

Rebuilding The Broken Walls

Wednesday Evening Series Led By Pastor Dan Betzer

Wednesday, October 10, 2012

1 A few months ago, joined by some of my friends, I walked along the floor of the Kidron
2 Valley (east of Jerusalem) south from the Mount of Olives to the ancient Pool of Siloam.
3 As the Valley grew deeper and deeper, I saw to my right the southeastern corner of the
4 Great Temple area and the “pinnacle” or “summit” of Herod’s Great Temple.
5 Continuing south into the “Ophel” - the area south of the city where King David had his
6 palace, I saw ruins of ancient walls and remnants of fortress towers.

7
8 These were the walls built by the incredible NEHEMIAH nearly 500 years before the
9 birth of Jesus Christ. The story of this remarkable man and the record of his exploits are
10 found in the Hebrew Scriptures (The Old Testament) and form the biblical basis for this
11 series of Bible studies.

12
13 The further south we walked, until we finally entered the excavations of the Pool of
14 Siloam, my mind began to form the basis of this current Bible study. Before we begin
15 the current application to our lives, it is essential that we understand the scriptural story.
16 This will be our mission tonight.

17
18 First - the Biblical account:

19
20 Neh. 1:1-11 (443 B.C.) (American Standard)

21 **The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.**

22 **Now it happened in the month Chislev (late in the year - November/December), in**
23 **the twentieth year (the 20th year that King Artaxerxes ruled in Persia), while I was in**
24 **Susa the capitol, [2] that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah**
25 **came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the**
26 **captivity, and about Jerusalem. [3] And they said to me, "The remnant there in the**
27 **province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall**
28 **of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire."**

29 **[4] Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and**
30 **mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. [5] And**
31 **I said, "I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who**
32 **preserves the covenant and loving kindness for those who love Him and keep His**
33 **commandments, [6] let Thine ear now be attentive and Thine eyes open to hear the**

1 prayer of Thy servant which I am praying before Thee now, day and night, on
2 behalf of the sons of Israel Thy servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel
3 which we have sinned against Thee; I and my father's house have sinned. [7] "We
4 have acted very corruptly against Thee and have not kept the commandments, nor
5 the statutes, nor the ordinances which Thou didst command Thy servant Moses. [8]
6 "Remember the word which Thou didst command Thy servant Moses, saying, 'If
7 you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; [9] but if you return to Me
8 and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been
9 scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there
10 and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.'
11 [10] "And they are Thy servants and Thy people whom Thou didst redeem by Thy
12 great power and by Thy strong hand. [11] "O Lord, I beseech Thee, may Thine ear
13 be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant and the prayer of Thy servants who delight
14 to revere Thy name, and make Thy servant successful today, and grant him
15 compassion before this man."

16 Now I was the cupbearer to the king.
17

18 One might wonder what this story of nearly 2500 years ago has to do with us today. Just
19 about EVERYTHING! I want to take the time today to help us fully comprehend the
20 history of what had happened to Jerusalem and how God used Nehemiah to **rebuild the**
21 **walls** of the city. The application to our lives will follow in subsequent studies.
22

23 **586 B.C.**
24

25 When King Solomon of Israel died (931 B.C.), he was followed on the throne by his son
26 Rehoboam (a horrible king by any standard!) whose infantile leadership caused ten of the
27 twelve tribes of Israel to revolt and form their own kingdom in the north (which became
28 known as Israel) and the two remaining tribes became known as Judah and kept their
29 capital in Jerusalem.
30

31 The northern kingdom had 19 kings over the next 210 years (everyone of the kings was
32 bad) until Israel was finally conquered by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.
33

34 But the southern kingdom continued on another 135 years until it, too, was finally
35 destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Many prophets, such as Jeremiah, had
36 faithfully warned the people of Judah to repent of their idolatry and wicked living lest
37 they be destroyed. But the prophets were ignored.
38

39 The devastation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was historic in its proportion. My

1 friend, the late Jewish historian Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder (editor of the *Encyclopedia*
2 *Judaica*), summarized the Babylonian rise in his classic book *Almanac of the Bible*):

3
4 ***“There is no mention of Babylon in the Bible for a period of a thousand years, from the***
5 ***days of Abraham up to the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians, when the latter, in***
6 ***keeping with their policy, deported the inhabitants of the conquered Kingdom and***
7 ***settled in their stead people from Babylon, at the time of vassal of Assyria (2 Kings***
8 ***17:24).***

9
10 ***“Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah welcomed Babylon. The rise of the new***
11 ***powerful kingdom was at first greeted with relief since it meant the end of the pressure***
12 ***which had been exerted upon them by the rulers of Assyria over the previous decades.***
13 ***Indeed, good relations between Babylon and Judah endured for a century from the***
14 ***reign of King Hezekiah through the reigns of Kings Manasseh, Amon, Josiah,***
15 ***Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. Nebuchadnezzar, the second king of the neo-***
16 ***Babylonian Empire, captured Jerusalem which had rebelled against Babylonian***
17 ***authority and made Judah a vassal. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah as its king***
18 ***(2 Kings 24:10, 12-13, 17-18). However, Zedekiah tried to rebel against Babylon,***
19 ***causing the return of the Babylonian armies to Jerusalem and the retaking of the city.”***

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21
22 Zedekiah and his family attempted escape from the city but were captured on the plains
23 near Jericho. ***“Nebuchadnezzar gave sentence and the firm executioner began his***
24 ***work. The sons of Zedekiah and certain of the Judean noblemen, were put to death***
25 ***before the eyes of the captured king, then with such gruesome scenes last upon his***
26 ***vision, the eyes of the once-proud king of Judah were put out and in chains he was***
27 ***taken to Babylon.”***

28 ABRAHAM TO THE MIDDLE-EAST CRISIS / G. FREDERICK OWEN / EERMANS PUBL / PAGE 86

29
30 Thus Jerusalem was destroyed some 470 years following the dedication of Solomon's
31 Temple. The old prophet Jeremiah, who again and again had warned Zedekiah and the
32 people of Judah to repent and turn back to God, was allowed to return to Jerusalem. He
33 viewed the horrendous destruction of the city and in a cave grotto, under a gray hill now
34 known as Gordon's Calvary, he wrote:

35
36 Lamentations 1:1-14

37 **Jerusalem's streets, once bustling with people, are now silent. Like a widow**
38 **broken with grief, she sits alone in her mourning. Once the queen of nations, she is**
39 **now a slave.**

40 **[2] She sobs through the night; tears stream down her cheeks. Among all her**
41 **lovers, there is no one left to help her. All her friends have betrayed her; they are**

1 now her enemies.

2 [3] Judah has been led away into captivity, afflicted and enslaved. She lives among
3 foreign nations and has no place of rest. Her enemies have chased her down, and she
4 has nowhere to turn.

5 [4] The roads to Jerusalem are in mourning, no longer filled with crowds on their
6 way to celebrate the Temple festivals. The city gates are silent, her priests groan, her
7 young women are crying—how bitterly Jerusalem weeps!

8 [5] Her oppressors have become her masters, and her enemies prosper, for the
9 Lord has punished Jerusalem for her many sins. Her children have been captured
10 and taken away to distant lands.

11 [6] All the beauty and majesty of Jerusalem are gone. Her princes are like
12 starving deer searching for pasture, too weak to run from the pursuing enemy.

13 [7] And now in the midst of her sadness and wandering, Jerusalem remembers
14 her ancient splendor. But then she fell to her enemy, and there was no one to help
15 her. Her enemy struck her down and laughed as she fell.

16 [8] Jerusalem has sinned greatly, so she has been tossed away like a filthy rag. All
17 who once honored her now despise her, for they have seen her stripped naked and
18 humiliated. All she can do is groan and hide her face.

19 [9] She defiled herself with immorality with no thought of the punishment that
20 would follow. Now she lies in the gutter with no one to lift her out. "Lord, see my
21 deep misery," she cries. "The enemy has triumphed."

22 [10] The enemy has plundered her completely, taking everything precious that she
23 owns. She has seen foreigners violate her sacred Temple, the place the Lord had
24 forbidden them to enter.

25 [11] Her people groan as they search for bread. They have sold their treasures for
26 food to stay alive. "O Lord, look," she mourns, "and see how I am despised.

27 [12] "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see if there is
28 any suffering like mine, which the Lord brought on me in the day of his fierce anger.

29 [13] "He has sent fire from heaven that burns in my bones. He has placed a trap
30 in my path and turned me back. He has made me desolate, racked with sickness all
31 day long.

32 [14] "He wove my sins into ropes to hitch me to a yoke of captivity. The Lord
33 sapped my strength and gave me to my enemies; I am helpless in their hands.

34
35 Read and reread that gripping passage for it could well be the obituary of the United
36 States unless there is repentance and revival in this land!

37
38 For the next few decades, multitudes of Jerusalem's Jews were captive in Babylon - one
39 of the major cities of antiquity.

1 *“Babylon was then a mighty metropolis, situated on the left bank of the great Euphrates*
2 *River which formed a mighty channel of commerce for imports as well as exports. The*
3 *city’s outer wall was fifty miles in length, pierced by one hundred gates of bronze. The*
4 *wall was so thick that four chariots could drive on it abreast. The streets were at right*
5 *angles to one another, as in our modern cities and a splendid canal, parallel to the*
6 *nearby Euphrates, furnished an abundant water supply. Its mighty temples adorned with*
7 *jewels and precious metals, its far-famed hanging gardens, and its many palaces brilliant*
8 *with colored bricks and tiles, were unusual sights to many of the Hebrews.”*

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10
11 But the captive Jews, though well treated, even given land upon which to build businesses
12 and homes, were far from happy. Their sorrow is mirrored in the biblical passage:

13 Psalm 137:1-2

14 **By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered**
15 **Zion. [2] We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.**

16 **[4] How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? [5] If I forget thee, O**
17 **Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. [6] If I do not remember thee, let**
18 **my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief**
19 **joy.**

20
21 (Here again is a sharp rebuttal to those who claim Jews had no history in Jerusalem!
22 Their history in the city and the land goes back over 3,000 years.)

23 24 CYRUS AND THE REMNANT OF THE JEWS

25
26 At this point in history (550 B.C.) Jewish history takes another sharp curve as the
27 Babylonian Empire came to an abrupt halt with its defeat at the hands of the Medo-
28 Persians.

29
30 A man named Cyrus became the chief prince and ruler of the Persian coalition. He was a
31 good man and was kindly disposed to the Jews. We must remember that for many years,
32 a Jew, Daniel, (who had been taken captive by the Babylonians in their first foray into the
33 Holy City) had been a chief advisor to the Babylonian rulers Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-
34 merodach, Nergal-sharezer, Labasi-merodach, Nabonidus (and his no-good son
35 Belshazzar). Now, Cyrus continued to listen to the counsel of Daniel who doubtless
36 helped influence the new monarch to release Jews back to their homeland.

37
38 The joyous announcement was pronounced and the prophet Ezra made the history clear in
39 his short book in the Old Testament: Ezra 1:2-4 **Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia,**
40 **The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath**

1 charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. [3] Who is there
2 among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem,
3 which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,)
4 which is in Jerusalem. [4] And whosoever remaineth in any place where he
5 sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with
6 goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in
7 Jerusalem.

8
9 To show good faith to the Jews, Cyrus released the sacred vessels of gold and silver
10 which Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem decades earlier. The
11 Jewish rejoicing was recorded in Psalm 126:1-3: **When the Lord turned again the**
12 **captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. [2] Then was our mouth filled with**
13 **laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord**
14 **hath done great things for them. [3] The Lord hath done great things for us;**
15 **whereof we are glad.**

16 17 ONE OF THE STRANGEST FACTS OF JEWISH HISTORY

18
19 It is estimated by scholars that some 50,000 to 100,000 Jews were marched into
20 Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. During the next six or seven decades, they flourished
21 in Babylon, even as they had following Joseph's reign as Grand Vizier in Egypt
22 (Genesis). By the time Cyrus came along, there must have been several hundred
23 thousand Jews living under captivity. However, when Cyrus told them they could return
24 to their homeland (Israel), only about 42,000 actually made the journey back. After all
25 their weeping and grief at being away from Jerusalem, only a REMNANT returned. One
26 scholar has suggested:

27
28 ***"Many who had acquired position and wealth (in Babylon) rejoiced because of the new***
29 ***freedom and favor shown them, yet stayed behind. Josephus, the great Jewish***
30 ***historian reported, 'They were unwilling to leave their possessions.' They were***
31 ***content in the belief that Jehovah could be worshipped in spirit and in truth, by prayer,***
32 ***reading the sacred record, and observance of a part of the law without sacrifices and***
33 ***the mercy-seat which were associated with the Temple. They were willing to give of***
34 ***their means toward the cause of reclaiming the fatherland, but left the actual work to***
35 ***those who were more pious, more patriotic, and more enthusiastic. Babylon had come***
36 ***to be their home, and they cared not to go elsewhere."***

37
38 The next 100 years or so would be very traumatic for the returning Jews. Yes, they had
39 some good leaders such as ZERUBBABEL (a descendant of David) who was the
40 designated governor of the reclaimed Judah, JOSHUA who was a functioning priest, a

1 man named MITHREDATH who was the designated treasurer, EZRA who came to
2 rebuild the Temple and others. But even as the remnant made their trek west to the
3 beloved homeland of Jerusalem and environs, they met many challenges.

4
5 The first thing to be done, they felt, was to rebuild the Temple. This work was entrusted
6 to the oversight of the priests and Levites, as in the days of Solomon. Masons and
7 builders were hired from Tyre and Sidon. Cedar trees were floated by sea to Joppa and
8 then transported overland some 40 miles to the hill country of Jerusalem. Quarries were
9 dug for the great stones that would be needed. But the biggest challenge would come
10 from THE SAMARITANS.

11
12 When the northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 721 B.C., the
13 Jewish people were scattered. Sargon of Assyria repopulated much of the area with
14 foreigners. There was a marrying back and forth from some of the remaining Jews and
15 the “newcomers” and their children became a cross-mixture of races and religions.
16 They were known as SAMARITANS.

17
18 When Cyrus released captive Jews to return back to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple,
19 the Samaritans wanted to assist. This the Jews would not allow as it involved “cross-
20 pollination” of their faith. Thus a real and lasting enmity was born between the Jews
21 and the Samaritans that lasted until the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the
22 Romans in 70 A.D. That meant centuries of feuding.

23
24 Now more trouble followed with the death of Cyrus (who died in battle). His son
25 Cambyses became the ruler of the Persian Empire. The Samaritans took advantage of
26 this change in leadership and notified Cambyses the lie that the Jews were disloyal and
27 planned to frustrate all Persian advances in culture and leadership. This was not true, of
28 course. But Cambyses did not know that and he issued a decree halting all the work of
29 rebuilding both Jerusalem and the Temple.

30
31 Nine years went by with nothing done until the second year of reign by Darius who
32 followed Cambyses. Zerubbabel and Joshua urged the people to rejoice in Darius’ new
33 freedoms and get back to work. But by now, the Jews were absorbed in their own lives
34 and had little or no enthusiasm about doing anything in the rebuilding process.

35
36 It during this time that the prophets HAGGAI and ZECHARIAH ministered. Haggai
37 rebuked their sloth and despondency. Zechariah recounted visions of what would be.
38 Some of the Jews responded favorably. This renewed opposition from the Samaritans.
39 However, Darius issued a decree that not only should the Jews be left alone in the
40 rebuilding processes but financial assistance be given them.

1 Four years later, the Temple was completed and dedicated. However, it should be
2 known that this post-exile Temple was a far, far cry from Solomon's colossal structure.

3
4 Now...as the years went by, the people's "faith" became more of a "form." The passion
5 was gone. MALACHI the prophet begged and pleaded with the people to come back to
6 God. But secularism had taken over. Some years later, back in Persia, a Jewish priest
7 named EZRA received a commission to take 6,000 workers back to Jerusalem to
8 refurbish the shabby Temple and get the people to return to their faith.
9

In the Jewish book of First Esdras 4:45-50, we are informed that the Edomites (longtime enemies of the Jews who lived east of the Dead Sea) burned the Temple and even occupied part of Judah. Marching armies, droughts, parched fields, withered flocks and hostility from other neighboring nations had reduced Judah to a pathetic wasteland. There are even records of Jews being captured and sold in Grecian markets. Persia itself was no longer so strong and that government could no longer subsidize Judah and so the Jews were reduced to unbelievable poverty. Some even left Judah and returned to former Babylon in hopes of jobs and prosperity. The situation seemed hopeless. That is, until one man decided to do something about it. That man was Nehemiah.

10
11 The year was 446 B.C. - 140 years after the final and fatal attack of Jerusalem by the
12 Babylonians. A Jewish man named Hanani had returned from Judah to the Persian
13 capital of Shushan where he met NEHEMIAH who was the king's cupbearer.
14 Nehemiah was a devout Jew who truly loved God and his ancestral home of Jerusalem.
15 Nehemiah asked Hanani about the condition of Jerusalem and was informed, sadly, that
16 not much was happening. The remnant of Jews who had returned were living in horrible
17 conditions and the city itself was in disastrous shape - including the city walls which were
18 broken down and the gates had been burned.
19

20 King Artaxerxes noted Nehemiah's downcast countenance and asked him about it. His
21 cupbearer replied, **"Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place
22 of my fathers' tombs, lies in waste and the gates are consumed by fire?"** The king
23 graciously asked Nehemiah what he wanted to do about it and Nehemiah asked to be sent
24 to Judah to rebuild the city and restore THE BROKEN WALLS.
25

26 NOTE THE DIFFERENCE THAT ONE PERSON CAN MAKE IN THE AFFAIRS OF
27 HUMANITY! We can moan and groan about conditions in our nation, or we can DO
28 SOMETHING ABOUT IT. That is the primary purpose of this series of Wednesday

1 night studies. Yes, America is at a cruel crossroads. Yes, we are in danger in so many
2 ways. SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

3
4 Shortly after Nehemiah's arrival in the broken down city, he made a night-time
5 reconnaissance of the city. (On the back page of your notes you have a map of the area
6 in question.)

7
8 Neh. 2:11-18

9 **So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.**

10 [12] **And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man**
11 **what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast**
12 **with me, save the beast that I rode upon. [13] And I went out by night by the gate of**
13 **the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of**
14 **Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.**
15 **[14] Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was**
16 **no place for the beast that was under me to pass. [15] Then went I up in the night by**
17 **the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the**
18 **valley, and so returned. [16] And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did;**
19 **neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the**
20 **rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.**

21 [17] **Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth**
22 **waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall**
23 **of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. [18] Then I told them of the hand of**
24 **my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto**
25 **me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for**
26 **this good work.**

27
28 The southeastern end of Jerusalem was in such ruin that Nehemiah's horse could not even
29 get through the debris.

30
31 Nehemiah's challenge rallied the nation: **LET US BUILD UP THE WALL OF**
32 **JERUSALEM THAT WE BE NO MORE A REPROACH.**

33
34 A reproach to whom?

- 35 * First of all - to GOD.
- 36 * Second - to themselves
- 37 * And third - to all the nations around them.

38
39 In this short series, we will discuss:

- 40 * The nation and the church as it used to be

- 1 * What has caused the foundations to crumble and the walls to fall
- 2 * What can - and must - be done about it

3
4 Just as Nehemiah faced the challenges and those who came against him, so must we
5 today. No sooner had Nehemiah announced his intentions that those who wanted
6 Jerusalem to remain a reproach and broken shouted their opposition:

7
8 Neh. 2:19

9 **But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the**
10 **Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?"**
11 **they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"**

12
13 As we will see in our next study, there are many (perhaps even a majority) who do not
14 remember America as she once was.....and those who have never seen a church alive,
15 vibrant and well....and who will decry any effort on the part of those who wish to
16 REBUILD THE BROKEN WALLS.

17
18 Nehemiah was successful. Many of his structures still stand today, 2500 years later.
19 And we will also be successful! And our work will last for eternity.

Upper house of the king

House of Azariah

House of Benjamin and Hasshub

House of Eliashib the high priest

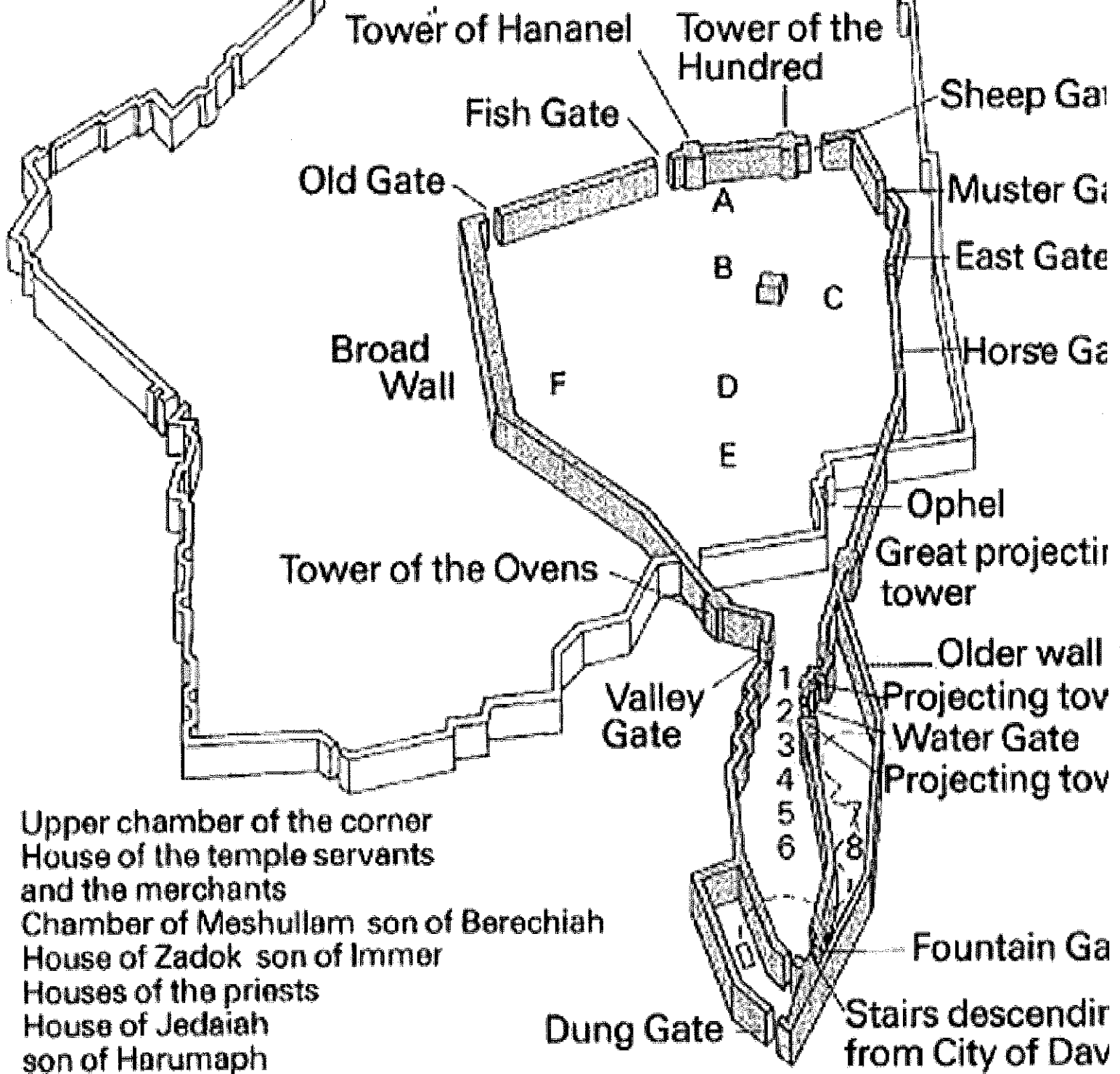
Ascent to the armoury

House of the mighty men

Artificial pool

Sepulchres of David

□ Present wall of Old City



Upper chamber of the corner

House of the temple servants and the merchants

Chamber of Meshullam son of Berechiah

House of Zadok son of Immer

Houses of the priests

House of Jedaiah

son of Harumaph

Dung Gate

Stairs descending from City of David