

1:5-11 Nechemiah's Prayer (continued)

1. Please, let me pray Bereishit 18:27; Shemot 32:10; Jeremiah 7:16

2. Talmud, Yoma 69b

למה נקרא שמן אנשי כנסת הגדולה שהחזירו עטרה ליושנה אתא משה אמר הקל הגדל הגבר והנורא אתא ירמיה ואמר נכרים מקרקרין בהיכלו איה נוראותיו לא אמר נורא אתא דניאל אמר נכרים משתעבדים בבניו איה גבורותיו לא אמר גבור אתו אינהו ואמרו אדרבה זו היא גבורת גבורתו שכובש את יצרו שנותן ארך אפים לרשעים ואלו הן נוראותיו שאלמלא מוראו של הקב"ה היאך אומה אחת יכולה להתקיים בין האומות

Why were they called the "Great Assembly"? Because they restored the crown. Moshe said, "The powerful, the great, the strong, the awesome." Yirmiyahu said, "Foreigners are croaking in His sanctuary – where is His awe?" And so he did not say "awesome". Daniel said, "Foreigners are enslaving His children – where is His might?" And so he did not say "mighty". Then the Great Assembly said, "Just the opposite – this is His might, that he conquers His nature, being patient with the wicked. This is His awe, for without awe of Him, how could one nation survive among the nations?"

3. Nation/Family/Me Vayikra 16:17

4. Malbim to Nechemiah 1:8

הוא מענין משכון... שישראל התחייבו לשמור תורת ד', ובעת שאין משלמים חוב זה יקח ד' כל מחמדיהם [שהוא המקדש וארץ הקדושה] למשכון בעד עונותיהם עד ישלמו את חובתם, ויחזיר להם את המקדש...

This means collateral... Israel obligated themselves to observe G-d's Torah, and when they fail to fulfill this obligation then G-d takes their treasures [the Beit haMikdash and the holy land] as collateral for their sins until they fulfill their obligation. Then He will return the Beit haMikdash...

5. Rashi to Nechemiah 2:1

ואנכי נשאתי את כוס היין ונתתיה למלך. וכך הוא המנהג שהמביא יין בחצר המלך אינו נושא ונותנו למלך אבל שר המשקים מקבל כוס היין מיד המביא והוא נושא ונותנו למלך:

And I took the cup of wine and gave it to the king. This is the practice, that the one who brings the wine to the king's court does not give it to the king, but the *sar hamashkim* receives the cup of wine from the one who brings it, and he gives it to the king.

6. Talmud Yerushalmi, Kiddushin 4:1

ולמה נקרא שמו "התרשתא"? שהתירו לו לשתות ביין.

And why is he called *Hatirshata*? For they permitted him [*reshu*] to drink the wine.

7. Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra (15th-16th century Spain/Israel/Egypt), Shu"t Radvaz 4:1096

וי"ל דלאו עכו"ם הוה ועדיין לא גזרו על סתם יינם. אי נמי הורמנותא דמלכא שאני:

Perhaps [the king] was not idolatrous, and they had not yet prohibited *stam yeinam*. Or, royal power is different.

Outline of Chapter 2

- 2:1-9 Royal permission
 - 2:1-3 Confession to the king
 - 2:4-9 Your wish is granted
- 2:10-18 Starting the process
 - 2:10 Samaritan trouble
 - 2:11-15 Reconnaissance
 - 2:16-18 Let's do it
- 2:19-20 First resistance

8. R' Dov Zakheim, Nechemiah, pg. 56

It is possible that Nehemiah deliberately chose this moment to drop the jovial mask he had been wearing since receiving Hanani's report. The date of the events appears to have been the first of Nisan, the beginning of the new year for the Persians (and the first Jewish month) at which a feast may have been held. Herodotus reports that the king granted requests that were made to him at his birthday feast. The same custom may also have been practiced at other feasts.

9. Wikipedia, Nowruz

Nowruz is the day of the vernal equinox, and marks the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. It marks the first day of the first month (Farvardin) in the Iranian calendar. It usually occurs on March 21 or the previous or following day, depending on where it is observed. The moment the sun crosses the celestial equator and equalizes night and day is calculated exactly every year, and families gather together to observe the rituals.

10. Malbim to Nechemiah 2:1

המלך היה מקפיד שמשרתיו לא יתראו לפניו ברוע פנים, שאז נחשדו בעיניו כי לבם רע, ונחמיה ידע טבע המלך ולשמור שבבואו לפני המלך יעמוד בפנים שוחקות

The king insisted that his servants not appear before him with a 'bad' face, for then he suspected that their heart was bad. And Nechemiah knew the king's nature, and [knew] to guard himself such that he would have a happy face when coming before the king.

11. Prof. Mordechai Zer-Kavod, Daat Mikra edition, Comment to Nechemiah 2:1

מלכי בית אחמנש לא היו מסובים יחד עם אורחיהם, כי אם פרגוד מפריד בינם ובין היושבים לפניהם.
The Achaemenid kings did not recline with their guests, but a curtain separated them from those sitting before them.

12. Malbim to Nechemiah 2:2

והיה זה אם שנכרו על פניו אותות העינוי והצום של הימים האלה, או שהיה בהשגחה שעי"כ ישאלנו המלך...
This was either because the signs of suffering and fasting during this time were visible on his face, or because of Divine supervision such that the king would inquire of him...

13. Rashi to Nechemiah 2:2

אין המעשה הזה כי אם רוע לב שיש בלבבך עלי להמיתני בסם המות בשתיית כוס זה:
This behaviour is only because of your bad heart toward me, intending to kill me with poison when I drink this cup!

14. Rashi to Nechemiah 2:4

ואמרתי לפני המלך בתפילתי "כן יהיה רצון מלפני אלקי השמים שתמלא שאלתי ובקשתי."
And I said in my prayer before the king, "So may it be the will of the Gd of Heaven, that you fulfill my request."

15. Metzudat David to Nechemiah 2:4

עד שלא השיב אמריו התפלל לד' תפלה קצרה בעמדו לפני המלך והתפלה היה שימשוך עליו חסד לפני המלך:
Before he responded, Nechemiah recited a short prayer to Gd while standing before the king. The prayer was to give him favour before the king.

16. Malbim to Nechemiah 2:4

בתשובה שהשיב אל המלך היה בלבו הדבור אל ד' בדרך תפלה
His respond to the king was, in his heart, speech to Gd in the manner of prayer.

17. R' Dov Zakheim, Nechemiah, pg. 54

The queen, Damasias (or Damaspia), was Artaxerxes' "first" wife, that is to say, she was the chief member of his harem... Nehemiah does not give Damasias a speaking part in his memoir, but he notes her presence... And, as will be shown, she may have been a supporter when he entreated the king for permission to leave the court and travel to Judah.