

Nehemiah 6:1 ¶ Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and *that* there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

Nehemiah 6:2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in *some one of* the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

Nehemiah 6:3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

Nehemiah 6:4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

Nehemiah 6:5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

When the enemies of the people of Israel heard that Nehemiah had successfully led the people in completing the wall (except for hanging the doors on the gates), their leaders sent messengers asking Nehemiah to meet them in a village in the plain of Ono (about 30 miles NW of Jerusalem). Nehemiah realized that their intentions toward him were evil, so he replied that he couldn't possibly justify stopping the work of reconstruction for such a meeting.

Nehemiah notes that they persisted in their efforts and sent messengers repeating their request for a meeting four more times. Nehemiah refused their request every time. Finally, Sanballat sent his servant to deliver an open letter to Nehemiah. An open letter would imply that it was intended to be made public to put more pressure on Nehemiah to comply with the request for a meeting.

I liked Guzik's application regarding Nehemiah's ability to discern the motive of his enemies: "Discernment gave Nehemiah focus; he knew what God wanted him to be doing and he did it. He wouldn't be sidetracked by things that sounded good, but weren't of the LORD for him. Anyone doing a work for God must contend with a hundred different noble causes, and a hundred things that might look good - and be good - but they are not what they are called to do at that time. Discernment gives us focus."

Nehemiah 6:6 Wherein *was* written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith *it, that* thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

Nehemiah 6:7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is* a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

Nehemiah 6:8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

Nehemiah 6:9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands.

The letter basically said: Rumors abound that you and the Jews built the wall because you are planning to rebel against the king. It further stated that they knew that Nehemiah had hired prophets to declare him as that king. We are going to inform the king if you don't meet with us.

Nehemiah immediately replied that the rumors were false; they were outright lies they had invented. It was obvious that their purpose was to provoke fear in the hearts of the people, hoping to cause a work stoppage. (It seems that "fake news" is nothing new under the sun. As always, evil people will seek to get their own way through lying and cheating.)

Then, as was his custom, Nehemiah asked God for His provision.

Nehemiah 6:10 ¶ Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

Nehemiah 6:11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who *is there*, that, *being* as I *am*, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

Nehemiah 6:12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

Nehemiah 6:13 Therefore *was* he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and *that* they might have *matter* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

Nehemiah 6:14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

Next, Nehemiah was evidently requested to meet with Shemaiah, who was confined in the temple for some reason. He asked that Nehemiah meet with him in the temple behind closed doors, saying that Nehemiah's life was in danger.

Nehemiah realized that this man was not sent from God; Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He had hoped to make Nehemiah afraid and agree to the set up that would make him appear guilty of planning rebellion.

The NIV Commentary offers this explanation: "Since he had access to the temple, Shemaiah was probably a priest, possibly one of those who were particularly friendly with Tobiah. He likely had shut himself up in the temple as a symbolic action to indicate that his own life was in danger and to suggest that both must flee to the temple....Even if his life was genuinely threatened, Nehemiah was not a coward who would run into hiding. Nor would he transgress the law to save his life. As a layman he was, of course, not permitted to enter the sanctuary (Ex 29:33; 33:20; Nu 18:7). That Shemaiah proposed a course of action contrary to God's word revealed him as a false prophet."

Once again Nehemiah turned to God in prayer asking Him to intervene on his behalf and judge his enemies that included a prophetess and some of the

prophets.

Nehemiah 6:15 ¶ So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day of the month* Elul, in fifty and two days.

Nehemiah 6:16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen that *were* about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

The wall was finally finished after 52 days of hard work. When the enemies of Israel realized this, they were quite despondent because they knew that the God of Israel had caused them to succeed.

Nehemiah 6:17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and *the letters* of Tobiah came unto them.

Nehemiah 6:18 For *there were* many in Judah sworn unto him, because he *was* the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

Nehemiah 6:19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. *And* Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

Sadly, there were many men of rank in Israel that were in league with Tobiah because he was the son-in-law of a prominent Jew and his son had married into another influential family—possibly that of the prophet Zechariah.

Zechariah 1:1 “In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, **the son of Berechiah**, the son of Iddo the prophet....”

The NIV is a little clearer for verse 19: “Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.”