

7:1-3 Assignment of guards for the walls (continued)

1. Malbim to Nechemiah 7:1

עד עתה היו הלויים טרודים בבנין החומה ועתה נפקדו על משמרתם:

Until now the Levites were busy in building the wall; now they were commissioned in their roles.

2. Ralbag to Nechemiah 13, Lesson 2

התועלת השני הוא להודיע שהוא ראוי שיופקדו בכל מלאכה גדולה ממונים ישגיהו בענין המלאכה ההיא שתהיה נעשית כהוגן ואם לא לא יתכן שתשלם המלאכה ההיא. ולזה זכר שאחר שהעמיד הדלתות שם על מנוים השוערים והמשוררים. וזכר גם כן שעל כל משמר ומשמר היה ראש המשמר להשגיח על המשמר שלו.

The second benefit is to inform that it is appropriate to appoint designees for any great task, to oversee the task such that it will be done properly. If this is not done, it is impossible that the task will be completed. Therefore it mentioned that after he set up the doors, he appointed gatekeepers and singers. It also mentioned that for each shift there was a head of the shift, to oversee his shift.

3. Malbim to Nechemiah 7:2

רוב האנשים יראה את הרבים מעשות דבר נגד רצונם אף שהוא כדבר אלקים, ופה היה צריך פקיד שלא יירא משום אדם, כי באשר היו שרים רבים עם טוביה כנ"ל. לכן בחר את חנני שלא יירא מהם:

Most people fear the masses, and will not act against their will even to follow the word of Gd. Here, he needed an officer who would fear no man, since there were many officers with Toviah, as mentioned. Therefore he selected Chanani, who would not fear them.

4. Rabbi Saadia Gaon, Emunot v'Deiot 8

והרביעי ששערי המדינה יהיו פתוחים לילה ויומם מהבטחת הנכנסים והיוצאים כמ"ש (ישעיה ס' י"א) "ופתחו שעריך תמיד יומם ולילה לא יסגרו", ומצאתים בבית שני סוגרים אותם קודם בא השמש, ולא היו פותחים אותם עד חצי היום כמ"ש (נחמיה ז' ג')...

The fourth point is that the gates of the land were to be open night and day, due to their confidence in the face of those who would enter and exit, as per Isaiah 11, "And your gates will be open always, day and night they shall not be closed." And we have found in the Second Temple that they closed [the gates] before sunset, and they did not open them until midday, as per Nechemiah 7:3...

7:4-5 The Problem of Jerusalem: Opening

5. Prof. Mordechai Zer-Kavod, Daat Mikra to Nechemiah 7:4

היו גם העומדים על המשמר מועטים, וממילא היתה סכנה גדולה נשקפת לירושלים, אע"פ שהיתה מקפת חומה.

They had few people to stand guard, leading to anticipation of great danger for Jerusalem despite its surrounding wall.

6. Metzudat David to Nechemiah 7:4

לפי שהעיר רחבת מקום ולתוספת ביאור אמר וגדולה ועי"ז רחוקים אנשים זה מזה כי המה מתי מספר: "ואין בתים בנוים" - ר"ל אינם בנוים בחוזק רב להסתר בהן מפני האויב. ובעבור כל זה צריך שמירה מעולה:

Because the city is spacious – and for added explanation he said "and large" – and so people would be far from each other, for they were few. "And there were no built-up houses" – Meaning, they are not built powerfully, such that one could shelter there from the enemy. Because of all of this, great protection would be needed.

7. R' Dov Zakheim, Nehemiah, pg. 130

Nehemiah assembled the entire populace ... His populism previously had permitted him to rally the masses against the community's leaders; by assembling the hoi polloi with the elites, he ensured the latter's cooperation in the effort to populate Jerusalem, though any check of the records carried the risk for the rich that they might have to cede some of their property to poorer claimants.

8. Malbim to Nechemiah 7:4

ובאשר אין בתים בנוים ראה שלא ירצו להתישב בעיר שאין בה דיורין, עד שיפילו גורלות כמו שהיה באמת, וע"כ הוצרך לדעת המשפחות שעלו לא"י. Since there were not built-up houses, he saw that they would not want to live in a sparsely populated city unless he would cast lots, as he actually did. Therefore, he needed to know the families who had ascended to Israel.

9. Prof. Mordechai Zer-Kavod, *Daat Mikra to Nechemiah 7:4-5*

נחמיה תהה וחפש עצה איך לתקן פגם זה, והחליט להטיל חובה על מעשר אדם לישובה של ירושלים. לשם כך הוכרח לערוך מפקד עם מחדש... "להתייחס" – לבדוק את אגרות היחש, ועל ידי זה יבואו ראשי האבות להיפקד.

Nechemiah wondered and sought counsel to fix this problem, and decided to obligate one-tenth of the population to settle Jerusalem. Therefore he needed to establish a new national census... "To identify the lineage" – to check the letters of lineage, and therefore the heads of families would come to be counted.

10. R' Dov Zakheim, *Nehemiah* pp. 131-132

These lists... were also integral to Nehemiah's effort to provide the people with a sense of historical legitimacy and national cohesion by linking his activities to the past... [T]hey demonstrated that his activities were part of, and culminated in, the process of return from exile.

11. Talmud, *Ketuvot* 110b

מנין ששייבת כרכים קשה שנאמר "ויברכו העם לכל האנשים המתנדבים לשבת בירושלים."

How do we know that living in cities is hard? As in *Nehemiah* 11:2.

12. Talmud, *Bava Kama* 82b

עשרה דברים נאמרו בירושלים... ואין עושין בה גנות ופרדסות - חוץ מגנות וורדין שהיו מימות נביאים הראשונים - ואין מגדלים בה תרנגולין... ואין עושין בה גנות ופרדסין משום סירחא ואין מגדלין בה תרנגולין משום קדשים...

Ten items were stated for Jerusalem... One may not make gardens and orchards, other than *Ginat Veradim* which was from the early prophets. And one may not raise chickens... One may not make gardens or orchards because of the smell, and one may not raise chickens because of sanctified items...

7:6-67 The original census of Ezra 2 is reported again

13. Prof. Mordechai Zer-Kavod, *Daat Mikra, Introduction to Nechemiah 7*

ומסתבר שנשנתה כאן כי נחמיה הוצרך לה לשם הטלת חובה של "מעשר אדם" לישובה של ירושלים. ועוד אפשר שנשנתה כאן משום החיבה שרחש הכותב לעולים הראשונים. [הערה 2: וכל כפל במקרא הוא לחזוק, לזרוז או לחיבה. והשווה דברי רש"י לבמדבר יח:ט...]

14. Dr. Tamar Cohn Eskenazi, *In an Age of Prose: A Literary Approach to Ezra-Nehemiah*, pp. 37-40, 97

The complexity of Ezra-Nehemiah gains coherence when one looks at the book's distinctive structure and discerns its major themes. The major repetition of the list of returnees (*Ezra 2* and *Nehemiah 7*) is the clue to the structure...

The most useful structural schematization of story for the purpose of describing Ezra-Nehemiah is, in my judgment, the one by the structuralist Claude Bremond, who charts the three formal features of story as follows:

- Potentiality (objective defined)
- Process of actualization (steps taken)
- Success (objective reached)

Bremond's categories allow us to recognize the following structure of Ezra-Nehemiah:

- Potentiality: decree to the community to build the house of Gd (*Ezra 1:1-4*)
- Process of actualization: the community builds the house of Gd according to decree (*Ezra 1:5-Neh.7:72*)
- Success: the community celebrates the completion of the house of Gd according to Torah (*Neh. 8:1-13:31*)...

The first part announces "potentiality" and "objective defined." It is an exhortation and a challenge in the form of a document to the people of Gd to build the house of Gd in Jerusalem. It introduces the central character, i.e., the people as a whole, and the central event, i.e., building the house of Gd.

The second part depicts the "process of actualization" i.e., the building and forming of house and people. The repeated list of returnees, *Ezra 2* and *Neh. 7:6-72*, literally frames this section. This major repetition re-presents the major character [the people-MT], provides continuity for the section as a whole, and unifies the events in between...

The third part depicts "success." The objective has been reached and the community rejoices. The people as a whole, i.e., the central characters, celebrate the success of the completed task, put on the finishing touches, and dedicate the house of Gd...

Intense emphasis on the people as a whole marks the opening scene (*Neh.8:1-12*) and sets the tone for the rest of the book. The people remain unequivocally in the foreground to the end of the book, except in the Coda. The word עם, "people," occurs thirteen times in the first twelve verses. The expression "all/the people" occurs nine times in these verses. Each reference describes the people as actors or subject. Such density of repetition has no parallels in Ezra-Nehemiah.