Nehemiah 2:11-20

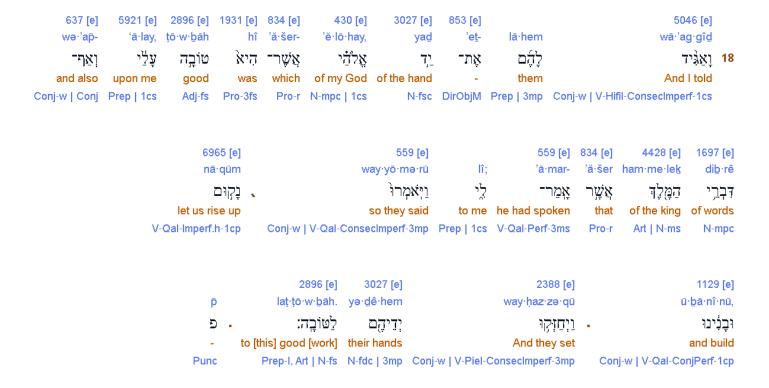
Nehemiah 2:11 – "So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days.

- 2:12 "Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode.
 - 1. Nehemiah went at night and alone with a small group:
 - a. To avoid drawing attention to his plans
 - b. To prevent Sanballat and Tobiah getting a head start
 - c. So no other theories of how to proceed could be presented besides the plan in Nehemiah's heart
 - d. So people with selfish motives or plans with self-interest could not speak and get their agendas on the table
- 2:13 "I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire.
- 2:14 "Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass.
- 2:15 "Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.
- 2:16 "And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

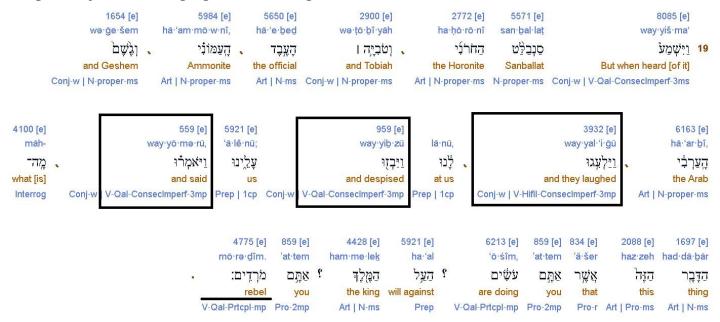
2:17 – "Then I said to them,
"You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision."

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2:18 – "And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work.



2:19 – "But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"."



- 1. Once Nehemiah told the people his plans the enemies of Judah heard about it.
 - a. Likely some of the people of Jerusalem, some of the Jews, had close relations with Samaria, Ammon (Trans-Euphrates) and the Arabs.
 - Some of the people had married into the families of the Samaritans and the other groups.
 - Some had business connections and prospered when the surrounding groups prospered.

- d. Some Jews reported to Nehemiah's enemies what his intentions were.
- 2. "they laughed" or "they jeered" is from the Hebrew *la'ag* which is a strong word meaning "irreligiously deride", "to mock", "to stammer". It means to laugh at with scorn.
 - a. They seriously mocked the intentions of Nehemiah it had been 94 years (538-444 BC) and others had talked and tried to do this.
 - b. The enemies had always stopped the Jews.
- 3. "they despised" which indicates the enemy considered themselves superior. The Gentile nations around the Jews considered the Jews and their new little to be insignificant and unworthy.
- 4. The enemy understood they merely needed to intimidate the Jews to make them back down and get back in line with the status quo.
- 5. The enemies:
 - a. Sanballat the Horonite
 - b. Tobiah the Ammonite servant
 - c. Geshem the Arab
 - i. Is now known from extrabiblical sources
 - ii. He is mentioned in two inscriptions (one Aramaic) as "king of Kedar"
 - iii. The Arabs came into the Negev driving the Edomites into southern Judah or the Negev.
- 6. The two questions were probably written and delivered as official documents. Copies likely were sent to Artaxerxes back in Persia since these leaders had positions in the Persian government as did Nehemiah.
 - a. "What are you doing?"
 - i. Again, a scornful question meaning you do not have the capacity, the man power, the money or the authority to accomplish this task because it is too great for you.
 - b. "Are you rebelling against Artaxerxes?"
 - i. This question had teeth to it. This was a legitimate threat IF Nehemiah had not had his paperwork and orders from Artaxerxes.
 - ii. Twenty years ago in 464 BC in Artaxerxes first year Ezra 4:7-24 records how successful this accusation had been. This "rebellion" clause had been a problem. Here is only a portion, Ezra 4:11-13:

"(This is a copy of the letter that they sent.) "To Artaxerxes the king: Your servants, the men of the province Beyond the River, send greeting. And now be it known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city. They are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations. Now be it known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and the royal revenue will be impaired." – Ezra 4:11-13

2:20 – "Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.



- 1. God will prosper the Jewish effort.
- 2. The Jews will build...and, their effort will prosper.
- 3. The Enemies have three strikes against them. These are not threats. These are not empty words. Nehemiah is too solid to rely on mere intimidation. These are the legal positions:
 - a. No heritage
 - i. Cheleq meaning "portion", "tract", "territory"
 - ii. The portion of the land (Jerusalem, Judah) that Nehemiah is working on is not theirs.
 - iii. They do not have the deed to this property
 - b. No right
 - i. Tsedagah meaning "righteousness"
 - ii. Meaning their desires have no legal merit, they are not just.
 - iii. If they follow through with their intentions and their words their actions will be illegal and they will be criminals in the eyes of the Persian government
 - c. No memorial
 - i. Zikkaron meaning "memorial". "remembrance"
 - ii. Meaning Samaria, Ammon, the Arabs have no history here. There is no historical record of them having the city of Jerusalem or the land they are living on.