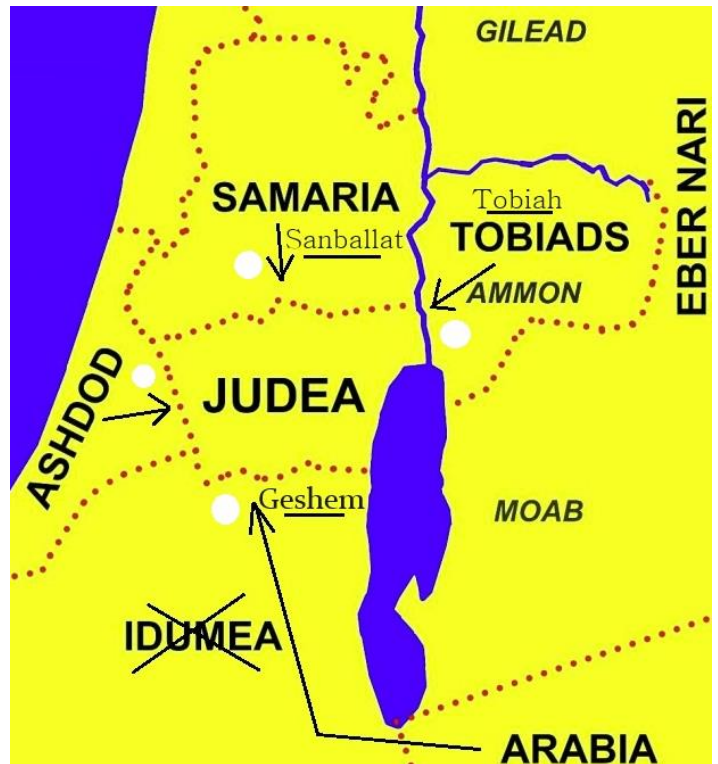


Nehemiah 4:1-23

4:1 – Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews.

2346 [e]	853 [e]	1129 [e]	587 [e]	3588 [e]	5571 [e]	8085 [e]	834 [e]	1961 [e]
ha-hō-w-māh,	'et-	bō-w-nīm	'ā-naḥ-nū	kí-	san-bal-lat,	šā-ma'	ka-'ā-šer	ye-hí
הַחֹמָה	אֶת-	בּוֹנִים	אֲנַחְנוּ	כִּי	סַנְבַלַּט	שָׁמַע	כַּאֲשֶׁר	וַיְהִי 1
the wall	-	were rebuilding	we	that	Sanballat	heard	when	But so it came to pass
Art N-fs	DirObjM	V-Qal-PrtcpI-mp	Pro-1cp	Conj	N-proper-ms	V-Qal-Perf-3ms	Prep-k Pro-r	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms
			to mock, deride, stammer			to be vexed or angry		to burn or be kindled with anger
3064 [e]	5921 [e]	3932 [e]	7235 [e]	3707 [e]		2734 [e]		
hay-ye-hū-dīm.	'al-	way-yal-'êg	har-bêh;	way-yik-'as	lōw,	way-yi-har		
הַיְהוּדִים:	עַל-	וַיִּלְעַג	רַבָּה	וַיִּקְעַס	לוֹ	וַיִּחַר		
the Jews	on	and mocked	very	and indignant	he	that was furious		
Art N-proper-mp	Prep	Conj-w V-Hifil-Conseclmpf-3ms	V-Hifil-InfAbs	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms	Prep 3ms	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms		

1. "We were building the wall" indicates that these events take place while the building organized in chapter 3 was taking place. The wall was not yet done, so all these things are taking place during the 52 days of construction of the wall.
2. Sanballat's first line of opposition is intimidation, mocking and taunting.
 - a. Sanballat is always mentioned first when the enemies are listed.
 - b. Tobiah from Ammon (Tobiads in Trans-Euphrates) is with Sanballat in Samaria.
3. Sanballat was "angry and very enraged"
 - a. He did not know what to do.
 - i. He had no real, legal option. This project and Nehemiah were approved by Artaxerxes
 - b. Sanballat is going to:
 - i. First, mock, intimidate, scorn since he cannot take legal action
 - ii. Second, threaten and organize military action which would mean a Persian province(s) were taking military action against another Persian province for acting on the orders and desires of the Persian emperor. This was very risky.
4. Israel's enemies angry about the plan and progress of the wall
5. Enemies:
 - a. North – Governor Sanballat in Samaria
 - b. East – Tobiah in Ammon part of Trans-Euphrates. They also had crossed over the Jordan and controlled the west banks of the Jordan.



- c. South – Geshem the Arab had moved out of the Arabian Peninsula into Edom to drive the Edomites into the Negev, but had followed them up to Judah’s southern border.
 - d. West – The Philistines old territory was occupied by the Ashdodites. Today the whole of the Gaza strip is in the southern part of this territory.
6. Because they were encircled by opposing satraps the Persian Satrap of Judea, or the province of Judah, was cut off from the supply lines of the caravan routes:
- a. From the south through Arabia,
 - b. From the west off the Mediterranean Sea and the coastal highway,
 - c. From the east along the Kings Highway along the Jordan Rift east of the Jordan River
 - d. From the north route running through the Jezreel Valley,

4:2 – And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?”

3064 [e]	4100 [e]	559 [e]	8111 [e]	2426 [e]	251 [e]	6440 [e]	559 [e]	
hay·yə·hū·dīm	māh	way·yō·mer	šō·mə·rō·wn,	wə·hêl	'e·hāw,	lip·né	way·yō·mer	
הַיְהוּדִים	מָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	שָׁמְרוֹן	וְהֵל	אֶחָיו	לִפְנֵי	וַיֹּאמֶר	
Jews	what	and said	of Samaria	and the army	his brothers	before	And he spoke	
Art N-proper-mp	Interrog	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms	N-proper-fs	Conj-w N-msc	N-msc 3ms	Prep-l N-cpc	Conj-w V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms	
"to live"	"to be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished"	"to slaughter for sacrifice"	"to leave, forsake, loose"	"weak, feeble, languish"				
853 [e]	2421 [e]	3117 [e]	3615 [e]	2076 [e]	1992 [e]	5800 [e]	6213 [e]	537 [e]
'et-	hay·hay·yū	bay·yō·wm,	hay·kal·lū	hă·yiz·bā·hū	lā·hem	hă·ya·'az·bū	'ō·šim;	hă·'ā·mê·lā·lîm
אֵת-	הַיְהוּיִי	בַּיּוֹם	הַיְכַלֹּ	הַיִּזְבְּחוּ	לָהֶם	הַיַּעֲזֹבוּ	עֹשִׂים	הַאֲמֵלִים
-	will they revive	in a day	will they complete it	will they offer sacrifices	themselves	will they fortify	are doing	these feeble
DirObjM	V-Piel-Imperf-3mp	Prep-b, Art N-ms	V-Piel-Imperf-3mp	V-Qal-Imperf-3mp	Prep-l Pro-3mp	V-Qal-Imperf-3mp	V-Qal-PrtcpI-mp	Art Adj-mp
				8313 [e]	1992 [e]	6083 [e]	6194 [e]	68 [e]
				šə·rū·pō·wł.	wə·hêm·māh	he·'ā·pār	mê·'ā·rê·mō·wł	hā·'ā·bā·nîm
				שָׂרוּפוֹת:	וְהֵמָּה	הַעֲפָר	מֵעֲרָמוֹת	הַאֲבָנִים
				burned	and they [are]	of rubbish [stones]	from the heaps	the stones
				V-Qal-QalPassPrtcpI-fp	Conj-w Pro-3mp	Art N-ms	Prep-m N-fpc	Art N-fp

1. Sanballat organizes to persuade his leaders, military and other governors
 - a. “his brothers” which would be his nobles and other governors
 - b. “army of Samaria”
2. Sanballat uses three rhetorical questions to prove his point and move this assembly to his side. All five questions are presented in a way that confirms the inability and unworthiness of the Jews and their project. And, the five questions are built around these five Hebrew words **hă·'ā·mê·lā·lîm** **hă·ya·'az·bū** **hă·yiz·bā·hū** **hay·kal·lū** **hay·hay·yū**
 - a. What are these feeble Jew doing?
 - i. **hă·'ā·mê·lā·lîm** - “feeble” is *amelal* meaning “feeble” from root *amal* meaning “to be weak, languish”
 - ii. These people are a withering group and can produce nothing substantial
 - b. Will they restore it for themselves?
 - i. **hă·ya·'az·bū** – “restore” meaning “to leave, forsake, loose”
 - ii. Meaning will they be able to build it for themselves or accomplish anything without someone else doing it for them.
 - c. Will they sacrifice?

- i. **hă·yiz·bā·hū** – “sacrifice” meaning “to slaughter for sacrifice”
- ii. This be referring to any of a number of sacrifices:
 - 1. The foundation sacrifice made when they laid the first stone.
 - 2. The sanctification sacrifice the priest would offer after they finished the sheep gate.
 - 3. The dedication sacrifice made at the completion and dedication of the wall
- d. Will they finish up in a day?
 - i. **hay·kal·lū** – “finish” meaning “to be complete, at an end, finished, accomplished, or spent”
 - ii. Meaning the Jews do not have enough strength, stamina or commitment to work more than one day on this project. They will quit before it is finished.
- e. Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish. And burned ones at that?
 - i. **hay·hay·yū** – “revive” meaning “to live”
 - ii. The Jews were not cutting or transporting new stones, but were building out of the burnt, piled up rubble

4:3 – Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!”

1. Tobiah also speaks to the group by mocking the structure the Jews were building
2. Usually, it took weeks and months of beating against an ancient city wall with siege engines for a breach to be made in the wall. Then, the structure could begin to be dismantled and the city invaded.
3. Tobiah says the wall these Jews are building could be breached by a fox who merely jumps up on the small structure.

4:4 – Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives.

413 [e]	2781 [e]	7725 [e]	939 [e]	1961 [e]	3588 [e]	430 [e]	8085 [e]
'el-	her-pā-tām	wə-hā-šēb	bū-zāh,	hā-yī-nū	kī-	'ē-lō-hē-nū	šə-ma'
אל-	הַרְפֹּתָם	וְהִשָּׁב !	בוֹזָה	הֵינּוּ	כִּי -	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	שִׁמַע 4
on	their reproach	and turn	despised	we are	for	our God	Hear
Prep	N-fsc 3mp	Conj-w V-Hifil-Imp-ms	N-fs	V-Qal-Perf-1cp	Conj	N-mpc 1cp	V-Qal-Imp-ms

Buzah = "contempt"

Bizzah = "spoil, booty"

7633 [e]	776 [e]	961 [e]	5414 [e]	7218 [e]
šib-yāh.	bə'e-reš	lə-biz-zāh	ū-tə-nēm	rō-šām;
שְׁבִיָּה:	בְּאֶרֶץ	לְבוֹזָה	וְתַנֵּם	רֹאשָׁם
of captivity	to a land	as plunder	and give them	their own heads
N-fs	Prep-b N-fsc	Prep-l N-fs	Conj-w V-Qal-Imp-ms 3mp	N-msc 3mp

1. These things must have been reported to Nehemiah by some supporters on the inside of Sanballat's coalition or intentional leaks from the inside of the coalition.
2. The intent was to humiliate and discourage.
3. Nehemiah goes to God in prayer just as he did in the beginning when he was in Artaxerxes' court.
4. Nehemiah's prayer is basically two requests:

- a. "Turn back their taunt on their own heads."
 - i. The five taunts of Sanballat and the one of Tobiah, let them not be true concerning us, but let them become true for the Samaritans and the Ammonites.
 - ii. Basically, the principle of the return of an undeserved curse described in Proverbs 26:2 – "*Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless does not alight.*"
- b. "Give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives."
 - i. Nehemiah asks that Sanballat and his companions be delivered to enemies, taken captive to another land and plundered in that foreign land.
- c. Note the possible word play in Nehemiah's prayer: **Buzah** and **Bizzah**

4:5 – Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

1. Nehemiah also asks that their sin not be forgiven.
2. Their sin is:
 - a. They have angered God by resisting his plan to restore and rebuild Jerusalem
 - b. They have discouraged the people attempting to follow and fulfill God's plan

4:6 – So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

1. "Half its height" is from the Hebrew "up to its half" or "up to its middle", and the most logical translation but these two also could work but not make as much sense:
 - a. Half its length
 - b. Half its width

4:7 – But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry.

1. Sanballat begins phase two because the taunting and intimidation did not work.
2. Sanballat was angry that the wall was proceeding.
3. The number and organization of the enemies grew:
 - a. Sanballat and the Samaritans (Samaria) to the north
 - b. Tobiah and the Ammonites to the east
 - c. Geshem and the Arabs to the south
 - d. Ashdodites to the west (Gaza Strip)

4:8 – And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.

1. The threat was physical and militant
2. The purpose was to:
 - a. Confuse the Jews
 - b. Distract from building by forcing time and resources into military and protection

4:9 – And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

1. Prayed for protection
2. Set a guard for protection

4:10 – In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.”

1. Fatigue and discouragement began to set in
2. Indeed, the Jews were not just building a wall, they were removing rubble and reusing broken and burned supplies.

4:11 – And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.”

1. Sanballat started a rumor saying, “We are always there. You won’t see us coming. You will be dead before you have a chance to respond. The work on the wall will stop either because you willingly quit or because you are dead. But, the work on the wall WILL be stopped.”

4:12 – At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.”

1. “ten times” meaning, time after time, or over and over, Nehemiah heard from Jews coming from every part of the city and the province reporting something in Hebrew to the effect:
 - a. “Sanballat says we must return and cooperate with him or else we are dead.”
 - b. “Sanballat is coming against us to kill us.”

4:13 – So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

1. Nehemiah organized the people in military divisions according to their families and clans.
2. This is just like earlier military divisions in the OT were made such as 1 Samuel 10:21.
3. One unit would be 1,000 men.
4. Camps were set up by the sections of the wall for the military divisions.

4:14 – And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”

1. Nehemiah reminds the Jews that this is not a human effort, but God’s plan being done through the hands of men.
 - a. God is great and awesome
 - b. God will fight with you as you fight for your families and your homes.

4:15 – When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work.

1. The military approach of Sanballat faded away and the people returned to work on the walls.

4:16 – From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah,

1. But things had changed. Now the workers were armed and posted as guards
2. “My servants” may refer to:
 - a. Nehemiah’s personal Persian/Jewish guard and staff. This appears to be the case
 - b. The people of Judea who were “servants” of the governor Nehemiah
3. There seems to be two groups Nehemiah is working with:

- a. His personal guard/staff
- b. The Jewish population
- 4. The four mentioned weapons:
 - a. Spearmen for close combat who would have:
 - i. Spears (offensive)
 - ii. Shields (defensive)
 - b. Bowmen for long range combat who would have:
 - i. Bows (offensive)
 - ii. Breastplates or coats of mail (defensive)
- 5. The three types of “workers” here:
 - a. Nehemiah’s guard/staff with the spears and bows:
 - i. Half worked on the wall
 - ii. Half held guard positions (short and long range positions)
 - 1. Long range compound bow reach 700 yards, but held accuracy for a skilled archer at 300-400 yards.
 - 2. Nehemiah had a well-armed small military supported by the Persian empire.
 - b. The “leaders” who were working on the wall setting stones and doing the masonry work.
 - i. These worked with both hands
 - ii. But, these all had a sword in their belt
 - c. The carriers were the ones digging through the rubble and bringing stones to the “leaders” working on the wall.
 - i. The carriers used one hand to carry. Most likely a basket or bag or sling of some sort to carry to the selected stones up to the wall
 - ii. They used one hand to hold a “weapon” which is the Hebrew word *hassalah* which is used in Ugaritic texts to say “javelin” or “missile” and could have been something as simple as stone “missile” or something the throw at the enemy.

4:17 – who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.

4:18 – And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

4:19 – And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another.

- 1. A communication system was organized by using a trumpet to call the military together at a point of attack.
- 2. There could be more than one place of attack, but once again Jerusalem is naturally protected on the east, south and west. So, the main point of attack with a military would be the north side.

4:20 – In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”

4:21 – **So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out.**

1. “So WE labored at the work” is personal.
2. This verse may be referring to Nehemiah and his guard/staff.
3. Not everyone had spears, bows, shields, and breastplates.

4:22 – **I also said to the people at that time, “Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.”**

1. Another problem was the laborers who lived in near by villages would want to return home for the evening, and not sleep in the streets.
2. This created two problems:
 - a. They could be attacked or ambushed on the way to or from Jerusalem.
 - b. There could be imposters imitate a worker and get into the work force to kill.
3. So, no one left the city or the work force

4:23 – **So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.**

1. No one took off their clothes including Nehemiah and his personal guard/staff.
2. Everyone was either working, sleeping or on guard duty for the full 52 days.

Zephaniah 2:3-7

Seek the **LORD**, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands
seek righteousness; seek humility;
perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the **LORD**.

For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation;
Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted.
Woe to you inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the **LORD** is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines;
and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.

And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for
flocks.

The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah,
on which they shall graze,
and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening.
For the **LORD** their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.