



## Valley of Baca

The Valley of Baca is mentioned in the Bible only once, in Psalm 84. Baca is rendered “weeping” in most translations: “What joy for those whose strength comes from the LORD, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings: (Psalm 84:5-6, NLT).

The Hebrew word *baca* is related to *bakah*, which means “to weep.” *Baca* refers to a type of “weeping” tree, that is, one that drips resin or gum-like tears, such as a balsam, mulberry, or aspen tree. In 2 Samuel 5:23, *bakaim* is translated as “balsam trees” (ESV).

The Valley of Baca was probably a literal place located near Jerusalem. The Valley of Rephaim (2 Sam. 5:18) is a possible identification. The Valley of Rephaim is the site of one of David’s victories over the Philistines; the author of 2 Samuel notes that there were balsam trees there (v. 23). Another possibility is that the Valley of Baca is the Valley of Anchor (Joshua 7:24), the place of Israel’s trouble where Achan was executed for bringing guilt upon the nation. In the psalmist’s day, pilgrims probably passed through this waterless valley on their way to Jerusalem to worship.

The psalmist uses the Valley of Baca symbolically to illustrate a difficult and sorrowful path in life. *The name of the valley indicates a dry, arid region since this is where these types of weeping trees tend to grow, as people traveled to Jerusalem to worship, they would pass through this weary, “weeping” place, but their journey was worth it in the end.*

“Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
In whose heart are the highways to Zion,  
As they go through the Valley of Baca  
They make it a place of springs.  
The early rain also covers it with pools,  
They go from strength to strength,  
Each one appears before God in Zion” (Psalm 84:5-7, ESV).

In the same way, those who experience sorrow in this life—and who doesn’t? — can find strength in their faith in God. With the Lord held in His rightful place, we can find that the Valley of Baca becomes a very different place. The journey of a faithful Christian through times of hardship is a step-by-step expedition “from strength to strength.”

In Psalm 84, the Valley of Baca helps illustrate the privilege and longing of all those who follow the Lord’s path in pilgrimage to Zion. These followers possess an intense longing to worship the Lord: “How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God” (Psalm 84:1-2). They begin the path of pilgrimage strengthened by God Himself and then remain steadfast in their hearts (v. 5). They grow spiritually stronger as they continue to meet adversity with unshaken faith (v. 7). As these sojourners find their strength in God, they are able to persevere through calamity, sorrow, and severe trials. And in the end, they find grace. Their Valley of Baca turns into springs of blessing and pools of refreshment.

## **Gates- What is the Significance of the twelve gates in Revelation 21?**

The twelve gates in Revelation 21 belong to the New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven to the new earth (v. 10), shining with the glory of God (v. 11). John describes the city: "It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel" (v. 12). The gates are miraculous in their construction: "The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl!" (v. 21). And the gates of the New Jerusalem will never shut (v. 25).

In order to understand the significance of the twelve gates being inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes, we must look to the beginning of the Old Testament, when God promised a new land and a great nation to Abraham, whose descendants would spread blessing upon all other nations (Gen. 12:1-3). To Abraham's grandson, Jacob, whom God later named "Israel" (Gen. 32:28), twelve sons were born to establish the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 49), those twelve tribes escaped slavery in Egypt, inherited the Promised Land (Ex. 6:14; 24:4), received the Law (Ex. 20), and were chosen by God to be His covenant people (Ex. 19:5-6).

During the reign of David, out of all the territories of the tribes of Israel, God chose the city of Jerusalem in Judah as the place where God's name would rest (2 Chronicles 12:13). Revelation speaks of the New Jerusalem that has been prepared for the reign of the Lamb (Rev. 21:1-3). This New Jerusalem sits on twelve foundations, representing the twelve apostles who would reign over the twelve tribes of Israel (v. 14; Matt. 19:28 and Luke 22: 30). The gates of the city are symmetrically arranged: "There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west" (Revelation 21:13). Each gate of the New Jerusalem bears the inscription of one of the tribes of Israel, and each gate is guarded by an angel (Rev. 21:12). These angels are there to let in "only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (v. 27).

Three gates on the North Side- Reuben, Judah, and Levi

Three gates on the East Side- Joseph, Benjamin and Dan

Three gates on the South Side- Simeon, Issachar and Zebulun

Three gates on the West Side- Gad, Asher, and Naphtali (Ezekiel 48:30-34 and Numbers 2).

The gates of the New Jerusalem are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel was chosen by God to be a light to all nations (Isa. 49:5-7; Romans 9:23-25), and God will never revoke Israel's status as His chosen people (Rom. 11:29). The New Jerusalem thus contains a tribute to the patriarchs of Israel. It also contains a tribute to the apostles (Rev. 21:14), so both Old Testament and New Testament are represented in the city—the New Jerusalem is filled with the elect of God from all eras.

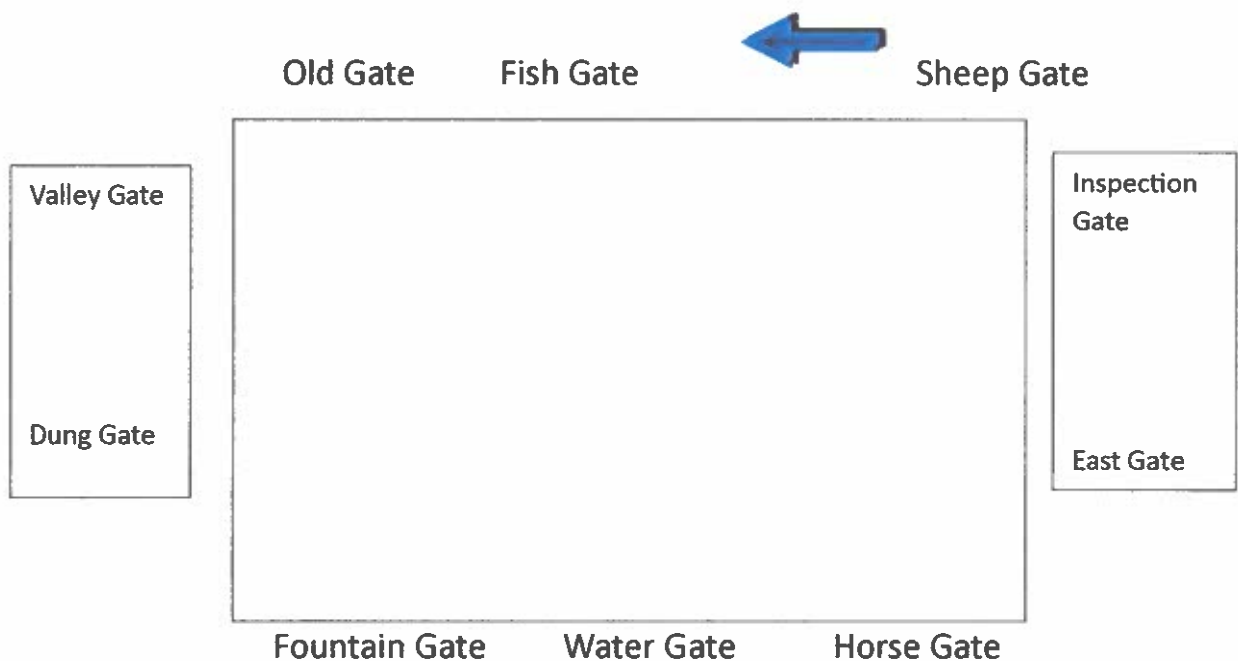
Romans 9 makes a distinction between physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their spiritual descendants—those who exercise the same faith in God as the patriarchs did. Just as not all Gentiles come to the light of the world, some Jews choose to live in darkness: “Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. . . It is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring” (Rom. 9:6-8; Rom. 2:28-29 and John 8:39-47). Those who have faith in Christ are accounted the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). It will be “true” Israel—those who have trusted in Jesus Christ—that will enter the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is through the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem that the true tribal people—believers of Jewish descent as well as Gentiles who have been “grafted in” with God's people (Rom. 11:17-25) – will enter the joy of the Lord (Matt. 25:21).

Angels are at the gates of New Jerusalem. As an angel was sent by God to guard Eden after mankind's fall (Gen. 3:24), so God has angels guarding the new paradise. Nothing evil or impure will ever enter the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27); the city is reserved for the redeemed of God.

Each gate of the New Jerusalem is made of a single pearl. The richness and supernatural nature of the city is profound. As commentator Charles Ellicott points out, “The pearl was esteemed of the greatest value among the ancients; it is an appropriate emblem of the highest truth. . . It is the only precious stone which the art and skill of man cannot improve” (Commentary for English Readers, Rev. 21:21). The imagery calls to mind Jesus' parable of the pearl of great price

(Matt. 13:45-46). This is the city that is worth more than anything this present world has to offer. Its builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10).

The gates of New Jerusalem never close. There are eternal safety and peace in the New Jerusalem, there are no enemies to shut the gates against. Access to the heavenly kingdom on the new earth is free and unhindered, and “the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it” (Rev. 21:26). The gates face every direction of the compass, and their perpetual openness invites everyone to partake of the goodness of God’s grace (Rev. 22:17).



### Spiritual Truth in Nehemiah 3:1-32

**Sheep Gate**-First experience. Realization that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Cross and Sacrifice.

**Fish Gate**- Evangelism. Believers on fire for the Lord.

**Old Gate**- Old ways of truth that never change (Jer. 6:16). Defense of the faith further established.

**Valley Gate**- Speaks of humbling and trials. Growth takes place in the valley. It produces fruit.

**Dung Gate**- Rubbish is removed. Clear away the rubbish so that true faith refined by the fire can come forth and produce fruit.

**Fountain Gate-** True faith comes forth and the fountains begin to flow quite quickly. (John 7:38). The truth of God's word was established again as Bibles were printed for the common man to read. Key truth of Salvation by grace through faith opened the fountains of salvation to flow again.

**Water Gate-** A picture of the word of god and its effect in our life. (Eph. 5:26 and Ps. 119:9). The Holy Spirit makes the Word of God alive to us personally, allowing cleansing, encouragement and direction to take place in our lives.

**Horse Gate-** Warfare (rev. 19:11). Spiritual Warfare is a requirement of every Christian because we are all in battle whether we know it or not. Ultimate fulfillment will be in the Tribulation (Rev. 6—19).

**East Gate-** Return of Jesus Christ. A crown is given to those who do this (live with the hope for Jesus return 2 Tim. 4:8). The Day of the Lord ends with the Coming of the Lord Jesus. This gate shall be shut. No one shall enter by it. It looks toward the Mount of Olives.

**Inspection Gate-** Final Gate. Examination of our lives by the Lord. (1 Cor. 4:4). The ultimate fulfillment is at the Bema seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3: 10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10) where our lives are inspected and rewarded appropriately. Live our lives with eternity in view, caring more for the things of eternity. Judgment (Mt. 25:31-46). Separation of the goats and the sheep. Lion of Judah shall reign.