

Nehemiah 06 - External Threats: Invitation, Slander, Trickery; Nehemiah's Discernment; Wall Rebuilt in 52 Days, Despite Tobiah's Subversion; Enemies Discouraged

I. Rebuilding of the wall (Neh 1:1—7:73)

(2) Nehemiah rebuilds the wall despite much opposition (Neh 3:1—6:19)

(B) Opposition to the rebuilding of the wall (Neh 4:1—6:19)

(c) External threats against Nehemiah (6:1-19)

(i) Invitation from Nehemiah's enemies to meet them on the plain of Ono (6:1-4)

(a) Attack (6:1-2)

(b) Answer: Nehemiah's refusal (6:3-4)

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(a) Attack (6:5-7)

(b) Answer: Nehemiah indicates that the letter is erroneous (6:8-9)

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(a) Wall's completion in 52 days to the discouragement of Israel's enemies (6:15-16)

(b) Tobiah's subversion through letters and loyal Judahites (6:17-19)

It was only 12 years after Ezra's return that Nehemiah came to Judah. Nehemiah was a high official at the Persian court who, out of concern for Jerusalem, asked for and was given permission to serve as governor of that minor district. He served in Jerusalem 12 years, returned to Persia, and then came to Judah a second time to govern there.

Unlike Ezra the priest, Nehemiah exercised political power. Yet his colorful and decisive leadership dealt with more than restoring respectability to Jerusalem by rebuilding its

walls. Nehemiah also committed himself to purifying the lifestyle of God's people and bringing them into conformity with God's Law.

It is striking to realize that even with Ezra in Judah, teaching the Word of God to the people, the Jews had drifted from full commitment. By Nehemiah's time intermarriage was again a problem, and doing business on the Sabbath Day was an established way of life. It was time for another fresh start for God's

In her days of greatness Israel never ranked in size with the empires and kingdoms of the Middle East. In Nehemiah's day this always-small land had shrunk even more; the district of Yehud (Judah) included only some 800 square miles! It extended north and south about 25 miles, and east and west about 32.

The tiny size of Judah and the plight of the exiles, who were surrounded on every side by hostile peoples, makes it easier for us to understand why Jewish morale so often ebbed, and why opposition from neighbors was usually all that was necessary to cause them to abandon a project. Nehemiah's decision to live on this insignificant parcel of land rather than to continue in his important position in the capital of the great Persian Empire seems especially dramatic, and is a measure of his commitment to God.

Nehemiah 6

(c) External threats against Nehemiah (6:1-19)

(i) Invitation from Nehemiah's enemies to meet them on the plain of Ono (6:1-4)

(a) Attack (6:1-2)

1 Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and *that* no breach was left in it, although at that time I had not installed the doors in the gates,

1 Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and *that* no breach remained in it, although at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates,

1 When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had completed the wall and that no break remained in it (even though by that time I hadn't yet installed the doors in the gates),

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;)

- It was "now or never" for Israel's enemies...the wall was rebuilt, but the gates were not yet hung. In a short period of time, the reconstruction work would be completed. If they didn't do something now, they would have forfeited their chance.

2 Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, "Come, let's meet together at **Chephirim** in the **plain of Ono.**" But **they were plotting to harm me.**

2 then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono." But they were planning to harm me.

2 Sanballat and Geshem sent word to me, saying "Come, let's meet together at Kephirim on the Ono Plain." But they were just trying to do me harm.

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.

- This is the satanic method of, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

— By all appearances, this was a friendly invitation, perhaps for reconciliation or possibly a vacation for Nehemiah. Whatever the purpose, Nehemiah viewed it as a distraction.

- "...Chephirim" - a town, possibly the village of Kafr Ana, just southeast of Jaffa. It is one of the towns on the Ono plain.

- "...plain of Ono" - 25 miles west and a little north of Jerusalem, near the town of Ashdod and Judah's border with Samaria. Today, Israel's international airport at Lud, near Tel Aviv, is very close to this site. It was located in a "no-man's land" between Judah, Ashdod, and Samaria.

— If Nehemiah had accepted this invitation, he would have been many miles from Jerusalem for at least two days, which would have allowed the enemy an opportunity to attack the Jewish workmen.

- By removing Nehemiah from the scene or by at least destroying his credibility with the Jews, they reasoned that they might be able to stop the work. Each of their three attacks on him was different, but each was designed to take his life or discredit his effectiveness as a leader.

- "...they were plotting to harm me" - Nehemiah saw through the friendly appearance of the invitation and understood what the offer was all about

— Nehemiah had discernment, which is the ability to judge matters according to God's view of them, not according to their outward appearance (Cf. 1 Sam 16:7). Many people see discernment as being negative or cynical, however discernment is equally able to see the good in something as it is in seeing the bad.

— Discernment is something that Christians, and the world in general, severely lacks. People generally accept something blindly because it looks or sounds good, without judging it against the whole counsel of God's Word (Cf. Prov 27:6).

— How does a believer develop discernment?

1. Get to know God's Word. This is the only way to see things as God sees them.
2. Develop spiritual maturity (see #1 above). What you learn, do. Heb 5:12-14 says that discernment is something spiritual infants do not possess (a baby will stick *anything* in its mouth).

3. Discernment is a spiritual gift, given by the Holy Spirit at the point of faith (Cf. 1 Cor 12:10). Seek God for it.

(b) Answer: Nehemiah's refusal (6:3-4)

3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and am unable to come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

3 So I sent messengers to them, replying "I am involved in a great endeavor, so I can't leave. Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you?"

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?

- Discernment gave Nehemiah focus. He had left Persia on a mission, and he was laser-focused on that mission until it was fully completed. 95% completion was not completion, so Nehemiah was not going to stop or be distracted until it was 100% complete.

— If the enemy can distract God's people, he has won. If we start majoring on the minors, or minoring on the majors, we become distracted and lose our effectiveness for the work of the Lord.

— There is never a shortage of worthy, noble causes for us to be involved in, but we just use discernment to determine what God wants, what he has gifted us and called us to do, then do that and only that with a singular, laser focus.

This first attack was more subtle than the others. Sanballat and Geshem invited Nehemiah to meet with them in one of the villages on the plain of Ono. The plain of Ono was named after the town of that name (Cf. 1 Chr 8:12; Ezra 2:33; Neh 7:37; 11:35). It was near Lod about 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem, about 6 miles southeast of Joppa. Ono was near the border of Samaria, Sanballat's home province. On the surface it appeared that Sanballat and his cohorts wanted to have a peace conference, but their hidden motive was to harm Nehemiah.

Nehemiah suspected foul play. Why would they want him a day's journey away from Jerusalem? Then he could not oversee the work, and by outnumbering him they might do him harm. Though he could not prove his enemies' motives at the moment, he chose a method that would eventually demonstrate whether they were sincere. He simply sent messengers to tell them he was involved in a great (important) project and could not leave it unsupervised. By responding in this way Nehemiah was not openly questioning their motives. In fact he was giving them an opportunity to prove their motives were sincere, if they had really wanted to make peace.

4 Then they sent *messages* to me four times worded in this way, and I answered them with the same wording.

4 They sent *messages* to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way.

4 They sent me this message four times, and I answered them the same way.

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

- Nehemiah was persistent in his discernment...they sent four invitations, and Nehemiah rejected all four

— With their multiple invitations, Sanballat and Geshem's tipped their hand. Rather than countering with an offer to meet with Nehemiah in Jerusalem, since he clearly wasn't leaving, they sent the same invitation four time and Nehemiah responded four times with his same refusal.

— Nehemiah could have impatiently attacked their motives on their third or fourth request, but he patiently waited it out till they revealed their motives. And this they did with their fifth response, which involved their second scheme.

(ii) Slander by Sanballat (6:5-9)

(a) Attack (6:5-7)

5 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same way a fifth time with an **open letter** in his hand.

5 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner a fifth time with an open letter in his hand.

5 Then Sanballat sent his assistant to me the fifth time. But this time the letter was sent unsealed, and

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

- "...open letter" - instead of a private, sealed invitation that Sanballat had sent four times before, the fifth time he sent a public letter, viewable to those who transported and delivered it, as well as to everyone else

— Open letters often aimed to stir suspicion and create fear among

— Sanballat adjusted his strategy, this time to question Nehemiah's integrity before all the Jews. The previous four invitations were private, delivered only to Nehemiah. Due to four rejections, the enemy went public with false accusations against Nehemiah.

6 In it was written: "**It is reported** among the nations, and **Gashmu** says, that **you and the Jews intend to rebel**; for that reason you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their king, according to these reports.

6 In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore you are rebuilding the wall. And you are to be their king, according to these reports.

6 in it was written: It is reported among the nations—and Gashmu confirms this—that you and the Jews are planning a revolt, and that you're rebuilding the wall in order to declare yourself king. According to these reports,

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.

- "...It is reported" - unnamed sources; this is where most slander or verbal attacks begin: "I've heard through the grapevine..." or "Everyone is talking about...". Such vague words always give the wrong impression.

— What Sanballat accused Nehemiah of doing was false; it doesn't matter if one nation reported this, or a thousand nations, it was still false.

- "...Gashmu" - an alternate spelling for Geshem the Arab (Cf. v1)

- "...you and the Jews intend to rebel" - by framing Nehemiah's efforts as treason against the Persian king, Sanballat sought to provoke official intervention and shift public perspective against the ongoing rebuilding project.

7 You have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'A king is in Judah!' And now **it will be reported to the king** according to these reports. **So come now, let's consult together."**

7 You have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'A king is in Judah!' And now it will be reported to the king according to these reports. So come now, let us take counsel together."

7 you also have appointed prophets to proclaim about you in Jerusalem, "There is a king in Judah!" Since these words are being reported to the king, come and let's meet together.

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.

- "...it will be reported to the king" - a threat against Nehemiah to expose these lies to the king

- "...So come now, let's consult together" - with scheme one, multiple invitations to meet far from Jerusalem, unsuccessful, Sanballat now tries to publicly shame and expose Nehemiah (with complete falsehoods) to cause a rift between him and the king, as well as him as the Jews.

This letter was insidious in several ways. First, the letter made it seem as if they had Nehemiah's welfare at heart. The letter implied that their reason for conferring with him was to protect him. Second, and more basic to their motive, they were attempting to get Nehemiah to respond out of fear.

(b) Answer: Nehemiah indicates that the letter is erroneous (6:8-9)

8 Then I sent a message to him saying, "Nothing like these things that you are saying has been done, but **you are inventing them in your own mind.**"

8 Then I sent a message to him saying, "Such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind."

8 I sent word back to him, "Nothing has happened as you've claimed. You're making up these charges in your imagination."

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.

- "...you are inventing them in your own mind" - Sanballat believed an alternative reality

— Nehemiah called Sanballat a liar. He did not refute his accusations point by point because he didn't have to. His character and integrity spoke for themselves.

— He wasn't going to waste his time and be distracted trying to satisfy Sanballat with facts, explanations, and evidence. If you give into their demands, they've achieved their goal (distraction).

— Sanballat would not be defeated by being proven a liar. He didn't care if the entire world thought he was a liar if he could stop construction on the wall. Thankfully, Nehemiah's discernment didn't allow him to take the bait.

9 For all of them were *trying* to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done." **But now, God, strengthen my hands.**

9 For all of them were *trying* to frighten us, thinking, "They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

9 For they all were trying to make us afraid by saying, "Their hands will become tired from laboring, so the work won't be completed." "Therefore, LORD, strengthen my hands!"

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.

- Nehemiah's bold response demonstrated his discernment, backed by his trust in God. He outrightly denied the accusation.

— He told his fellow workers that the letter was designed to frighten them into thinking their wall-building would bring Artaxerxes' wrath down on them. Then, as Nehemiah regularly did, he prayed, this time asking God for strength.

— Since Nehemiah had a reputation as a man of integrity among the Jews, this seed of doubt did not take root in their minds

- "...But now, *God*, strengthen my hands" - we cannot overcome slander or fear in our own strength; not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord (Zech 4:6).

If we take care of our character, we can trust God to take care of our reputation. [Wiersbe]

(iii) Invitation for Nehemiah to meet Shemaiah in the Temple (6:10-14)

(a) Attack (6:10)

10 When I entered the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined *at home*, he said, "Let's meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let's close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night."

10 When I entered the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined at home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night."

10 Later I visited Delaiah's son Shemaiah, a grandson of Mehetabel, who was confined at home. He kept urging me, "Let's meet together at the house of God, within the Temple, and take refuge there, because they're coming to kill you. In fact, they're coming at night to kill you!"

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.

- Persisting in their evil planning, Nehemiah's enemies hired Shemaiah, a man "on the inside," to lure him into the Temple "for his safety" because people were trying to kill him.

— Claiming to be a prophet, Shemaiah purposely locked himself in his house, supposedly from some debility or ritual defilement, and sent word for Nehemiah to visit him. Perhaps Shemaiah devised an urgent situation that would arouse Nehemiah's curiosity.

— Shemaiah must have been a man Nehemiah trusted, for it would have been illogical for him to meet secretly with someone he did not trust. When Nehemiah arrived, Shemaiah suggested they meet in the temple behind closed doors. He pretended to be protecting Nehemiah from would-be nighttime assassins.

- The Mosaic Law prohibited anyone but Yahweh's anointed servants from entering the Holy Place and Most Holy Place in the Temple (Cf. Num 1:51; 3:10; 18:7). It was lawful, however, for an Israelite to seek refuge at the brazen altar in the temple courtyard (Cf. Ex 21:13-14), but that's not what Shemaiah proposed.

(b) Answer: Nehemiah's refusal since he believed that Shemiah was hired by Sanballat and Tobiah (6:11-14)

11 But I said, "**Should a man like me flee? And who is there like me who would go into the temple to save his own life?** I will not go in."

11 But I said, "Should a man like me flee? And could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in."

11 But I asked him, "Should a man like me run? Should someone like me run into the Temple to save his life? I won't go there!"

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.

- "...Should a man like me flee?" - Nehemiah discerned the heart of God based on the whole counsel of Scripture. Shemaiah tried to create fear in order to get Nehemiah to disobey God.

— The key to discernment is the whole counsel of God. Shemaiah could've used Ps 61:4, which says: Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Nehemiah could've cited this verse as God's approval to enter the temple in danger. But this was not the heart of God.

- "...who is there like me who would go into the temple to save his own life?" - Nehemiah knew that only priests were allowed in the Holy Place and Most Holy Place, and Nehemiah was not a priest. If he went inside as Shemaiah suggested, he would have been disobeying God.

— In 2 Chr 26, King Uzziah did just that—he was not a priest, yet he entered into the temple—and God instantly struck him with leprosy

— Nehemiah discerned that this "prophecy" could not be the will of God because it counseled disobedience to the Mosaic Law

12 Then I realized that God certainly had not sent him, but he uttered *his* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

12 Then I perceived that surely God had not sent him, but he uttered *his* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

12 I perceived that God had not sent him. Instead, Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him to pronounce this prophecy against me.

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.

13 He was hired for this reason, that I would become frightened and act accordingly and sin, so that they might have an evil report in order that they could taunt me.

13 He was hired for this reason, that I might become frightened and act accordingly and sin, so that they might have an evil report in order that they could reproach me.

13 He had been hired to make me afraid so I would sin by doing what he suggested. Then they could create a slanderous report to use against me.

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.

- The strategy of the enemy here was to show the Jews that their leader had no real concern for the Law, but was rebuilding the walls for personal reasons

14 **Remember, my God, Tobiah and Sanballat** in accordance with these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets, who were *trying* to frighten me.

14 Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these works of theirs, and also Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were *trying* to frighten me.

14 "Remember me, my God, and take note of what Tobiah and Sanballat are doing. Also take note of the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who intend to make me afraid."

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.

- "Remember, my God, Tobiah and Sanballat" - in much the same manner that Nehemiah prayed that God would remember him (5:19) for his obedience and pure motives, he now asked God to remember his enemies for what they've tried to do to him.

— Instead of lashing out against his enemies, who were actively trying to subvert him and his work, Nehemiah committed these wicked men, and the entire situation, to God. If God could take care of Nehemiah, He certainly could take care of Shemaiah.

(iv) Wall completed despite Tobiah's subversion (6:15-19)

(a) Wall's completion in 52 days to the discouragement of Israel's enemies (6:15-16)

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of *the month* Elul, in **fifty-two days**.

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of *the month* Elul, in fifty-two days.

15 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul in 52 days.

15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.

- "...fifty-two days" - the date of completion is said to be **September 20, 444 BC or October 2, 444 BC**. This was unfathomable to every other nation and people group who were watching, and demonstrated God's hand throughout the project.

— The walls were in ruins for over 140 years, but it only took 52 days to set everything right. When Nehemiah first heard about the condition of Jerusalem and the wall, he prayed for four months. The work itself took less than two months. This shows that the spiritual battle is often greater than the physical battle.

— A seemingly overwhelming task, with severe opposition, can be completed quicker than expected when God's favor is present. This shows that God strengthens His people to accomplish His purposes.

— Why wasn't the job done in the more than 100 years before? It wasn't that no one saw the problem; it wasn't that walls were not wanted. Many people saw broken walls and knew how they ruined the lives of the people of Jerusalem, but no one got past the place of just *wishing* Jerusalem had walls.

— Finally, God raised up a man who did more than wish Jerusalem had walls; he grieved, he ached, he prayed, he planned, he asked boldly, he went, he fought, he encouraged, he stood strong, and he saw the job through to completion. But he also had people around him with the same kind of heart.

— We have such small ideas of how God can use us. God used a man named Nehemiah to set right a 100-year-old problem in less than two months—and the same God sits on a throne in heaven today.

16 When all our enemies heard *about it*, and all the nations surrounding us saw *it*, they **lost their confidence**; for **they realized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God**.

16 When all our enemies heard *of it*, and all the nations surrounding us saw *it*, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

16 When all of our enemies—including the surrounding nations—heard this, they became very discouraged, since they saw that the work had been done by our God.

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.

- "...lost their confidence" - the enemies had tried to discourage Nehemiah and the workers throughout the process; after completion, it was the enemies who were discouraged.

- "...they realized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God" - even their enemies realized that what they accomplished, in an unbelievably short amount of time, was by the hand of God.

— When something has the fingerprints of God on it, even the enemies will notice it. But the enemy is only disheartened when God does the work. If the work was a product of man's efforts, their reaction would be different.

(b) Tobiah's subversion through letters and loyal Judahites (6:17-19)

The writer now mentions another distracting ploy the enemy used, suggesting that this additional problem may have plagued Nehemiah through the entire process of rebuilding the wall.

17 Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to **Tobiah**, and Tobiah's letters came to them.

17 Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah's *letters* came to them.

17 Meanwhile, at that time the nobles of Judah continued to send many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah kept sending letters to them.

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

- "...Tobiah" - his name implies he was a Jew, who had evidently intermarried with Jews who had returned to the land and participated in the reconstruction project, though he himself did not approve of the project.

— Tobiah was the man who had opposed the rebuilding work with Sanballat:

- In Neh 2:10 he was disturbed that Nehemiah came to rebuild the walls.
- In Neh 2:19; 4:3 he mocked Nehemiah's work.
- In Neh 4:7 he was angry that the work was being done.
- In Neh 6:1-2 he was one of the men who tried to get Nehemiah to stop the work and come to the plain of Ono where he could be attacked.

18 For **many in Judah were bound by oath to him** because he was the son-in-law of **Shecaniah the son of Arah**, and his son **Jehohanan** had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

18 For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

18 For many Judeans had sworn allegiance to him, since he was son-in-law to Arah's son Shecaniah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Berechiah's son Meshullam.

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.

- "...many in Judah were bound by oath to him" - even after everything he had done (v17), the nobles of Judah had no problem being a friend to him because he had family ties to many in the tribe of Judah

— Tobiah also likely had financial dealings with many of the nobles that they wanted to protect. These were likely trading contracts facilitated by marriage/family connections.

- One way Tobiah the Ammonite was able to make some inroads into Judah was that he had marital and social ties with the nobles, which resulted in them commending him to Nehemiah (v19).

— So although he did not share God's desires for His people, he had considerable influence with many of the reconstruction leaders

- "...Shecaniah the son of Arah" - his father-in-law was Shecaniah (Cf. Ezra 2:5)

- "...Jehohanan" - his daughter-in-law was the daughter of Meshullan, who helped repair the wall (Cf. 3:4,30)

19 Moreover, **they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence, and were reporting my words to him.** Then **Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.**

19 Moreover, they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. Then Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

19 Furthermore, they kept reporting Tobiah's good deeds to me, and kept repeating what I told him. Tobiah kept sending letters to intimidate me.

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

- "...they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence" - these nobles were even speaking positively about Tobiah to Nehemiah

— These Jewish nobles could not see what was so clearly evident to Nehemiah. Maybe they didn't see his evil work first-hand, so they had a hard time believing it.

— Maybe they didn't have a shepherd's heart like Nehemiah did. Nehemiah was called by God to protect God's people and God's work; he was always watching and on guard in a way that most others were not.

- "...and were reporting my words to him" - these nobles likely saw Nehemiah as the enemy rather than Tobiah. They thought Tobiah's deeds as good, and Nehemiah spoke against him without cause (Cf. 4:4).

- "...Tobiah sent letters to frighten me" - after this mention, Nehemiah did not write any more about this situation. He didn't demand the nobles cut ties with Tobiah, nor did he retract what he said about Tobiah. He just let it go and let God deal with it.

— Nehemiah had a work to do, and that work did not include going out and attacking people like Tobiah. He could leave people like Tobiah alone as long as they weren't

attacking the work of God.

Want To Be a Leader?

Note the following character traits of a godly leader from Neh 1-6:

1. A leader must be a person of prayer (Neh 1)
2. A leader must have a vision (Neh 2:1-3)
3. A leader must be a wise planner (Neh 2:4-8)
4. A leader must inspire his followers (Neh 2:11-20)
5. A leader must organize his tasks (Neh 3)
6. A leader must combine faith and common sense (Neh 4)
7. A leader must be compassionate (Neh 5:1-13)
8. A leader must possess personal integrity (Neh 5:14-19)
9. A leader must be absolutely impartial (Neh 5)
10. A leader must display a sense of mission (Neh 6)

Nehemiah's leadership secret was that he infused meaning into action. He made them see that the stones that they built into walls were more than stones, they were symbols of reborn nationhood, security, purpose, fulfilling God's will, and community. He turned a demoralized and disappointed multitude into a workforce that accomplished the impossible, with God's help.