

New Perspectives on
Ezra–Nehemiah

*History and Historiography, Text,
Literature, and Interpretation*

Edited by
ISAAC KALIMI

Winona Lake, Indiana
EISENBRAUNS
2012

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Printed in the United States of America.

www.eisenbrauns.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

New perspectives on Ezra–Nehemiah : history and historiography, text, literature,
and interpretation / edited by Isaac Kalimi.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-57506-233-4 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Bible. O.T. Ezra—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 2. Bible. O.T. Nehemiah—
Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Kalimi, Isaac.

BS1355.52.N49 2012

222'.706—dc23

2012004421

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.Ⓢ

Contents

List of Contributors	ix
Abbreviations	xii
In the Persian Period: New Perspectives on Ezra–Nehemiah	1
ISAAC KALIMI	

Part One

History and Historiography

Ezra’s Use of Documents in the Context of Hellenistic Rules of Rhetoric	11
LISBETH S. FRIED	
What Was Nehemiah Up To? Looking for Models for Nehemiah’s Polity	27
LESTER L. GRABBE	
Nehemiah: Subject of the Empire, Subject of Writing	37
DON POLASKI	
Nehemiah as a “Court Jew”	61
KLAAS A. D. SMELIK	
Nehemiah 3: Sources, Composition and Purpose	73
ODED LIPSCHITS	
On Nehemiah’s City-Wall and the Size of Jerusalem during the Persian Period: An Archaeologist’s View	101
DAVID USSISHKIN	
The Real History: The Theological Ideas Behind Nehemiah’s Wall	131
MANFRED OEMING	
Some Issues in Ezra–Nehemiah	151
RAN ZADOK	

Part Two
Text, Literature, and Interpretation

Hidden Treasure: The Unpublished Doublet Catchwords in Ezra-Nehemiah	185
DAVID MARCUS	
Where Did the Judahites, Benjaminites, and Levites Settle? Revisiting the Text of Nehemiah 11:25–36 MT and LXX	197
DEIRDRE N. FULTON	
The Census List in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7: A Suggestion	223
PAUL L. REDDITT	
Nehemiah's Request on Behalf of Jerusalem	241
JOSEPH FLEISHMAN	
Prayer as Rhetoric in the Book of Nehemiah	267
MARK J. BODA	
Index of Authors	285
Index of Scripture	290

Nehemiah 3: Sources, Composition, and Purpose

ODED LIPSCHITS

Introduction

This essay explores the sources of the list of the builders of Jerusalem's wall and seeks to detect the stages and aims of the list's composition and its insertion into the "Nehemiah Memoir."¹ After considering the list of the builders of the wall (§A), I examine the formulas used in this list in order to differentiate between the sources and the additions and editing strata of the list (§B). Focusing on the use of the verbs in the list and their meaning, especially the verb *הִתְחַזְּקוּ*, I argue that this verb means "support" and "finance" rather than "build" or "reconstruct" (§C). The use of this verb in the list (§D) shows that the list includes people who financed and organized the building of various parts of the wall, as well as those who were involved in the preparation before (or during) the construction process. An examination of the names and the functions of some of the people shows that those mentioned were residents of Jerusalem with a direct interest in the construction (§E).

Author's note: This essay is based on a lecture presented in the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Antonio, Texas (November, 2004). A preliminary Hebrew version of this essay was published as "Who Financed and Who Arranged the Building of Jerusalem's Walls? The Sources of the List of 'the Builders of the Wall' (Nehemiah 3:1-32) and the Purposes of Its Literary Placement within 'Nehemiah's Memoirs,'" in *Shai le-Sara Japhet: Studies in the Bible, Its Exegesis and Its Language* (ed. Moshe Bar-Asher et al.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007) 73-89. I wish to thank my colleagues with whom I was able to discuss different ideas concerning this study and share my thoughts: Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, Gary N. Knoppers, Nadav Na'aman, Bezalel Porten, Yuval Shar, David Talshir, Hugh G. M. Williamson, and Ran Zadok. If there are any mistakes, errors, or misunderstandings in this essay, they are entirely my own.

1. For convenience, the first-person account in the book of Nehemiah is called the Nehemiah Memoir in this essay.



Table 1. Linking Repetition in the Nehemiah Memoir

<i>Nehemiah 2:19–20</i>	<i>Nehemiah 3:33–38</i>
	וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר
וַיִּשְׁמַע סַנְבַלַּט הַחֹרֶנִי	שָׁמַע סַנְבַּלַּט
וְטַבְיָה הַעֶבְרָא הָעֲמוֹנִי וְגִשְׁם הָעַרְבִי	כִּי אָנַחְנוּ בּוֹנִים אֶת הַחוֹמָה וַיַּחַר לוֹ וַיִּכְעַס הָרַבָּה
וַיִּלְעָגוּ לָנוּ	וַיִּלְעָג עַל הַיְהוּדִים
וַיִּכְדּוּ עָלֵינוּ	
וַיֹּאמְרוּ	וַיֹּאמְרוּ . . .
מָה הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹשִׂים . . .	מָה הַיְהוּדִים הָאֵמְלִלִים עֹשִׂים; . . .
וַאֲנַחְנוּ עֹבְדֵי יְקוֹם וּבְנֵינוּ . . .	וּנְבַנְהָ אֶת הַחוֹמָה . . .

There is no specific connection between the function, the status, and the positions of the individuals and groups and the organization and the financial support of the various sections of the Jerusalem's wall. Similar methods of building city walls can be found in reports of the the wall of Dur-Šarrukin (Khorsabad; §F). The parallels between the two sources and the two methods explain why the name *Nehemiah*, who, as governor of the province, was responsible for the construction work carried out in Jerusalem, does not appear in the list. It names all the officials and other people and groups that were responsible for financing and organizing the different sections of the wall. Each of them was assigned a particular section of the wall, and the sections are simply listed in order. The source of this list in the Nehemiah Memoir might have been a similar report on the progress of the work, compiled during the preparations for the project or even during the work itself. Discussing all the above could shed more light on the purpose of inserting the list into the Nehemiah Memoir and its place in the ideology of the book of Ezra–Nehemiah.

A. *The List of the Builders of the Wall and Its Place in the Nehemiah Memoir*

The list of the builders of the wall (Neh 3:1–32) is not part of the Nehemiah Memoir,² despite its skillful incorporation into the narrative.

2. This is a common assumption among scholars, mentioned already by J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte* (9th ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1958) 168 n. 1; and see, e.g., C. C. Torrey, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra–Nehemiah* (BZAW 2; Giessen: Rickers'sche Buchhandlung, 1896) 37–38;



After Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem (2:11) and his nocturnal inspection of the ruined walls (2:12–16), he gathered the leaders of the people and urged them: "Come and *let us rebuild* the wall of Jerusalem, so that we will be a reproach no more" (2:17). The leaders respond with "*Let us rise up and rebuild.*" So they strengthened their hands for the good" (2:18),³ which parallels Nehemiah's response to the scornful taunts of "Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite servant, and Geshem the Arabian" (2:19) and his declaration: "The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we, his servants, will *rise up and rebuild*" (2:20). This also connects to the beginning of rebuilding of the wall, namely: "Then Eliashib the high priest *rose up* with his brethren the priests and they *built* the sheep gate" (3:1).⁴ The reiteration of the taunts (3:33–35) and Nehemiah's prayer that follows immediately after (3:36–37) can be seen as a linking repetition that stresses Nehemiah's part in the building project, the urgent need to build the wall, and the dangers faced by the workers from Judah's neighbors' continuous opposition to building the wall (see table 1).⁵ This linking repetition, which centers on the verb

L. W. Batten, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913) 206–7; G. Hölscher, "Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia" in *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments (Zweiter Band): Hosea bis Chronik* (ed. E. Kautzsch and A. Bertholet; Tübingen: Mohr, 1923) 529–30; S. Mowinckel, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia. I. Die nachchronische Redaktion des Buches: Die Listen* (SUNVAO 3; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964) 109–10; A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Nehemia* (KAT 2/19; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1987) 75–76; J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988) 231; J. L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah Memoir and Its Earliest Readers* (BZAW 348; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004) 118–20.

3. It is hard to accept Wright's suggestion (*Rebuilding Identity*, 114–18), based on Blenkinsopp's remark (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 220), to understand the expression *וַיִּתְחַזְקוּ יְדֵיהֶם לְטוֹבָה* (v. 18) as indicating the actual start of work and to connect it to the list in chap. 3 by omitting vv. 19–20 (or even just v. 20). I can find no reason for this translation, or for deleting vv. 19–20 or seeing these verses (or part of them) as later additions (with Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 224–25; K. Gallig, *Die Bücher der Chronik, Ezra, Nehemia* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954) 220; R. G. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments: Grundwissen der Bibelkritik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000) 72). See, however, U. Kellermann, *Nehemia: Quellen, Überlieferungen und Geschichte* (BZAW 102; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967) 13 n. 28.

4. Many scholars emphasize the connection between *וַיִּתְחַזְקוּ יְדֵיהֶם* in Neh 2:18, 20 and *וַיִּתְחַזְקוּ יְדֵיהֶם* in the opening of chap. 3. See T. Reinmuth, *Der Bericht Nehemias: Zur literarischen Eigenart, traditionsgeschichtlichen Prägung und innerbiblischen Rezeption des Ich-Berichts Nehemias* (OBO 183; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) 82, 83; Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, 112–14.

5. This supposition follows Wellhausen, *Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte*,



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שָׁמַע or שָׁמַעוּ and Sanballat (or Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem) as opposed to Nehemiah, is the literary device used by the redactor to join the various documents and lists he employs, which create the storyline in chaps. 2–6, and it appears seven times in these chapters (Wright’s “שמע-schema”).⁶

Most scholars considered the list of the builders of the wall (3:1–32) to be original, written in Nehemiah’s time under priestly influence, kept in the temple archive, and inserted into its present position in the narrative by a late editor.⁷

168; Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 224–25, M. Burrows, “Nehemiah 3:1–32 as a Source for the Topography of Ancient Jerusalem,” *AASOR* 14 (1933–34) 115–24; and Galling, *Die Bücher der Chronik, Ezra, Nehemia*, 220; cf. Kratz, *Die Komposition*, 70–73, which stressed the coinciding repetition in 2:19 and 3:33–35. These scholars saw it as an addition connected either to the list of the builders of the wall in chap. 3 or as a late editorial insertion (in their view, it was an addition of the Chronicler). Wright (*Rebuilding Identity*, 119–20; and cf. Kratz, *Die Komposition*, 72) went even further and saw it as evidence of the late addition of the list of the builders, suggesting that it was drafted specifically for the context of 2:18b and 3:38. Against this view, see Kellermann, *Nehemia*, 17; and the commentaries of H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC 16; Waco, TX: Word, 1985) 215–16; and Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 243.

6. See Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, 27–29, 110, 112–14; idem, “A New Model for the Composition of Ezra–Nehemiah,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* (ed. O. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007) 333–48, esp. p. 336; Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 224–25; and for another point of view, see Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 251–252; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 231; idem, “The Nehemiah Autobiographical Memoir,” in *Language, Theology, and the Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr* (ed. S. E. Balentine and J. Barton; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 204. This literary device, in which the verb שָׁמַע is central and that accentuates the scornful reaction of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, is enclosed by another repetition, one that emphasizes their growing anger (2:10, 3:33, 4:1–2) and introduces the description of attempts to sabotage the building project. Later, this verb is used twice in general references (4:9, 6:16) to stress God’s place in discovering the conspiracy to disrupt the building project. In 6:1, this verb appears once more as an introduction to the attempt at harming Nehemiah.

7. The obvious exception to scholars’ accepting the originality of the list was Torrey (*The Composition and Historical Value*, 37–38; *Ezra Studies*, 225, 249), who considered it to be the work of the Chronicler. Wright (*Rebuilding Identity*, 119) claimed that it was a later document composed to balance Nehemiah’s contribution with that of the high priesthood. Later, he claimed that the list should be dated to an even later phase. See idem, “A New Model for the Composition of Ezra–Nehemiah,” 337 and n. 11. On the other hand, most scholars saw the list as an original document of local administration, which was inserted into the Nehemiah Memoir by Nehemiah himself. See, e.g., W. Rudolph, *Ezra und*



Nehemia (HAT 20; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1949) 113; Galling, *Die Bücher der Chronik, Ezra, Nehemia*, 222; J. M. Myers, *Ezra–Nehemiah* (AB 14; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965) 112; Kellermann, *Nehemia*, 14–15; M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) 257; R. J. Coggins, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 81; F. C. Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 172; D. J. A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 149; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 201; idem, *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 202–3; Gunneweg, *Nehemia*, 74–76; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 231; L. L. Grabbe, *Ezra–Nehemiah* (London: Routledge, 1998) 43; C. Karrer, *Ringgen um die Verfassung Judas: Eine Studie zu den theologisch-politischen Vorstellungen im Esra-Nehemia-Buch* (BZAW 308; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001) 134 and n. 21; R. Albertz, “Purity Strategies and the Political Interests in the Policy of Nehemiah,” in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever* (ed. S. Gitin, J. E. Wright, and J. P. Dessel; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006) 199–206, esp. p. 200. Few scholars also saw the list as an original document of local administration but hypothesize that it was inserted into the Nehemiah Memoir by a later editor. See, e.g., Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 231; Gunneweg, *Nehemia*, 75. On the basis of Burrows’ observations (“Nehemiah 3: 1–32,” 116–19), Galling (*Die Bücher der Chronik, Ezra, Nehemia*, 222) divided the list into two parts: vv. 1–15, characterized by the expressions וְעַל יָדָם and וְעַל יְרֵמְיָהוּ, and vv. 16–32, characterized by the expression וְאֶחָדָם and וְאֶחָדָם. In contrast, several scholars have suggested that the list is composed of two separate lists that represent the two different stages of building the city wall. See, e.g., Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 207; Kellermann, *Nehemia*, 14. Burrows himself (“Nehemiah 3: 1–32,” 119) opposed this view and saw the two parts of the list as a literary device, stressing its uniformity; see also Williamson (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 200), who opposed the “theory of two stages” and suggested seeing the first part of the list as the stage when the workers built up the already-existing wall and the second part as when the workers built new walls that were higher than the First Temple Period wall. In continuity with this, see Gunneweg, *Nehemia*, 71; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 232; Grabbe, *Ezra–Nehemiah*, 44, 157–59; N. A. Bailey, “Nehemiah 3, 1–32: An Introduction of the Text and the Topography,” *PEQ* 122 (1990) 34–40. Reinmuth (*Der Bericht Nehemias*, 84–86) suggests dividing the list into three parts and differentiates from Burrows’s two parts of vv. 13–15 as a third and separate part. The main evidence for the historical reliability of the list and that it is not a tendentious literary source is the full description of the extent of the wall in contrast to the incomplete and limited description of the builders’ origins. To this, scholars have added the use of unique technical terms for administration and the geographical picture that arises. See M. Kochman, *The Status and Extent of Judah in the Persian Period* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980 [Hebrew]) 119–21; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 201; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 231–32.

The view that the list was kept in the temple archive was held by many scholars: see Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 113; Mowinkel, *Studien zu dem Buche*



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Having accepted the list as original, most scholars assign it an important place in Jerusalem's reexpansion and the position of its walls in the Persian period.⁸ The list even illuminates the internal administrative division of the Province, as well as its extent and borders.⁹

Ezra-Nehemiah, 109–10; Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 112; Kellermann, *Nehemia*, 14–15; Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 257; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 201; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 231; Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 43. See also, however, the remark of M. Cogan, "Raising the Walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3: 1–32): The View from Dur-Sharrukin," *IEJ* 56 (2006) 91.

Some scholars consider the current placement of the list to be a very late editorial development in the book's formation. See, e.g., Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 207; Hölscher, "Die Bücher Esra und Nehemia," 521; and Mowinckel, *Studien zu dem Buche Ezra-Nehemia*, 109–16 (with further literature in n. 8). Mowinckel (*ibid.*, 110) and Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 75–76, even claim that the list disrupts the continuity between 2:20 and 3:33. Against this view, most scholars maintain that the list was inserted at the outset as part of Nehemiah's Memoir (some even attributed it to Nehemiah himself) to justify the literary and ideological purposes of this literary unit. See especially M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (3rd ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1960) 127; Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 113; Galling, *Die Bücher der Chronik, Esra, Nehemia*, 221–22; Kellermann, *Nehemia*, 14–17; Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 149; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 200–202; O. Kaiser, *Grundriss der Einleitung die kanonische und deuterokanonische Schriften des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1: *Die erzählenden Werke* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1992) 139. This is not the place to discuss this subject, but in my view both proposals are problematic, and it seems to me that the most plausible solution is that the list of builders was integrated into the Nehemiah Memoir as part of the process of merging and editing the separate literary units and other literary components into the continuous story line from Ezra 7 to Nehemiah 13.

8. For the various discussions on the size of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah and on the line of its walls see; Burrows, "Nehemiah 3:1–32," 115–40; M. Avi-Yonah, "The Walls of Nehemiah: A Minimalist View," *IEJ* 4 (1954) 239–48; *idem*, "The Newly Found Wall of Jerusalem and Its Topographical Significance," *IEJ* 21 (1971) 168–69; C. G. Tuland, "ZB in Nehemiah 3:8: A Reconstruction of Maximalist and Minimalist Views," *AUSS* 5 (1967) 158–80; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 232–39; H. Eshel, "Jerusalem under Persian Rule: The City's Layout and the Historical Background," *The History of Jerusalem: The Biblical Period* (ed. S. Ahituv and A. Mazar; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2000 [Hebrew]) 337–42, with further literature cited there.

9. The list has been accepted by most scholars as the main geographical-historical evidence for Persian-period Judah. This is primarily because of the relatively clear date and time extent of the list, as well as the background for its composition, its technical character, and its wide scope and because it mentions the settlement boundaries only incidentally. See, e.g., E. Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judentums* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1896) 107–11; R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. 3: *Die Zeit der Wegführung und die Aufrichtung der neuen Gemeinde*



mentioned in v. 2, it is not clear what was built: “And next to him built the men of Jericho. And next to them built Zaccur the son of Imri.” This verse is the only deviation from the usual formula of the building of the wall. In the other cases, the verb **בנה** is applied only to the gates. Where the verb **בנה** refers to the priests in v. 1, it should be seen as mainly symbolic and meant to stress the priests’ support and the part they played in the building.¹² It is possible to assume that the work done in v. 2 refers to the building of the sheep gate. Similarly, as the sons of Hassenaah in v. 3 built the fish gate, the men of Jericho and Zaccur the son of Imri could have built the sheep gate, and the priests were those who sanctified the gate (**הִקְדִּישׁוּהָ קְדָשׁוּהָ**) and put the doors in place (**וַיַּעֲמִידוּ וַיִּלְתְּתוּ**).¹³ If this is the case, then it is also possible to assume that in a fashion similar to v. 13, where there is a separation between Hanun, who **הִחְזִיק** the valley gate, and the inhabitants of Zanoah who built it, in the case of the sheep gate, “Eliashib the high priest with his brethren the priests” were those who **קָרוּהוּ**, while the men of Jericho and Zaccur the son of Imri were those who built it. It is also possible that the men of Jericho and Zaccur the son of Imri were those who built the part of the wall described in v. 1: “to the tower of Hammeah they sanctified it, to the tower of Hananel.”¹⁴

In contrast to the nonuniform formula of the verb **בנה**, which essentially characterizes vv. 1–3, the second part, which describes the building of the six gates, is distinguished by a uniform style. This formulaic style is connected to the first part of the description of the building of the gate by means of an anaphoric pronoun (*they* or *he*) and adds to the name of the builder (or builders) and the description of the building process two additional actions: one action is described with the verbs **קָרוּהוּ** or **בָּנוּהוּ** (**וַיִּבְנוּ**), and this pertains to the completion of the building activity. The second action is described by the use of **וַיַּעֲמִידוּ** (according to the Kethib—once in the third-person singular and five times in third-

12. It is doubtful if this was the historical truth. The fact that the list opens by mentioning Eliashib the high priest first is one of the main indications that this list is not part of the Nehemiah Memoir. On the connections between Nehemiah and Eliashib the high priest and on the particular problems between these two characters, see Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 233.

13. This was the claim of Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 208.

14. See, in opposition to this suggestion, Williamson’s reconstruction (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 195–96) of the words omitted from v. 1 in the original list. In my view, this suggestion is reasonable, but this omitting of the missing words seems to be not incidental but part of the redaction’s tendency.



person plural—וַיַּעֲמִידוּ), this is directed or pertains to the placing of the doors, locks, and bolts.

15(v. 1)	וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָיו	הַמָּה קִרְוֵהוּ
16(v. 3)	וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָיו מִנְעֻלָּיו וּבְרִיחָיו	הַמָּה קִרְוֵהוּ
(v. 6)	וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָיו וּמִנְעֻלָּיו וּבְרִיחָיו	הַמָּה קִרְוֵהוּ
(v. 13)	וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָיו מִנְעֻלָּיו וּבְרִיחָיו	הַמָּה בְּנוֹהוּ
17(v. 14)	וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָיו מִנְעֻלָּיו וּבְרִיחָיו	הוּא יְבַנְנוּ
18(v. 15)	וַיַּעֲמִידוּ דְלֹתָיו מִנְעֻלָּיו וּבְרִיחָיו	הוּא יְבַנְנוּ וַיִּטְלְלוּ

The style of the list of gate builders indicates that this part of the list was written after the completion of the building project. The list refers to the final phase of building, which included roofing the gates and installing the doors, locks, and bolts. According to 3:38[4:6] the building project was only half finished “and all the wall was joined together to the half of it.”¹⁹ According to 4:1[7], the work had just begun closing the “breaches,” and the continuation of chap. 4 describes how the construction proceeded under the enemy’s threats. Even according to 6:1, the building of the wall was completed except for the doors, locks, and bolts, but “Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and

15. Kittel (*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 134), followed by others, corrected the verb וַיַּעֲמִידוּ to קִרְוֵהוּ and added here “and locks and bolts” as in the other verses that describe the construction of the gates. In my opinion, it is doubtful that this suggestion should be accepted (and see Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 208), as well as the suggestion of A. B. Ehrlich (*Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel* [Leipzig: Olms, 1914] 188) to correct the verb to קִרְוֵהוּ (and see, following him, Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 195). In any event, placing the priests at the beginning of the list is symbolic, and therefore it is unlikely that it should be corrected according to the usual formula like the other examples. On this, see Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 229.

16. After the LXX, this verse (as also in vv. 13, 14, and 15) should be corrected to וַיַּעֲמִידוּ as in v. 6 (Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 221).

17. The form of the verb here is irregular. Even so, it is hard to accept the proposed two corrections that are based on the LXX (*ibid.*, 222).

18. Following the LXX and the subject of the verse, the form of the verb should be changed to וַיַּעֲמִידוּ.

19. See the suggestion of Wright (*Rebuilding Identity*, 118–25; *idem*, “A New Model for the Composition of Ezra–Nehemiah,” 337–38) that 3:38 is reworked and originally reported the completion of the building, connected to 6:15. On the connection between the two verses from another angle, see V. A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 122–23.



the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates).” Clearly, then, this part of the formula could only have been written in this form after the period described in 7:1, “Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors,” because this is the completion. At this stage, Nehemiah could command, “Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot” (v. 3).

This additional formula for the completion of the work is exceptional in the list because it reports minute details about the doors, their bolts, and their locks and even uses verbs that are unusual and are not repeated in the uniform formula for the building of the gates. From the linguistic and literary point of view, it is possible to assume that this part of the list was added to the uniform style found in 3:1b, 3, 6, 13–15, apparently together with the additional remarks in 6:1 and 7:1.²⁰ It is probably part of the redaction of the list, along with v. 3:1a, added to open the list. If my explanation of v. 2 is correct, then that verse is also part of this redaction.

We can assume that this addition to the list was intended to stress the ceremonial and religious aspects of the project, along with the editorial decision to locate the list here in the Nehemiah Memoir, which highlights Nehemiah’s role in the building. This was the reason for the linking repetition in 3:33–38, the emphasis on the scorn and ridicule of Sanballat and his companion, and Nehemiah’s answer (2:19–20).²¹

Unlike the formula used to describe the building of the gates, the formula used to describe the construction of the various parts of the wall is more uniform, but shorter and less clear, because the direct object (the specific part of the wall built by a particular person or group) is missing and may only be inferred from the general context of the list. In each case, the description of the building of a different section of the

20. As stated above, Reinmuth (*Der Bericht Nehemias*, 84) pointed out the different sources of vv. 3, 6, 13–15. In my opinion, the first part of these verses is from the original list, with stylistic changes made by the author to stress the gates’ great importance to the building, while the second part was added by the redactor who inserted the list into this part of the narrative.

21. Most scholars maintain that the list was written after the completion of building the walls, mainly because they have translated the verb *החזיק* as “build” and they have not differentiated between the formula for organizing and financing wall and gate building and the later additions of the formula dealing with completing the gates and placing the doors. On this subject, see for example Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 113; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 200; Reinmuth, *Der Bericht Nehemias*, 86.



wall opens with a preposition connected to the preceding part of the list.²² Following this comes the verb הִחְזִיק, in the third-person singular or plural, the name (or names) or the title of the person (or group) listed, and occasionally a remark about them or the part of the wall they are building. This form indicates that the subject matter was drawn up as a list from the outset, though it is noticeable that in most cases there is no description of the object built: the size of the part constructed, its exact location, the route or direction of the wall, or if it had any special characteristics. This may be because the parts of the wall were listed one after the other as part of the whole description of the construction of the walls. Even so, this formula indicates that what is important in the list is the people and their roles in the wall's construction, not the parts of the wall (see table 2, pp. 84–85).²³

C. The Verb הִחְזִיק in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah and Chronicles

A central element in the uniform formula of the list of the wall builders is the verb הִחְזִיק (third-person singular) or הִחְזִיקוּ (third-person plural). This verb appears alone in almost all parts of the list, without additional verbs, with few adjectives and no conjunctions. For this reason, scholars have found it difficult to understand its precise meaning, and it was generally accepted as having a technical connotation associated with the reconstruction, repairs, or the reinforcement of the walls.²⁴ Myers translated it as “reconstructed,” and other scholars translated it as “repaired.”²⁵ Blenkinsopp suggested translating it as “reinforced,” while Rudolph translated it as “*ausbessern*.”²⁶ Nevertheless, examining the function and place of this verb in the list of the wall builders reveals a different meaning and usage of this verb—namely, “support” or

22. As stated above, until v. 12 (or not until v. 15, as Burrows suggested) the description opened with the expression וְעַל יָדוֹ (or וְעַל יָדָם) and continued from v. 16 (with one exception) with אַחֲרָיו (or וְאַחֲרָיו).

23. Table 2 is based on the Hebrew Bible. The problems in this version and the proposed corrections put forward in research are not dealt with here.

24. See, e.g., M. Zer-Kavod, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1949 [Hebrew]) 95.

25. “Reconstructed”: Myers, *Ezra–Nehemiah*, 107. “Repaired”: H. E. Ryle, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah with Introduction, Notes and Maps* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907) 174; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 200; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 227; Cogan, “Raising the Walls of Jerusalem,” 84.

26. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 233; Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 114.



Table 2. Formulas for the Wall's Construction

<i>Further Remarks</i>	<i>Basic Formula</i>	
	הַחֲזִיק מְנוּמֹת בְּרֵי-אֹמֶיךָ בְּרֵי-הַקִּיץ	v. 4
	הַחֲזִיק מְשֻׁלָּם בְּרֵי בְרִכְיָה בְּרֵי מִשְׁיֻבְאֵל	וְעַל-יָדָם
	הַחֲזִיק צְדִיק בְּרֵי בַעֲנָא	וְעַל-יָדָם
וְאִדְוֵי-יָהִם לֹא תִבְאוּ אֲנֹרִם בַּעֲבֹרֹת אֲדֹנֵי-יָהִם	הַחֲזִיקוּ הַתְּקוּלָעִים הַגְּבֻעֵי	v. 5
אֲנֹשִׁי גְבֻעוֹן וְהַמְצִיפָה לְכִסֵּא פֹתַת עֵבֶר תִּהְיֶה	הַחֲזִיק מְלֻכְיָה הַגְּבֻעֵי	v. 7
	וְדוֹן הַמְּוֹרָגִי	v. 8
צוּרִים	הַחֲזִיק צוּרָא בְּרֵי-חֲזֵי	וְעַל-יָדוֹ
הַיַּעֲזוּבוּ יִירוּשָׁלַם עַד הַחֲמוּה תְּרִחְבֵּה	הַחֲזִיק תַּנְנוּה בְּרֵי-תְרִקְחִים	v. 9
שֶׁר תִּצַּי פֶּלֶךְ יוֹרְשָׁלַם	הַחֲזִיק וְפִיָה בְּרֵי-חֹר	וְעַל-יָדָם
וְנִגְדַּי בֵּיתוֹ	הַחֲזִיק יָדֵי בְּרֵי-חֹרֶמֶף	v. 10
	הַחֲזִיק חֲטוּשׁ בְּרֵי-תִשְׁבְּנֵה	וְעַל-יָדוֹ
** = מְדוּה שְׁנֵי	הַחֲזִיק מְלֻכְיָה בְּרֵי-חֹרִם	** v. 11
	וְחֲשׁוּב בְּרֵי-פֹתַת מוֹאֵב	
שֶׁר תִּצַּי פֶּלֶךְ יוֹרְשָׁלַם הוּא וּבְנוֹתָיו	הַחֲזִיק שְׁלֹם בְּרֵי-הַחֹשׁ	v. 12
שֶׁר תִּצַּי פֶּלֶךְ בֵּית-צוּר	הַחֲזִיק נְחֻמָּה בְּרֵי-עֲזוּבוֹת	v. 16
צִדְיָגְד קָבְרֵי דוּיָד וְעַד-הַפְּרִכָה הַעֲשׂוּיָה וְעַד בֵּית הַגְּבֻרִים	הַחֲזִיקוּ הַלְוִיִּם רְחוּם בְּרֵי-בְנֵי	v. 17
שֶׁר תִּצַּי-פֶּלֶךְ קַעֲלָה לְפִלְכוֹ	הַחֲזִיק תִּשְׁבְּנֵה	v. 17
שֶׁר תִּצַּי פֶּלֶךְ קַעֲלָה	הַחֲזִיקוּ אֲמִיתִים בְּרֵי בְּרֵי-חֲבֹד	v. 18



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Offprint from:
Isaac Kalimi, ed.,
New Perspectives on Ezra–Nehemiah: History . . . Interpretation
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“finance,” meaning funding and organizing the building of particular parts of the wall, as well as responsibility for their construction.

In all parts of biblical literature, the verb חזק in the Piel and the Hiphil has expected and clear meanings in the semantic range “renew,” “repair,” “support,” “make strong,” “fortify,” “fasten,” “upgrade,” “build.” But another meaning was added, especially in Chronicles—“support and (financially) maintain the temple” with silver and gold, or even with the spoils of war.²⁷ The description in 1 Chr 26:27 (מִן הַמְּלִחְמוֹת וּמִן) הַשְּׁלָל הַקָּדִישׁוֹ לְחִזּוֹק לְבַיִת יְהוָה does not concern building or repairing the temple (which had not yet been built) and is the most obvious example that it cannot be interpreted here in the usual sense of repairing or renewing the temple. The two verbs הַקָּדִישׁוֹ לְחִזּוֹק should be understood with the general meaning “wealth dedicated to the temple treasury,” even if it was to be reserved for a certain time. This meaning is even more obvious in the expressions in Chronicles that are analogous to the expression לְחִזּוֹק אֶת בְּדֵק בַּיִת ה' in the book of Kings. Opposite the clear connection in Kings between the collection of silver for the house of God and the act of building and repairing the temple, the parallel passages in Chronicles suggest a broader connotation of “financial support for the maintenance of the house of God,” meaning, among other things, support for the reconstruction and repairs of the temple.²⁸

27. A direct parallel between החזיק and תמך is found only in Prov 3:18

28. 2 Kgs 12:6 shows clearly the usual meaning of this expression: Jehoash the king ordered the priests to collect silver for repairing the temple, in order to conduct the reconstructions (“וְהֵם יְחִזְקוּ אֶת-בְּדֵק הַבַּיִת לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יִמְצָא שָׁם בְּדֵק”). In the parallel version in 2 Chr 24:4–5 it is reported that after the decision of Joash “to repair the house of the Lord”, he ordered the priests and Levites to collect the silver in order to conduct “annual repairs to the Temple of Yahweh” (“לְחִזּוֹק אֶת-בַּיִת” אֱלֹהֵיכֶם”). There are no actual works in Chronicles, but only creating the financial support for the reparations. Also in 2 Kgs 12:8 there is a clear reference to the actual repairs in the temple: “Then King Jehoash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and said to them, ‘Why are you not repairing the house?’” (“וַיִּקְרָא הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוֹאָשׁ לַיהוֹיָדָע הַכֹּהֵן וְלַכֹּהֲנִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מָדוּעַ אֵינְכֶם מְתַזְקִים אֶת-” (בְּדֵק הַבַּיִת). In this case too, the parallel in 2 Chr 24:6–7 stresses that the silver is collected for the empty temple treasury, and there is no mention of repairs in the temple. In the same vein, it is also stated in 2 Chr 34:8 that the aim of the delegation Josiah sent was to collect silver from all Israel in order to “to repair the house of the LORD.” Indeed, this is the case in 2 Kgs (22:5–6), which states that the silver was collected to build and repair the temple: “and let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD; and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house



When the verb חזק appears in Chronicles in connection with building and reconstructing projects, it suggests a physical strengthening of the temple (with iron and copper).²⁹

Most scholars link the Chronicles descriptions of the annual collection of silver for the temple with the commandment in Exod 30:11–16 (see also 38:25–26) to donate the half-shekel to the temple וַיִּתֵּן אֹתוֹ עַל־ עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד.³⁰ The stress is on the fact that the silver was collected to finance numerous works in the temple, similar to Neh 10:33, which states וְהַעֲמַדְנוּ עָלֵינוּ מִצּוֹת לְתֵת עָלֵינוּ שְׁלִישִׁית הַשֶּׁקֶל בַּשָּׁנָה לְעֲבֹדַת בַּיִת אֱלֹהֵינוּ. It seems that on this basis the translation of the verb חזק in the Piel and Hiphil should be understood as it is elsewhere in Nehemiah.

A good example of this meaning of the verb in connection with the building of the wall is found in Neh 5:16. In v. 14, Nehemiah declares that, since serving as governor (פְּתָחָה), he and his brothers “have not eaten the bread of the governor,” whereas those who preceded him “laid heavy burdens upon the people, and took from them food and wine, besides forty shekels of silver.” He emphasizes that he not only avoided acting as previous governors did but he also וְגַם בְּמִלְאֲכַת הַחוּמָה הַחֲזַקְתִּי הַזֹּאת (5:16). Most scholars understand the verb החזקתי here as

of the LORD, repairing the house, that is, to the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons, as well as for buying timber and quarried stone to repair the house.” In 2 Chr 34:10–11, in contrast, there is a separation between the silver given “in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD,” who are “doing in the house of the LORD, in order to check and strengthen the house” (עֹשִׂים בְּבַיִת יְהוָה לְבַדּוֹק וּלְחַזֵּק הַבַּיִת) and the next phase, where the silver was given to the works in the temple (“the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone and timber for binders and beams for the buildings which the kings of Judah had let go to ruin”).

29. According to 2 Kgs 12:13, the collected silver is to be used to “repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.” 2 Chr 24:12 (parallel to vv. 4–5) differentiates between the payment to “masons and carpenters [who] set about repairing the Temple of Yahweh” and the payment to “iron workers and bronze workers [who] labored to strengthen the Temple of Yahweh.” This is probably the reason for the separation between the building of “towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate and at the valley gate and at the angle” by Uzziah and the additional verb at the end of this verse, stating that he וַיִּצְמַחֵם (‘‘strengthen them’’). This should also be the meaning of this verb in 2 Chr 29:3 (where the subject of the sentence is the doors of the temple) and in 32:5, where Hezekiah “strengthened the Millo in the city of David” (וַיִּחַזַק) (אֶת־הַמִּלּוֹא עִיר דָּוִד), again, not in the context of building the wall.

30. See the views of Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, 177–79; Myers, *Ezra–Nehemiah*, 137–38; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 335–36; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 316, with further literature there.



referring to Nehemiah's part in the building of the wall but have difficulty pinpointing the exact meaning.³¹ But this verse, which is a late insertion in the text,³² is meant to lay additional stress on the difference between Nehemiah and the governors prior to him. It seems that the late redactor wished to emphasize that Nehemiah did not merely refrain from taking silver from the people; he actually supported (financed, paid for) the building of the wall with his own silver. Nehemiah used the silver not to enlarge his estate but to support public works.

This unique meaning of the verb *החזיק* in the Piel and the Hiphil characterizes late Biblical Hebrew, which meets the "three conditions" defined by Hurvitz. Despite the enormous distance in time, it seems possible to connect the meaning of this verb as "support," "finance," or "donate" with the use of the root *חזק* in the local Aramaic Itpael.³³ This verb appears in the expressions *אתחזק ועבר* and *אתחזק ויהב* (meaning "donated and made," "donated and gave") in the dedicatory inscription at 'Ibelin and Navaran and in the meanings "donation to" or "support for" in the inscriptions from Beit Shean and Navaran.³⁴

D. On the Place and the Meaning of the Verb החזיק in Nehemiah 3

Examining the list of the builders of the wall in light of the translation of the verb *החזיק* suggested above shows that a distinction must be made between two groups of people: those who were responsible for the construction project, who financed and organized the work, and those who actually built the wall of Jerusalem. The exceptions in the list are "Malchijah the son of Rechab, the head of the district of Beth Haccherem" and "Shallum the son of Colhozeh, the head of the district of Mizpah," who were the only people among the financiers and organizers who also took part in building the gates. According to v. 14, Malchijah built the dung gate and even installed the doors, locks, and bolts. Shallum, according to v. 15, financed and organized the building of the fountain gate and also "built it, and roofed it and set up its doors,

31. See, for example, Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, 132; Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 132; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 232; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 261.

32. As maintained by Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 244.

33. See J. Naveh, *On Mosaic and Stone* (Jerusalem: Carta, 1978 [Hebrew]) 10.

34. See *ibid.*, inscriptions 21, 46, 60, 64, 65, and 69, and compare to the dedicatory inscription no. 76 from Khirbet Susya which states *זכורין לטובה* [זכורין לטובה] . . . *שהחזיקו ועשו* [ולבן רכה] . . .



bolts and bars.” Not content to have done this, “he also 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.” On the other hand, Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah financed and organized the building of the Mishneh Gate (3:6), and although it is not said that they built this gate, they “laid the beams, set up the doors, their bolts and their bars.” These people are in sharp contrast to those who financed and organized the various parts of the walls and their gates and even added *מִדָּה שְׁנִיית* (“a second section”; see vv. 11, 19) but did not take part in the actual construction. The distinction between those who financed and organized the building of the valley gate and those who built it is described in v. 13: *אֵת שַׁעַר הַגֵּיאַת הַחֲזוּקִים חָנָן וַיִּשְׁבִּי וַיְנַוֵּחַ הַמָּה בְּנוֹהוּ וַיַּעֲמִידוּ: דְּלֹתֵתָיו מִנְעָלָיו וּבְרִיחָיו וְאֶלֶף אַמָּה בַחֹמֶה עַד שַׁעַר הַשְּׁפוֹת:* This verse should be translated as follows: “Hanun financed and organized the building of the valley gate and the inhabitants of Zanoah built it; they set its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and built a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the dung gate.” It is therefore impossible to accept the opinion of commentators and scholars who improperly altered the verb *הַחֲזוּקִים* from the third-person singular to the third-person plural, because this change would mean that Hanun *as well as* the inhabitants of Zanoah built the Valley Gate together.³⁵ This change has no practical or grammatical justification, and there is no textual evidence for it. It seems that in this verse there is the usual use of the formula for building the gates, but with a clear distinction between the two actions: Hanun organized and financed the building project, and the people of Zanoah built the gate and furthermore “set its doors, its bolts, and its bars” and built “a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the dung gate.” It should be emphasized that in the entire list, the verb *הַחֲזוּקִים* (third-person plural) appears eight times, and in each case it refers to a group: the Tekoites (vv. 5 and 27), the Levites (v. 17), the priests from the surrounding region (v. 22),³⁶ the priests (v. 28), and the goldsmiths and the merchants (v. 32). Only once are two persons, “Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah” (v. 6), referred to with this verb in third-person plural, while in v. 18 it is unclear to whom “their brethren, Bavvai the son of Henadad” refers. But never is there any mention of a particular person

35. Myers (*Ezra–Nehemiah*, 108); Williamson, (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 197), Blenkinsopp (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 228), and others translated the verb *הַחֲזוּקִים* in the plural and understood it as the plural of “Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah.” On the other hand, see, for example, the translation and commentary of Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, 116–17.

36. See Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 195, 198.



together with a specific group, and in all cases is the distinction maintained between the particular group of those who actually built the wall and the people who financed and organized it.

Against this background, it is possible to distinguish the unique linguistic composition of 3:3, the only verse that describes the construction of the gates but does not mention who financed and organized the building and states that *וְאֵת שַׁעַר הַדְּגִים בָּנוּ בְנֵי הַסְּנָאָה הַמָּה קְרוּהוּ וַיַּעֲמִידוּ* וְדָלְתָיו מִנְעוּלָיו וּבְרִיחָיו. According to the above reconstruction, the editor's desire to stress the role of Eliashib the High Priest and his fellow priests produced the changes in v. 1, as well as the identification of the priests as the builders of the sheep gate, leaving the men of Jericho and Zaccur the son of Imri as two exceptions in the list without mention of what they built. It is possible to assume that originally vv. 1–2 were part of the same formula, where Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brother priests and organized and financed the building project, while the men of Jericho and Zaccur the son of Imri actually built the sheep gate.

The above proposed translation clarifies v. 5, according to which *וְעַל-יָדָם הִחְזִיקוּ הַתְּקוּעִים וְאֲדִירֵיהֶם לֹא-הִבִּיאוּ צָרָם בְּעִבְדַת אֲדִירֵיהֶם*. This in itself accentuates the verb *החזיק* as meaning administrative and financial support. This background highlights the excellent example of the Tekoites, who were able both to finance and to take part in building and even to contribute financially to another section, while *אֲדִירֵיהֶם* are criticized for not taking part in building the walls of Jerusalem.

E. Who Financed and Organized the Building of the Different Sections of Jerusalem's City Walls?

Given the above interpretations of the verb *החזיק* and of v. 5, it is possible to define more accurately the identity of the people who financed and organized the building of various sections of the wall. Excepting a few people who worked on two sections, the list is segmented into well-defined groups or persons each responsible for organizing and financially supporting a particular section: twenty sections of the wall were built with the financial support and organization of individuals mentioned only by name; eight sections were organized and financially supported by persons in official positions or heads of districts, subdistricts, or settlements.³⁷ Five sections are mentioned as organized and

37. Individuals mentioned by name: Zaccur the son of Imri (v. 2); Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz (two sections, vv. 4, 21); Meshullam



financially supported by persons in cultic positions, such as priests, Levites, and temple servants.³⁸ Another section of the wall was financed and organized by Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, who held another official position in Jerusalem—“the keeper of the east gate” (v. 29). Four sections were financed and organized by settlements from outlying areas of the province.³⁹ One part of the wall was financed and organized by “the goldsmiths and the merchants,” two groups referred to

the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel (two sections, vv. 4, 30); Zadok the son of Baana (v. 4); Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam, the son of Besodeiah (v. 6); Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite (v. 7); Uzziel the son of Harhaiah (v. 8); Jedaiah the son of Harumaph (v. 10); Hattush the son of Hashabneiah (v. 10); Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab (v. 11); Hanun (v. 13); Baruch the son of Zaccai (a correction from Zabbai; v. 20); Benjamin and Hasshub (v. 23); Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah (v. 23); Binnui the son of Henadad (v. 24); Palal the son of Uzai (v. 25); Pedaiah the son of Parosh (v. 25); Zadok the son of Immer (v. 29); Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah (v. 29); Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, (v. 30); Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph (v. 30); and Meshullam the son of Berechiah (v. 30).

Persons in official positions and heads of districts, subdistricts, or settlements: Rephaiah the son of Hur, the head of half the district of Jerusalem (v. 9); Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the head of half the district of Jerusalem (v. 12); Malchijah the son of Rechab, the head of the district of Beth-haccherem (v. 14); Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the head of the district of Mizpah (v. 15); Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the head of half the district of Beth-zur (v. 15); Hashabiah, the head of half the district of Keilah (v. 17); Bavvai the son of Henadad, the head of half the district of Keilah (v. 18); Ezer the son of Jeshua, the head of Mizpah (v. 19).

38. Priests: Eliashib the high priest with his brothers the priests (v. 1); the priests from the surrounding region (v. 22; and see Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 195, 198); the priests as a group built “every one over against his own house” (v. 28). Levites: One section of the wall was financed and organized by a Levite family headed by Rehum the son of Bani (v. 17). Temple servants: One section of the wall was organized and financed by temple servants who “dwelled in Ophel” (v. 26).

39. Out of the four sections of the wall that were financed and organized by the groups named after the settlements from which they came, two sections were built by the Tekoites, and, as stated above, it is possible to assume that this is the reason for stressing that they bore the burden, **וְאֲדִירֵיהֶם לֹא הִבְיִאוּ צָרָה** (v. 5), and they were not satisfied with one section and **הַחֲזִיקוּ מִדָּה שְׁנִית** (v. 27). The men of Jericho built next to them (v. 2a), and another section was built by the sons of Hassenaaah (v. 3). The inhabitants of Zanoah (v. 13) are not part of this category because they were partners with Hanun, who seems to have financed a comparatively large section of the wall.



only by their professions,⁴⁰ another section by (probably) a member of this group, מַלְכִּיָּה בֶן־הַצֹּרְפִי (“Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths,” v. 31), and another by a member of another professional group (“Hananiah, one of the perfumers,” v. 8).

The great variety of persons and groups mentioned in the list proves that there was no direct connection between the function, status, and position of the individuals and groups and the organization and financial support of the sections of Jerusalem’s wall.⁴¹ It is therefore possible to assume that persons in the list designated without any title were inhabitants of Jerusalem who could afford to organize the building of a section of the wall and undertake the financial burden of the enterprise.⁴² From this, we may deduce that those who held official posts in the administration of the province, who bore the title שָׂר and were the heads of districts,⁴³ half districts,

40. See v. 32. It is possible to assume that they were part of the merchants of Jerusalem who had a definite financial interest in the building of the wall. Compare also with the professions in vv. 8 and 31, and see Smith, *Palestinian Parties*, 119.

41. It is not known why certain tasks were given to those specifically mentioned in the list, because there are other important persons not mentioned in the list, nor is there any indication of whether tasks were assigned or chosen, based on the workers’ personal understanding of the need for the construction or their connections with the leaders of the people or with the governor, or for any other reason. Against the common assumption that all the important people of that time were mentioned in the list see, e.g., Wright, *Rebuilding Identity*, 91.

42. Smith has already understood the role of the individuals and the groups mentioned in the list in a similar way (*Palestinian Parties*, 129); and see in this vein Blenkinsopp’s note in *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 129.

43. Most scholars have understood the term פֶּלֶךְ, mentioned only in Nehemiah 3 (eight times in vv. 9, 12, 14–18), as district מְחֻזָּה. See, e.g., Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judentums*, 166–67; Noth, *The History of Israel*, 325; S. Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times* (London: SCM, 1975) 315; Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (ed. and trans. A. Rainey; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) 418; Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 175; Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 150; J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 642; G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander’s Conquest* (JSOTSup 146; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 843. See E. A. Speiser’s fundamental discussion on the term *pilku* (“Akkadian Documents from Ras Shamra,” *JAOS* 75 [1956] 161–62), and cf. the explanations of Williamson (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 206), Blenkinsopp (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 232, 235–36) and M. Weinfeld (“Pelekh in Nehemiah 3,” in *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zech-*



and settlements, did not contribute as part of their official obligations but because they could bear the cost of the building project they themselves funded and organized.⁴⁴ The text does not say that these persons lived in the areas assigned to them, or that they built the section of the wall with the assistance of people from that area. It seems that the difference between the people who served in the administration of the province and those mentioned by name and not by title lies in the fact that the officials were subordinate to the governor, who could require them to pay the expenses.

It is possible to assume that most of the organizers of the building of the various sections were residents of Jerusalem, who had a direct inter-

aria Kallai [ed. G. Galil and M. Weinfeld; Leiden: Brill, 2000] 249). A. Demsky claimed that פִּלְקָי was an administrative term for a group of workers drafted for labor (“Pelek in Nehemiah 2,” *IEJ* 33 [1983] 242–44; idem, “The Days of Ezra and Nehemiah,” in *The History of the People of Israel*, vol. 5: *The Return to Zion: The Period of Persian Rule* [ed. H. Tadmor; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1983] 53). Demsky was followed by J. N. Graham, “‘Vinedressers and Plowmen,’ 2 Kings 25:12 and Jeremiah 52:16,” *BA* 47 (1984) 57; C. E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 80; K. Høglund, “The Material Culture of the Persian Period and the Society of the Second Temple Period,” in *Second Temple Studies*, vol. 3: *Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture* (ed. P. R. Davies and J. M. Halligen; JSOTSup 340; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2002) 16; and D. Edelman, *The Origins of the “Second” Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem* (London: Equinox, 2005) 213–16. This is the direction already taken by R. A. Bowman, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (New York: Abingdon, 1954) 267. However, apart from the method problem of the sources on which Demsky had based his work (and see §F, below), this contention cannot be accepted because only seven segments of the wall were built by “group leaders” of this kind. This would also demand that Judah had an extremely complicated if well-developed administrative system in which each district had supervisors for conscripted workers, which would indicate many of these undertakings. For criticism on this interpretation, see: Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 206; C. E. Carter, *A Social and Demographic Study of the Post-exilic Judah* (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1991) 75–76 and n. 71; N. Na’aman, “The Historical Background of the Philistine Attack on Ahaz in 2 Chronicles 28:18,” in *Dor Le-Dor: Studies in Honor of Joshua Efron* (ed. A. Kasher and A. Oppenheimer; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1995 [Hebrew]) 21 n. 39; Weinfeld, “Pelek in Nehemiah 3,” 249–50; Cogan, “Raising the Walls of Jerusalem,” 89 n. 10.

44. It is not surprising that those who organized and financed the building of the various sections of the wall are denoted by a variety of official titles and personal names according their places of residence. This combination strengthens the supposition that the official titles were not connected to the specified assignments of the building project.



est in the construction. Among them, nine were responsible for the part of the wall near their houses: four sections of the wall were financed and organized by persons who lived *נִגְד* (“in front of”) part of the wall (vv. 10, 23, 28, 29). One section of the wall was *נִגְד נִשְׁכָּתוֹ* (“in front of his room”) regarding Meshullam the son of Berechiah (v. 30), and another section was *אֶצְל בֵּיתוֹ* (“next to his house”) regarding Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah (v. 23). The goldsmiths and the merchants organized and financed the section of the wall adjacent to their house, and they are mentioned directly after Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths responsible for the section *עַד-בֵּית הַנְּתִינִים וְהַרְכָּלִים* (“as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants,” vv. 31–32). So it is possible to assume that the temple servants who resided in the Ophel were responsible for financing and organizing the section of the wall “as far as the place opposite the water gate toward the east, and the projecting tower” (v. 26) and that continuing from there “Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah the keeper of the east gate” (v. 29) financed and organized the section of the wall by that gate.

There is hardly any connection between the names in the list of the “returnees” (Nehemiah 7 = Ezra 2) and the names mentioned in Nehemiah 3 and the fact that several of the persons named in Nehemiah 3 are mentioned elsewhere in the book of Nehemiah (especially in the Memoir) as being among his opponents⁴⁵ All these facts reinforce the assumption that the list is a separate source, incorporated in the Nehemiah Memoir for literary and ideological purposes.

45. Note especially Eliashib the high priest (Neh 13:4–8, 28; however, see Rudolph [*Ezra und Nehemia*, 203–4] and Blenkinsopp [*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 353–54], who think that vv. 4–8 refer to a different Eliashib); Meshullam the son of Berechiah (Neh 6:18–19); Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoi (cf. Ezra 8:33 to Neh 7:61–65 [= Ezra 2:59–63]); and Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah (Neh 3:29, if this is indeed the son of the same Shecaniah, the son of Araú, who, according to Neh 6:18, was the son in law of Tobiah; and see Edelman, *The Origins of the “Second” Temple*, 23–24; G. N. Knoppers, “Nehemiah and Sanballat: The Enemy Without or Within?” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.* [ed. O. Lipschits, G. N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007] 305–32, esp. p. 323 n. 52. This point was one of the main issues argued by Fried, that Nehemiah was completely isolated in Judah. See L. S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004] 156–212). But see, however, Knoppers’s comment (“Nehemiah and Sanballat,” 322 n. 50) and the overview of L. L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol 1: *Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004) 294–313.



F. Similar Methods of Building City Walls

Cogan already noted the similarities between the list in Nehemiah 3 and Nehemiah's role in the building project, on the one hand, and the reports about and the building of the wall of Dur-Šarrukin (present-day Khorsabad) in the reign of Sargon II of Assyria (between 717 and 706 B.C.E.), on the other.⁴⁶ Much can be learned from the royal inscriptions carved on the walls and other parts of the palaces and temples and from the reliefs of the royal palace, but the main source of information on the building process in Dur-Šarrukin and the way the work was conducted, supervised, registered, and reported, is the administrative correspondence and other documents from the Assyrian state archives, written in the course of the building project.⁴⁷ Of special interest are the "Building Progress Reports."⁴⁸

From the king's royal inscriptions we know that the massive building effort was administered directly by the ruler.⁴⁹ However, the main conclusion arising from the "Building Progress Reports" (probably periodic reports prepared at the site to update the king and the central administration) is that officials and provincial governors were responsible for providing the labor force for specific sections of the city wall. The work consisted mainly of laying courses of bricks, installing beams and drainpipes, and building towers and gates. There is a clear separation between the supply of the labor force (mainly deportees, including

46. Cogan, "Raising the Walls of Jerusalem."

47. See: S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I: Letters from Assyria and the West* (SAA 1; Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1987); G. B. Lanfranchi and S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces* (SAA 5; Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1990); F. M. Fales and J. N. Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration* (SAA 7; Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1992); idem, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration* (SAA 11; Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1995). See a description of the documents and a summary of their content and implications on our understanding of the project, as summarized by S. Parpola, "The Construction of Dur-Šarrukin in the Assyrian Royal Correspondence," in *Khorsabad, le palais de Sargon II, roi d'Assyrie (Actes du colloque organisé au musée du Louvre par le Service culturel les 21 et 22 janvier 1994)* (ed. A. Caubert; Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1995) 47-77. See also the summary of the relevant texts for comparison with the building of Nehemiah's wall as made by Cogan, "Raising the Walls of Jerusalem," 86-90, with further literature.

48. Fales and Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II*, nos. 15-21.

49. *Ibid.*, xv.



deportees from Samaria) and the supply of building materials.⁵⁰ In some cases the king contributed, and the building materials were supplied to the workers,⁵¹ and it seems that the regular-sized bricks were produced in local centers that received the raw materials from the central government and distributed them to the builders of the sections.⁵² The portion of work assigned to each provincial governor (*pilku*) was carefully planned, and each sector was well defined:⁵³ “from [brick-course] 850 to the edge of the gate of the tower of the people.”

Based on the above, and assuming that the same principal methods were in use during the Persian period, we may conclude that Nehemiah, as governor of the province, was responsible for the construction work carried out in Jerusalem.⁵⁴ That is why, even if the list was compiled in Nehemiah’s time, we should not expect to find his name in it. The governor supervised and administered the work, and the list names all the officials, heads of districts, and other functionaries in the province who were individually responsible for financing and organizing the sections of the wall. Each of them was assigned a particular part of the wall, described in detail in the list, and, as in the building progress reports from Dur-Šarrukin, in some cases the location of the section is missing, and the sections are simply mentioned one after the other.⁵⁵ The source of this list might have been a similar report on the progress of the work, compiled during the preparation for the project or even during the work itself, describing the exact section of the wall that each person was responsible to finance and organize.⁵⁶

Another interesting parallel to the restoration of Jerusalem’s wall, much closer in time but distant from the geographical and geopolitical viewpoint, is found in the renovation of the long walls from Athens to

50. Parpola, “The Construction of Dur-Šarrukin,” 54–55, 64–65.

51. Fales and Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II*, xvi, and see esp. no. 21.

52. *Ibid.*, xviii; Parpola, “The Construction of Dur-Šarrukin,” 57.

53. *Planning of the work*: Parpola, “The Construction of Dur-Šarrukin,” 51; and see, e.g., *idem*, *The Correspondence of Sargon II*, no. 64; cf. also Cogan, “Raising the Walls of Jerusalem,” 88–90. *Definition of each section*: e.g., the description of Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II*, no. 64, rev. 5–7; cf. Fales and Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II*, xvi.

54. Cogan, “Raising the Walls of Jerusalem,” 90.

55. Cf. *ibid.*, 88.

56. As opposed to the conclusions of Cogan (*ibid.*, 90–91), who hypothesizing that the list was drawn up toward the conclusion of the project.



its port of Piraeus.⁵⁷ These walls were destroyed in the year 404 B.C.E., after Athens's surrender to Sparta, and were rebuilt by Konon in the ruling year of Eubolides (between July 16th 394 and July 5th 393 B.C.E.). An inscription that describes the building of one of the sections of the wall describes its exact place and length (790 feet) and stresses that Demosthenes the Beotian was responsible for its construction and for the transportation of the stones.⁵⁸

G. Conclusions: The Source of the List and the Purpose of Its Insertion

The first conclusion from the above discussion is that the list of the "builders of the wall" comprises both those who organized and financed the construction of the various sections of the wall and those who organized and financed the building of the six gates. As it stands, the list was composed of two basic and similar lists: of those who financed and organized the building of the gates and of those who financed and organized the building of the different sections of the wall. The different formulas used in reference to sections of wall as opposed to the gates suggests that the author of the list placed great importance on the gates. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that the two formulas were written by the same author, because their use of grammar and language is the same and they are expertly interwoven. It can be assumed that the editor who inserted the list along with other sources and with the Nehemiah Memoir laid further stress on the gates by adding the second part of the building formula, describing the placing of the doors, the locks, and the bolts, while at the same time clearly hinting at the editorial comments in Neh 6:1 and 7:1. As part of the same editorial process, v. 3:1a was added to open the list, and if the proposed explanation to v. 2 is correct, then it is part of the same process.

This list was not originally part of the Nehemiah Memoir. It was apparently written in order to document the persons who financed and organized the building of the gates and the various sections of the walls. Just like in Dur-Šarrukin, the governor of the province, whether

57. Smith (*Palestinian Parties*, 129–30) and Blenkinsopp (*Ezra, Nehemiah*, 232–33) have mentioned the connection of this inscription to the system of building the wall of Jerusalem at the time of Nehemiah.

58. See J. Kirchner, *Inscriptiones Atticae* II–III (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1927) 290, inscription no. 1657. The translation here is based on P. Foucart, "Les fortifications du Pirée," *BCH* 11 (1887) 129–44. I would like to thank Prof. Ran Zadok for his assistance in interpreting and understanding this inscription.



Nehemiah or one of his predecessors, was responsible for conducting the project. As we learn from the “Building Progress Reports,” we must not expect to find the governor’s name in the list of officials, heads of districts, and other functionaries in the province, recorded in the order of the sections for which they were responsible, rather than in the order of their importance. The source of this was probably compiled in the preparation stage of the project and might have been used during the work itself, describing the exact wall section each person was responsible for financing and organizing. The list was inserted by the editor of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah in the right place, namely, in the beginning of preparation to build the walls and the commencement of the work.⁵⁹ The editor’s aim was to emphasize the role and importance of Nehemiah as the one who instigated the building project, led it, dealt with the difficulties that arose throughout the duration of the work, and finally brought the project to a swift and successful conclusion. To this end, the editor added the uniform formula of placing the doors and connected it to the editorial comments of Neh 6:1 and 7:1. This was part of the wider purpose to create an affinity between the actions of Nehemiah and the building of the walls, with the emphasis on this project as the most important event in the restoration of Jerusalem as the religious and political center of the province and undisputed center for all the Judeans.

This editing created a direct association between the contents of the Nehemiah Memoir and the building of the walls and repopulating Jerusalem. It placed the list at the center of the process while highlighting Nehemiah’s actions. Thus, according to the Nehemiah Memoir, the information about the state of the walls and gates (“the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire”) was the main reason for Nehemiah’s arrival (1:3), and his appeal to the king shows his intention of restoring the city and rebuilding it (2:3, 5). Nehemiah’s main petition to the king is to provide him with “a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king’s garden, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house which I shall occupy” (2:8). The first thing Nehemiah does after arriving at the city is to walk around and inspect the destroyed walls

59. As opposed to the assumption of many scholars and commentators; cf. to Wright (*Rebuilding Identity*, 110–11, 119–20; idem, “A New Model for the Composition of Ezra–Nehemiah,” 336–37) and Cogan (“Raising the Walls of Jerusalem,” 85, 91), who understood the list as describing the actual building of the wall. Much of Wright’s thesis was grounded in this assumption, which is, in my opinion, not well founded enough.



(vv. 12–16), and the description the state of the walls says that they “had breaches there and [their] gates had been destroyed by fire” (v. 13). Immediately afterwards, Nehemiah rouses the leaders of the people and encourages them “Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem” (v. 17). The list in Nehemiah 3 demonstrates the support that Nehemiah received from all who engaged in financing and building the walls despite the difficulties (4:1–2 and so on), while chaps. 4 and 5 conspicuously stress Nehemiah’s role and how he functioned despite danger to himself (chap. 6). The Nehemiah Memoir is directed toward the time when it would be possible to move on to the next stage—populating Jerusalem and its demographic strengthening. Only when “the wall had been built and I had set up the doors” (7:1), when Nehemiah could command “Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot,” could he also begin to repopulate the city, and the book he found, “the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first” (7:5) was the starting point of this process.

The above discussion shows that from the editorial point of view it was highly important to make the connection between Nehemiah and the whole project of the building of the walls—from the decision to the preparations and on to the final stage, placing the gates and posting guards on the walls. With this aim, the significance of the list in chap. 3 goes beyond the comments inserted by the editor into the Nehemiah Memoir, because it emphasizes Nehemiah’s role in the process and the widespread support he got for building. The fact that the list was not originally connected to Nehemiah did not concern the editor—to him, the important point was to insert the list exactly where it belonged and thus to portray this period as the outcome of the community’s decision to organize its way of life according to God’s intention for his people, under the leadership of Nehemiah and as part of the wide national consensus.⁶⁰

60. In the same way and from the same intention, the same editor inserted the list in Nehemiah 11; see my “Literary and Ideological Aspects of Nehemiah 11,” *JBL* 121 (2002) 423–40.





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Offprint from:

Isaac Kalimi, ed.,

New Perspectives on Ezra–Nehemiah: History . . . Interpretation

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