

Lesson 3

- What do you learn about the three men mentioned in 2:19?
- How did Nehemiah respond to the men who came to him according to 2:20?

2. Please examine these word studies for some of the **key words** in this lesson.

Strong's No. and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance unless written in <i>italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
2896 towb towbaah Nehemiah 2:10	Good , a good thing, a good man or woman; the good, goods, or good things, beautiful, best, better, bountiful, cheerful, at ease, (be in) favour, fine, glad, good (deed, -lier, liest, -ly, -ness, -s) liketh (best), loving, ...	Nehemiah 2:18 Psalm 119:72
1121 ben libneey Nehemiah 2:10	Children , a son (as a builder of the family name), in the widest sense ... including grandson, subject, nation, ... [anointed-] one, appointed to, ... child, ... daughter, young (one), youth	The Hebrew uses two words for what was translated as "Israelites" in 2:10. In the Hebrew text it is actually "sons of Israel."
3478 Yisra'el Yisra'eel Nehemiah 2:10	Israel , (see word study for Israelites on page 17)	See note above. Nehemiah 1:6
3548 kohen w ^a lakoh ^a niym Nehemiah 2:16	Priests , ... one officiating, also (by courtesy) an acting priest (although a layman): chief ruler, prince, principal officer	Exodus 40:12-15
2715 chor w ^a lachoriym Nehemiah 2:16	Nobles , properly, white or pure (from the cleansing or shining power of fire hence (figuratively) noble (in rank). <i>Following the Babylonian exile, these were administrators and influential people, although not aristocracy.</i> ¹	Nehemiah 6:17
5461 cagan w ^a lacgaaniym Nehemiah 2:16	Officials , from an unused root meaning to superintend; a prefect of a province: prince, ruler <i>KJV</i> . <i>This can refer to the head of a Jewish community, as well as lesser officials of Judah.</i> ²	Ezra 9:2
2781 cherpah cherpaah Nehemiah 2:17	Disgrace , (see word study for shame on page 15)	Nehemiah 1:3

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*, Chattanooga, AMG Publishers, 1994, 2318.

² *Ibid.*, 2344.

Strong's No. and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance unless written in <i>italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
2388 chazaq way ^a chazquw Nehemiah 2:18	Encouraged , to fasten upon; ... to seize, (figuratively, courageous, causatively, strengthen <i>KJV</i> , cure, help, repair, fortify), ... to bind, ... catch, cleave, confirm, be constant, constrain, continue, be of good (take) courage (-ous, -ly), encourage (self), be established, fasten, force, fortify, make hard	Deuteronomy 31:6, 7, 23 Joshua 1:6
4775 marad mor ^a diym Nehemiah 2:19	Rebelling , to rebel: rebel (-lious). <i>To be obstinate, resist, revolt, disobey.</i> ³	Joshua 22:19

3. The three men mentioned in Nehemiah 2:19 had a unique role in Israel's history. In this portion of the lesson we will look at the "background" of these three men. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem are only mentioned in the book of Nehemiah.

It is always helpful to keep an atlas of the Bible nearby while you are studying. Look in the section that represents the era you are studying to find the cities or regions that are mentioned in the Bible.

Nehemiah 2:10 introduced **Sanballat the Horonite**. The name Sanballat has Akkadian and/or Aramaic origins meaning "Sin, (the god) has healed."⁴

Six papyrus letters were discovered in the southern region of Egypt at the end of the 19th century and these "Elephantine Letters" recorded information about Israel and a "colony" of Israelites living on an island along the Nile River while the Persians ruled Egypt. One of the letters that was written in 407 B.C. mentioned that Sanballat was the governor of Samaria during the reign of Darius I.⁵ The letter also mentioned Sanballat's sons, Delaiah and Shemlemiah.⁶ The endings of the names of Sanballat's sons included a form of the Hebrew word for God, Yahweh. This (iah or yah) was used in many Hebrew names such as Jeremiah and Nehemiah. In the time of the Persian Diaspora, 51% of the names given to Jewish men contained various forms of the name Yahweh.⁷

Some have said that perhaps Sanballat was from Horonaim, in the southern region of Moab. However since the Elephantine Letter said that Sanballat was the governor of Samaria, being from the city of Beth-Horon would make sense as this city was in the southern edge of Samaria, between the cities of Jericho and Joppa (on the Mediterranean coast). Beth-Horon contained both upper and lower regions as well as four suburbs. Beth-Horon is mentioned in five books of the Old Testament, beginning with Joshua. During the time of Persian Empire the city of Beth-Horon "controlled" the major road that connected Jerusalem with the Mediterranean Sea. This would mean that rebuilding the city of Jerusalem would impact the economic position of the city of Beth-Horon.

Look ahead for a reminder of what was said about Sanballat's family in Nehemiah 13:28. What are the implications of this?

³ Ibid., 2334.

⁴ *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Trent Butler, Editor, Nashville, Holman Bible Publishers, 1991, 1230.

⁵ Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1990, 242.

⁶ Victor H. Matthews & Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, New York, Paulist Press, 1997, 200.

⁷ Yamauchi, Ibid., 243.

Lesson 3

Nehemiah 2:10 introduced **Tobiah the Ammonite**. Genesis 19:38 tells of the origin of the people of Ammon. Read this verse in its context (in this case look at the narrative of Genesis 19:30-38). What is the origin of the sons of Ammon?

During the era of the Old Testament, the Ammonites lived to the east of Israel in Rabbah-Ammon. Today this is the city of Ammon, Jordan.

Nehemiah 2:19 introduced **Geshem the Arab**. In the Old Testament the name Geshem appeared in Nehemiah 3 times and then a different spelling was used in 6:6 (as Gashmu). The spelling of some words and names in the post exilic era is different because of the influence of the Aramaic language among the nation of Israel.

The Arab people in the ANE were known as nomadic or bedouin. The people groups who were known as Arabian included the Midianites, the Ishmaelites, the people of Kedar, the Amalekites, the Dedanites, and the Temanites. These people came through Abraham's son Ishmael as well as through Abraham's second wife Keturah (Genesis 25). When the word Arab or Arabian is used in Scripture, you must look at the context of the word to see how the word is used specifically.

The region of Arabia in the time of the Old Testament included present day Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and parts of Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula.⁸ These Arabian countries bordered Israel on the north, east, and south.

4. The leaders of the Jewish people in Jerusalem heard Nehemiah's plan to rebuild their city and their response showed their agreement with Nehemiah and their determination to build. The text of 2:18 says they "encouraged themselves to do good."

Look at how the word "encourage" (chazaq) was used in these Scriptures.

a. Deuteronomy 31:6, 7, 23

b. Joshua 1:6

Read Nehemiah 2:19, 20 and write out how Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem responded to Nehemiah and the Jewish leaders.

How would you summarize Nehemiah's response to these three men?

Continued on the next page.

⁸ Joseph Coleson, *Holman Bible Dictionary*, Trent Butler, Editor, Nashville, Holman Bible Publishers, 1991, 80.

When you read the end of Nehemiah 2 you might have thought of individuals who have been in your life that came up “against” you. Nehemiah said that these men jeered and despised them and they also falsely accused them by saying that they were rebelling against the king.

In the New Testament those who follow Christ are told (in John 10:10) that we have an enemy who comes to “rob, kill, and destroy.” Jesus promised His followers that He came to give life and that this life would be abundant. We are told that Satan, our enemy is the accuser who reveals himself to us with lies. Jesus said (in John 8:44) to some of the Pharisees, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*; for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Jesus did not leave His followers defenseless against the schemes of the enemy. Read what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 about what has been provided for us and then write the specific actions that Christians are to take against opposition from the enemy.

Please close by allowing the words of Psalm 138 to be your prayer. Look for what this Psalm says about one’s enemy and what this Psalm says about God.

Day 2 – Nehemiah 2 Review and Nehemiah 3 - Comprehensive Chapter Study

1. Today you will review Nehemiah 2 and then begin the study of Nehemiah 3. Open by **praying** that as you review and observe the next chapter you will receive the message that God has for you from His holy word.

Read Nehemiah 2 and ask the Holy Spirit to help you write a brief description of the major events of the chapter or a brief summary of what took place in the chapter. Record this on the sheet in the Appendix called the Nehemiah Review Sheet. After you have done this, record what was revealed about God in the chapter and then record your own response to Nehemiah himself or any of the circumstances that took place in the chapter.

Another theme that will be studied in the lessons will be Nehemiah’s prayers that are recorded in the book of Nehemiah. On the sheet in the Appendix called Nehemiah’s

Lesson 3

Prayers you are asked questions about prayer. Please look at this now as part of your review.

- Now you will **observe** the text of Nehemiah 3. As you read Nehemiah 3, pay attention to the important words in the chapter. Mark the **key words** in Nehemiah 3 in a consistent way. List here what you decided are the **key words** for Nehemiah 3.

- We generally look at the main characters in a chapter, but to list the names of those mentioned in Nehemiah 3 would take quite an effort! Why do you think this record was included in Nehemiah's account?

- What references to geographical locations are made in Nehemiah 3?

- What references are made in Nehemiah 3 that reflect the culture at the time of Nehemiah?

- What references are made to specific historical information in Nehemiah 3?

2. As you read Nehemiah 3, look for **contrasts and comparisons** that were used. Write the **contrasts and comparisons** in the space provided, or mark your Scripture Work Sheets in some way to show these.

Contrasts (to show differences/opposites)

Comparisons (to show similarities and connections, using the words *as* or *like*)

3. Look for **terms of expression** that help you understand *time*, with words like “now, then, later,” etc. and mark these in a consistent way.

Another means of understanding language is to examine the way verbs are used in writing. A simple explanation of verbs is that they are words that express action or the state of being, and they relate the words communicated within a framework of time. Verbs *communicate* that something *is happening* at the moment, or *has happened* in the past, or *will happen* in the future. (The verbs in the preceding sentence are in italics.) Verbs can also announce that an event has already taken place and the results of that event are continuing at the present time.

Please take the time to read Nehemiah 3 looking for the different verb tenses that were used, noting in the left hand margin references to the future, the present, or the past. This can add another dimension to your study, not because you will be studying verbs, but perhaps to help you see what God has done in the past, what He is doing today, as well as what He has promised to do in the future.

4. Now mark words that express **conclusion** or show **results or purpose** with words like “for,” “for this reason,” “so that,” and “because.” Words that express **conclusion** are important to note because they show why the author wrote what he wrote and help you see the promises or consequences that will come.

5. What did you read in Nehemiah 3 that caused you to stop and meditate? What is there in the chapter that causes you to think about your own life and lifestyle? How has Nehemiah 3 ministered to your spirit today?

When I read Nehemiah 3 I thought about Psalm 143. Please close by reading this and reflecting on your understanding of God and what He has accomplished on your behalf in the past and how you see Him working in your life today.

Reflect on one attribute of God that you can share with someone this week. Write this out here and pray for the opportunity to speak God’s truth to someone in need.

Day 3 – Nehemiah 3

1. In Nehemiah 1:5 and 2:4 Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven. This address to God was unique to the post-exilic era as it is used in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. Israel knew that their God dwelt between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem, and with the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel’s prophecy of the departure of the Shekinah glory (of God) came true. Israel then understood God as the LORD God of heaven. Open in **prayer** thanking the Lord God that He sent His precious Son to take upon Himself your sin and that your Savior Jesus is in you, proclaiming to you the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). We can also thank God that He

Lesson 3

gave Christ's followers the Holy Spirit to guide us into His truth. Begin now with these **observation questions**.

- In modern day Jerusalem one can enter the city through seven gates. As you read through Nehemiah 3 mark the number of gates that existed in Jerusalem during the post exilic era. Also look for references to the men of various occupations that contributed to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The number of gates: _____ People of what professions helped rebuild the walls?

- The Sheep Gate was the entrance for the sheep that would be used in the temple sacrifices. Who was to rebuild the Sheep Gate according to 3:1?
- Look at the map of Jerusalem in the Appendix for some help with understanding the rebuilding project.
- **Some facts that relate to information in Nehemiah 3:**
The wall around Jerusalem contained gates and towers. The **towers** provided an area for "watchmen" to guard the city.

Jericho was located around 15 miles to the east of Jerusalem, 3:2.

Tekoa was 10 miles south of Jerusalem, 3:5.

Gibeon was around six miles west of Jerusalem, 3:7.

Mizpah was around 8 miles northwest of Jerusalem, 3:7.

The location of **Beth-haccherem** is not certain, but it is thought to be between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, a few miles south of Jerusalem, 3:14.

Beth-zur was around 15 miles south west of Jerusalem, 3:16

Keilah was around 18 miles southwest of Jerusalem, 3:17.

2. Please examine these word studies for some of the **key words** in this lesson.

Strong's No. and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance, unless written in <i>italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
1419 gadowl ha-gaadowl Nehemiah 3:1	High , great (in any sense); hence, older; also insolent: aloud, elder (-est), + exceeding (-ly), + far, (man of) great (man, matter, thing), high, ... mighty, more, much, noble, proud thing, very	
3548 kohen ha-koheen Nehemiah 3:1	Priest , (see word study for priests on page 30)	
113 adown ^a doneeyhem Nehemiah 3:5	Lord , (from a root meaning to rule); sovereign, i.e. controller, (human or divine): master, owner	Used three times in Nehemiah. Nehemiah 8:10; 10:29

Strong's No. and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance, unless written in <i>italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
3619 oikodome oikodomes Romans 14:19	Building up , architecture, i.e. (concrete) a structure; figuratively confirmation: building, edify (-ication, -ing)	Ephesians 4:12
3870 parakaleo parakaleite Hebrews 3:13	Encourage , to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation): beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort (-ation), intreat, pray	1 Thessalonians 4:18 1 Thessalonians 5:11

3. In Nehemiah 3 we read about people coming to Jerusalem to participate in the rebuilding project who were from cities outside of Jerusalem (see information in Question 1). Nehemiah 3 also tells us that some repaired the wall near their own house (see 3:10, 23, 28, 29, 30). Sometimes God calls us to rebuild or build up what we see in our own community and sometimes God calls us to go outside of our own neighborhood to contribute to His building projects in another location.

The building in Jerusalem involved the reconstruction of the walls and gates, and those who follow Christ are sometime equipped to participate in building projects that involve physical labor. God also calls His children to build up people who need to be encouraged.

Look at what Paul wrote about God's calling in the following Scriptures. How is the church responsible according to these passages?

a. Ephesians 4:12-16

b. Romans 4:19

c. 1 Thessalonians 4:18

d. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

e. Hebrews 3:13

f. Hebrews 10:24, 25

4. In war, the gates and walls of a city provided a defense against the schemes of the enemy. In our world we know gates and walls (or fences) are often more decorative or artistic rather than substantial and defensive.

Continued on the next page.

Lesson 3

In the ANE, the walls of a city were very important. The book of Joshua tells us that Jericho was a city that thought they were “safe” from the Israelites when they entered the land of Canaan. The archeological evidence found from ancient Jericho shows that the walls around Jericho were very wide. The top of the wall was wide enough to allow the soldiers who were guarding the city to walk the perimeter of the city and watch for “visitors” of any sort.

Remember in Nehemiah 2:18 the leaders of Jerusalem responded to Nehemiah’s plan by “encouraging themselves to do good.” Read what Jude 17 says about building up oneself and write out what this means to you.

In Philippians 4:6, 7 the Apostle Paul used the Greek word for guard that was used to describe a sentinel who would be on duty, walking the perimeter of what he had been assigned to guard, thereby protecting his station. Write out Philippians 4:6, 7 and then look at the command that follows this to see how Paul intended us to live in obedience to the commands of 4:6, 7.

Please close by reading Psalm 141 as your own prayer and notice how the word guard was used in verse 3. You might write out Psalm 141:3 as you finish your time in the word today.

