the terms of the covenant would lead to *YHWH*’s divine judgement and wrath up to the fourth generation (Ex 20:5-6). In Ex 34:6-7 *YHWH* identified himself as gracious and merciful, in the lived experience of the Israelites, despite judgment and wrath, *YHWH* continuously proved to be a God who could forgive and restore a broken relationship upon repentance (Kessler 2013:246).

Levenson (2012:56) describes the Sinaitic covenant as “nesting” in the Abrahamic covenant. God relented from destroying the people for their idolatry when Moses interceded for them because he reminded *YHWH* of his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Levenson (2012:56) continues that Israel’s compliance to God’s commandments remained indispensable, but when they did not comply “the antecedent Abrahamic covenant (reiterated to Isaac and Jacob) remains in effect and offers a reservoir of grace for the errant people,” thereby upholding the nuances of both conditionality and unconditionality.

5.2.2.4. The Davidic Covenant

The next notable covenant concluded was with King David and his successors. *YHWH* makes the promise that the seed of David will inherit the kingship forever. Whereas the covenant of Abraham contains the promise of land, the covenant with David contained the promise of a house, in other words, a dynasty. David is told that it is his son who will unite his kingdom and build a house for Lord. Bauckham (2009:11) holds that, in contrast to the Sinai covenant, where the emphasis was on the ongoing relationship between *YHWH* and the Israelites, as dependent on their obedience to his commandments, the Davidic covenant was more forgiving when it came to the consequences of disobedience: “When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use...¹⁵But I will not take my steadfast love from him...” (2 Sm 7:14-15 NRSV). Understanding human frailty, note how *YHWH* says “when” he commits iniquity, and not “if” he commits iniquity. David expressed immense gratitude and openly shows his trust and faith in *YHWH* to fulfil his promises.

5.2.2.5. Priestly Appropriation of Covenant

Flanders *et al.* (1996:90-91) describes how the priestly community took it upon themselves to preserve Israel’s heritage during the exile. They were the ones who gave the Torah its final form during the late exilic period. They believed that the community would retain their unique identity if they stayed committed to priestly institutions and laws. Priestly narrators took the J and E strands in the Pentateuch and supplemented them with ritual and cultic materials, they also made editorial additions such as dates and genealogies to link narratives together. Some key narratives that were inserted, such as the flood, and the crossing of the sea have been attributed to them (Collins 2018:143).

The J strand is described by Flanders *et al.* (1996:89) as referring to the national epic of Israel’s origins written by the “Yahwist” (so called for his preference in using the name *YHWH* for God). The Yahwist emphasized the role and the heroes of the Southern tribe of Judah. The E strand refers to a second version covering the same period as the Yahwist, only without the section on the primeval creation and fall. The author who is called the “Elohist” (for his preference in using the name Elohim for God) emphasizes the Northern tribes and their split from the South after the death of Solomon.

According to Kessler (2013:190), Priestly appropriation of covenant embodied all the relational themes of the previous covenants: it had present and future hope, required obedience, ongoing relational maintenance, and had the risk of permanent loss. The covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 ensured that Israel would have an eternal relationship with *YHWH*, but people could distance themselves from this bond by deciding against its terms. Kessler (2013:191) describes it as a covenant of “collective perpetuity and individual obligation.” People who rebelled against *YHWH* ran the risk of being cut off from him: “...he shall be held guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood, and he shall be cut off from the people” (Lv17:4); it is also expressed in Nm 15:31 “Because of having despised the word of the LORD and broken his commandment, such a person shall be utterly cut off and bear the guilt” (NRSV). This meant that individuals could be cut off from him, but his bond with Israel as a nation would remain eternal.

5.2.2.6. Ezra and Nehemiah’s renewal of the Covenant

Kessler (2013:247-249) explains that under Persian rule, the Israelites, who were but remnants of their former selves, sought to restore the covenantal relationship they previously enjoyed with *YHWH*. God’s desire to continue with the relationship is made abundantly clear in Dt 4:25-31: “The LORD will scatter you among the peoples...²⁹from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart...³¹Because the LORD your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you.”

Ezra and Nehemiah renewed the covenant with *YHWH* with the intention of adhering to its requirements. Kessler (2013:250-351) describes the new covenant as having an additional dimension to it, there was the hope of a transformed relationship where obedience would come from the heart and not from the fear of punishment: “...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jr 31:33 NRSV). Throntveit (1992:110) comments that a series of episodes of disobedience and redemption in the history of Israel was recounted by Ezra, through this the people recognized their own fallible human nature and inability to stay true to their intentions; they also acknowledged that despite this, God continued to show them grace, this gave them hope and is what inspired them to renew the covenant.

5.2.3 Theologies in the Old Testament

Different theologies developed in the Old Testament. These theologies originated from the different covenants, as mentioned above, and can be linked to specific traditions in the Old Testament.

5.2.3.1. Sinai Theology

Sinai Theology originated from the event of sealing the Sinai covenant after *YHWH* had liberated his people from the Egyptians. Kessler (2013:200-205) stresses that the covenant established at Sinai was fundamental in shaping Deuteronomic literature. Deuteronomic History (the books of Deuteronomy, and Joshua through 2 Kings), and Exodus (19-24; 32-34), contains foundational concepts related to Sinai Theology such as the *character credo* of Ex 34:6-7.

Deuteronomic literature contains the laws and lists of blessings and curses established by *YHWH* through his covenant with Israel (Dt 4:23; 5:2-3; 7:12; 28:69 etc.). Chapter 5 relates the Ten Commandments that were recorded in Exodus 20. Kessler (2013:205) draws attention to the fact that both textual units emphasize the core belief of the covenant by means of the words: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:2). Chapter 12-26 contain detailed elaborations on the Law. Curses for specific incidents of covenant contravention are described in chapter 27, followed by a list of rewards and penalties for obedience and disobedience in chapter 28. According to Edenburg (2015:134) the Deuteronomic material presupposed the exile, and most likely only assumed its final form during or after the Babylonian exile.

The book serves as an introduction to the rest of the corpus that narrates stories of heroes, tribal traditions, prophetic traditions etc. (Flanders *et al.* 1995:223). Edenburg (2015:134-135) is of the view that the literary unit was designed to illustrate how the covenant functioned in the divine-human relationship throughout Israel’s history. God was faithful in giving them the land of Canaan and conquering their enemies; however, *YHWH*’s promises were dependent on the conditions agreed upon in the covenant. The Assyrian conquest of Israel was therefore a precursor for the judgement that was to come to Judah. When Judah did not respond to the warning *YHWH* took punitive action, as promised. Chronicles of their Hebrew history was therefore an attempt at explaining why the traumatic events of the exile occurred.

The terminology and ideology used in the book of Deuteronomy can also be seen in the texts of the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles etc.). This is due to scribes who would apply their own distinctive view and vocabulary (derived from the Sinai covenant theology) to the material they collected, edited and recontextualized for their contemporary situation.

Words and phrases reflecting the core characteristics of Sinai theology include: “*YHWH* your God,” a form of expressing possession, they had been selected to be in an exclusive relationship with *YHWH*, he wasn’t just any God, he was *their* God, for example Dt 1:25 “It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us”(NRSV); “adhering to the commandments that God had stipulated,” obedience guaranteed *YHWH*’s beneficence toward his people (Dt 4:23; 5:1 etc.); “fearing, serving, loving and knowing” (Ex 20:20; Dt 10:12; 13:7) are all forms of the exclusive and heartfelt worship of *YHWH*; “the land that *YHWH* your God has given you,” this term is commonly used, and is in fulfilment of *YHWH*’s promise to their ancestors.

5.2.3.2. Zion Theology

Zion theology originated from the Davidic covenant in which *YHWH* promised David that his descendants will inherit the kingship forever, and that his son would build him a temple (2 Sm 7:12-13). Weinfeld (1983:88-90) explains that David’s dynasty was established, and the location of *YHWH*’s sanctuary on Mount Zion would later be fixed during Solomon’s reign; both royal dynasty and royal sanctuary were required to establish a strong empire. According to 1 K 5:17-18, when Israel experienced a period of “rest,” a period without misfortune or adversity, God too could assume his “resting-place” in the form of a house that was to be built by Solomon. Solomon does as was foretold by *YHWH* and builds a temple on the summit of Zion to house the ark of the covenant (1 Ki 8:1-9). Weinfeld (1983:90) refers to Psalm 132:13-14 as capturing the full sense of the idea “For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation: ¹⁴This is my resting place forever...” (NRSV).

The notion of dynasty and temple were intimately related. Temples were holy, sacred spaces built especially for the deity as a dwelling place. Jerusalem (Zion), as the dwelling place of *YHWH* was the center of the world, and served as the point at which the divine realm would intersect with the secular realm of the earth. The location on which the temple was to be built was chosen by the deity himself. *YHWH*’s choice of Davidic kingship and Jerusalem (Zion) as his dwelling place were closely bound up in the promises made to David (Kessler 2013:299).

The book of 2 Sm 5:6-10 expresses the names of Jerusalem, Zion, and the city of David as synonymous terms. Mount Zion was the eastern hill on which Jerusalem was built, it was supplied with water from the Gihon spring and according to Psalm 48:12-13 it had towers, ramparts, and citadels (Longman III 2013:1759-1760). The ideology that developed surrounding the dynasty and the temple manifested in the Psalms “His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion” (Ps 76:2), as well as in Israelite prophetic literature:

In the days to come the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains...For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem...⁷The lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion now and forevermore (Mi 4:1-2, 7 NRSV)

Friedman (1983:114-115) comments on how Jerusalem was depicted as the city of God, a place that symbolized *YHWH*’s rule of the earth, and the cessation of war. In their eschatological hope, nations and kings would be drawn to bring tribute and offerings of worship to God in the temple city (Is 18:7; Zph 3:10; Zch 8:21; Ps 47). They would submit to the supreme God and his judgements (Ps 96:11-13; Is 2:1-4; Mi 4:1-4), because he is the one who will establish eternal peace. The king of the royal city will no longer rule by the force of his arm but: “will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips, he shall kill the wicked” (Is 11:4 NRSV).

The pervasive theme connected to the divinely chosen temple and royal dynasty is that it was protected by the promise of *YHWH*. Kessler (2013:301) explains that because of this understanding, the royal city and its sanctuary were considered sacrosanct and supernaturally protected from enemy attack (serious questions regarding God’s promise arose after the Babylonian exile, the destruction of Jerusalem and the removal of the last Davidic king).

Zion theology also expressed the notion that God had his own agenda and may at times, choose to intervene only at the last moment in distressful situations. Consequently, people were urged to keep their faith and trust in *YHWH*, even in their darkest hour (Zch 14:3-4). Kessler (2013:312) eloquently states that their relationship was based upon “a word given in integrity, believed in sincerity, and trusted in adversity.” They were called to trust in God’s supernatural

care (Ps 2; 46; 78; 89 etc.). The promissory covenant emphasized the disposition of the heart; faith and trust were pleasing to *YHWH* as was reflected in *YHWH*'s response to Abraham when he believed that God would remain faithful to his promise, and he accounted it to him as righteousness.

The promises made by *YHWH* directed the life decisions made by the individuals who had received them in faithful expectation. Kessler (2013:278-280) identifies some of the most frequently used terms that expressed their conception of these promises: verbs such as *dibber* and *amar* (to speak), and nouns such as *dabar* and *imrah* (a word, saying); the verb for making an official promise such as *shb'* can be found in verses such as Ps 12:6: "The promises (אִמְרָה) of the LORD are promises (אִמְרָה) that are pure..." (NRSV) and in Dt 9:5: "...in order to fulfill the promise (דְּבַר) that the LORD made on oath (שָׁבַע) to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (NRSV). The word *berith* is also used to refer to an official agreement between two parties or in making a solemn divine promise: "Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant (בְּרִית) that he made with David..." (2 Chr 21:7 NRSV).

The theme of trust is expressed in verbs such as *bth*, and *shqt* (to be calm, at peace), found in verses such as: Is 7:4, "...and say to him, Take heed, be quiet (שָׁקֵט), do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint..."(NRSV), and the word *nht* (to have rest in *YHWH*) found in verses such as Is 30:15b, "In returning and rest (נָחַת) you shall be saved..." (NRSV). The noun *qwh* (to wait), is also used in, for example, Gn 49:18, "I wait (קוּה) for your salvation, O LORD" (NRSV); and *tiqwah* (expectation/hope), for example in Jr 29, "...plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope (תִּקְוָה)..."(NRSV); and *hkh*,(to wait), for example in Ps 33:20, "Our soul waits (חָכָה) for the LORD; he is our help and shield"(NRSV); and lastly the word *yhl* is also used in verses such as Ps 31:24 "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait (יָחַל) for the LORD"(NRSV).

5.2.3.3. Priestly Theology

The core principles of priestly theology were entrenched in the presence of *YHWH* with his people. The two primary concerns that assured his presence in their midst, was to keep the sanctity of his dwelling place and his people by means of ritual and ethical undertakings; and to maintain clear boundaries in the appointed times, spaces, items, individuals, and activities that were dedicated to *YHWH* (Kessler 2013:321).

The nucleus of the Priestly source begins in Exodus 25 and runs through Leviticus (of which chapter 17-26 is known as the Holiness Code) up to Numbers 10 and contains all the laws and cultic directives. As a corpus they represent a symbolic system of rituals and order that comprises a distinct theology in the Hebrew Bible (Collins 2018:143).

a) Exodus 25-31; 35-40: Texts related to the tabernacle.

The tabernacle served as a safe haven for the ark of the covenant, which was yoked to the presence of God. Collins (2018:143-145) comments that scholars see the description and construction of the tabernacle in Exodus as idealistic, and hints at an anachronistic addition. Of theological significance, however, is that in presenting the tabernacle in this way, it allowed for the depiction of a central sanctuary, despite Israel's roaming in the wilderness. The Priestly strand reflected in Exodus chapter 26-40 appears to be cognizant of the centralization of worship that took place during the reforms of King Josiah when he discovered the laws of Deuteronomy circa 621 B.C.E.

b) Leviticus 1-7: The ritual of sacrifice and their regulations

Sacrifices were brought as gifts to God, and as a means of communicating gratitude and worship. The offerings came in the form of various kinds of animals and agricultural produce such as cereal. Specific offerings would be prescribed for specific offences (Lv 4-7). The blood that would be disposed of on the altar was also used to clean the sanctuary (Achtemeier 1996:1271). Collins (2018:145-146) describes how the sacrifice could either be burnt in full, as a complete offering that emits an odor *'olah* (that which ascends) that is pleasing to God (Gn 8:21), or it could be placed on a fire and then consumed by the worshipper, who would leave the fat and blood behind as offering to the deity. The actions of the priests who sustained themselves by taking portions of the offerings, were carefully controlled by the laws in Leviticus.

The Day of Atonement played a special role in relieving people from their sense of guilt and sin, it was a specific day set aside for sanctification and atonement of past sins and impurities of the high priest and the people of Israel. What made it significant is that the individual would be pardoned not only by God but also by society who believed in the authenticity and power of the ritual (Collins 2018:146).

c) Leviticus 8-16: The consecration of priests and impurity laws

In these texts specific instructions are provided for the consecration of priests, the sons of Aaron. They would be anointed to indicate their elevated status, and covered with a special tunic and a breastplate fitted with Urim and Thummim that were used as a medium to communicate with God. The Levites, who were descendants of Jacob were also set aside for the priesthood, but their position was one of service to the Aaronide priests.

Purity was of paramount importance; one could not enter the presence of *YHWH* if you were found to be unclean or profaned in some way. God chose to dwell in the temple, and the primary function of the priests was therefore, to maintain the purity of the “holy.” The system of worship required that a distinction was to be made between that which was clean and that which was unclean, and between the common and the holy. Amongst the multitude of regulations, the laws concerning diet (Ex 23; Lv 11) made the biggest impact on Jewish life. Collins (2018:150) contends that by forbidding the consumption of certain land animals, fish, and flying creatures under the auspices of holiness, it was meant to serve the dual purpose of creating a sense of order that made people feel protected in times of distress.

d) Leviticus 17-26: The Holiness Code and the cultic calendar

The Code contains a series of ethical and ritual laws concerning issues such as slaughter and sacrifice, sexual relations, penalties for violations, the holiness of priests, the use of holy offerings, blasphemy and its punishment, and improper relations. The statement “For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy” forms the foundation of the Holiness Code (Mounce 2009:337). Leviticus 23 provides the appointed dates (using the Babylonian calendar) for the celebration of Passover, Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, the Festival of Tabernacles, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. The Holiness Code ends with a list of rewards for obedience and penalties for disobedience.

e) The book of Numbers

The book provides a census (or military registration) of the Israelite men “in their clans, by ancestral houses” (Nm 1:2 NRSV) when they journeyed through the wilderness. According to Longman III (2013:1221-1222) it describes their camp, and how God’s tabernacle is placed at the center and then surrounded by the Levites and the rest of the tribes.

The first section of the book narrates an episode of sin and judgement as it contends with the doubts displayed by the Israelites, despite being led miraculously by God’s glorious presence in a column of smoke and pillar of fire through the desert. The climax of the story is reached in chapters 13-14 when the 12 spies sent from the twelve tribes of Judah, return from the promised land with both bad and good news. They report that the inhabitants of the land are too strong to overcome. The people respond with rebellion, and God dooms them to 40 years of wandering in the desert. God, however, keeps his promise and continues to protect his people. Chapter 26 records the census of the second generation.

f) Key theological themes

Kessler (2013:373-375) presents a few key theological themes inherent to Priestly theology. Their theology emphasized the importance and splendour of *YHWH*’s presence that dwells in the tabernacle amongst the people of Israel. The glory of his presence is depicted as a “devouring fire” (Ex 24:17) and as a cloud of fire (Ex 40:38). Entry into his holy presence was permitted only to sanctified priests, as the glory of God was overwhelming and had the power to consume. The priests had the authority to mediate between *YHWH* and his people and transform the sovereignty of his glory into blessings that would be given in his name. The institution of priesthood with its sacrificial system and ritual laws enabled the people to approach God without fear. Boundaries were maintained, rites of passage were enforced and sacred times were appointed. The functioning of their entire society centered around the co-habitation of *YHWH* with his people.

Kessler (2013:374) adds, that sin was a very serious offence in Priestly theology. They required sacrifices to be offered as ransom for the forgiveness of transgressions. At times, forgiveness was subject to restitution first being made by the offender. Both forgiveness, and the restoration of their relationship with *YHWH* could be attained when sacrifices were brought. It was through the offering of a sacrifice that the ritual of purification and cleansing was initiated: “Thus he

shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the fresh water...” (Lv 14:52); “They shall purify themselves with water on the third day, and so be clean...” (Nm 19:12). Furthermore, Priestly Theology emphasized the holiness of *YHWH* and his people. They were called to be obedient to *YHWH*, who directed their everyday decisions with the laws he prescribed. These social, economic, ritual, and sexual regulations manifested in their fair and just actions toward their neighbours and gave them their identity as set apart from other nations. The need for order and structure as implemented by God in his creation of the universe was accentuated in Priestly conduct.

5.3. Concepts relating to Nehemiah 3 that resonate with the implicit themes of covenant and tradition

a) Shemiah (*YHWH* has heard), Zaccur (*YHWH* remembered, spoke), Imri (*YHWH* has promised, spoken)

As previously mentioned, the narrative of the Sinai covenant originates from the event of Egyptian oppression of the holy nation, and *YHWH*'s subsequent liberation of them. Zaccur (*YHWH* has remembered) and Shemiah (*YHWH* has heard) together, trigger the memory of Moses' first encounter with *YHWH* in Exodus:

²There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush: he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ⁶...I am the God of your father the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ⁷...I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry...(3:6-7 NRSV).

The word *remember*, in the Hebrew texts is applied in the sense of God remembering his covenant with his people. The name Imri (*YHWH* has promised, spoken) was a typical term used to express their conception of the divine promise. As previously noted, the J source is marked by its use of the divine name *YHWH*. According to Collins (2018:630) it can also be distinguished by its depiction of God in anthropomorphic terms (*YHWH* can hear because he has ears), and its themes of promise and fulfillment. All three names appear to reflect characteristics of the Southern Traditions of Judah.

b) Meshezabel (God delivers), Melatiah (YHWH has delivered), Jeshua (YHWH is salvation).

Before the Israelites were liberated from their slavery in Egypt, *YHWH* had made a covenant with Abraham in which he promised him a multitude of descendants and the land of Canaan. The reason for the Sinai covenant, according to Kessler (2013:208) was “rooted in a *pre-existing promise and a prior act of deliverance*.” Disobedience and deliverance are themes found throughout the history of Israel’s covenantal relationship with *YHWH*.

The application of the word “deliver” in the Hebrew Bible relates to situations of hostility in which God presents himself as the protector and deliverer of his people. Isaiah prophesied that King Cyrus, God’s anointed one, would be empowered to deliver the Israelites from their captivity in Babylon. The redemption of the Israelites from exile, and subsequent return to their homeland, was an act of God’s forgiveness, protection, and provision in fulfilment of his earlier vow, which has been honoured in the names of Meshezabel, Melatiah and Jeshua.

c) Zabbai (YHWH has given), Berechiah (YHWH has blessed), Jedaiah (YHWH has favoured), Hanun (blessed, favoured), Baruch (blessed).

By continually renewing his covenant with Israel, *YHWH* performs an act of grace based on his love for his people (Kessler 2013:209). He had repeatedly proved that his intentions toward Israel were good. According to Dt 28:1-14, *YHWH*, who had given them the land to possess (Dt 3:18), would continue to provide blessings if they remained obedient to his commandments: “The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you...⁸The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and all that you undertake...⁹The LORD will establish you as his holy people...” In Nehemiah, the Israelites as a favoured and blessed nation becomes evident when *YHWH* bring them back from the cities they had scattered to, restore their land to them, and re-establishes them as God’s holy nation.

d) Hananiah (YHWH is gracious), Nehemiah (to comfort), Rehum (compassion, mercy).

Sinai theology relates to the *character credo* of Ex 34:6. When God revealed himself to Moses in Ex 33:19-34:9, it included the self-proclamation that he is compassionate (*’el raḥûm*), gracious (*wēḥannûn*), slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love (*ḥesed*), and faithfulness.

The application of the word grace in the Hebrew Bible is to be understood within the paradigm of God's proclamation that encompasses the contributions of all three terms *rahûm*, *ḥannûn*, and *hesed*.

e) Hasshub (person to whom has been reckoned); Hashabneiah (YHWH has taken account of me); Hashabiah (YHWH has esteemed, considered, taken account)

The name Hasshub, produced only one result during the word study, which coincidentally appeared to be very relevant to the context of Nehemiah 3. In Isaiah 53:3-4 (LBS 10), the word is understood as relating to the Israelites as the *Suffering Servant*, and the servants' ultimate exaltation: "He was despised and rejected by others...and we held him of no account" (3 NRSV); "...yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted" (4 NRSV). Brueggemann (2003:208) notes that Isaiah 53 emphasizes the suffering caused by YHWH's judgement, and the promise of the restoration of Jerusalem, and re-establishment of the people of his covenant.

The names Hashabneiah and Hashabiah have YHWH as a theophoric suffix. A very important moment in Israelite history is recalled with the words "YHWH has reckoned." It forms the climax of the narrative in Genesis 15 where God makes his covenant with Abraham: "And he believed the LORD: and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness" (v6 NRSV). The interpretation of verse 6 has important consequences for exegesis and has been the topic of much scholarly discussion. According to Westermann (1985:222) the whole passage (vv. 1-6) is seen to be affiliated with the subsequent history of Abraham. The general view is that v. 6 is a late interpretation (that presupposes the idea of faith as specifically formulated by Isaiah) born out of the author's theological reflection on Abraham as the "father of faith." Westermann (1985:222) cites Wellhausen: "We are faced here with a 'retrojection': a well-defined attitude towards God which became important in a circle within the later history of Israel has been transferred to Abraham, the father of the people."

In the covenant renewal of Nehemiah 9, Ezra alludes to this verse when he describes how YHWH found Abraham's heart faithful and therefore made the covenant with him (v8). The text once again focuses on the new dimension that was added to the covenant in Ezra-Nehemiah concerning the internal disposition of the heart. By recalling the event he establishes continuity with the "father of faith" and triggers a social memory that reminds them of how important it

is to have faith in God's word, and that it is their faith that can make them righteous, despite their fallible human nature.

f) Shecaniah (*YHWH* has taken up abode)

The name Shecaniah, reflects the need of Priestly theology for order and structure to be implemented. In maintaining order, they assured the glory of God's presence in their midst. Therefore, *YHWH* "taking up his abode" is symbolic of the order that had been restored to the post-exilic community.

One of the pervasive themes in Zion theology was the divinely chosen temple and Jerusalem as the city of God. *YHWH* took up his abode in Solomon's temple when Israel experienced a period of rest. The name Shecaniah was symbolic of the fact that Jerusalem was now experiencing its period of rest. The root of the name *škn* "to settle" was popular in the post-exilic period and was used as an expression of the need for *YHWH* to live amongst his people.

Weinfeld (1983:114-115) commented on how the eschatological hope of the prophets depicted Jerusalem as a place that would symbolize the cessation of war. The name Shecaniah keeps this eschatological hope alive as the Israelites re-settle into a peaceful Jerusalem.

The substance of the new covenant was the disposition of the heart as it internalized the demands of the covenant. The Israelites were previously unable to comply with the requirements set by *YHWH*. Ezekiel (36:27) maintained that the only way they would be able to follow the ordinances and statutes, was by the Spirit of God. Jeremiah (31:33-34) described how in the new covenant *YHWH* would write his law on their hearts. In this new, changed relationship with God, they would no longer have to teach others who he was, people would experience him personally, on a spiritual level: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you." His presence would move from the abodes of the external realm of creation into the internal realm of their hearts.

g) Palal (*YHWH* has interceded), Pedaiah (*YHWH* has ransomed), Immer (Lamb)

The names Pedaiah, Palal, and Immer that contain the words *ransom*, *intercede* and *lamb* are commonly used concepts in Priestly theology. A sacrifice in the form of an animal or type of grain would be offered as ransom for the atonement of sins. The use of the word *ransom*

originated from the story of the Passover when the Lord redeemed the first-born sons by means of sacrificing sheep.

A study on the word *intercede*, with the Israelites as the object, found the word to be translated as “pray” in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Kessler (2013:261) describes how the text is focused on Solomon’s prayer for forgiveness. Solomon starts his prayer off by honouring *YHWH*’s continued faithfulness to his covenant, and repeatedly uses the word *forgive*. Included in Solomon’s list of the seven occasions upon which God may be appealed to in prayer, is when they were overthrown in war (1 Ki 6:24-25) and when they committed sin against God (1 Ki 6:36-39). Solomon’s prayer of dedication in 1 Kings 8, acknowledges that *YHWH*’s palpable presence in the temple is not required to access the divine, and that their prayers could be heard in heaven. The name Palal triggers the very important memory of Solomon’s prayer and reminds them of the fact that their prayers were heard despite the destruction of their temple.

h) Malchijah (My king is *YHWH*)

As previously noted, the perception of *YHWH* as “King of the gods” was a late conception (Wagenaar 1999:484). One of the core responses required by the Sinai covenant was loyalty to the exclusive worship of *YHWH*. Theophoric names with a pronoun expressing possession illustrated that they were in a covenantal relationship with no other god besides *YHWH*, this is most likely what was expressed by the name Malchijah.

i) Eliashib (God return/refresh)

One of the primary responses called for in situations of sin and disobedience is the “returning to *YHWH*.” Divine judgement and punishment were designed with the purpose of prompting covenantal partners into “returning,” with the focus on active obedience (Kessler 2013:227). The Hebrew verb שׁוּב which is part of Eliashib’s name is used specifically to denote repentance and turning away from sin to righteousness (Dt 4:30; 30:2; Jr 3:12; 14; 18:8 etc.).

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah it was clear that this is what they were trying to do. Zerubbabel enforced social boundaries, rebuilt the temple and restored worship. Ezra was focused on teaching the people the statutes and ordinances of God, and Nehemiah was responsible for instituting the social reforms that advanced “returning” to the Lord.

j) Zadok (right, just)

The name Zadok (right, just) expresses the person's sense of order and loyalty before God. It was expected that loyalty towards God would automatically translate into right and just actions towards others (Kessler 2013:271). Furthermore, it is part of the divine nature of God to offer his people an opportunity for repentance. He first warns them of the impending judgement by sending his prophets. Ezra (9:7-8) acknowledged that they ignored these warnings, and that *YHWH*'s actions were just and right, that his judgement was warranted for the sinful acts of the nation. Nehemiah's prayer, during the national confession (Ch. 9), appeals to *YHWH*'s *character credo*, when he emphasizes God's willingness to forgive, and his goodness and mercy in times of distress (Kessler 2013:249).

k) Meshullam (restitution), Shallum (recompense), Shelemiah (recompense)

The Sinai covenant required that the Israelite community kept trusting in God's unfailing love and mercy, even in the face of death. Forgiveness was rooted at the very center of *YHWH*'s identity; it was his heart's desire to restore broken relationships (Kessler 2013:271). The word study of *restitution* found that it was applied to the Hebrew texts in the sense of restoring to the rightful owner something that had been taken away. In the context of the Sinai covenant as "nesting" in the covenant with Abraham, *YHWH* was restoring his covenantal relationship with the community of Israel, as well as fulfilling the promises he had made concerning the land.

l) Rephaiah (*YHWH* has healed)

Rephaiah's name "*YHWH* has healed" relates to the text in a strong way. Jeremiah uses imagery related to illness as a symbol of the spiritual and religious state of the Israelites. He states that they are wounded and in need of a physician (8:22). He then prophecies about the coming Messiah and his new covenant that will reverse their sickness and heal them from the consequences of sin. The application of the word in the Hebrew Bible relates to every form of healing including faithlessness (Jr 3:22), idolatry (Is 57:18), apostasy (Hs 14:5), poverty and destruction (Jr 33:6), the brokenhearted (Ps 147:3), and the consequences of sin (Ps 41:5).

5.4. Concepts of significance that cannot be substantiated conclusively

a) Meremoth (unknown), Uriah (Flame of *YHWH*), and Hakkoz (thorns, thorny bushes)

The names Meremoth, Uriah and Hakkoz bring to memory the occasion upon which Moses encountered *YHWH* as a burning bush. God's appearance to Moses was in response to the cries of the people who were enslaved in Egypt. In the same chapter he proceeds to reveal his divine name (Ex 3:14-15).

b) Tekoa

Tekoa was primarily known as the birthplace of the prophet Amos. In the context of Nehemiah, Tekoa would trigger the memory of Amos and the fulfillment of his prophecy. Before the Babylonian exile, Amos emphasized righteousness and justice as part of the covenantal duties of the Israelites and made them aware that their acts of injustice and violence was in violation of the terms. They had neglected their responsibility of upholding God's call for them to be holy, and a blessing to other nations, therefore divine judgement and punishment was warranted.

c) Benjamin "son of the right-hand"

The fact that God refers to Cyrus as the one "whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations" (Is 45:1) was symbolic of the authority given to him to deliver the people of Israel, and may be represented in the name of Benjamin "son of the right hand."

d) The builders as representative of the whole community

Kessler (2013:211) interestingly notes that the Hebrew texts listing the commandments incorporated both singular and plural forms to denote the idea that they were intended for the entire community, regardless of gender or social standing. Parallels are found with the rebuilding of the walls, where the individuals were representative of the whole community, they were from different levels of society and included both male and female workers.

e) The sons of Hassenaah (hate)

The words “to hate” relate to the terminology used in Ancient Near Eastern treaties that symbolized disloyalty to the covenant.

f) The men of Jericho

Jericho was the first access point and site conquered when they entered the promised land.

g) Gibeon

Gibeon was suggested to be “the hill of God,” a tent for meeting with God and where prayers were answered (2 Chr 1).

h) Paseah (limper), Rephaiah (*YHWH* has healed), ointment mixers

The names Paseah and Rephaiah recall Jeremiah’s use of imagery that related to illness (Jr 8:22). He likened Israel and Judah’s religious and spiritual state to one who is wounded and in need of balm and a physician. Together these names and the symbolism represent by the ointment mixers as providers of balm for healing, recall Jeremiah’s words and the fact that they have entered a period of healing.

The names listed in the reconstruction of the wall relate predominantly to Sinai covenant theology and appear to be a testimony to the renewal of their covenant. Embedded in the relationship formed by the Sinai covenant is the importance of the character of each covenant partner. External acts are seen as indications of the internal disposition of the heart (Kessler 2013:210). Most of the names listed in Nehemiah are theophoric and have God as the subject. They serve to affirm *YHWH*’s divine character and the internal disposition of his heart toward his people. He is exalted as one who fulfils his promises and is faithfully committed to upholding the terms of his covenant.

5.5. Excursus: Nehemiah 9

The confessional prayer that is recorded in chapter 9 is of special interest and warrants further research. Nehemiah gathers the people for the renewal of the covenant and recounts the most important events in the history of Israel’s relationship with *YHWH*. A significant portion of the concepts studied in Nehemiah 3, appear to be concentrated in this unit of text and serve to

substantiate the claim that the names, settlements, and crafts reflect aspects of covenant mostly related to Sinai theology.

Verse 1 starts off with a moment of sincere repentance when the people confess their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors (Eliashib: lead back return, repent) The people then separate themselves from all the foreigners (v2). This separation is symbolic of the high priest Eliashib and his brothers “the priests,” when reconstruction started, they consecrated the Sheep Gate to separate that which is holy from that which was common. The Levites stand up and encourage the people to worship and bless *YHWH*. In verse 6-8, Ezra recounts the Creation and the covenant made with Abraham; he alludes to Genesis 15:6 where Abraham’s faith is accounted to him as righteousness (Hasshub: person to whom has been reckoned; Hashabneiah: *YHWH* has taken account of me; Hashabiah: *YHWH* has esteemed, considered, taken account). In verse 9, he refers to the Egyptian oppression, how *YHWH* had heard their cries and delivered them (Ananiah: *YHWH* has covered, heard; Uriah: Flame of *YHWH*; Hakkoz: thorns, thorny bushes Ex 3:4; 6:5). He reminds the people how *YHWH* led them with a pillar of cloud during the day, and a pillar of fire at night (Uriah: Flame of *YHWH*).

In verse 13, he continues with the event of Mount Sinai where Moses received “...right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments...” He comments on how *YHWH* nurtured them and sustained them with bread from heaven and water from a rock (Uzziel: to nourish). He uses the term “stiffened their necks” twice in verses 16-17 to emphasize how, despite God’s care, they still would not listen to his commandments (the sons of Hasenaah: to hate [disloyalty to covenant]). Recalling the *character credo*, he exalts God who was ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Hananiah: *YHWH* is gracious; Hanun: blessed, gracious; Rehum: compassion, softness, gentleness). Even in the event of disobedience *YHWH* remained faithful to his covenant and continued to illustrate his unmerited favour towards his people (Jedaiah: *YHWH* has shown kindness, been beneficent, favoured: Hanun: blessed, favoured; Berechiah: *YHWH* has blessed; Baruch: blessed). Ezra reflects again on Abraham’s relationship of promise and fulfilment (v23).

The entrance into Canaan (the men of Jericho is symbolic of the place Jericho as the first access point into Canaan) is presented with the emphasis on God’s military defeat of their adversaries (v25) They inherit a land “filled with all sorts of goods...and were filled and became fat...” (Zabbai: *YHWH* has given; Goldsmiths as symbol of currency, power and wealth). In verse 26

stories of disobedience follow as they reject the prophets who warned them against the consequences of their rebellion (Tekoites as symbolic of the message of Amos). Ezra describes how God gave them over to their enemies so that they would suffer (Paseah: limp, lame), but each time they cried out to God and he sent them saviours who saved them from the hand of their enemies (Jeshua: *YHWH* is salvation; Meshezabel: God delivers; Melatiah: *YHWH* has saved, delivered). After Ezra recounts their history, he addresses God and refers to him as “our God” (Malchijah: *YHWH* is my King) and declares the renewal of the covenant.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

Ezra and Nehemiah's attempts to reconfigure Jewish society appeared to be driven only by a purity ideology. Emphasis was placed on creating social boundaries, and their identity as Jews, a holy nation set apart by *YHWH*. Extensive genealogical records were provided as proof of descent. Only Jews were permitted to assist in the building efforts. One would assume that this ideology extended to the selection of builders, especially in view of the fact that their names would be recorded in the sacred texts. Several individuals who helped to rebuild the walls reappear in other parts of the text as being amongst Nehemiah's adversaries.

Only a portion of the names were recorded with specificity (on occasion up to the third generation) while others were referred to in general, either by their settlement or craft. It appears that the list did not serve as a genealogical record, or merely as a tribute to honour the individuals who assisted in the reconstruction of the wall (adversaries would not be honoured).

Findings made by scholars such as Lipshchits (2012:74,82-83) and Williamson (1985:69-70) pointed to the fact that there may be more to be discovered in the names, settlements and crafts listed in the reconstruction of the wall. Following the authors intended line of focus, the research was conducted with emphasis on the names, and the settlements and crafts, to answer two questions: what was the meaning of the names, settlements, and crafts listed in Nehemiah; and was there any theological significance attached to them?

The aim of the research was therefore to determine whether any theological significance was attached to the meaning of the builders' names, their settlements, and crafts. The objectives were to: examine the historical and literary context that Nehemiah 3 referred to; analyze all proper names, settlements, and crafts in the texts; examine and synthesize the findings with identified theological traditions in the Hebrew Bible; and present the concluding remarks.

The literary context was examined by presenting an overview of the following aspects in Ezra-Nehemiah: the unity and authorship of the text, date of composition, theological perspectives, and the structure and content of the text. To examine the historical context pertaining to the text, a summary of Neo-Babylonian rule (586-539 B.C.E.) was presented, followed by the reconstruction of the period of Nehemiah's service under the reign of king Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.E.). In the analysis of the names, the root (where possible) was determined by means of a lexical and onomastic examination. A word study of the root was completed to discern its most probable meaning. The settlements and crafts were analyzed for theologically significant elements such as events or individuals that may have been associated with them by consulting encyclopedias and biblical dictionaries. An overview of the history of theological traditions that developed in the process of *YHWH*'s covenantal relationships with the people of Israel, was presented with the purpose of synthesizing the research findings with said theological traditions.

6.2. Findings of the study

The research introduced different scholarly views on the literary composition and purpose of the list of builders in the Nehemiah memoirs. This study offered an alternative view from which to analyze the content with the hope of gaining new insight into the coherency and purpose of the text.

The reconstruction of the literary and socio-political text indicated that Ezra and Nehemiah had the task of establishing continuity between the newly formed community of the second temple, and the legacy of the pre-exilic Israelites of the first temple. In the setting of rebuilding their social and religious institutions, they sought to renew and restore their relationship with *YHWH*. Both Ezra and Nehemiah engaged in prayers of national confession (Ezr 9; Neh 9), followed by the denunciation of mixed marriages (Ezr 10; Neh 13), with various covenant renewal ceremonies in between. Kessler (2013:248) explains that the affirmation of *YHWH*'s judgement as just and right, and the acknowledgement of their guilt was underscored by the biblical author in the penitential prayers.

YHWH's judgement prompted his covenantal partners to repentance, the "turning away" from sin back to the righteous ways of God. They acknowledged that the destruction inflicted to Zion was just and right, they had been warned and chose to reject the warnings. They proceed by formally committing to a life of faithful adherence to the statutes and ordinance set by the covenant. Their renewed faith in the covenant was entrenched in the recognition that despite

the history of their sinful nature *YHWH* had always delivered them, protected them, and provided for their needs when they cried out to him in repentance.

Upon repentance, their biggest priority was to prevent history from repeating itself, for this, they had to comply with the first instruction *YHWH* had given them in Dt 7:1-4 (NRSV): “When the LORD your God brings you into the land...and he clears away many nations before you...³Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters for your sons, ⁴for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods.” Failure to adhere to this command would lead to the wrath of God, his divine judgment and destruction...again. Hence, the advancement of a rigid purity ideology.

The genre, structure and form of the text was analyzed followed by an exegesis of the text. The text fell under the genre of historical narrative. It was discovered that contrary to modern historical writers, biblical writers would draw from Israel’s past traditions and present them as pedagogical tools of instruction without considering chronological accuracy. With regards to the form and structure, scholars agreed on the essential unity of the list but commented that too many variations existed to justify forcing a greater sense uniformity than that which is provided by their geographical succession (Williamson 1985:251). The list is accepted as original by scholars, who consider it to be an important source for the wider socio-political, and geographical situation of the province of Judah in the Persian period.

After the literary examination, a word study, and lexical and onomastic analysis revealed the most probable meaning that could be ascribed to each name. Gorman (2009:119-120) explained that certain words could function outside of their semantic range and could have additional meanings, emotions and value judgements connected to them by their cultural or rhetorical environment. This appeared to be true, as meanings and emotions were clearly attached to names such as Uriah (Flame of *YHWH*) and Hakkoz (thorns, thorny bushes) etc. that amongst other things, evoked the memory of the theophany that occurred with Moses. Social memory specific to Israelite religious history was also triggered by the people or significant events that were related to places such as Tekoa, Jericho and Gibeon. In addition to this, imagery based on universal experiences of the Israelites is found in the usage of terms such as “healing and ointment mixers” that related to Isaiah’s imagery of Israel’s spiritual state that was in need of a physician.

What immediately became clear was a cluster of concepts around the central idea of covenant related predominantly to Sinai covenant theology. The settlements were examined for any

significant events that may have taken place, or for any notable individuals associated with them. Many of the concepts related to the settlements and crafts, when considered collectively, were found to be significant, but could not be substantiated with certainty.

The contribution and relevance of this study becomes evident in the findings made by the research. By approaching the names, settlements, and crafts from an alternative perspective, it was found that they appear to have theological significance. Because the text fell under the genre of historical narrative, the interpretation of the names, settlements, and guilds listed in Nehemiah could be approached as elements of pedagogical instruction. By surrounding the wall with the people, places and settlements mentioned in its construction, it denotes the history of “bringing in, to existence” or “fixing” of the continued relationship between *YHWH* and Israel (cf. Bardis comments 2.4.1). As posited earlier by Seymour (1983:109), names were used as a means of bringing order to a previously unordered universe (cf. Seymour’s comments in 2.4.1). Order is a major theme found in priestly theology and may support the understanding that the text was composed by a priestly scribe. The names that resonated with Sinai covenant theology were found to be distributed in both halves of the text which may indicate a relationship between the main ideas, enhancing the coherency and unity of the text.

It is difficult to ignore the concentration of concepts that were found in the covenant renewal of Nehemiah 9. Taken together, each name, settlement and craft could be seen to represent different elements of the story of Israel’s covenantal relationship with *YHWH*, presented in a form true to historical narratives.

6.3. Overview and relevance of the study

The introduction provided a discussion of the various aspects of the research that had to be addressed. These aspects included: the research question, the literature review, methodology, aims and objectives, hypothesis, and chapter divisions. The next chapter described the theoretical framework of the research, and the approaches that would be utilized to achieve the intended aim and objectives. In the third chapter the historical context was discussed and provided an overview of the literary and socio-political context in which the text was composed. Aspects concerning unity and authorship, date of composition, canonical structure and the historical background of the text were elaborated on. The exegesis of Nehemiah 3 was presented in the fourth chapter. It expounded on the structure, form, and genre of the text, followed by a word study, and lexical and onomastic analysis of the personal names.

Encyclopedias and biblical dictionaries were consulted to assist in the examination of settlements and crafts. The fifth chapter started with an overview of the history of the theological traditions that developed in the process of *YHWH*'s covenantal relationships with the people of Israel. This was followed by a synthesis of the research findings with the identified theological traditions.

The research demonstrates that the names of the builders listed in Nehemiah 3 are theologically significant and resonate with the concepts and vocabulary of Sinai covenant theology. This has offered new insight into the meaning and coherency of the text within its own historical and literary context. Albert and Schmitt (2012) appear to have been correct in their assertion that Hebrew names contain allusions to Israel's political and sacred history.

6.4. Possible areas for further research

The analysis of Nehemiah 3 dealt largely with the names, settlements and crafts found in the text. The study did not focus on the description of the gates that were reconstructed. According to Wright (2009:19) gates constituted "a very important boundary between the 'insiders' and 'outsiders' of the Israelite city." Taking into consideration the ideological background of Ezra-Nehemiah, and their socially constructed idea of "self" and "other," the gates and builders designated to them may reveal what role, if any, they played in the reconstitution of the community and could be regarded for further study.

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