

Nehemiah 2:11-20

Sept. 5, 2023

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

1. Nehemiah is governor of Judaea appointed by King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah answers to no one. 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.

8179 [e] ša'ar שַׁעַר Gate N-msc	413 [e] we'el- וְאֶל- and Conj-w Prep	8577 [e] hat-tan-nîn, הַתַּנְּיִן the dragon N-cp	5869 [e] 'ên עֵין the Serpent Well N-proper-fs	6440 [e] pə-né פְּנֵי to N-cpc	413 [e] we'el- וְאֶל- and Conj-w Prep	3915 [e] lay-lāh, לַיְלָה by night N-ms	1516 [e] hag-gay הַגֵּיאַ the Valley Art N-ms	8179 [e] bə-ša'ar- בְּשַׁעַר- through Gate Prep-b N-msc	3318 [e] wā'ê-šə'āh וַאֲצֵאָה And I went out Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmperf-1cs 3fs
<p>"tannin" = serpent, dragon, sea monster, "en" = eye, spring, fountain serpent, dragon, sea monster</p>									
6555 [e] pe-rū-šîm, פְּרוּצִים broken down V-Qal-QalPassPrtcpl-mp	hēm (הֵם) (וְ) were Pro-3mp	ham-pō-r-wā-šîm [הַמְּפֻרָצִים] - Art V-Pual-Prtcpl-mp	834 [e] 'ă-šer- אֲשֶׁר- which Pro-r	3389 [e] yə-rū-šā-lîm יְרוּשָׁלַיִם of Jerusalem N-proper-fs	2346 [e] bə-hō-w-mōt בְּחֻמֹּת the walls Prep-b N-fpc	7663 [e] šō-bēr שָׁבַר viewed V-Qal-Prtcpl-ms	1961 [e] wā'ê-hî וְאֵהִי and Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmperf-1cs	830 [e] hā'aš-pōt; הַאֲשָׁפֹת the Refuse Art N-ms	
<p style="text-align: right;">784 [e] bā'êš. בְּאֵשׁ: with fire Prep-b, Art N-cs</p> <p style="text-align: right;">398 [e] 'uk-ke-lū אֲכִלוּ which were burned V-QalPass-Perf-3cp</p> <p style="text-align: right;">8179 [e] ū-šə-'ā-re-hā וּשְׂעָרֶיהָ and its gates Conj-w N-mpc 3fs</p>									

1. Does not go north or inspect the northern walls, because, most likely, they were totally destroyed 142 years ago by the Babylonians.
2. “Dragon Spring” is *en hattannin* or literally “spring of the dragons”
 - a. “dragons” were serpentine mythical water monsters
 - b. Some suggest En Rogel, but this is too far away or 275 yards away from the south point of the wall on the ridge.
 - c. The fact that the main source of water for the city is the Gihon Springs (but, on the other side) combined with the fact that the water from the Gihon Springs comes out on the west side through the winding, “serpentine-like” tunnel of water called Hezekiah’s Tunnel would make this most likely the Pool of Siloam. Or, the spot the water gushes out of Hezekiah’s Tunnel.

3. “Dung Gate” – the word “Dung” is *ha-aspot* meaning “ash heap, refuse heap, dunghill” most likely lead to a garbage dump on the south side in the Hinnom Valley
 - a. Mazar suggests the Hebrew ha-aspot is **s-p-w-t** (the Hebrew without the vowel points). This is a form of “Tophet”, meaning “place of burning” referred to in 2 Kings 23:10 during the days of Manasseh for burning infant sacrifices. Josiah shut this down when: “he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.”

<p>2011 [e] 1121 [e]</p> <p>hin-nōrm; ben- bə-nē-</p> <p>הַגֵּם (בְּנֵי-)</p> <p>the Valley of the Son of Hinnom of the sons</p> <p>N-proper N-mpc</p>	<p>1516 [e] 834 [e]</p> <p>bə-gé 'ā-šer</p> <p>בְּגֵי אֲשֶׁר</p> <p>in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom which [is]</p> <p>Prep-b N-proper-fs Pro-r</p>	<p>8612 [e] 853 [e]</p> <p>hat-tō-pet, 'et-</p> <p>הַתֹּפֶת אֶת-</p> <p>Tophet -</p> <p>Art N-proper-fs DirObjM</p>	<p>2930 [e]</p> <p>we-ṭim-mē</p> <p>וַיִּטְמַא</p> <p>And he defiled</p> <p>Conj-w V-Piel-ConjPerf-3ms</p>
<p>4432 [e] 784 [e] 1323 [e] 853 [e] 1121 [e] 853 [e] 376 [e] 5674 [e] 1115 [e]</p> <p>lam-mō-lek. bā-'ēš bit-tōw we-'et- bə-nōw 'et- 'iš le-ha-'ā-bīr le-bil-tī,</p> <p>לַמֹּלֶךְ: בְּאֵשׁ בִּתּוֹ אֶת- בְּנֵו אֶת- אִישׁ לְהַעֲבִיר לְבִלְתִּי</p> <p>to Molech through the fire his daughter or his son - man that no might make pass that no</p> <p>Prep-l, Art N-proper-ms Prep-b, Art N-cs N-fsc 3ms Conj-w DirObjM N-msc 3ms DirObjM N-ms Prep-l V-Hifil-Inf Prep-l</p>			

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.

1. “Fountain Gate” was probably used to access water from:
 - a. Canaanite channels used to irrigate the King’s Gardens on the SE
 - b. The King’s Pool there in the SE
 - c. The Pool of En Rogel further to the south (about 275 yards)
 - d. Water had also been diverted from the Pool of Siloam back to this side for the King’s gardens according to:
 - i. 2 Kings 20:20 – “The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”
 - ii. 2 Kings 25:4 – “Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king’s garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah.”
2. “No room” from the collapsed terraces on the east side
 - a. Kenyon excavated here 1961-67 revealing the collapse of the terraces, she wrote: “The tumble of stones uncovered by our Trench 1 is a vivid sample of the ruinous state of the eastern side of Jerusalem that balked Nehemiah’s donkey. The event shows that the sight of this cascade of stones persuaded Nehemiah that he could not attempt to

restore the quarter of Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the eastern ridge, or the wall that had enclosed it.”



Notice the east side of the Kidron Valley today in the city of Silwan opposite the collapsed terraces below David's palace. The houses are built on each other in a similar terrace like setting that had collapsed between 586-444 BC in Jerusalem.

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, [lies] waste Adj-fs	3389 [e] ye-rú-ša-lim N-proper-fs	834 [e] 'ā-šer Pro-r	587 [e] bah, in Prep 3fs	834 [e] 'ā-šer Pro-r	7451 [e] ha-ra'ah Art Adj-fs	7200 [e] rō-'im V-Qal-Prtcpl-mp	859 [e] 'at-tem Pro-2mp	413 [e] 'ā-lé-hem, to them Prep 3mp	559 [e] wā-'o-w-mar And I said Conj-w V-Qal-ConsecImperf-1cs	17
3808 [e] wa-'lo- that no Conj-w Adv-NegPrt	3389 [e] ye-rú-ša-lim, of Jerusalem N-proper-fs	2346 [e] hō-w-mat the wall N-fsc	853 [e] 'et- - DirObjM	1129 [e] wa-nib-neh and let us build Conj-w V-Qal-ConjImperf.h-1cp	1980 [e] lō-kū, Come V-Qal-Imp-mp	784 [e] bā-'és; with fire Prep-b, Art N-cs	3341 [e] niš-šə-tū are burned V-Nifal-Perf-3cp	8179 [e] u šə-'ā-re-hā and its gates Conj-w N-mpc 3fs		
						2781 [e] her-pāh. a reproach N-fs	5750 [e] 'o-wd longer Adv	1961 [e] nih-yeh we may be 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]
wa-'ap-	'a-lay,	to-w-bah	hī	'ā-šer-	'ē-lō-hay,	yad	'et-	lā-hem	wa-'ag-gīd
ואף־	עלי	טובה	היא	אשר־	אלהי	יד	את־	להם	ואגיד 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;	'a-mar-	'ā-šer	ham-me-lek	dib-ré
נקום		ויאמרו	לי	אמר־	אשר	המלך	דברי
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-to-w-bah.	ye-dé-hem		way-ḥaz-zə-qū		u-bā-nī-nū,
פ	לטובה:	ידיהם		ויחזקו		ובנינו
-	to [this] good [work]	their hands		And they set		and build
Punc	Prep-I, Art N-fs	N-fdc 3mp		Conj-w V-Piel-Conseclmpf-3mp		Conj-w V-Qal-ConjPerf-1cp

1. Nehemiah revealed to the people what Artaxerxes had said.
 - a. Artaxerxes had reversed his previous ruling from 20 years ago that said do not build.
 - b. Artaxerxes wanted Nehemiah to rebuild the walls and the city
 - c. Artaxerxes had already sent Ezra back to restore law.
 - d. Nehemiah was not just visiting or on a religious pilgrimage.
 - i. Nehemiah was the governor of Judaea.
 - ii. Nehemiah answered to Artaxerxes.
 - iii. The other governors (Samaria, Ammon, Arabia) had no jurisdiction in Nehemiah's satrap.
 - iv. Nehemiah was equal to Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem in the Persian empire. But, in Judah Nehemiah had no equal.

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-ge-šem	hā-'am-mō-w-nī,	hā-'e-bed	wə-to-bī-yah	ha-ḥō-rō-nī	san-bal-laṭ	way-yiš-ma'
וגשם	העמוני	העבד	וטביה	החורני	סנבלט	וישמע 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]
māh-		way-yō-mə-rū,	'a-lé-nū;		way-yib-zū	lā-nū,	way-yal-'i-gu	ha-'ar-bī,
מה־		ויאמרו	עלינו		ויבזו	לנו	וילעגו	הערבי
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-re-dīm.	'at-tem	ham-me-lek	ha-'al	'ō-sīm,	'at-tem	'ā-šer	haz-zeh	had-dā-bār
	מרדים:	אתם ?	המלך	העל ?	עשים	אתם	אשר	הזה	הדבר
	rebel	you	the king	will against	are doing	you	that	this	thing
	V-Qal-Prtcpl-mp	Pro-2mp	Art N-ms	Prep	V-Qal-Prtcpl-mp	Pro-2mp	Pro-r	Art Pro-ms	Art N-ms

1. Three opponents from neighboring provinces or satraps:
 - a. Sanballat the Horonite, governor of Samaria
 - b. Tobiah the Ammonite, governor of Ammon (or, Trans-Euphrates)
 - c. Geshem the Arab, governor of Arabia
 - i. The Arabs became dominant in the Transjordan area beginning in the Assyrian Empire and into the Persian period
 - ii. Geshem means “bulky”, “stout”
 - iii. There is an inscription from Lihyan (Dedan) territory, an Arabian kingdom between 600-24 BC when it was absorbed into the Nabatean state recognized by Rome. This Lihyanite inscription reads: “**Jasm** (or, Geshem) **son of Sahr and Abd, governor of Dedan**”
 - iv. In 1979 an inscription was found in Arabia with the name of “**Gashm ben Shahr**” which means “Geshem son of Shahr”
 - v. 1947 several silver vessels were found with Aramaic inscriptions dating from around 450 BC. One found near the Suez Canal said, “Qaynu the son of **Gashmu, the king of Qedar**” which is naming “Geshem as king of Qedar” which is all of Arabia from the Egyptian border, up to Beersheba, all of Edom, up into Ammon and Moab continuing far to the east.
 - vi. It is possible that the Persian palace found at Lachish was occupied by Geshem according to archaeologist Wright.
 - vii. Notice the enemies of Judah are to the north (Samaria), east (Ammon) and south (Arabia). But, there is no mention of the Edomites to the south. They were pushed north into southern Judah (in the vacuum and occupied now by Geshem and the Arabs)
2. 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.
3. “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.



4. "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.
5. The enemy understood they merely needed to intimidate the Jews to make them back down and get back in line with the status quo.
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-lo-hē	lā-hem	559 [e] wā'ō-w-mar	1697 [e] dā-bār,	853 [e] 'ō-w-tām	7725 [e] wa'a-šib
הוא	השמים	אלהי	להם	ואמר	דבר	אותם	ואשוב
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-ConseImperf-1cs	N-ms	DirObjM 3mp	Conj-w V-Hifil-ConseImperf-1cs

2506 [e] hē-leq	369 [e] 'ēn-	wə-lā-ḵem,	Jews				God	
הַלֶּקְחִי	אין	ולכם	1129 [e] ū-bā-nī-nū;	6965 [e] nā-qūm	5650 [e] 'ā-bā-dāw	587 [e] wa'ā-naḥ-nū	lā-nū,	6743 [e] yaš-lī-ah
heritage	have no	but you	and build	will arise	His servants	therefore we	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] wə-zik-kā-rō-wn	6666 [e] ū-šə-dā-qah
	בירושלם	וזכרון	יְדָתָהּ
	in Jerusalem	or memorial	or right
	Prep-b N-proper-fs	Conj-w N-ms	Conj-w N-fs

1. "God of heaven" is a well-known expression in the Persian court (heard in the book of Daniel)

- a. The Perian officials and Artaxerxes knew Nehemiah served this God.
 - b. The God Nehemiah was serving and receiving support from was also a God the Persians would allow and support.
2. God will prosper the Jewish effort.
 3. The Jews will build...and, their effort will prosper.
 4. 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
 - iv. The “legal share” (*cheleq*) belongs to the Jews in the province of Judea.
 - 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
 - iv. Nehemiah answered to Artaxerxes. He did not need to answer the opposition. In fact, they did not need to know what Artaxerxes and Nehemiah were doing.
 - 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.
 - iii. This also refers to the cultic memorial of the Jewish temple and priesthood of Aaron and the Law of Moses.
 1. The Samaritans claimed to worship YHWH, but it was a different location, a different priesthood, different law, different Scripture. Their worship of YHWH was pagan, and unlawful according to YHWH’s directions to the Jews.
 2. This false religious system of Samaria, Ammon and Arabia had no place, position or history to correct or criticize what Nehemiah and the Jews were doing with their God.