



Nehemiah: Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem

Nehemiah 1-2



Nehemiah worked as a trusted cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, who ruled over the mighty empire of the Medes and Persians.



Nehemiah was a Jew living in Susa. Many years before, the Jews had been taken as captives by the Babylonians. When the Medes and Persians then defeated the Babylonians, many Jews, like Nehemiah, resettled in this new empire. Some Jews had returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple.



One day Nehemiah was visited by Hanani, one of his brothers, who lived in Jerusalem. Nehemiah asked them about the city and the Jews living there.



They explained that the walls that had been knocked down were still rubble. The city gates that had been set on fire had not been replaced.



The Jews in the city had no protection and were living in great trouble and disgrace. When Nehemiah heard these things he sat down and wept.



For several days he mourned, fasted and prayed. He confessed his sin and the sin of his people. He knew that God had promised that if His people turned back to Him and obeyed Him then God would return them to their land. Nehemiah asked God for an opportunity to speak to the King about the situation.



Some time later, Nehemiah was serving wine to the King when the king asked, 'Why do you look so sad?' 'May the king live forever!' replied Nehemiah. 'Why should my face not look sad when Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?' 'What is it you want?' asked the king.



The King gave Nehemiah all he asked for including royal letters of safe conduct and an armed escort. He was also given permission to take timber from the royal park to build new city gates.



Nehemiah set off on the long journey to Jerusalem.



When he finally arrived he rested for three days and didn't tell anyone about his plans to rebuild the city walls.



Then, accompanied by a few others, he set out one night to secretly inspect the walls.

Jerusalem City Walls



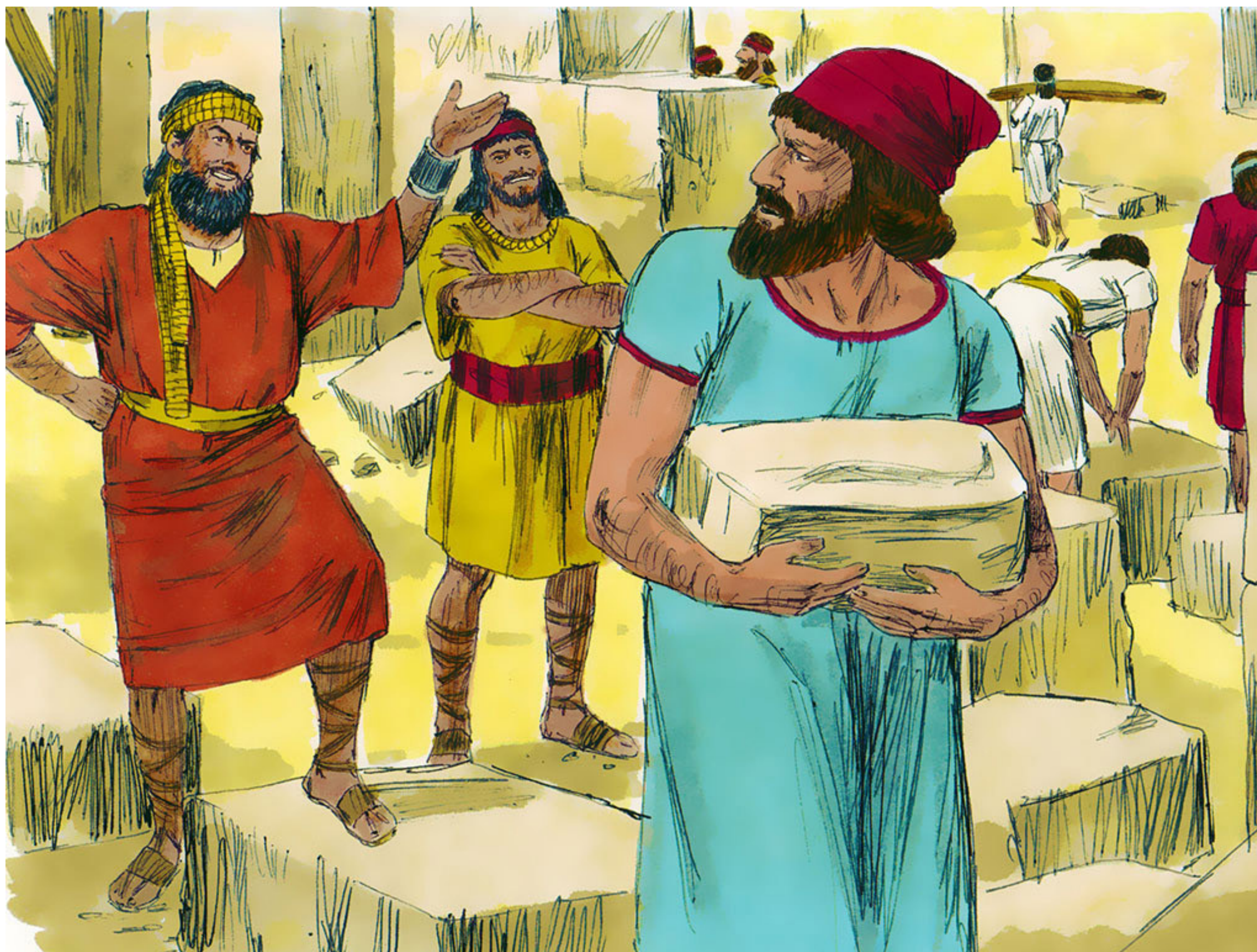
He started from the Valley Gate and headed towards the Dung Gate. The walls were in ruins and the gates burned. Soon his way was blocked with rubble and he had to detour around it to inspect the rest of the ruined walls.



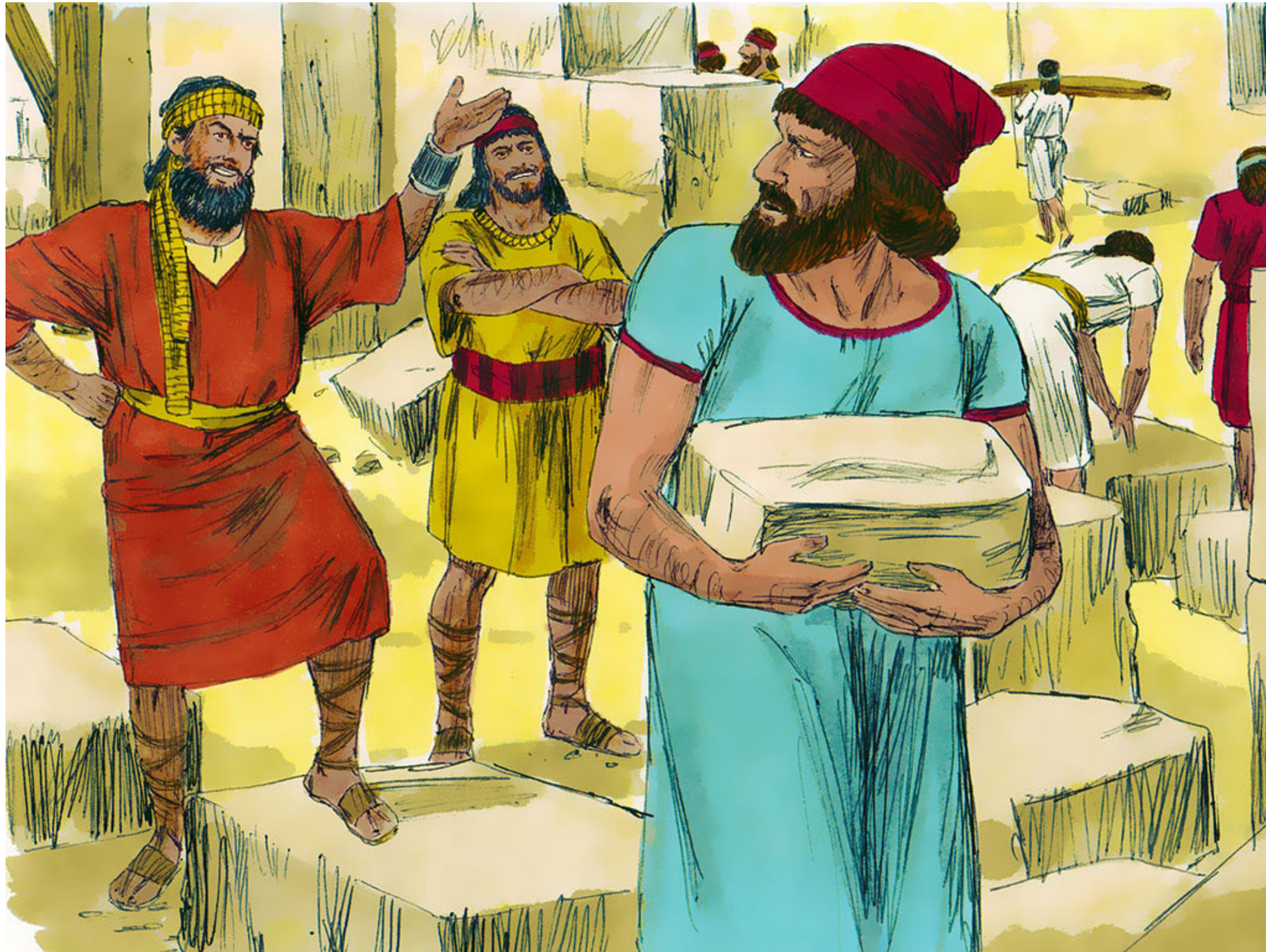
Then he called a meeting of the leaders and those who could do the work. 'You see the trouble we are in and the ruins. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so we will no longer be in disgrace.' Nehemiah explained how God was with him and that he had the backing of the King too.



They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' The work began at once.



But there were enemies of the Jews who did not want the wall rebuilt. Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab mocked and ridiculed the workers. 'What is this you are doing?' they asked.

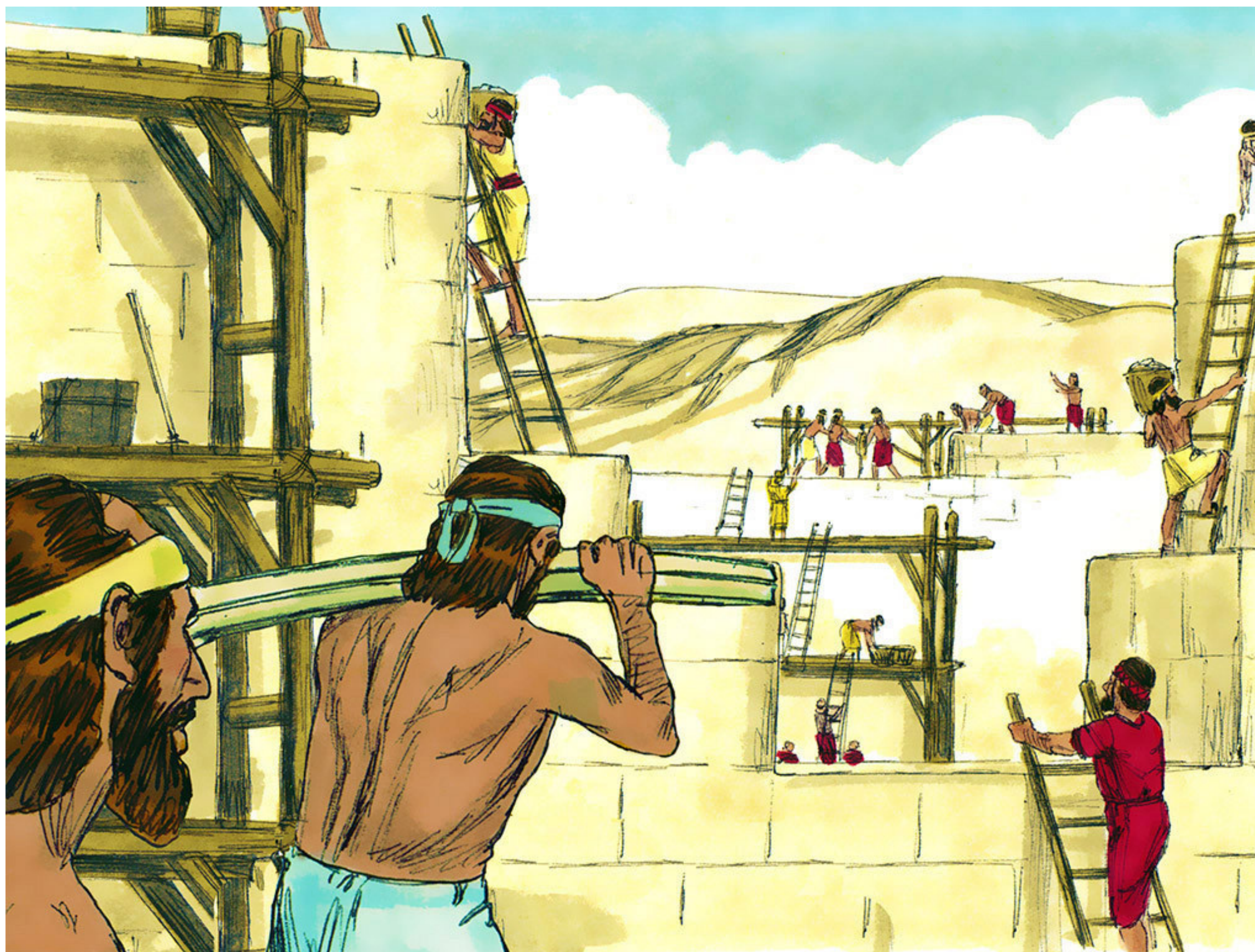


‘Are you rebelling against the king?’ Nehemiah replied, ‘God will give us success. We, his servants, will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim to it.’



Nehemiah: Overcoming opposition to rebuilding

Nehemiah 3-6



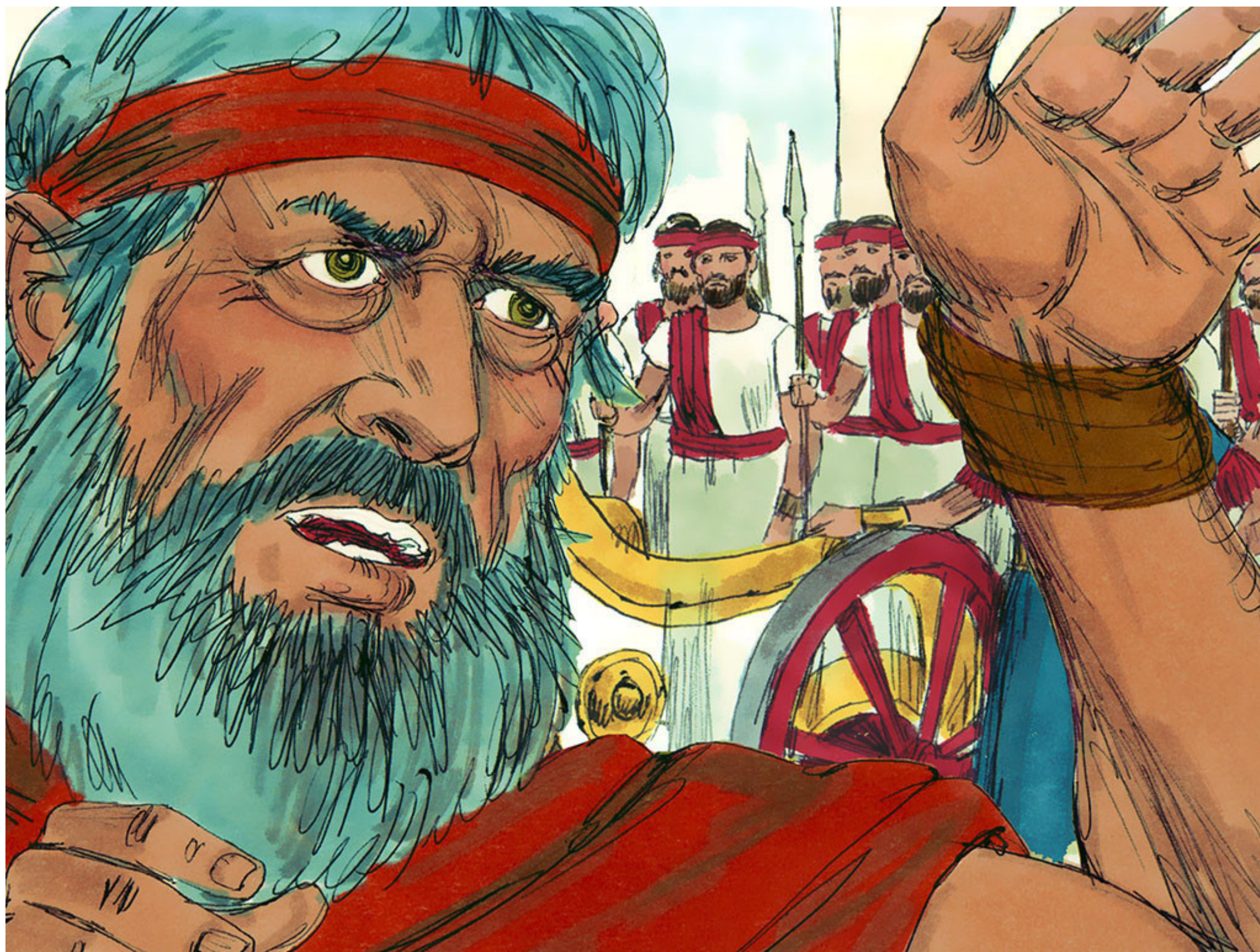
Despite being mocked by their enemies, the builders set to work rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Each family or group repaired a section of the wall.



Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate.



Levites and priests joined in the work. People from the surrounding towns and villages joined in to help.



When Sanballat got news the rebuilding was making progress he was furious. In front of the army of Samaria he mocked them, ‘What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?’



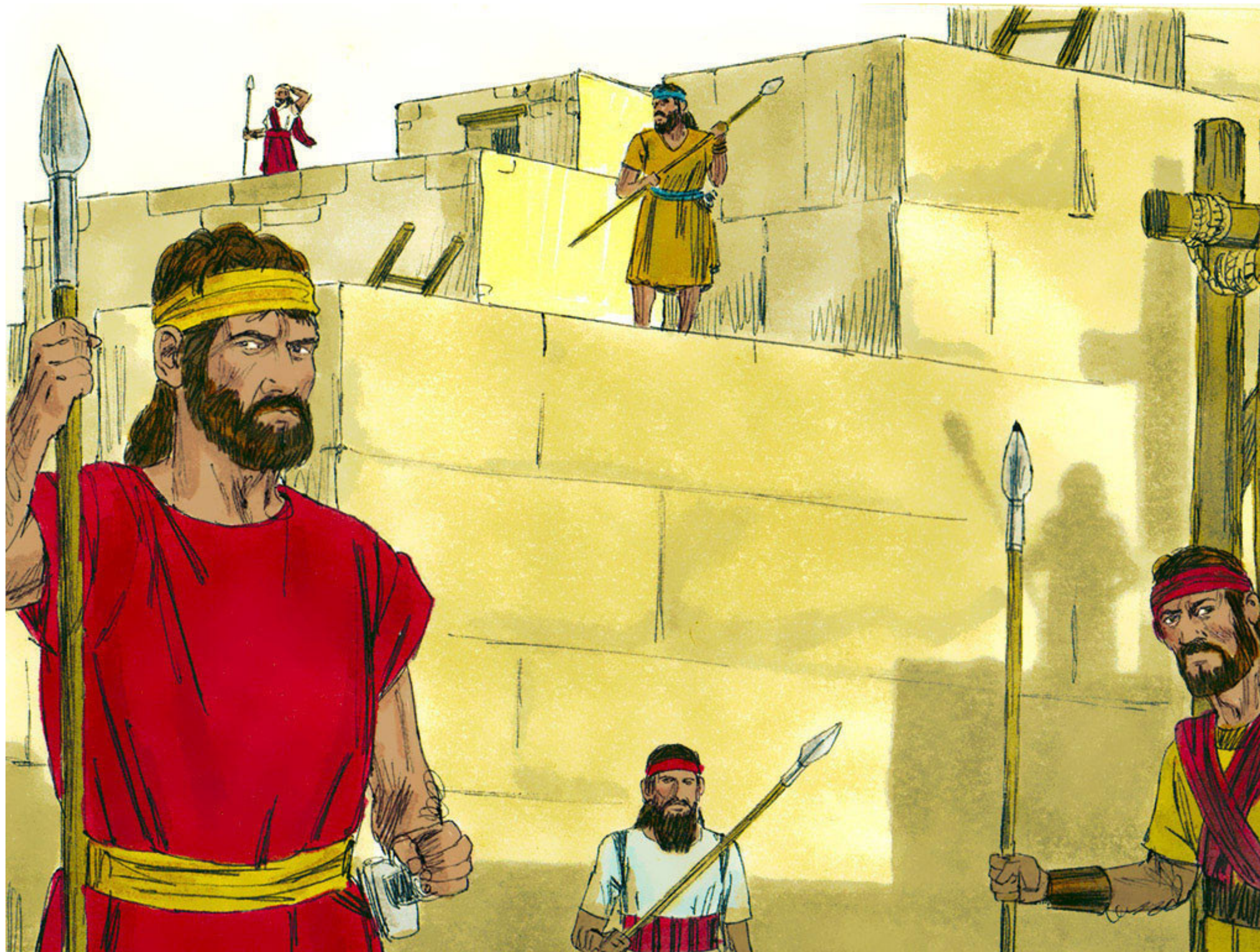
Tobiah the Ammonite, standing next to him jeered, 'What they are building— even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!'



The builders prayed and continued working until the walls were half their height.



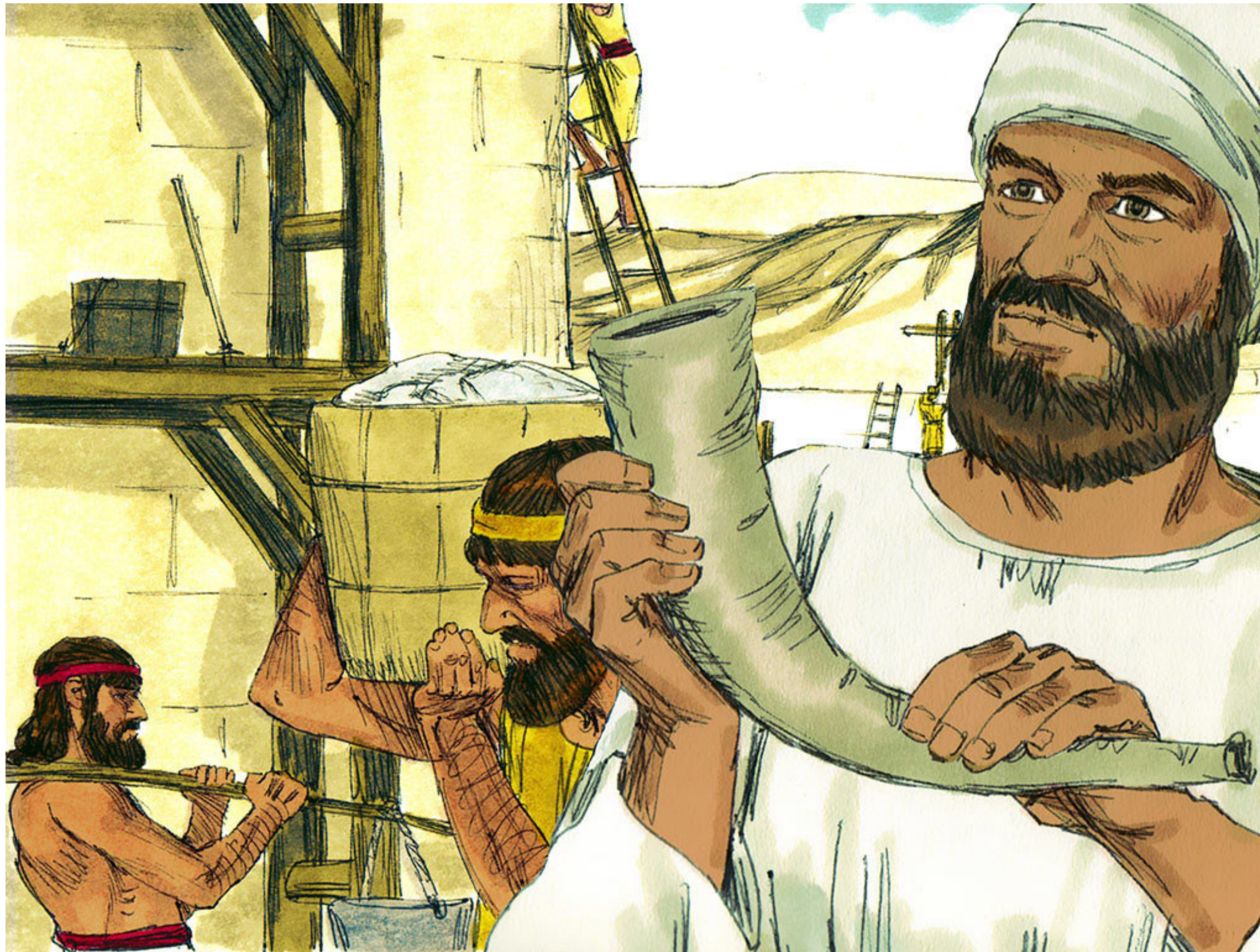
When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the gaps in the walls were being closed, they angrily plotted to attack Jerusalem and cause trouble.



The Jews prayed to God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.



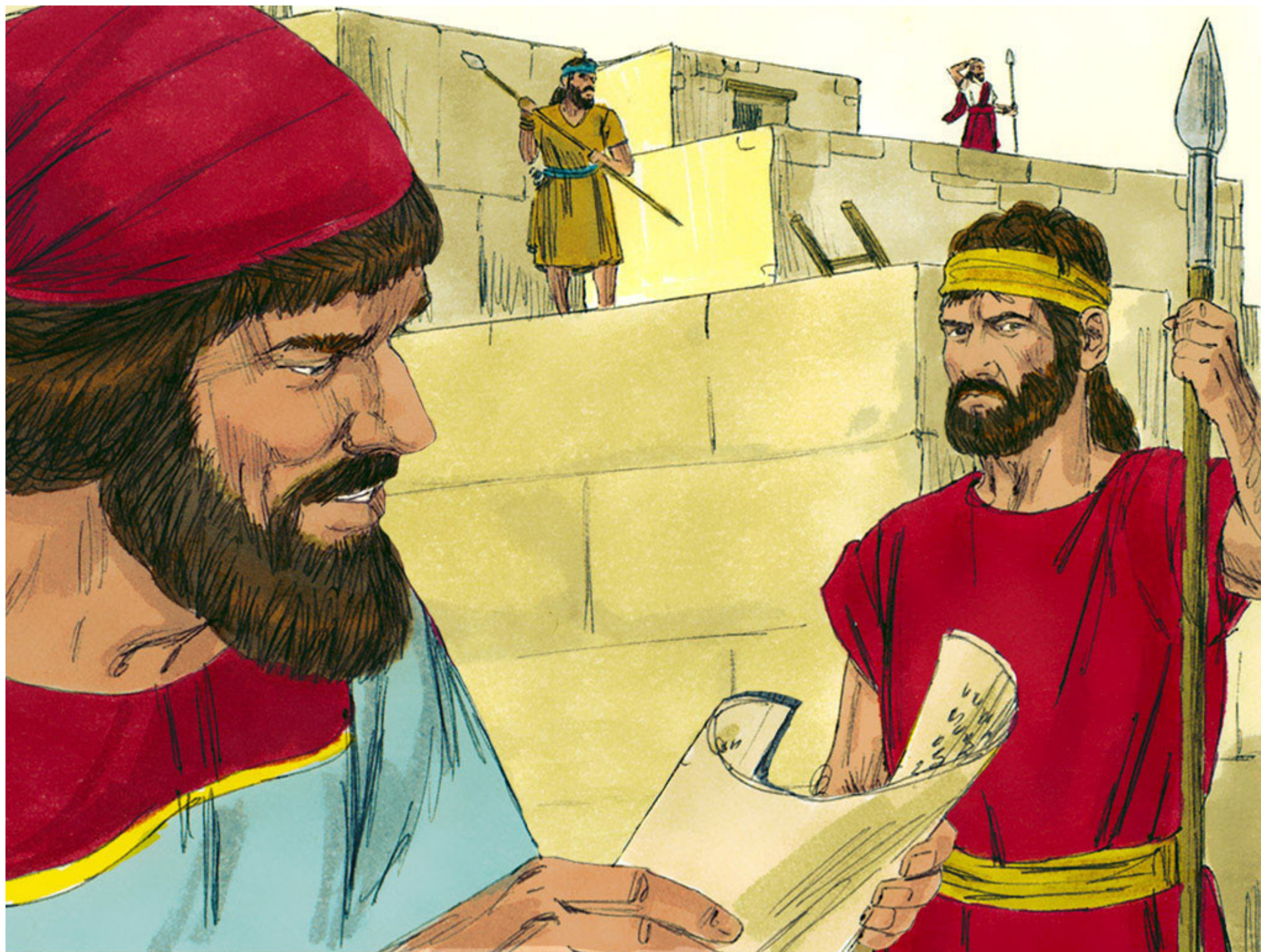
Nehemiah faced further problems. The builders started complaining they were exhausted and the task was too much for them. Others warned Nehemiah ten times that their enemies were planning to end the project.



Nehemiah stationed armed men with swords, spears and bows in the gaps in the walls. A trumpeter stood by Nehemiah ready to sound the alarm. 'Don't be afraid of them,' Nehemiah urged, 'Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and will fight for you all.'



From that point on half the men did the work while the other half stood guard with swords, spears, bows and armour. Those who were building also carried weapons.



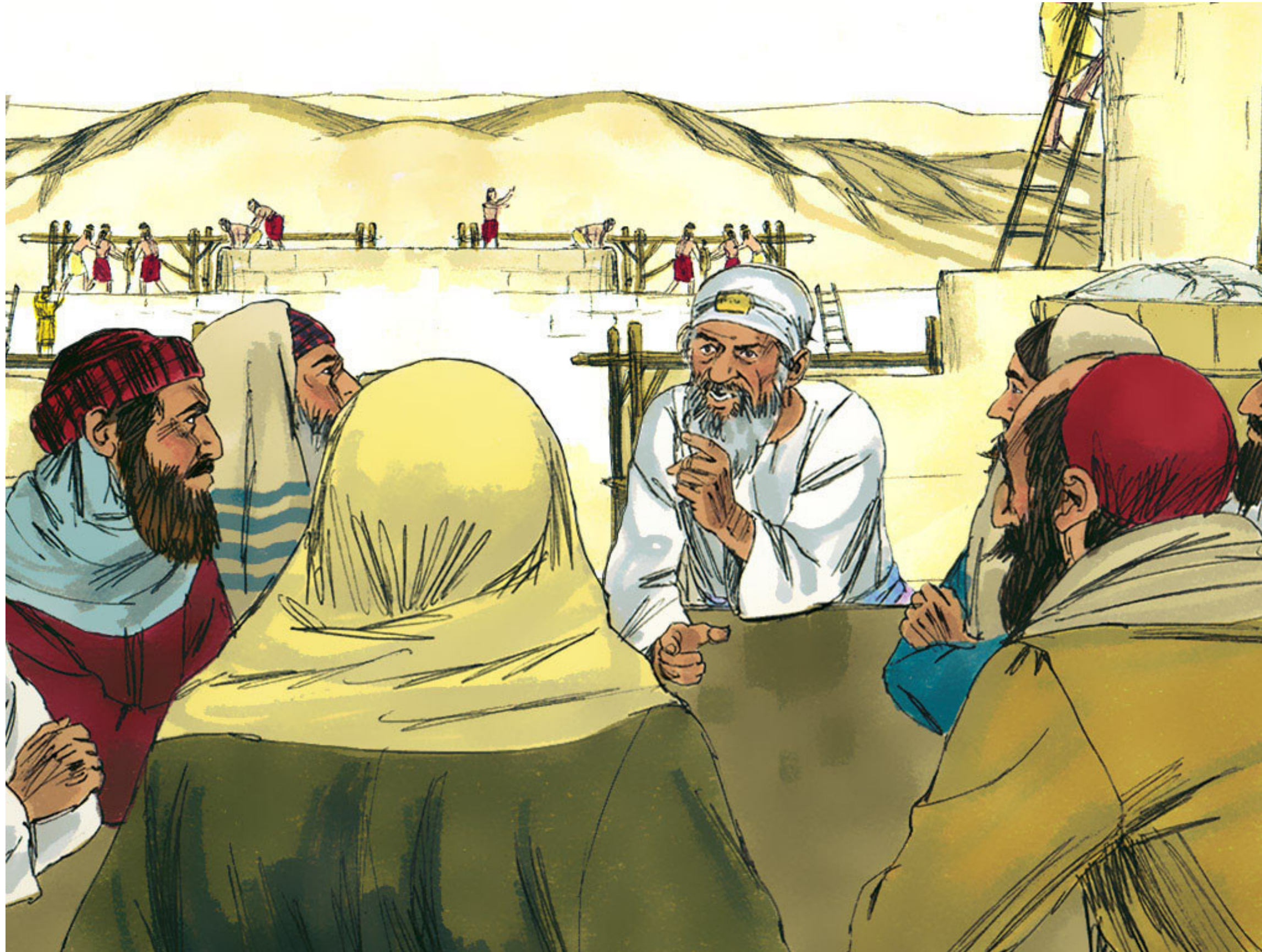
Work continued from dawn until sunset as Nehemiah reminded them, 'Our God will fight for us!'



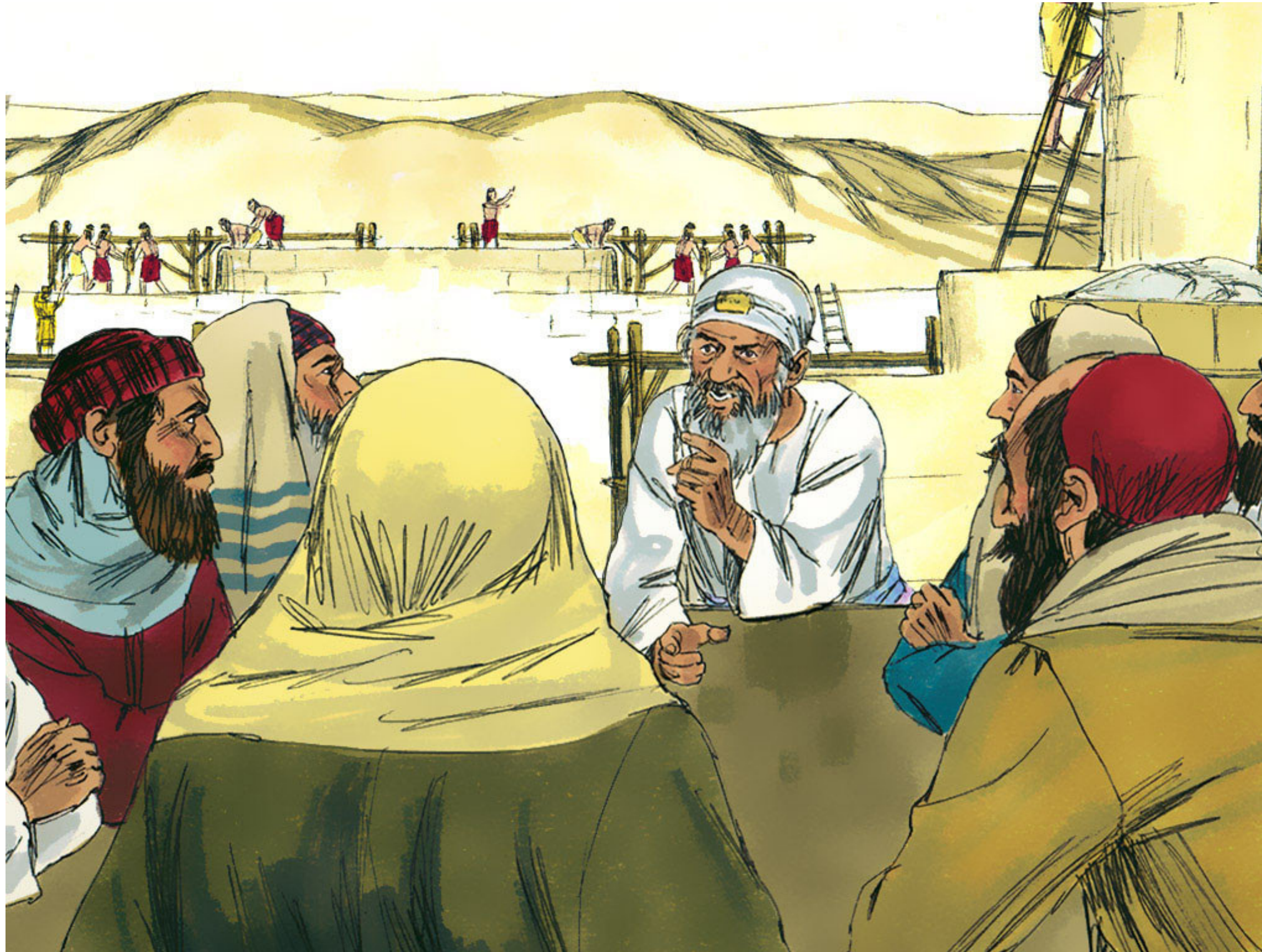
Suddenly there was another problem. Some of the Jews who were poor, had borrowed from those who were rich to pay their taxes. The rich Jews then demanded repayment plus interest. Those who couldn't pay had their lands taken away and their children made into slaves. There was uproar and many could not afford to buy grain.



Nehemiah was angry and called a meeting. He shamed the rich nobles and officials by saying, 'You are charging your own people interest. Now you are selling your own people.' At first the rich moneylenders kept quiet but then relented. 'We will give it back,' they said. 'And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.'



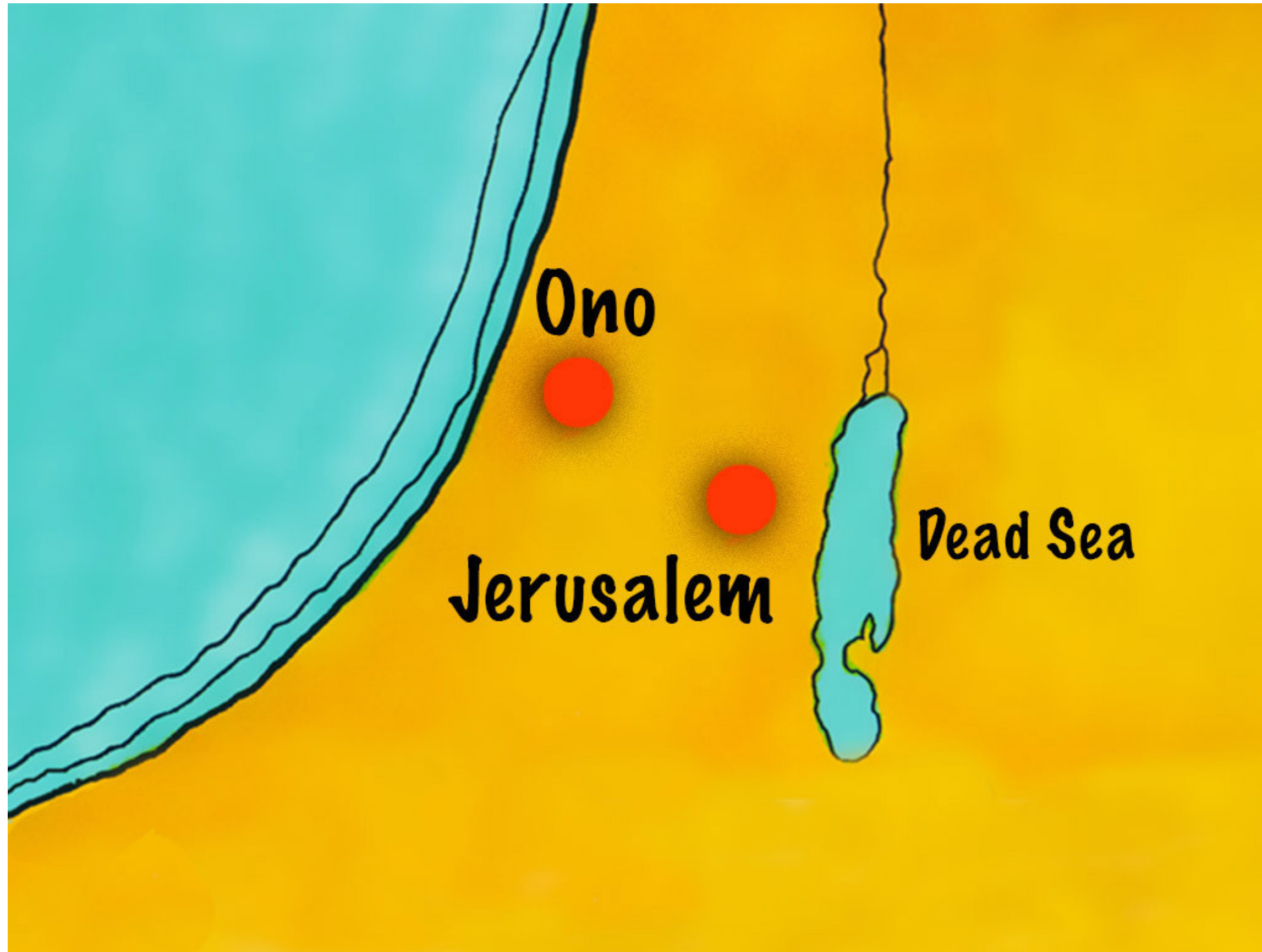
Nehemiah summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. Everyone at the meeting said, 'Amen,' and praised the Lord.



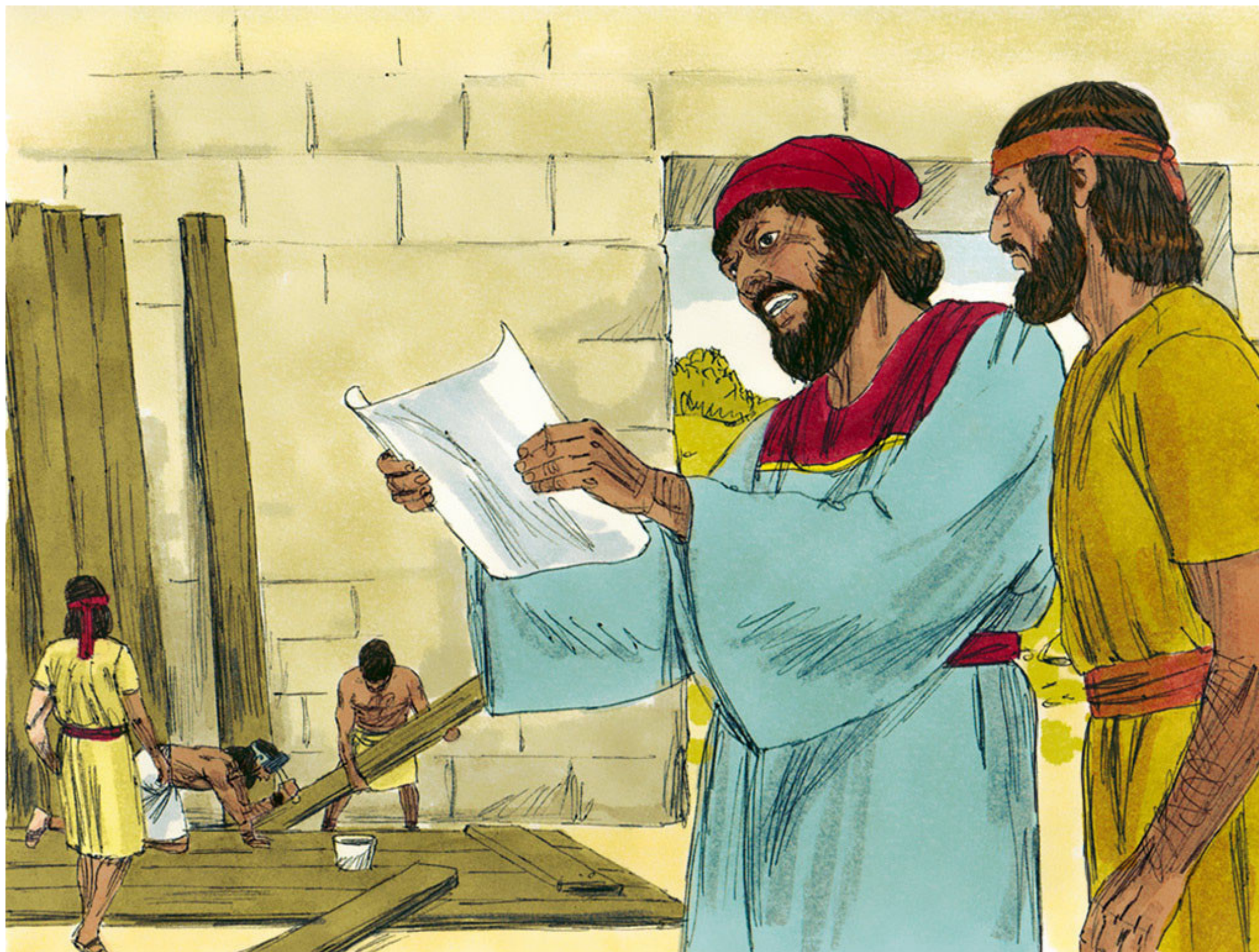
Nehemiah summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised. Everyone at the meeting said, 'Amen,' and praised the Lord.



Work continued until all the gaps in the wall had been filled. Only the gates now needed to be built and fitted. Sanballat and Geshem sent Nehemiah a message: 'Meet us in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.'



They were plotting to get Nehemiah away from Jerusalem so they could assassinate him. Nehemiah replied, 'I am busy on a great project. Why should the work stop while I visit you?'



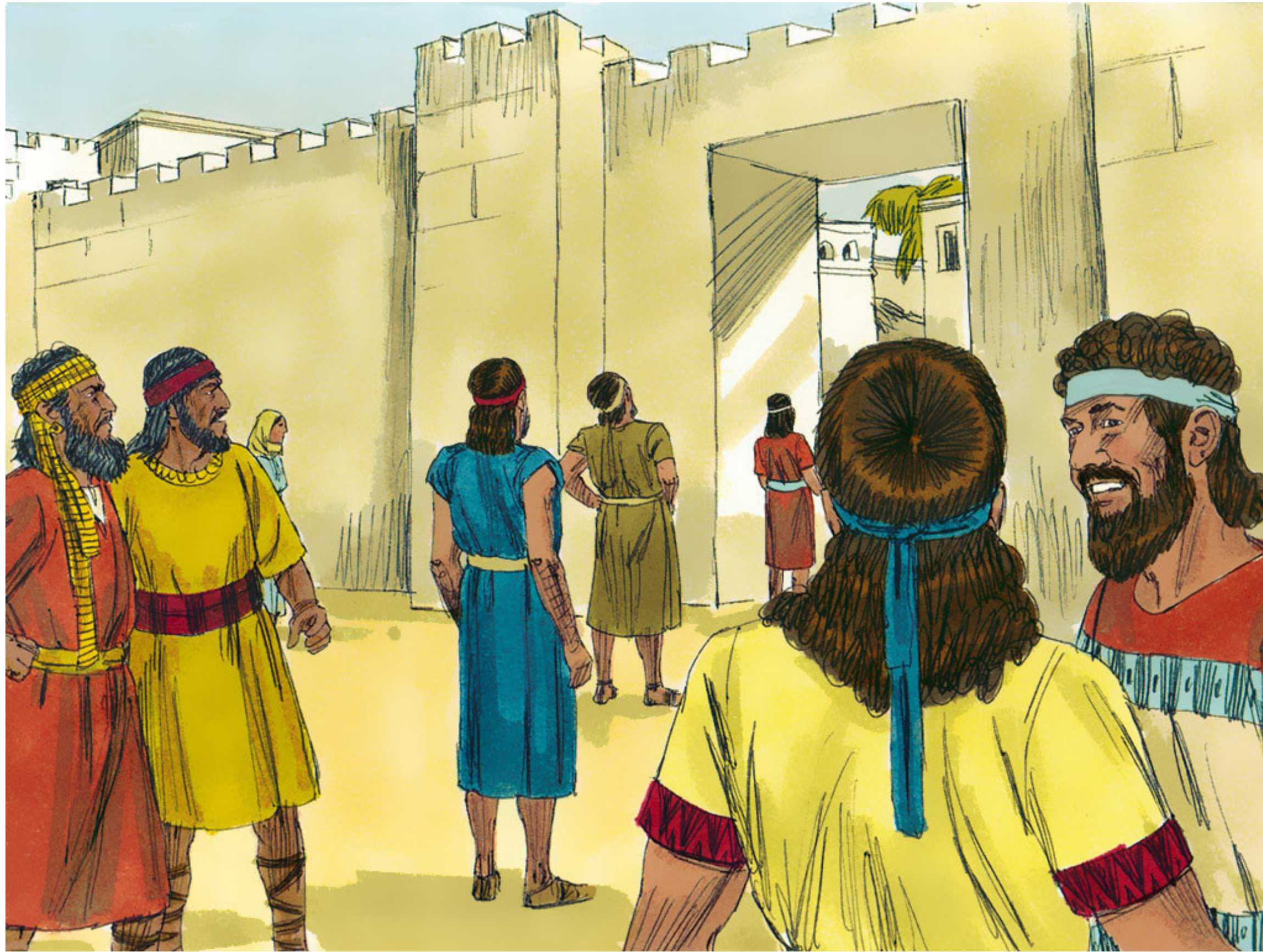
They sent the same message another three times but each time Nehemiah refused to leave Jerusalem. Then they sent Nehemiah a letter accusing him of planning to rebel against the King of the Medes and Persians. 'That is not true,' Nehemiah replied, then prayed to God saying, 'Now strengthen my hands.'



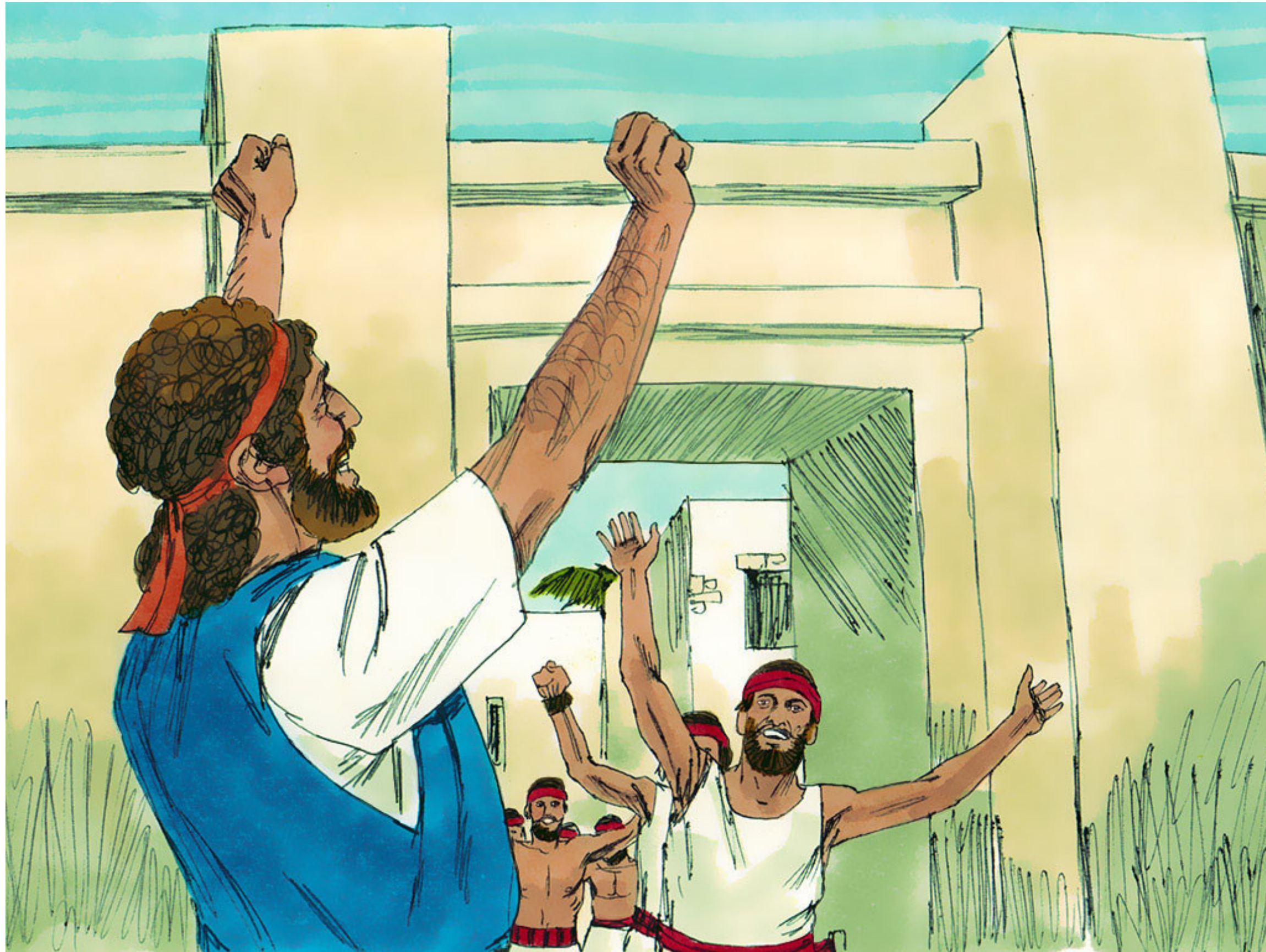
But Tobiah and Sanballat had not given up and hired a man in Jerusalem called Shemaiah to discredit Nehemiah. He warned Nehemiah there was a plot to kill him that night but he had a plan to save him. He suggested Nehemiah hide in the temple that night and closed the doors behind him. Nobody would think of looking for him there as only the priests were allowed into the temple.



Nehemiah knew that it was wrong for him to enter the Temple. 'Should I run away? Should I go into the temple to save my life? I will not go!' he insisted.



52 days after the rebuilding started the project was finished.



Those who had opposed the project were afraid, because they knew that this work had been done with the help of God.

**Let's Talk About
The Story...**



**What was
Ezra's job?**



**What did the king allow
Ezra to do?**



**Who did Ezra take with
him?**



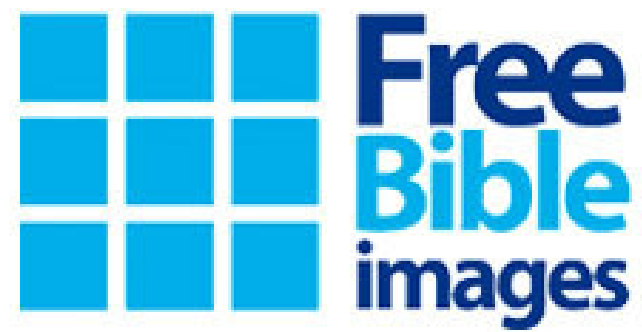
When Ezra returned, he found the Jews living in Jerusalem were living in sin. What had they done?



**How did the Jews feel
when they realized they
displeased God?**



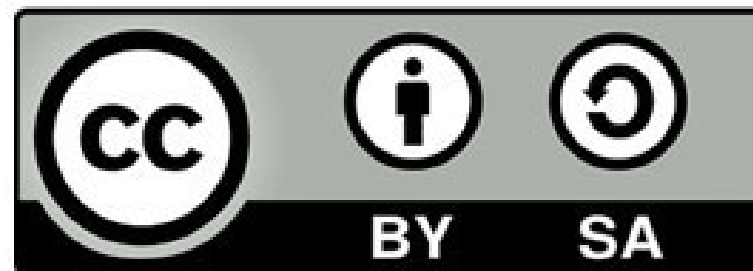
**What did Ezra do to
make things right?**



CONTRIBUTED BY
SWEET PUBLISHING

These images are the copyright of Sweet Publishing.
Artist: Jim Padgett

They are licensed to FreeBibleimages for free distribution under a
Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license.



www.freebibleimages.org