

PLEASE NOTE - The references below are taken from the 86-23 Index. Many verses have additional references that have not been included due to time & space. We are encouraged to do additional personal research.

(Nehemiah 1:1) 1 The words of Ne·he·mi'ah the son of Hac·a·li'ah: Now in the month of Chis'lev, in the 20th year, I was in Shu'shan the citadel.

*** w06 2/1 p. 8 par. 5 Highlights From the Book of Nehemiah ***

1:1; 2:1—Is “the twentieth year” mentioned in these two verses counted from the same reference point? Yes, the 20th year is that of the reign of Artaxerxes the king. However, the method of counting used in these verses is different. Historical evidence points to 475 B.C.E. as the year of Artaxerxes’ ascension to the throne. Since the Babylonian scribes customarily counted the years of the Persian kings’ reign from Nisan (March/April) to Nisan, Artaxerxes’ first regnal year began in Nisan of 474 B.C.E. Hence, the 20th year of rulership mentioned at Nehemiah 2:1 began in Nisan of 455 B.C.E. The month of Chislev (November/December) mentioned at Nehemiah 1:1 logically was the Chislev of the preceding year—456 B.C.E. Nehemiah refers to that month as also falling in the 20th year of Artaxerxes’ reign. Perhaps in this case, he was counting the years from the accession date of the monarch. It could also be that Nehemiah was counting time by what the Jews today call a civil year, which begins in the month of Tishri, corresponding to September/October. In any case, the year in which the word went out to restore Jerusalem was 455 B.C.E.

*** w86 2/15 p. 25 True Worship Triumphs ***

◆ 1:1—What year was this?

This was the 20th year of King Artaxerxes (Longimanus). (2:1) Since Chislev (November-December) is placed before Nisan (March-April) in this narrative, apparently Persian kings counted each year of their reign from fall to fall, or from the time they actually ascended the throne. Reliable historical evidence and fulfilled Bible proph-

ecies point to 455 B.C.E. as the year in which Nisan of the 20th year of Artaxerxes falls. Thus, Nehemiah’s account begins in the fall of 456 B.C.E., and the decree to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem was issued in the spring of 455 B.C.E.

(Nehemiah 1:11) 11 O Jehovah, please, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who take delight in fearing your name, and please, grant success to your servant today, and may this man show me compassion.” Now I was cupbearer to the king.

*** w10 7/1 p. 9 Did You Know? ***

What was involved in being cupbearer to the king?

- Nehemiah was cupbearer to Persian King Artaxerxes. (Nehemiah 1:11) In the royal courts of the ancient Middle East, the king’s cupbearer was no menial servant. On the contrary, he was a high-ranking official. Classical literature and a wealth of ancient pictorial representations of cupbearers allow us to draw a number of conclusions regarding Nehemiah’s role at the Persian court. The cupbearer would taste the king’s wine to protect him from poisoning. The cupbearer thus had the king’s unreserved confidence. “The great need for trustworthy court attendants is underscored by the intrigues which were endemic to the Achaemenid [Persian] court,” says scholar Edwin M. Yamauchi. The cupbearer was likely also a favorite official who had considerable influence with the king. His close proximity to the monarch on a daily basis may have enabled him to decide who had access to the king. Such a position may have had a bearing on the success of Nehemiah’s request to be allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls. Nehemiah must have been highly valued by the king. The Anchor Bible Dictionary observes: “The king’s only reply was ‘How soon will you come back?’”—Nehemiah 2:1-6.

*** w87 7/15 p. 12 par. 10 How Meaningful Are Your Prayers? ***

10 We will be able to guard against the aforementioned pitfalls to the extent that we appreciate the importance of our daily prayers and have a good relationship with our heavenly Father. For one thing, such appreciation will help us to guard against hurrying through our prayers as if we needed to get to more important things. Nothing can be more important than talking to the Universal Sovereign, Jehovah God. True, there may be occasions when time is limited. For example, when King Artaxerxes asked his cupbearer Nehemiah, "What is this that you are seeking to secure?" Nehemiah 'at once prayed to the God of the heavens.' (Nehemiah 2:4) Since the king was expecting an immediate reply, Nehemiah could not linger long in that prayer. But we may be sure that it was meaningful and came from his heart because Jehovah immediately answered it.

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*** it-2 p. 667 Prayer ***

PRAYER

Worshipful address to the true God, or to false gods. Mere speech to God is not necessarily prayer, as is seen in the judgment in Eden and in the case of Cain. (Ge 3:8-13; 4:9-14) Prayer involves devotion, trust, respect, and a sense of dependence on the one to whom the prayer is directed. The various Hebrew and Greek words relating to prayer convey such ideas as to ask, make request, petition, entreat, supplicate, plead, beseech, beg, implore favor, seek, inquire of, as well as to praise, thank, and bless.

Petitions and supplications, of course, can be made to men, and the original-language words are sometimes so used (Ge 44:18; 50:17; Ac 25:11), but "prayer," used in a religious sense, does not apply to such cases. One might "beseech" or "implore" another person to do something, but in so doing he would not view this individual as his God. He would not, for example, si-

lently petition such one, nor do so when the individual was not visibly present, as one does in prayer to God.

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