

Called and Committed

Nehemiah 2:1-4 HCSB During the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was set before him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had never been sad in his presence, (2) so the king said to me, "Why are you sad, when you aren't sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." I was overwhelmed with fear (3) and replied to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should I not be sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" (4) Then the king asked me, "What is your request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven

Great works often have insignificant beginnings. They are sometimes slow in developing their final nature. Demosthenes once wrote, "*Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.*" Who would have expected such developments from a brief conversation between a few Jews in Iran? Who would have thought that a single moment's grief displayed publicly would lead to such great activity? So never lose an opportunity of urging a practical beginning, however small, for it is wonderful how often in such matters the mustard-seed germinates and roots itself.

Great works require vigorous leadership. Nehemiah definitely fit the bill. The fact that, though a foreigner, he held such a high and trusted position gives us some sense of what type of man he was. His intense passion and enthusiasm for the work of the Lord was translated into direct action – something unfortunately rare among many of God's children.

Great works are based on knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. They should not be undertaken without a deliberate estimate of the possible difficulties. Zeal without knowledge leads to sin and confusion.¹ Ill-considered courage doesn't last long on the battlefield.

1. *Never forget that your weapon was made by the lowest bidder.*
2. *If at first you don't succeed, call in an air strike.*
3. *The easy way is always mined.*
4. *A sucking chest wound is Nature's way of telling you to slow down.*
5. *If it's stupid but it works, it isn't stupid.*
6. *Try to look unimportant; the enemy may be low on ammo and not want to waste a bullet on you.*
7. *Teamwork is essential; it gives the enemy other people to shoot at.*
8. *Incoming fire has the right of way.*
9. *Tracers work both ways.*
10. *Never share a foxhole with anyone braver than yourself.*

I said, "**Great works are based on knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.**" Let's look at three examples of what I mean:

- **Nehemiah 2:7 HCSB** I also said to the king: "If it pleases the king, let me have letters *written* to the governors of the region west of the Euphrates River, so that they will grant me *safe* passage until I reach Judah.
- **Nehemiah 2:9 HCSB** I went to the governors of the region west of the Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent officers of the infantry and cavalry with me.

Foresight. Nehemiah forestalled opposition by asking for an armed escort. Similarly, as we approach a great spiritual battle, we must expect to be attacked and put on the whole armor of God.²

¹ Proverbs 19:2; Romans 10:2

² Ephesians 6:11

- **Nehemiah 2:8 HCSB** And *let me have* a letter *written* to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me timber to rebuild the gates of the temple's fortress, the city wall, and the home where I will live." The king granted my *requests*, for I was graciously strengthened by my God.

Deliberateness. *Nehemiah carefully considered what had to be done and ensured he had the appropriate resources.*

- **Nehemiah 2:11-12 HCSB** After I arrived in Jerusalem and had been there three days, (12) I got up at night and *took* a few men with me. I didn't tell anyone what my God had laid on my heart to do for Jerusalem. The only animal I took was the one I was riding.

Patience. *Nehemiah was patient and deliberate.* When taking action, we must build in time to carefully consider the possibilities, to talk through various strategies, to research and have our facts straight. We must be men and women of action but it must be deliberate action.

Great works are bound to provoke opposition.

- **Nehemiah 2:10 HCSB** When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard that someone had come to seek the well-being of the Israelites, they were greatly displeased.
- **Nehemiah 2:19 HCSB** When Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *about this*, they mocked and despised us, and said, "What is this you're doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

Externally. Wicked people are always ready to attribute false motives to a righteous work. Why? **First**, because they are projecting out of their own dark hearts. They are selfish and self-seeking so they assume other people are too.

Second, they do this because it gives them an excuse to not step up and do the right thing. If they assume that you're doing it for the wrong reasons, then they can maintain their wicked ways with some degree of self-justification.

Third, they think that it helps maintain their status. They've done nothing to help or contribute and then they are confronted with someone who is on fire; someone who is actually DOING something about the spiritual and ethical needs of society. Deep in their hearts they know this makes them look bad so they try to tear the good worker down.

Internally. The same kind of thought patterns can happen within the group. Not everyone is equally willing to sacrifice. Not everyone possesses the same work ethic. Not everyone is as excited about the Lord and His kingdom. They know they would look bad if they say they truth, i.e. "I really don't want to give toward this because I prefer spending my money on booze and entertainment." Or "I really don't feel like swinging a hammer or sanding sheetrock. I'd much rather sit in my lazy boy." So, instead of speaking the truth, they either find some fault with the work or with the workers.

Great works must be based on mutual cooperation.

- **Nehemiah 2:17-18 HCSB** So I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned down. Come, let's rebuild Jerusalem's wall, so that we will no longer be a disgrace." (18) I told them how the gracious hand of my God had been on me, and what the king had said to me. They said, "Let's start rebuilding," and they were encouraged to *do* this good work.

There's a reason Hashem said "it's not good for man to be alone."³ There's a REASON the Messiah sent His disciples out in pairs!⁴

³ Genesis 2:18

Working together helps combat discouragement. It's tough working at a huge task day after day by yourself. When a lot of friends and family are helping, you not only have the benefit of great fellowship and conversation, but you also get to see progress much more quickly. The work is turned from drudgery into an act that will help build camaraderie into the family.

- **Ecclesiastes 4:9 HCSB** Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts.

Further, mutual cooperation is necessary in order to overcome great obstacles. It doesn't matter whether the obstacle before us is financial, physical, emotional, spiritual, ethical, or if it is a great injustice that must be thwarted. Good people need to be willing to combine their efforts so that we can bring justice and advancement into a dark and hostile world.

- **Ecclesiastes 4:10 HCSB** For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up.
- **Ecclesiastes 4:12 HCSB** And if somebody overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

Great works cannot succeed without Hashem's blessing.

- **Nehemiah 2:20 HCSB** I gave them this reply, "The God of heaven is the One who will grant us success. We, His servants, will start building, but you have no share, right, or historic claim in Jerusalem."

Even if an entire nation stands by your side; even if the whole world is on your team, if God is against you – YOU WILL FAIL.

- **Isaiah 31:1 HCSB** Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and who depend on horses! They trust in the number of chariots and in the great strength of charioteers. They do not look to the Holy One of Israel and they do not seek the LORD's help.

Human force can always be overcome with human force but the person or the congregation that possesses the blessing of the Holy One will succeed against all odds.

- **Isaiah 31:4-5 HCSB** For this is what the LORD said to me: As a lion or young lion growls over its prey when a band of shepherds is called out against it, and is not terrified by their shouting or subdued by their noise, so the LORD of Hosts will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill. (5) Like hovering birds, so the LORD of Hosts will protect Jerusalem--by protecting *it*, He will rescue *it*, by sparing *it*, He will deliver *it*.

This is why we Adonaic Christians seek to "return to the One the Israelites have greatly rebelled against (Isaiah 31:6)

The people of Israel, as a nation, may have rejected their King but we Goyim believers embrace Him whole heartedly. We must be certain that our excitement about building is not about having an appearance of worldly success but is instead rooted in the fact that it will enhance the Lowlanders' view of our King. Our primary purpose must be His glory and His kingdom and His honor. When we do, he will come down and protect us, rescue us, spare us, and deliver us.

You may say, "I thought this derash was about being called and committed?" I'm just laying down some ground work.

So, what does being called and committed look like? Here are sixteen traits that are common to those who are called and committed.

1. Empathy - an emotional response to a perceived need
2. Vision – an ability to see how things should be

⁴ Luke 10:1

3. Helpfulness - desire to make a difference
4. Sacrifice - a willingness to sacrifice in order to achieve
5. Modesty – contentment with starting small and insignificant
6. Commitment - commitment to the requisite training
7. Industry - a tremendous work ethic
8. Curiosity - a passion for learning
9. Self-control - constant self-improvement
10. Foresight - a disciplined examination of and preparation for the future
11. Patience – a willingness to spend years in developing the foundations required
12. Courage - in the face of external opposition
13. Boldness - in rebuking internal opposition
14. Cooperation - humble willingness to be a team player
15. Humility - sublimation of the personal to the corporate
16. Persuasiveness - ability to draw others into ministry

Closing

- [Psalms 127:1 HCSB](#) ...Unless the LORD builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain; unless the LORD watches over a city, the watchman stays alert in vain.

We don't get to choose our callings. We don't get to determine our fates. The Lord God is the Potter and we are the clay. He is the Master and we are the slaves. He is the King and we are His servants. He is the Father and we are the children.