

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.”

2717 [e] hā-ré·bah, הַרְבֵּה	3389 [e] ye·rú·šā·lim, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	834 [e] 'ā·šer אֲשֶׁר	587 [e] bah, בָּהּ	834 [e] 'ā·nah·nū אֲנַחְנוּ	7451 [e] 'ā·šer אֲשֶׁר	7200 [e] ro·'im רָעִים	859 [e] 'at·tem אַתֶּם	413 [e] 'ā·lē·hem, אֲלֵהֶם	559 [e] wā·'ō·w·mar וְאָמַר	17
[lies] waste	Jerusalem	how	in	we [are]	that the distress	see	You	to them	And I said	
Adj-fs	N-proper-fs	Pro-r	Prep 3fs	Pro-1cp	Pro-r	Art Adj-fs	V-Qal-Prtcpl-mp	Pro-2mp	Prep 3mp	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclimperf-1cs

3808 [e] we·lō- וְלֹא	3389 [e] ye·rú·šā·lim, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	2346 [e] hō·w·mat חֹמַת	853 [e] 'et- אֶת-	1129 [e] we·nib·neh וְנִבְנֶה	1980 [e] lē·kū, לָכֹוּ	784 [e] bā·'ēs; בְּאֵשׁ	3341 [e] niš·ṣə·tū נִשְׂרְפוּ	8179 [e] ū šə·'ā·re·hā וְשַׁרְפוּהָ	
that no	of Jerusalem	the wall	-	and let us build	Come	with fire	are burned	and its gates	
Conj-w Adv-NegPrt	N-proper-fs	N-fsc	DirObjM	Conj-w V-Qal-ConjImperf.h-1cp	V-Qal-Imp-mp	Prep-b, Art N-cs	V-Nifal-Perf-3cp	Conj-w N-mpc 3fs	

2781 [e] her·pāh. הִרְפָּה:	5750 [e] 'ō·wd עוֹד	1961 [e] nih·yeh נִהְיֶה
a reproach	longer	we may be
N-fs	Adv	V-Qal-Imperf-1cp

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.

637 [e]	5921 [e]	2896 [e]	1931 [e]	834 [e]	430 [e]	3027 [e]	853 [e]		5046 [e]
wə-'aḇ-	'ā-lay,	ṭō-w-bāh	hī	'ā-šer-	'ē-lō-hay,	yad	'et-	lā-hem	wā-'ag·gīd
וְאִתִּי	עָלַי	טוֹבָה	הִיא	אֲשֶׁר-	אֱלֹהֵי	יַד	אֶת-	לָהֶם	וְאָגִיד 18
and also	upon me	good	was	which	of my God	of the hand	-	them	And I told
Conj-w Conj	Prep 1cs	Adj-fs	Pro-3fs	Pro-r	N-mpc 1cs	N-fsc	DirObjM	Prep 3mp	Conj-w V-Hifil-Conseclmpf-1cs

6965 [e]		559 [e]		559 [e]	834 [e]	4428 [e]	1697 [e]
nā-qūm		way-yō-mə-rū	lī;	'ā-mar-	'ā-šer	ham-me-leḵ	dib-rē
נִקְוִים		וַיֹּאמְרוּ	לִי	אָמַר-	אֲשֶׁר	הַמֶּלֶךְ	דִּבְרֵי
let us rise up		so they said	to me	he had spoken	that	of the king	of words
V-Qal-Imperf.h-1cp		Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3mp	Prep 1cs	V-Qal-Perf-3ms	Pro-r	Art N-ms	N-mpc

	2896 [e]	3027 [e]		2388 [e]		1129 [e]
p	laṭ-ṭō-w-bāh.	yə-dē-hem		way-haz-zə-qū		ū-bā-nī-nū,
פ	לְטוֹבָה:	יְדֵיהֶם		וַיַּחֲזִקוּ		וּבְנִינוּ
-	to [this] good [work]	their hands		And they set		and build
Punc	Prep-l, Art N-fs	N-fdc 3mp	Conj-w V-Piel-Conseclmpf-3mp	Conj-w V-Qal-ConjPerf-1cp		

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?”.”

1654 [e]	5984 [e]	5650 [e]	2900 [e]	2772 [e]	5571 [e]	8085 [e]
wə-ḡe-šem	hā-'am-mō-w-nī,	hā-'e-bed	wə-ṭō-bī-yāh	ha-ḥō-rō-nī	san-bal-lat	way-yiš-ma'
וְגֶשֶׁם	הָעַמּוֹנִי	הַעֲבָד	וְטוֹבְיָהּ	הַחֹרֹנִי	סַנְבַּלַּט	וַיִּשְׁמַע 19
and Geshem	Ammonite	the official	and Tobiah	the Horonite	Sanballat	But when heard [of it]
Conj-w N-proper-ms	Art N-proper-ms	Art N-ms	Conj-w N-proper-ms	Art N-proper-ms	N-proper-ms	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms

4100 [e]		559 [e]	5921 [e]		959 [e]		3932 [e]	6163 [e]
mah-		way-yō-mə-rū,	'a-lé-nū;		way-yib-zū	lā-nū,	way-yal-'i-gū	ha-'ar-bī,
מָה		וַיֹּאמְרוּ	עָלֵינוּ		וַיִּבְזוּ	לָנוּ	וַיִּלְעָגוּ	הָעֲרָבִי
what [is]		and said	us		and despised	at us	and they laughed	the Arab
Interrog	Conj-w	V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3mp	Prep 1cp	Conj-w	V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3mp	Prep 1cp	Conj-w V-Hifil-Conseclmpf-3mp	Art N-proper-ms

4775 [e]	859 [e]	4428 [e]	5921 [e]	6213 [e]	859 [e]	834 [e]	2088 [e]	1697 [e]
mō-rə-dīm.	'at-tem	ham-me-leḵ	ha-'al	'ō-šīm,	'at-tem	'ā-šer	haz-zeh	had-dā-bār
	מְרִדִים:	אַתֶּם ?	הַמֶּלֶךְ	הָעַל ?	עוֹשִׂים	אַתֶּם	אֲשֶׁר	הַזֶּה
	rebel	you	the king	will against	are doing	you	that	this
	V-Qal-Prtcpl-mp	Pro-2mp	Art N-ms	Prep	V-Qal-Prtcpl-mp	Pro-2mp	Pro-r	Art Pro-ms

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.
 - b. Some of the people had married into the families of the Samaritans and the other groups.
 - c. 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.”

1931 [e] hū	8064 [e] haš-šā-ma-yim,	430 [e] 'ē-lō-hē	lā-hem	559 [e] wā'ō-w-mar	1697 [e] dā-bār,	853 [e] 'ō-w-tām	7725 [e] wā'a-šīb	20
הוא	השמים	אלהי	להם	ואמר	דבר	אותם	ואשיב	
He	of heaven	the God	to them	and said	act	them	So I answered	
Pro-3ms	Art N-mp	N-mpc	Prep 3mp	Conj-w V-Qal-ConseclImperf-1cs	N-ms	DirObjM 3mp	Conj-w V-Hifil-ConseclImperf-1cs	

2506 [e] hē-leq	369 [e] 'ēn-	wē-lā-kem,	Jews 1129 [e] 6965 [e] 5650 [e] 587 [e] ū-bā-nī-nū; nā-qūm 'ā-bā-dāw wa'ā-nah-nū ובנינו נקום עבדיו ואנחנו and build will arise His servants therefore we				6743 [e] yaš-lī-ah	
חלק	אין	ולכם					לנו	יצליח
heritage	have no	but you					us	will prosper
N-ms	Adv	Conj-w Prep 2mp	Conj-w V-Qal-ConjPerf-1cp V-Qal-Imperf-1cp N-mpc 3ms Conj-w Pro-1cp				Prep 1cp	V-Hifil-Imperf-3ms

Enemies	3389 [e] bī-rū-šā-lim.	2146 [e] wē-zik-kā-rō-wn	6666 [e] ū-šə-dā-qah
	בירושלם:	וזכרון	וצדקה
	in Jerusalem	or memorial	or right
	Prep-b N-proper-fs	Conj-w N-ms	Conj-w N-fs

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. Tsedaqah – 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.