



The wall of
Nehemiah

Persia, a powerful nation, ruled the world. And King Artaxerxes ruled Persia. That made him the world's mightiest ruler. One of the king's important helpers was a Jewish man named Nehemiah. His job was to taste the king's food to protect the king from possible poisoning.



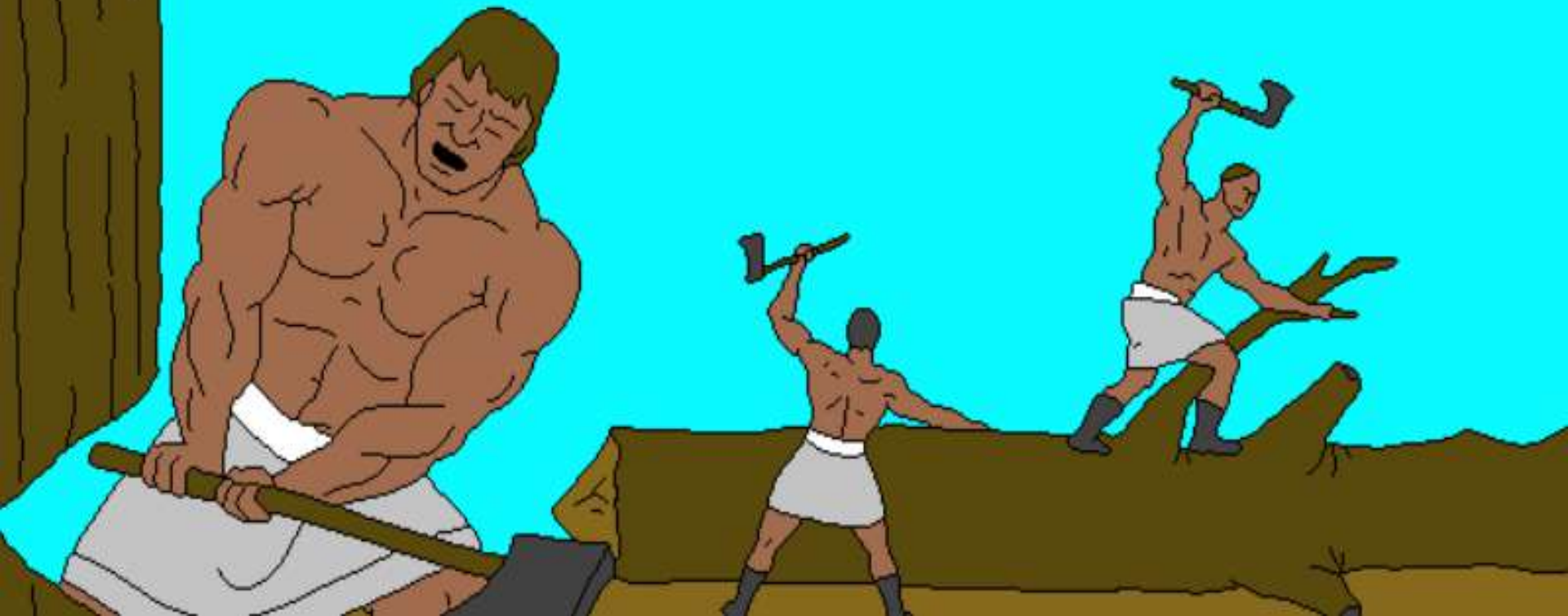
One day, Nehemiah came before the king with a very sad face. The king wanted to know what was wrong. "O king, may you live forever," Nehemiah said. "I'm sad because the city where my fathers are buried is in ruins and the gates have been burned." Nehemiah was talking about Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by war many years before.



King Artaxerxes asked, "What is it you would like?"
"Let me go to Jerusalem so I can rebuild it,"
Nehemiah pleaded. King Artaxerxes kindly agreed.
He also gave Nehemiah official letters to protect
him as he traveled.



The king helped even more. He gave Nehemiah a letter for Asaph, the keeper of the king's forests. Asaph was ordered to provide as much timber as Nehemiah asked for to build the city walls.



When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he gathered the city officials and said, "We're in trouble here. The city is in ruins and the gates are burned. Let's start rebuilding." He told them that King Artaxerxes approved and, most important of all, God was on their side.



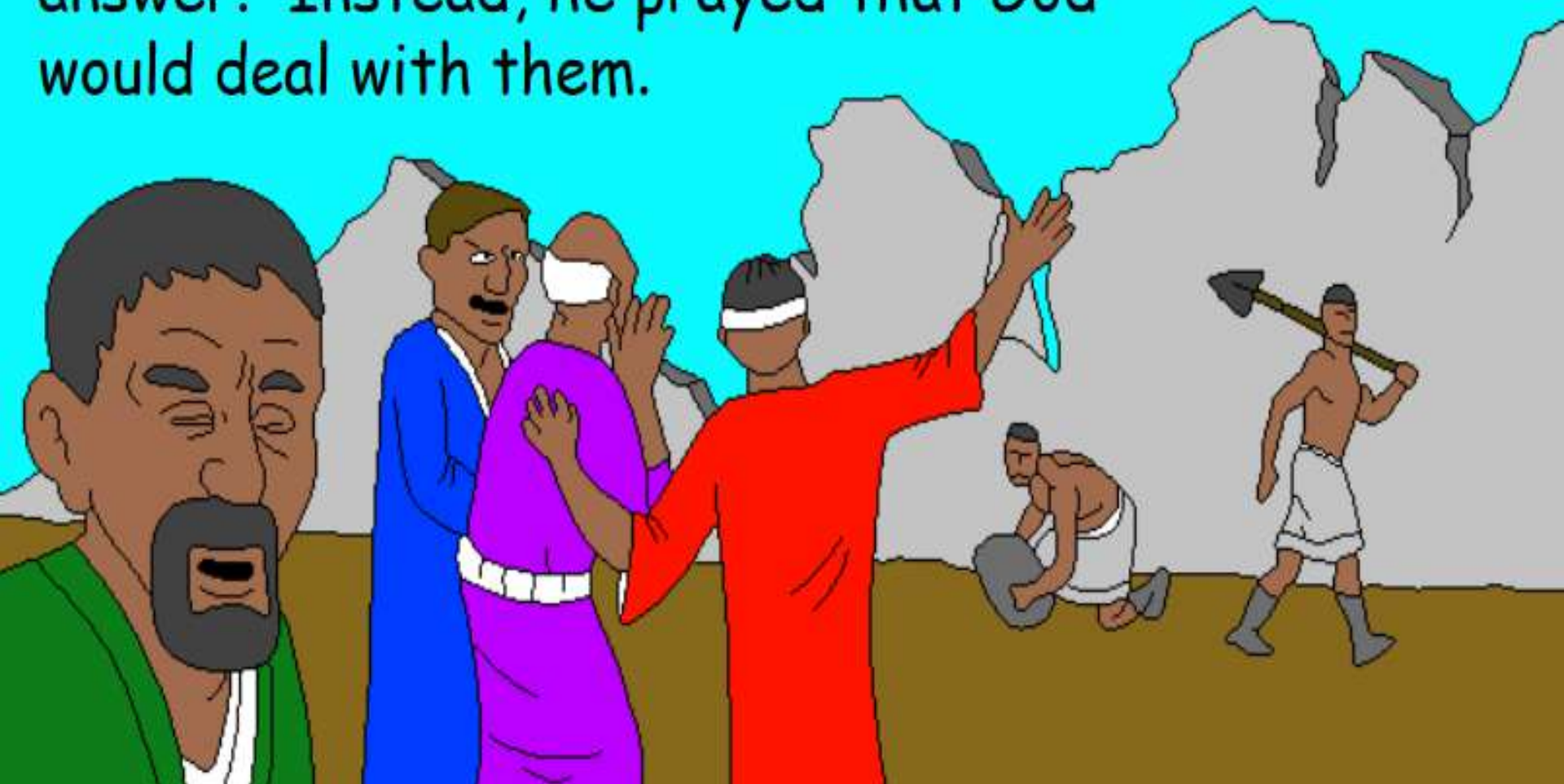
Nehemiah's faith and enthusiasm must have inspired the people. They agreed, saying, "Let's rebuild." Nehemiah told each family which piece of the wall they should fix.



But, not everybody agreed to rebuild the wall. A man named Sanballat, and his two friends Tobiah and Geshem, were not Jewish and they didn't want the wall rebuilt or the gates fixed.



As the work went on, Sanballat became very angry. He and his friends mocked the Jews. Tobiah said, "When they're finished building that puny wall, one little fox will make it crumble." Nehemiah didn't answer. Instead, he prayed that God would deal with them.



When their mocking insults didn't have any effect, they plotted together to fight against Jerusalem and cause as much trouble as they could. Again, Nehemiah prayed for God's help. He also placed a guard day and night so they wouldn't be taken by surprise.



The Jews worked so hard, they were getting weary. Some became afraid that the enemy would come and kill them while they were working. Still, Nehemiah wouldn't stop the project. He put guards around the workers and reminded them that God was on their side and God is more powerful than any enemy!





Nehemiah tried to be a good example. King Artaxerxes had made him governor of Jerusalem with the right to demand food and money from the people, but he didn't do it.

He just worked hard alongside the people as they rebuilt the wall. He used his own money to buy food.



Finally, the people finished the wall, and only the doors had to be put into the main gates. When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem heard that there wasn't a gap in the walls anymore, they planned to harm Nehemiah.



They sent messages for Nehemiah to meet them at a place called Ono. But Nehemiah knew they were trying to trick him out of the city so they could harm him. He wrote back telling them that he would not leave the work to go visit with them.



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The wall
was finally
finished,



and Nehemiah
set guards
to protect it.

He also made a rule that the gates should not be

opened until well after

the sun came up. Through the night, they were to be shut and barred



Now that the city was safe, many Jewish exiles from different parts of the world returned to Jerusalem. Nehemiah must have been very happy that he had finished the job God gave him to do, in spite of all the obstacles. He stayed on in Jerusalem and helped the people to always obey God.

