

# Nehemiah 2:1-11

Nehemiah 1:11b – “.....Now I was cupbearer to the king.”

8605 [e] tə-pil-lat	413 [e] we-'el-	5650 [e] 'ab-de-kā	8605 [e] tə-pil-lat	413 [e] 'el-	7183 [e] qaš-še-beṭ	241 [e] 'ā-ze-ne-kā-	4994 [e] nā	1961 [e] tə-hī	136 [e] 'ā-dō-nāy,	577 [e] 'an-nā
תפלת	ואל	עבדך	תפלת	אל	לשבת	אזנך	נא	תהי	אלוהי	אנא 11
the prayer	and to	of Your servant	the prayer	to	attentive	Your ear	please	let be	Lord	I pray
N-fsc	Conj-w   Prep	N-msc   2ms	N-fsc	Prep	Adj-fs	N-fsc   2ms	Interjection	V-Qal-Imperf.Jus-3fs	N-proper-ms	Interjection

3117 [e] hay-yō-wm,	5650 [e] lə-'ab-de-kā	4994 [e] nā	6743 [e] we-haš-lī-hāh-	8034 [e] šə-me-kā,	853 [e] 'et-	3372 [e] lə-yir-'āh	2655 [e] ha-hā-pé-šīm	5650 [e] 'ā-ba-de-kā,
היום	לעבדך	נא	והצלחה	שמך	את	ליראה	החפצים	עבדיך
this day	Your servant	I pray	and let prosper	Your name	-	to fear	who desire	of Your servants
Art   N-ms	Prep-I   N-msc   2ms	Interjection	Conj-w   V-Hifil-Imp-ms   3fs	N-msc   2ms	DirObjM	Prep-I   V-Qal-Inf   3fs	Art   Adj-mp	N-mpc   2ms

No article in the Hebrew. Nehemiah was not "THE CUPBEARER", but "a cupbearer". One of a group of cupbearers.

4428 [e] p	4945 [e] maš-qeh	1961 [e] hā-yī-tī	589 [e] wa-'ā-nī	2088 [e] haz-zeh;	376 [e] hā-'iš	6440 [e] lip-né	7356 [e] lə-ra-hā-mīm,	5414 [e] u-tə-né-hū
פ	למלך	משקה	הייתי	ואני	הנה	האיש	לפני	לרחמים
-	of the king	cupbearer	was	for I	This	of man	in the sight	mercy
Punc	Prep-I, Art   N-ms	N-ms	V-Qal-Perf-1cs	Conj-w   Pro-1cs	Art   Pro-ms	Art   N-ms	Prep-I   N-cpc	Prep-I   N-mp

1. Nehemiah was one of the cupbearers for Artaxerxes.
  - a. There is no article in the Hebrew so Nehemiah was not “the cupbearer”, but was “a cupbearer”. There were others
    - i. From the days of the Assyrians around 700 BC, Tobit 1:22 –  
 “Now Ahikar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria; for Esarhaddon reappointed him.”
    - ii. Xenophon, Greek historian born 431 BC, wrote:  
 “Now, it is a well-known fact that the kings’ cupbearers, when they proffer the cup, draw off some of it with the ladle, pour it into their left hand, and swallow it down – so that, if they should put poison in, they may not profit by it.”
2. Cupbearer from *masqeh* which means literally “one who gives someone something to drink”
3. Nehemiah would have:
  - a. Been well trained in court etiquette
  - b. Good looking, and perfect in appearance
  - c. Know how to taste and select wines. The Babylonian Talmud says, “The wine belongs to the master but credit for it is due to his cupbearer.”
  - d. He would have been in the presence of the king when he shared his thoughts and would have joined him in conversation.
  - e. Been trusted with the king’s life and privacy. Artaxerxes father had been killed by a man such as Nehemiah.
  - f. Had great influence in determining who had a meeting or audience with the king.

Nehemiah 2:1 – “In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

Now I had not been sad in his presence.

1. Delay of four months from Kislev (Nov-Dec) 445 BC until Nisan (Mar-Apr. 445 BC)
2. The king may have been in his winter palace in Babylon or Nehemiah may have been waiting for the right time or the opportunity had not come about.

2:2 – “**And the king said to me,**  
**“Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick?**  
**This is nothing but sadness of the heart.”**

Then I was very much afraid.

2:3 – “**I said to the king,**  
**“Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”**

2:4 – “**Then the king said to me,**  
**“What are you requesting?”**

So I prayed to the God of heaven.

2:5 – “**And I said to the king,**  
**“If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ graves, that I may rebuild it.”**

1. Artaxerxes had stopped the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem 20 years before.

2:6 – “**And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him),**  
**“How long will you be gone, and when will you return?”**

4970 [e]	4109 [e]	1961 [e]	4970 [e]	5704 [e]	681 [e]	3427 [e]	7694 [e]	4428 [e]		559 [e]
ū māṭay	ma-hā-lā-kā-kā	yih-yeh	māṭay	'ad-	'eš-lōw,	yō-wō-še-beṭ	wə-haš-šē-ḡal	ham-me-lek	lī	way-yō-mer
וּמָתַי	מַה־לָּא־כָּא־כָּא־	יִהְיֶה	מָתַי	עַד־	אֶשְׁלוֹ,	יּוֹשֵׁב־בֵּית	וְהַשֶּׁגַל	הַמֶּלֶךְ	לִי	וַיֹּאמֶר
and when	your journey	will be	how long	even to	beside him	sitting	and the queen	the king	to me	And said
Conj-w   Interrog	N-msc   2ms	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Interrog	Prep	Prep   3ms	V-Qal-Prtcpl-fs	Conj-w, Art   N-fs	Art   N-ms	Prep   1cs	Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmperf-3ms

2165 [e]		5414 [e]		7971 [e]	4428 [e]	6440 [e]		3190 [e]	7725 [e]
ze-mān.	lōw	wā-'et-te-nāh		way-yiṣ-lā-hē-nī,	ham-me-lek	liṭ-nē-		way-yī-tāḅ	tā-šūḅ;
זְמַן:	לוֹ	וַאֲנִי		וַיִּשְׁלַח־נִי	הַמֶּלֶךְ	לִפְנֵי־		וַיֵּטֵב	תְּשׁוּב
a time	him	and I set		and to send me	the king	accept		so it pleased	will you return
N-ms	Prep   3ms	Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmperf-1cs   3fs		Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmperf-3ms   1cs	Art   N-ms	Prep-l   N-mpc		Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmperf-3ms	V-Qal-Imperf-2ms

1. “Queen” is *segal* from the root word *sgl* meaning “to lie with”, “ravish a woman”
  - i. *Segal* used in
    1. Psalm 45:9 – “daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.”
    2. Daniel 5:2-3 (Aramaic) for concubine – “
    3. Daniel 5:23 (Aramaic) for concubine – “
  - ii. Here there is a definite article, So this was “THE QUEEN”. Not just one of the women.
  - iii. Daniel 5:10, the queen is Malka or malkah and likely the queen mother, Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter Nitocris /nuh-taa-kruhs/

5954 [e] 'al-lat; (עלת) came V-Qal-Perf-3fs	'a-lä-lat [עללת] - V-Qal-Perf-3fs	4961 [e] miš-tə-yā משתא - N-msd	1005 [e] lə-bēt לבית to hall Prep-I   N-msc	7261 [e] wə-rab-re-bā-nō-w-hī, ורבבנהו and his lords Conj-w   N-mpc   3ms	4430 [e] mal-kā מלכא of king the N-msd	4406 [e] mil-lé מלי of the words N-fpc	6903 [e] lä-qo-bél לקבל because Prep-I	4433 [e] mal-kə-tā מלקתא The queen N-fsd	10
7476 [e] ra'yō-w-nāk, רעיונך your thoughts N-msc   2ms	927 [e] yə-ba-hā-lūk יבהלוך do let trouble you V-Piel-Imperf.Jus-3mp   2ms	409 [e] 'al- אל- not Adv-NegPrt	2418 [e] hè-yī, חיי live V-Qal-imp-ms	5957 [e] lə-'ā-lə-mīn לעלמין forever Prep-I   N-mp	4430 [e] mal-kā מלכא king N-msd	560 [e] wa-'ā-me-ret, ואמרת and saying Conj-w   V-Qal-ConjPerf-3fs	4433 [e] mal-kə-tā מלקתא queen the N-fsd	6032 [e] 'ā-nāt ענת spoke V-Qal-Perf-3fs	
						8133 [e] yiš-tan-nōw. ישתנו: let change V-Hitpael-Imperf.Jus-3mp	409 [e] 'al- אל- nor Adv-NegPrt	2122 [e] wə-zī-wayk ווינך and your countenance Conj-w   N-mpc   2ms	

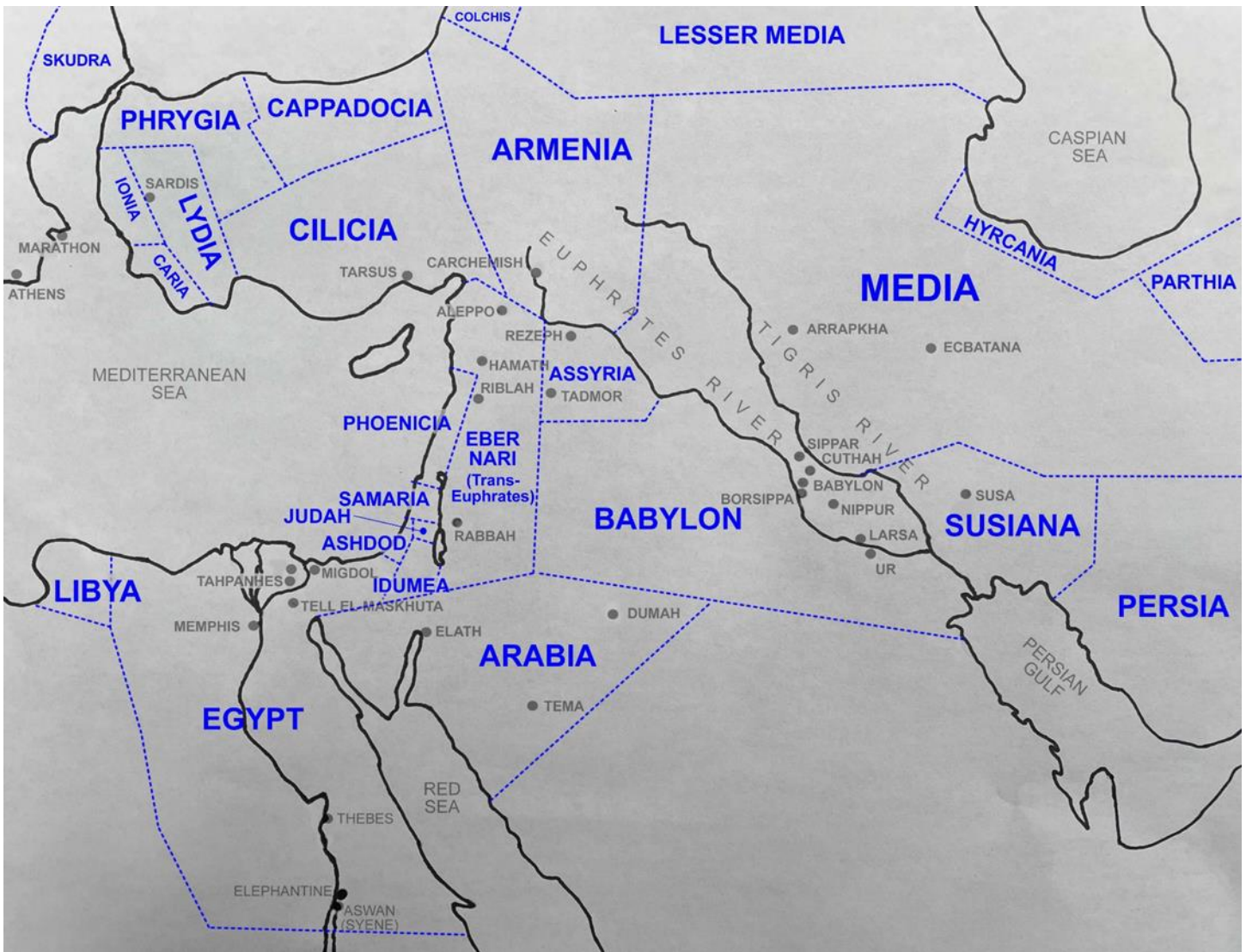
So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.

2:7-8 – “And I said to the king,  
“If it pleases the king,

- let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah,
- and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for
  - o the gates of the fortress (*bira*) of the temple,
  - o and for the wall of the city,
  - o and for the house that I shall occupy.”

1. “forest” is ***pardes*** a Persian word brought into the Hebrew language at this time. It meant “beyond the wall” and referred to an enclosed area such a park or vacation site. It is used in Song of Solomon in 4:13 as “orchard” and Ecclesiastes 2:5 as “parks”
  - a. The Greek transliteration of this was ***paradeisos*** which was used in the LXX for the Garden of Eden in Genesis
  - b. The Greek word is used 3x in the NT:
  - c. Luke 23:43
  - d. 2 Corinthians 12:4
  - e. Revelation 2:7
2. This forest is likely the forest of Lebanon where the cedars of Lebanon grew. Solomon and Zerubbabel both got this wood for the temple. Two other options for location are:
  - a. Solomon’s Garden six mile south of Jerusalem at Etham (2 Kings 25:4; Eccl. 2:5-9; Jer. 39:4; 52:7)
  - b. The forest of the Mount Carmel range.
3. The “fortress” or “citadel” is the word *bira* which would refer to a fortress on the northern wall of the Temple Mount.

a. Nehemiah is going to call it the Tower of Hananeel



b. This would be replaced by Herod with Antonia Fortress or Fort Antonia  
**And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.**

**2:9 – “Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.**

**2:10 – “But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.**

1. Sanballat

a. Sanballat is from *Sin-uballit* meaning “Sin (the moon god) has given life”

b. Horonite means

- i. Hauran a place east of the Sea of Galilee
- ii. Horonaim in Moab (Jer. 48:34)
- iii. Most likely from Beth-Horon, either upper or lower, two important cities 12 miles NW of Jerusalem that guarded the main road ascending into Jerusalem from the coast and foothills.

c. Sanballat was an opponent throughout Nehemiah's time:

- i. 2:19
- ii. 4:1, 7
- iii. 6:1-2, 5, 12, 14,
- iv. 13:28

d. He is not called governor, but holds the position of governor in Samaria

e. A letter in the Elephantine papyrus that was sent to the governor of Judah named Bagoas refers to two sons of "Sanballat the governor (*peha*) of Samaria"

- i. Both sons have names connected to YHWH: Shelemiah, Delaiah

f. IN 1962 the same Bedouin who discovered the original Dead Sea Scrolls found in a cave some papyrus from 400-300 BC writing of a Sanballat which could have been a grandson of this Sanballat

2. Tobiah the Ammonite servant or official

a. Tobiah means "Yahweh is good"

b. His name and the name of his son, Jehohanan (6:18) are connected to YHWH.

c. Tobiah was from an aristocratic family that owned estates in Gilead and the Transjordan area in the 800's BC.

d. The word "official" or "servant" is *ebed* and literally means "slave" or "servant", but it is used of high officials in biblical text and in contemporary text.

e. Tobiah married the daughter of Shecaniah

f. Tobiah son Jehohanan married the daughter of Meshullam the leader who oversaw the construction of a portion of the wall by his living quarters just outside the east wall of the temple mount.

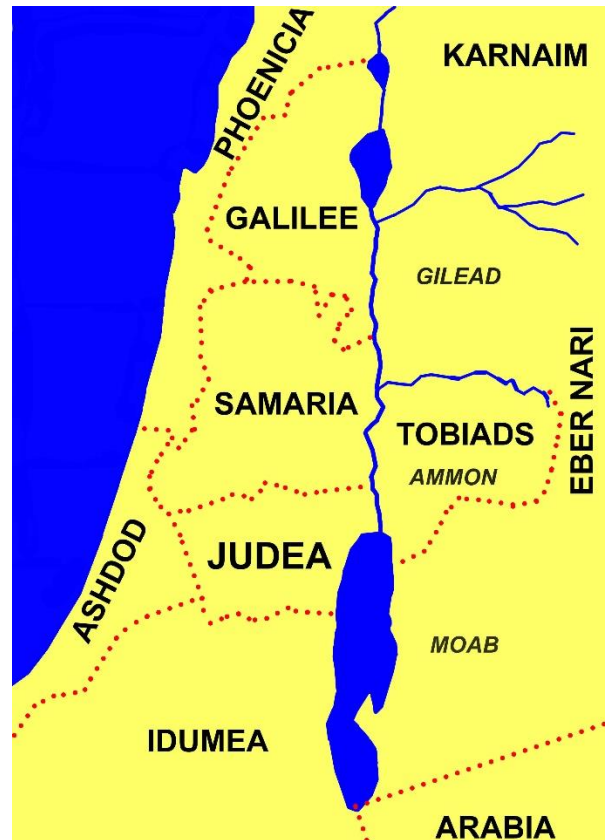
g. Tobiah was related to the Jewish priest Eliashib

h. Josephus records that a Tobiah that came later Hellenized the Jews for Ptolemy II.

i. Ammon is the satrap east of Judea

j. Tobiah was the governor of Trans-jordan or Ammon.

k. A large building on the hill Qasr el-Abd or "castle of the slave, (60 x 120 feet) was built by a Tobiad and today there have been two inscriptions found there with the name Tobiah written Aramaic



2:11 – **“So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days.**

