

Tobiah's Defense - Nehemiah 6:17-18

*In those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to **Tobiah**, and Tobiah's letters came to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of **Shecaniah** the son of **Arah**, and his son **Jehohanan** had married the daughter of **Meshullam** the son of **Berechiah**. Ne 6:17-18*

Why are the names in the verse included? What makes them important?

To get right to the point, just read the boxes. Include everything else if you want the whole story.

Tobiah

An Ammonite who resisted the building of Jerusalem's wall (Ne 2:19, 4:3). Ammon was the son of Lot and his younger daughter (Gen 19:36,38). Israelites were not to harass sons of Ammon (Dt 2:19). Israel and Ammon had a love/hate relationship throughout the Old Testament. God often used the Ammonites to carry out His wrath on Israel when they forsook Him.

Tobiah's son married Meshullam's daughter.

Arah (grandfather)

-> **Shecaniah** (father)

-> Shemaiah (son) Levite keeper/prince of East Gate

-> (daughter-S) married **Tobiah** (SIL)

{Levitical daughter married an Ammonite}

-> **Jehohanan** (T-son) – father was Ammonite, uncle and FIL were Levite princes

Berechiah (grandfather)

-> **Meshullam** (father) Levite prince, sent away foreign wife (and daughter & SIL)

-> (daughter-M) married **Jehohanan** (T-son) – both of whom are ½ foreign

Shecaniah

His father, **Arah** returned with Zerubbabel: *Now these are the people of the province who came up out of the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his city. These came with Zerubbabel,*

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*Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: ... the sons of **Arah**, 775. Ezr 2:1-2,5*

*Shemaiah the son of **Shecaniah**, the keeper of the **East Gate**, carried out repairs. Ne 3:29*

The **east gate** is the gate of the temple mount that was kept shut because the Lord had used it (see Ezk 44:1-2) and only Levites could hold the position of "keeper of the East Gate."

The East Gate -

*Then He brought me back by the way of the **outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east**; and it was shut. The Lord said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince, **he shall sit in it as prince** to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate and shall go out by the same way." Ezk 44:1-3*

***The prince** shall have land on either side of the holy allotment and the property of the city, adjacent to the holy allotment and the property of the city, on the west side toward the west and on the east side toward the east, and in length comparable to one of the portions, from the west border to the east border. Ezk 45:7*

This means Shemaiah and his father, **Shecaniah**, were Levites and Shemaiah had the same authority as a prince.

Meshullam

*Now the sons of Hassenah built the **Fish Gate**...Next to them Meremoth...made repairs. And next to him **Meshullam the son of Berechiah** the son of **Meshezabel** made repairs. Ne 3:3-4*

The Fish Gate is just west of the temple mount opposite the East Gate.

*Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him **Meshullam the son of Berechiah** carried out repairs **in front of his own quarters**. Ne 3:30*

Meshullam's lived next to the temple mount directly south of the East Gate. Both the Fish Gate and Meshullam's quarters were on either side of the temple mount and designated as a holy allotment for the princes of Israel (Ezk 45:7-8). This means that Meshullam was also a Levitical prince.

*Let our leaders represent the whole assembly and let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times...until the fierce anger of our God on account of this matter is turned away from us." ...**Meshullam...the Levite** supporting them. Ezr 10:14-15*

*The descendants of Israel **separated themselves from all foreigners**, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. Neh 9:2*

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*The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the **gatekeepers**, the singers, the temple servants and all those who had **separated themselves from the peoples of the lands** to the law of God, their wives, their sons and their daughters, all those who had knowledge and understanding, are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of God our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes; and that **we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land** or take their daughters for our sons. Neh 10:28-30*

Meshullam supported removing the Levite's foreign wives. Since he took an oath not to give his daughter to the peoples of the land, this included sending away his son-in-law, **Jehohanan**, who was Tobiah's son. **Jehohanan** was half Levite and half Ammonite. This may have fueled Tobiah's rage against Nehemiah and would also be the answer as to why the genealogy was provided in Neh 6:17-18.

Berechiah

The father of **Meshullam** is a Levite although this is never directly stated. However, Berechiah's father and son are both Levites. He is only mentioned in Nehemiah.

Was Berechiah also known as Bani? No. Although Bani is listed as Meshullam's father they are not listed under the Levites, but under "Israel" (Ezr 10:25,29, Neh 10:14). So this is a different Meshullam.

Meshezabel

The grandfather of **Meshullam** was a Levite and one of the signers of the sealed agreement.

*Now because of all this we are making an agreement in writing; and on the sealed document are the names of our leaders, our Levites and our priests. Now on the sealed document were the names of: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah, ... And the **Levites**: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, ...**Meshezabel**. Ne 10:1,9,21*