

# Nehemiah 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

## Analysis

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**Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.**

This verse within Nehemiah 2 addresses themes of providence, courage, planning, vision. The narrative shows God's providence in moving the king's heart while honoring Nehemiah's faithful preparation through months of prayer. The Hebrew palal (פָּלָל) for prayer indicates intercession and petition, emphasizing dependence on God. This passage demonstrates biblical principles applicable across both testaments—God's sovereignty combined with human responsibility, faith expressed through obedient action, and the necessity of both individual and corporate commitment to covenant faithfulness. Nehemiah models leadership that combines vision, prayer, courage, integrity, and perseverance amid sustained opposition.

## Historical Context

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Nehemiah's account occurs during Persian imperial dominance (539-331 BC), specifically 445-433 BC under Artaxerxes I. The post-exilic community had returned to Judah but remained politically subject to Persia, living under imperial administration while attempting to rebuild covenant identity. Archaeological evidence confirms Persian-period occupation of Jerusalem and the wall's route. The Persian period was crucial transitional time when Jewish identity shifted from monarchical nationalism to Torah-centered covenantal community. Without

political independence, the people's cohesion depended on shared scripture, temple worship, and covenant obedience. This established patterns persisting through the Second Temple period into New Testament times. Understanding this context illuminates Jesus's ministry among a people shaped by these reforms and challenges.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. What does this passage teach about prayer's role in discerning and accomplishing God's will?
2. How can you develop more sustained, biblically-grounded prayer practices in your daily routine?
3. How can the principles demonstrated in this passage inform your response to current challenges in your life or church?

## Interlinear Text

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אָמַר	הָיָה	לְךָ	מִתְּכָלָה	עַל	מִהָּ	זֶה	אָמַר
<b>said</b>	H0	<b>Then the king</b>	H5921	H4100	H2088	H859	
H559		H4428					
שְׁמַיִם:	אֱלֹהִים	אֶל	תְּאַתְּפֵל	לְ	מִבְּקָשׁ	שְׁמַיִם:	אֱלֹהִים
<b>unto me For what dost thou make request</b>	<b>So I prayed</b>	H413	H6419	H430	<b>to the God</b>	<b>of heaven</b>	H8064
H1245							

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 3:6** (Parallel theme): In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

**Nehemiah 1:4** (Prayer): And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

**Nehemiah 1:11** (Kingdom): O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

**Philippians 4:6** (Prayer): Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

**Mark 10:51** (Parallel theme): And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

**1 Kings 3:5** (References God): In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

**Esther 7:2** (Kingdom): And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

**Esther 5:6** (Kingdom): And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

**Esther 5:3** (Kingdom): Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.