

Bible Comics - 21
ZECHARIAH



Bible Comics – 21

Zechariah

Script

Rev. Dr. Michael Karimattam

Illustration

Devassy

ZECHARIAH

The present book tries to illustrate the history of the people of Israel during the second half of the sixth century B.C. The Israelites deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon went through a severe crisis of faith. Shocked by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, they believed that Yahweh had cancelled the Sinai covenant and rejected Israel for ever. They were thrown into a

slavery that was similar to the one their forefathers were subjected to in Egypt.

The prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel had forced them to a serious soul-searching and to radical conversion. But it was an anonymous prophet, whom the bible scholars call Isaiah II or Deutero Isaiah (Is 40-55), who sustained the faith and heightened the hopes of the exiles. He spoke tenderly to the disheartened people about the loving kindness

of Yahweh. The return of the exiles he called a “New Exodus” and depicted it in vivid colors. His call to prepare a highway in the desert for the Lord who comes back with the captives is taken up in the synoptic gospels in connection with the preaching of John the Baptist.

The captives who returned to Jerusalem with great expectations were met with even greater disappointment. The sight of the city

and the temple lying in ruin pained them deeply. The prophecies of Micah and Jeremiah had come true. The temple had become a heap of rubble and jackals had made their home in the holy city. Cyrus, the Persian emperor, by an edict issued in B.C. 538 had allowed the captives to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. But even after almost two decades of their return, they could not even begin the rebuilding. Utter poverty on the one side and the hostility of those who had

remained in the land on the other side crushed their spirit. Continuous drought and crop failure added to their misery. Many were forced to sell themselves as slaves to their own brethren. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah depict this situation vividly. The discrepancy between the prophetic promises and the actual reality was a severe blow that again shook the foundations of their faith. It was under these circumstances that God sent

two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to Jerusalem.

The prophetic ministry of Haggai lasted only a few weeks in 520 B.C. His mission was to encourage the people to rebuild the temple. He exhorted them to put their trust in Yahweh and to concentrate on building the temple. Then Yahweh would look kindly on them and give them material prosperity, he promised. Towards the end of Haggai's prophetic career

another prophet, named Zechariah, appeared on the scene. “The Lord remembered” is the meaning of the name. Zechariah was a young priest who returned from the exile. He told the people that Yahweh who put an end to the Babylonian captivity was again about to act on their behalf and establish His Rule in Jerusalem by sending the Messiah. As a preparation for this he invited them to repent and turn to Yahweh with their whole heart,

put an end to oppression, give justice to the poor and rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.

In this preaching Zechariah had frequent recourse to the literary form of visions. In fact, the Book of Zechariah recounts eight visions one after another. The cover picture of this story depicts one of such visions. The woman in a bushel being carried off by two other women is a vivid picture of the message that God will wipe out every evil from the

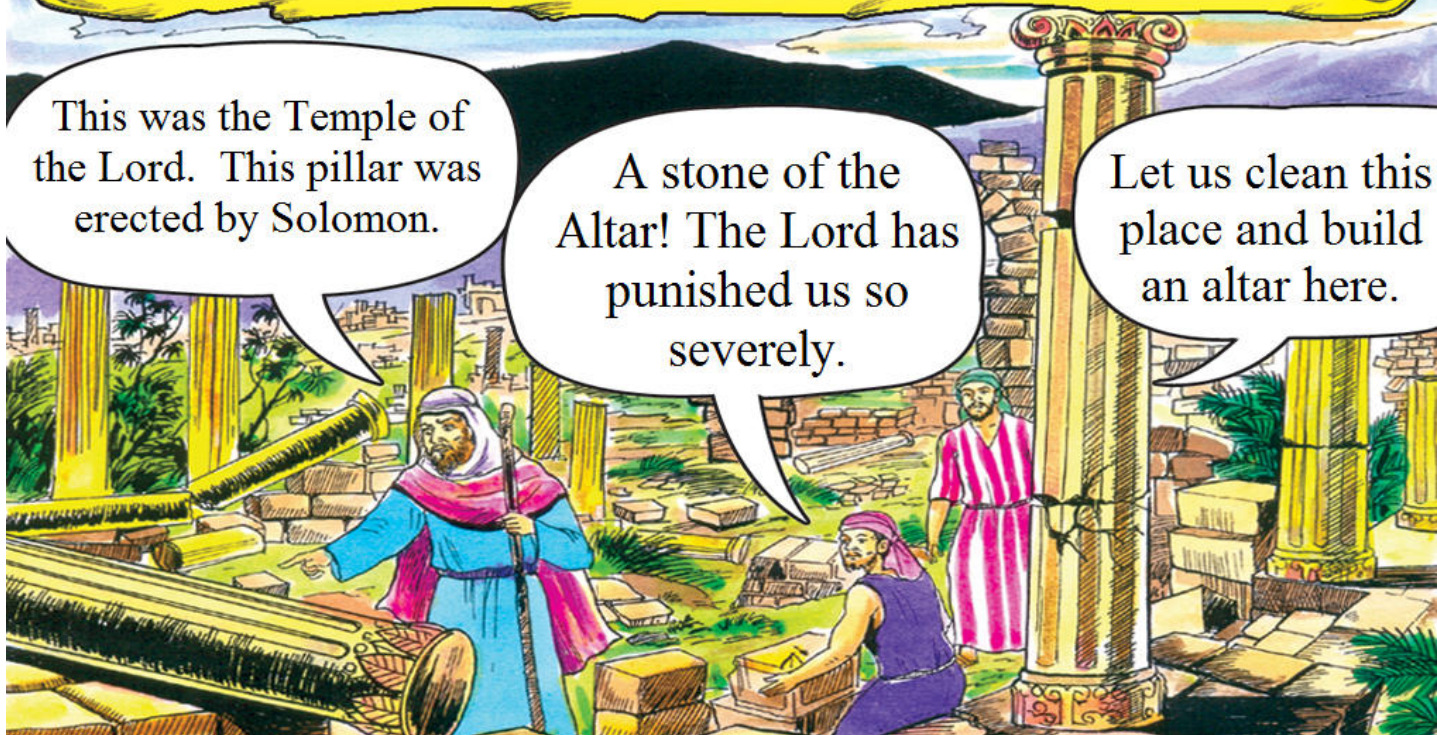
face of the earth. Zechariah is noted for his visions, messianic prophecies and the importance he gives to angels. Several of his prophecies are quoted in the New Testament as fulfilled in Jesus. Among them, the prophecy concerning the king riding a donkey is the most well known one.

In 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and took thousands as captives to Babylon. The poor people who were left in Jerusalem used to come and weep over the ruins.

This was the Temple of the Lord. This pillar was erected by Solomon.

A stone of the Altar! The Lord has punished us so severely.

Let us clean this place and build an altar here.



Those exiled settled down in different places by the rivers of Babylon. They sat and wept over Jerusalem.

How long are we going to mourn like this?

We must cultivate the land the king gave us. There are all kinds of possibilities for business.

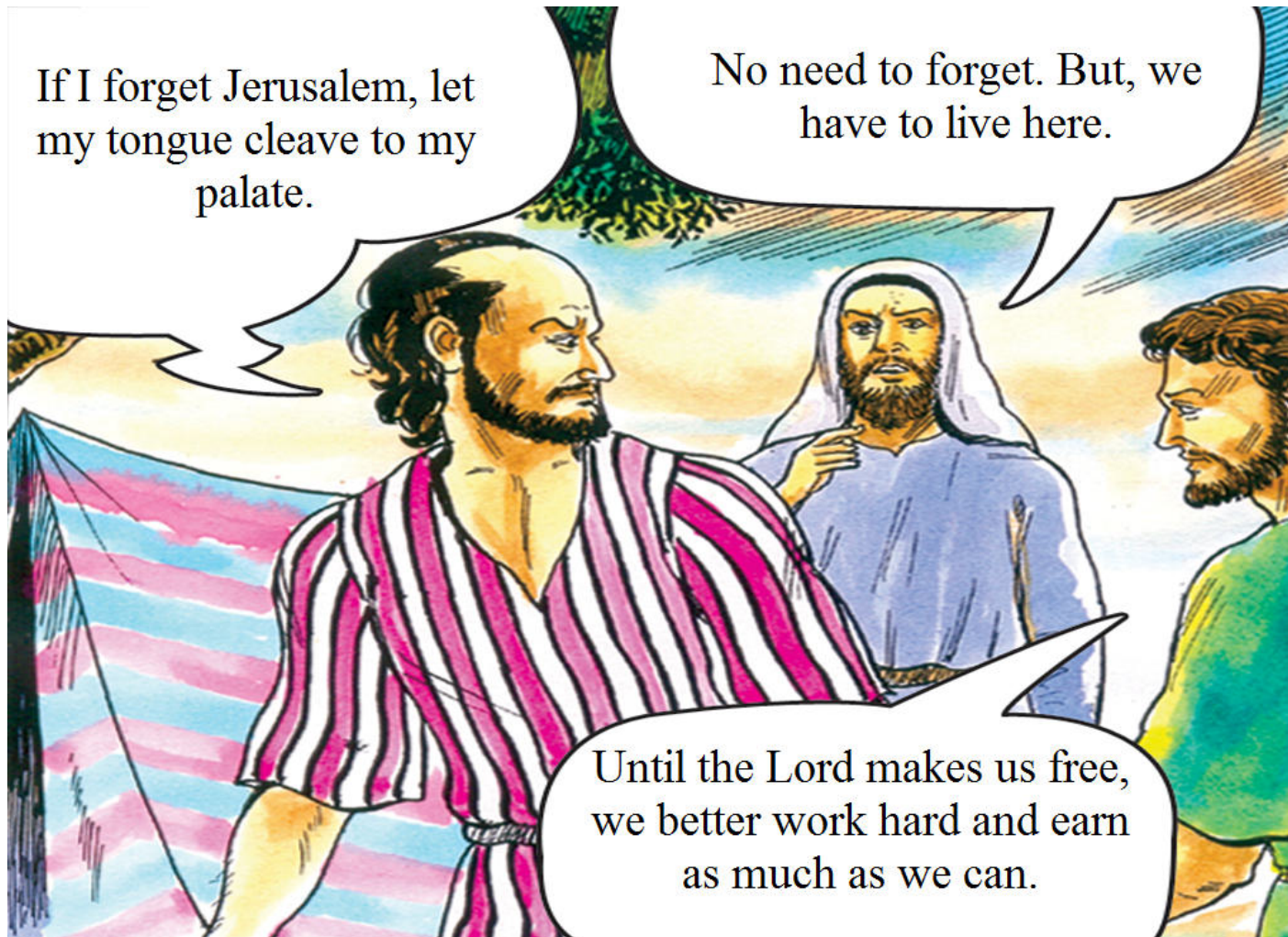
You mean, settle down in this foreign land? No way!



If I forget Jerusalem, let
my tongue cleave to my
palate.

No need to forget. But, we
have to live here.

Until the Lord makes us free,
we better work hard and earn
as much as we can.



That is what
Prophet Jeremiah
also had said.

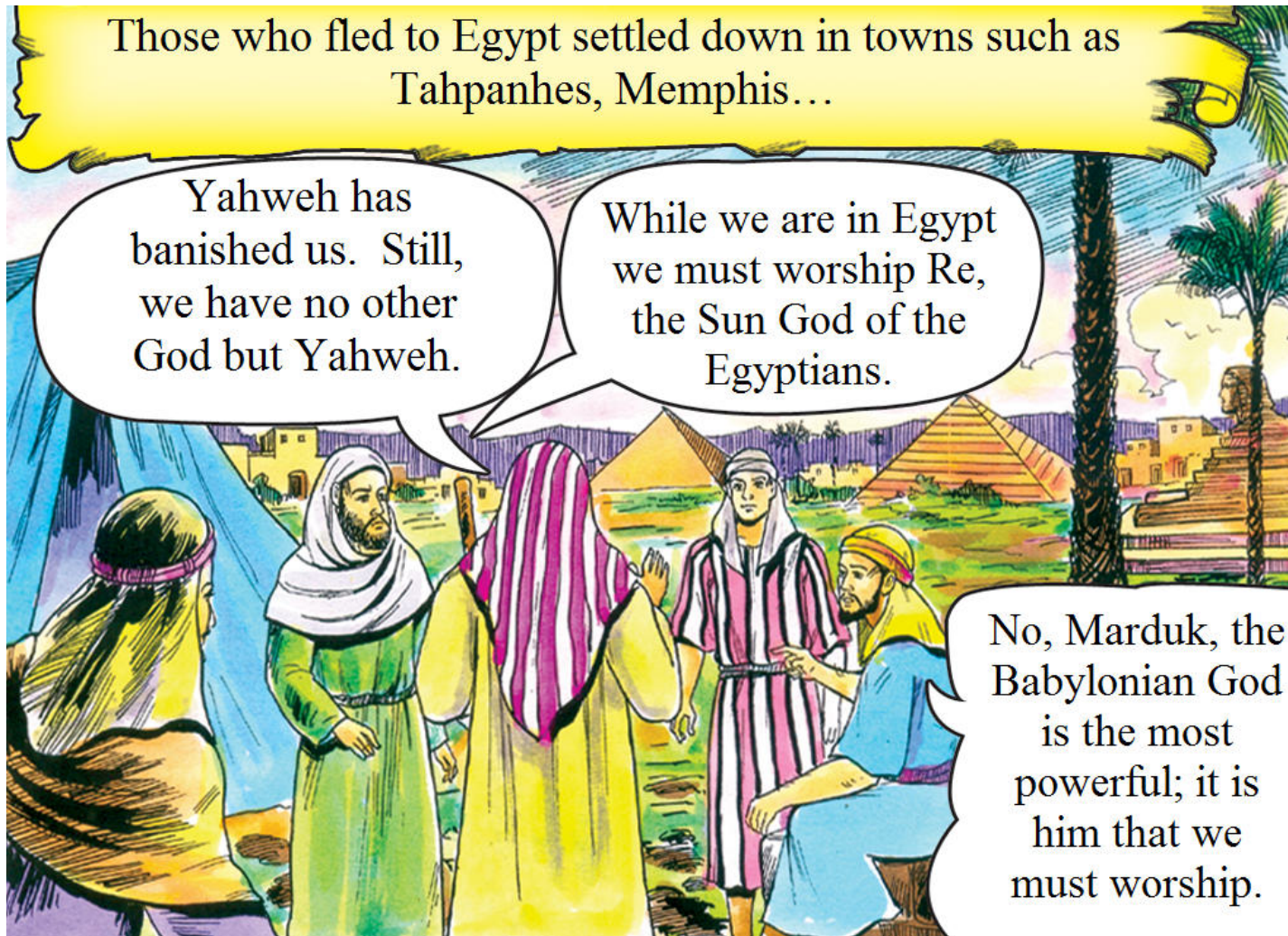


Those who fled to Egypt settled down in towns such as Tahpanhes, Memphis...

Yahweh has banished us. Still, we have no other God but Yahweh.

While we are in Egypt we must worship Re, the Sun God of the Egyptians.

No, Marduk, the Babylonian God is the most powerful; it is him that we must worship.



Yahweh alone is God

Then, how come
He doesn't
protect us?



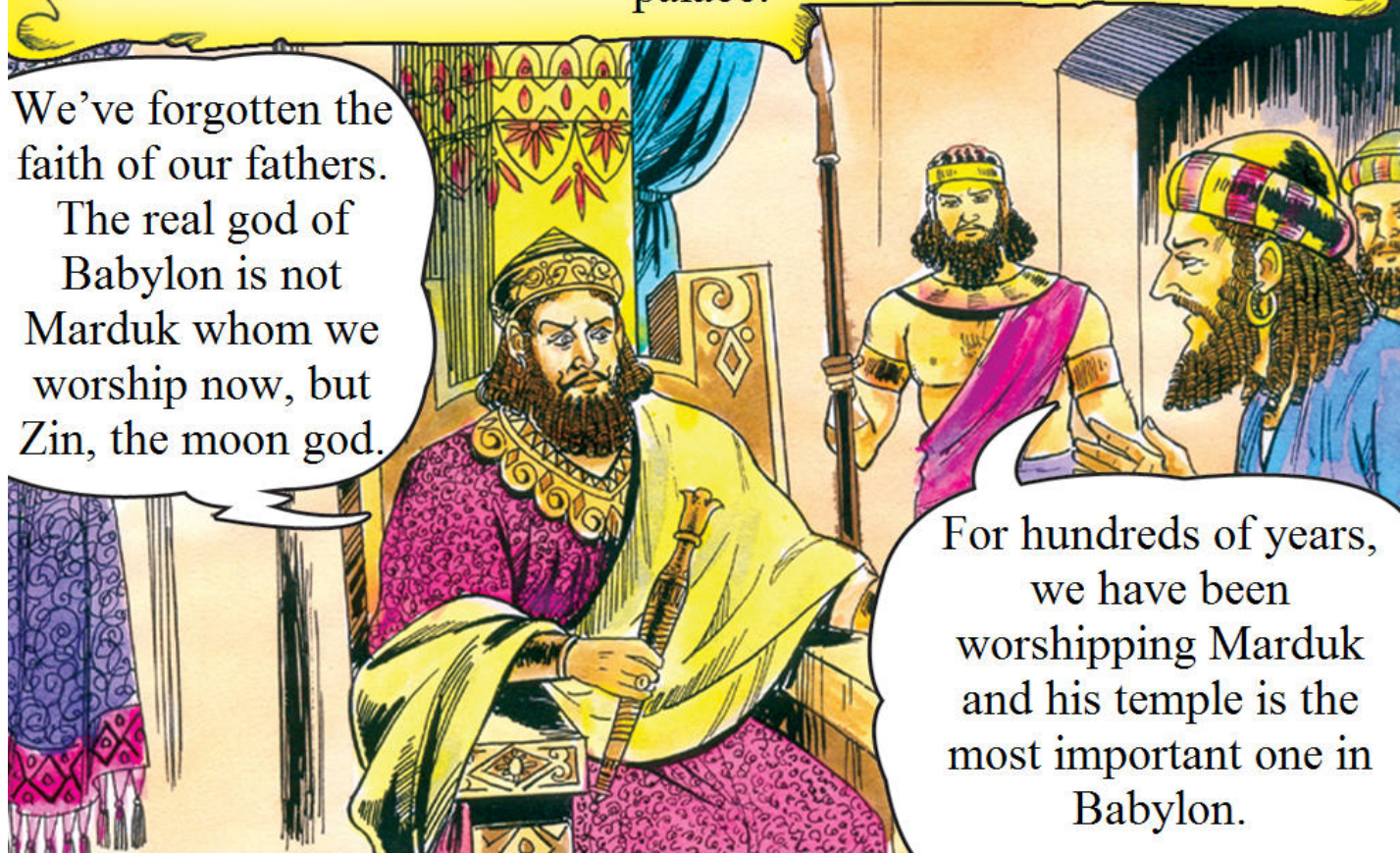
The Lord punished us
because we forgot Him.
We must repent and return
to Him.



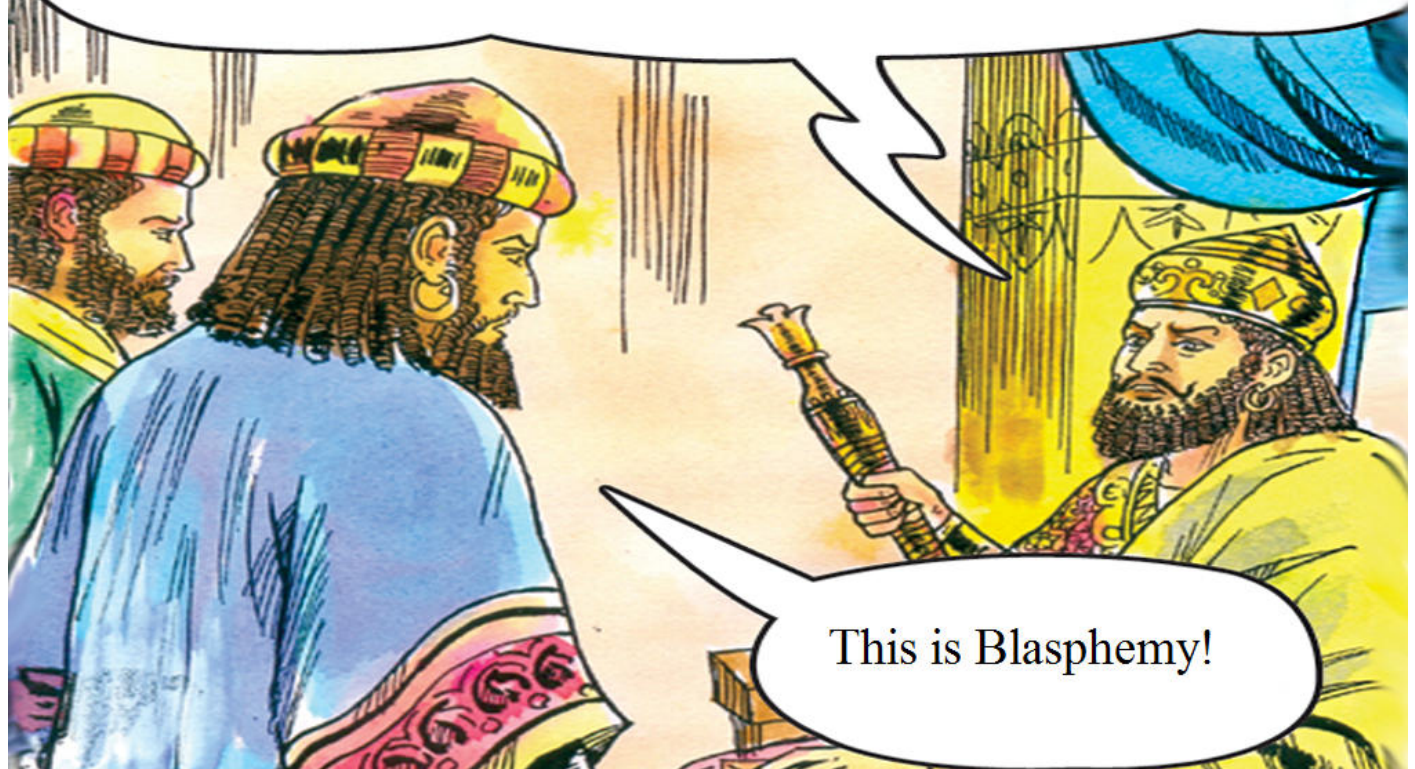
Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. The next two kings were assassinated. In 526 B.C. Nabonidus became king. At the palace:

We've forgotten the faith of our fathers. The real god of Babylon is not Marduk whom we worship now, but Zin, the moon god.

For hundreds of years, we have been worshipping Marduk and his temple is the most important one in Babylon.



We have a tradition of thousands of years. Then who cares about hundreds of years? From now on Zin will be the god of Babylon.



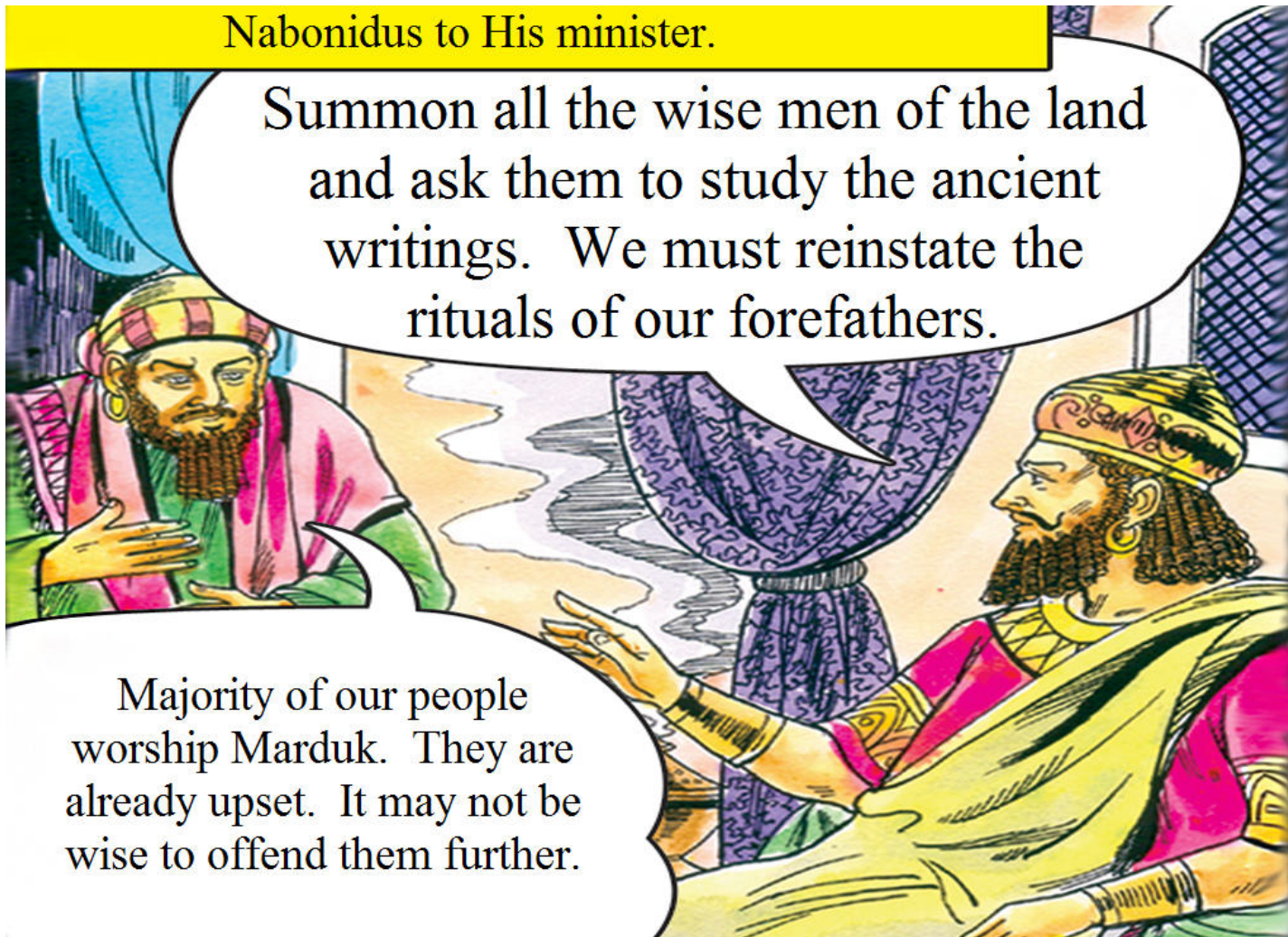
Guards, arrest all
the priests of
Marduk.



Nabonidus to His minister.

Summon all the wise men of the land and ask them to study the ancient writings. We must reinstate the rituals of our forefathers.

Majority of our people worship Marduk. They are already upset. It may not be wise to offend them further.



What do the stupid people know? Renovate all the old temples. We'll restore the ancient traditions of Babylon.



We won't celebrate
the New Year feast
anymore. Instead
we will celebrate
the moon-day.



My Lord, in the east,
the Persians are
becoming a
formidable force
under Cyrus.

Good, we will give him a hand
in defeating the Medes. Now,
one more thing. We are going
to shift our capital to Thema in
Arabia.



While Nabonidus was pre-occupied with the religious reforms, Cyrus king of Persia was laying the foundation for his empire. In 550, he captured Ecbatana, capital of Media. With the conquest of Sardis, capital of Lydia in 547 he became the master of Asia-Minor.

A conversation among the Israelites in Babylon.

Brethren, rejoice,
our captivity is
over.

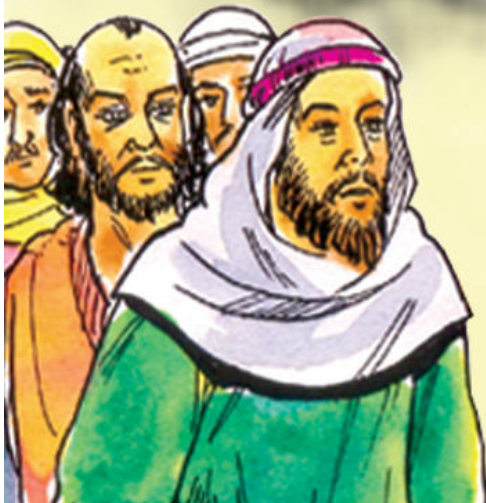
Who is this?

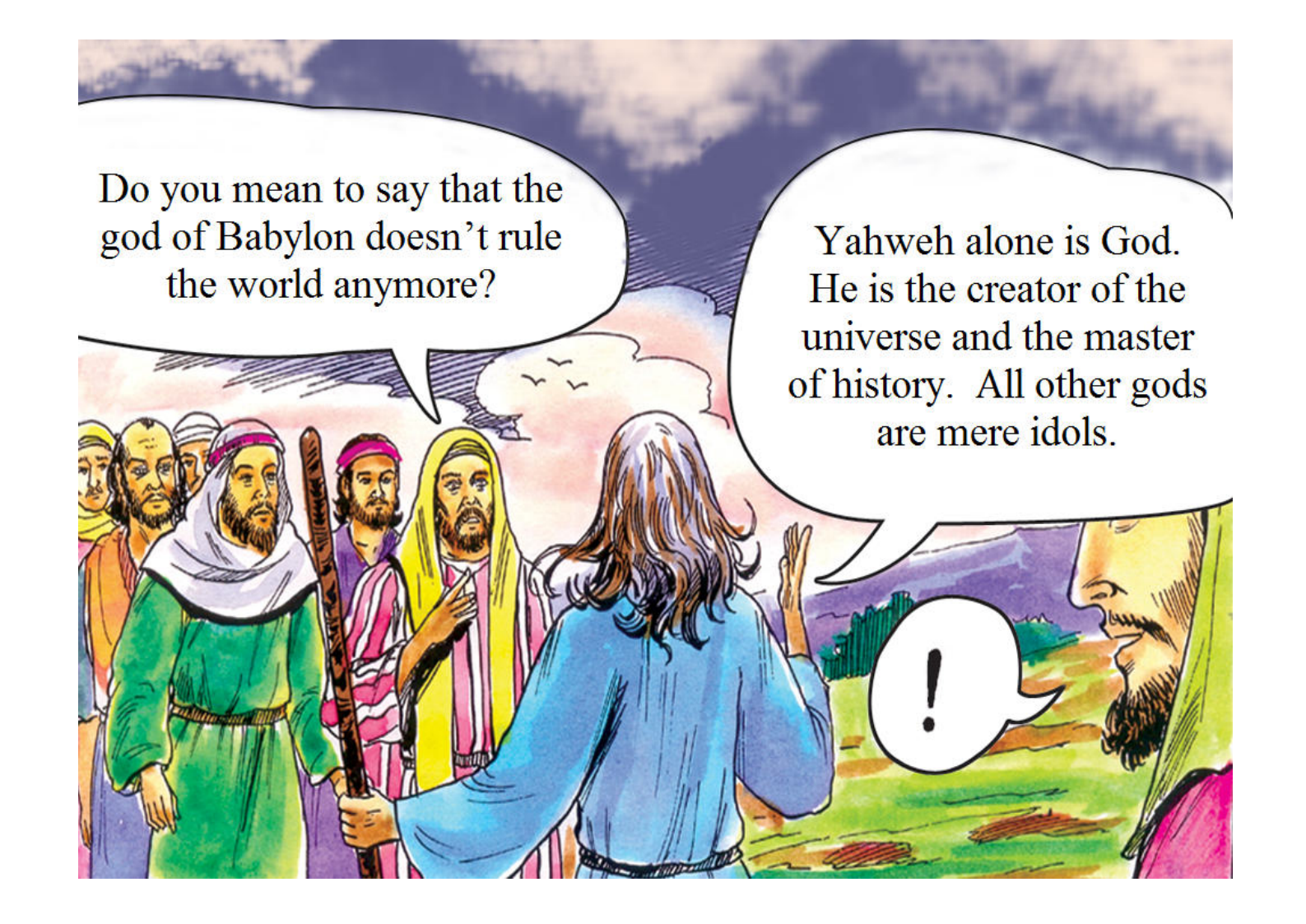
I heard that he is a
disciple of the
great Prophet
Isaiah.

!!!



Prepare a way for the
Lord in the desert!
The Lord is about to
lead his people back
to Jerusalem.





Do you mean to say that the
god of Babylon doesn't rule
the world anymore?

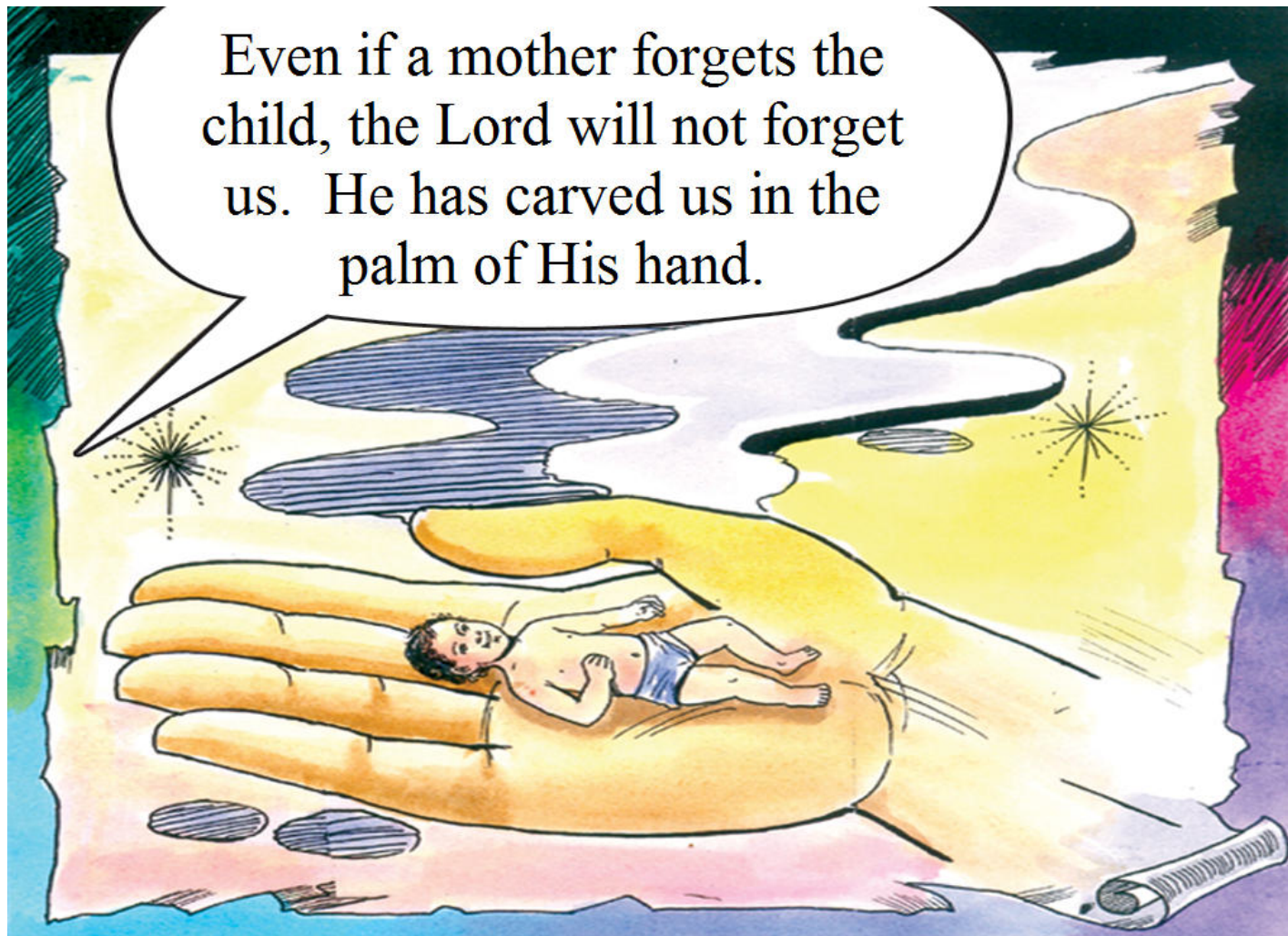
Yahweh alone is God.
He is the creator of the
universe and the master
of history. All other gods
are mere idols.

!

The Lord will gather His
people and restore the
holy city, Jerusalem.



Even if a mother forgets the child, the Lord will not forget us. He has carved us in the palm of His hand.

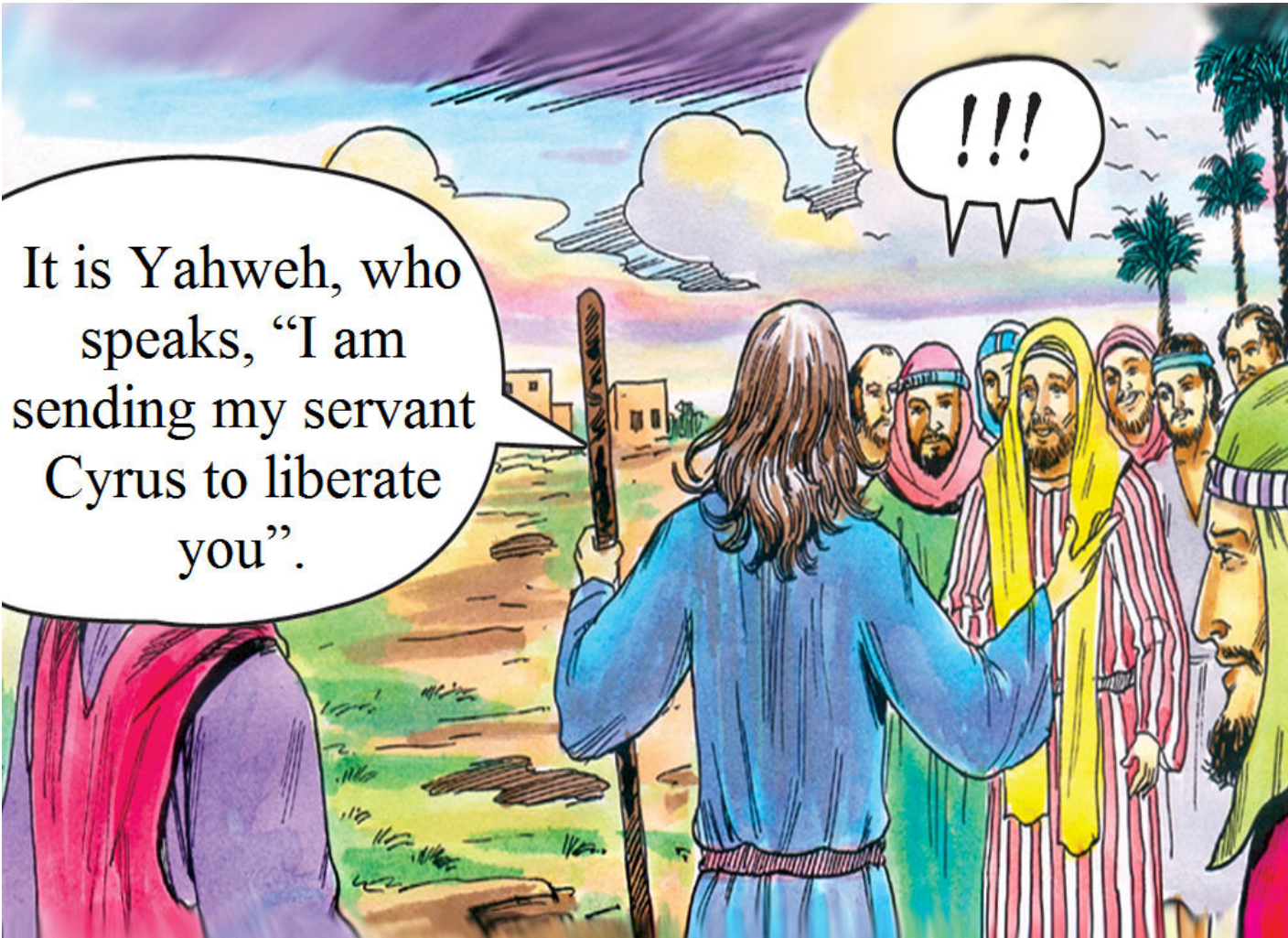


Even if you walk through the
raging waters, you shall
not be drowned.



Even if you walk through
the fire, it will not
burn you.

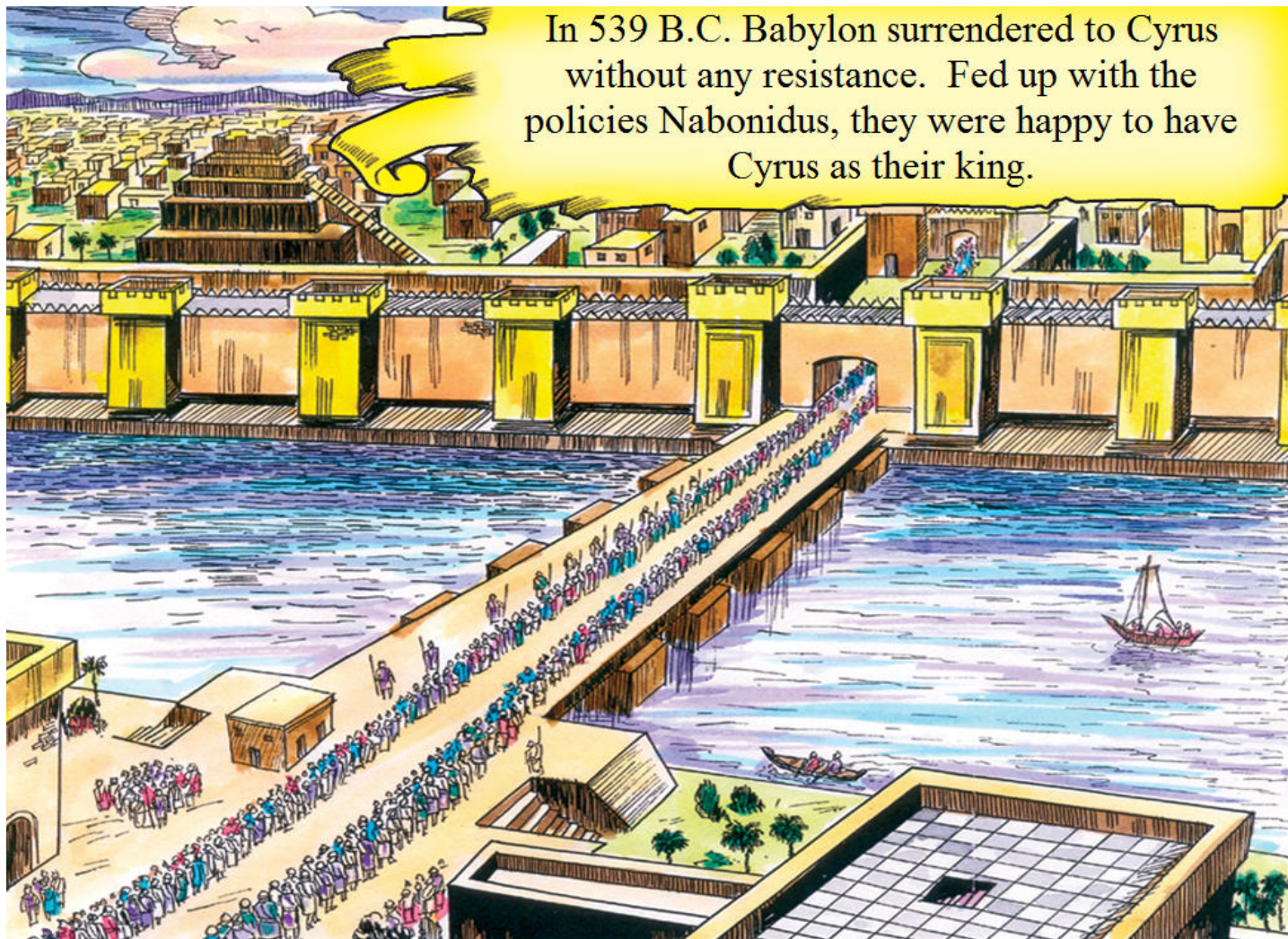




It is Yahweh, who speaks, “I am sending my servant Cyrus to liberate you”.

!!!

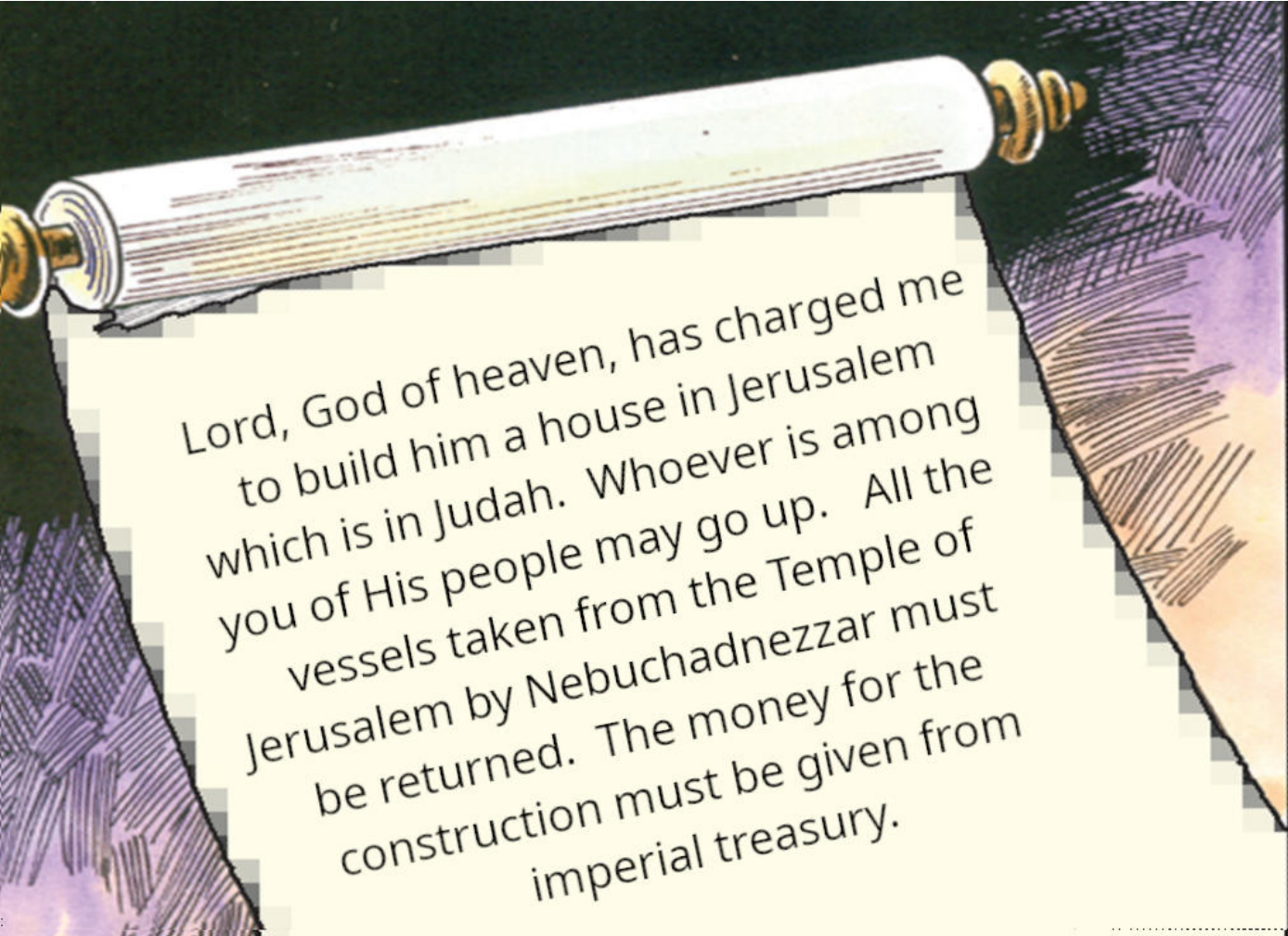
In 539 B.C. Babylon surrendered to Cyrus without any resistance. Fed up with the policies Nabonidus, they were happy to have Cyrus as their king.



Cyrus, King of Persia issued
an edict in 538 B.C.

We want all our subjects to
be content. There must be
peace and prosperity for
all. Write...



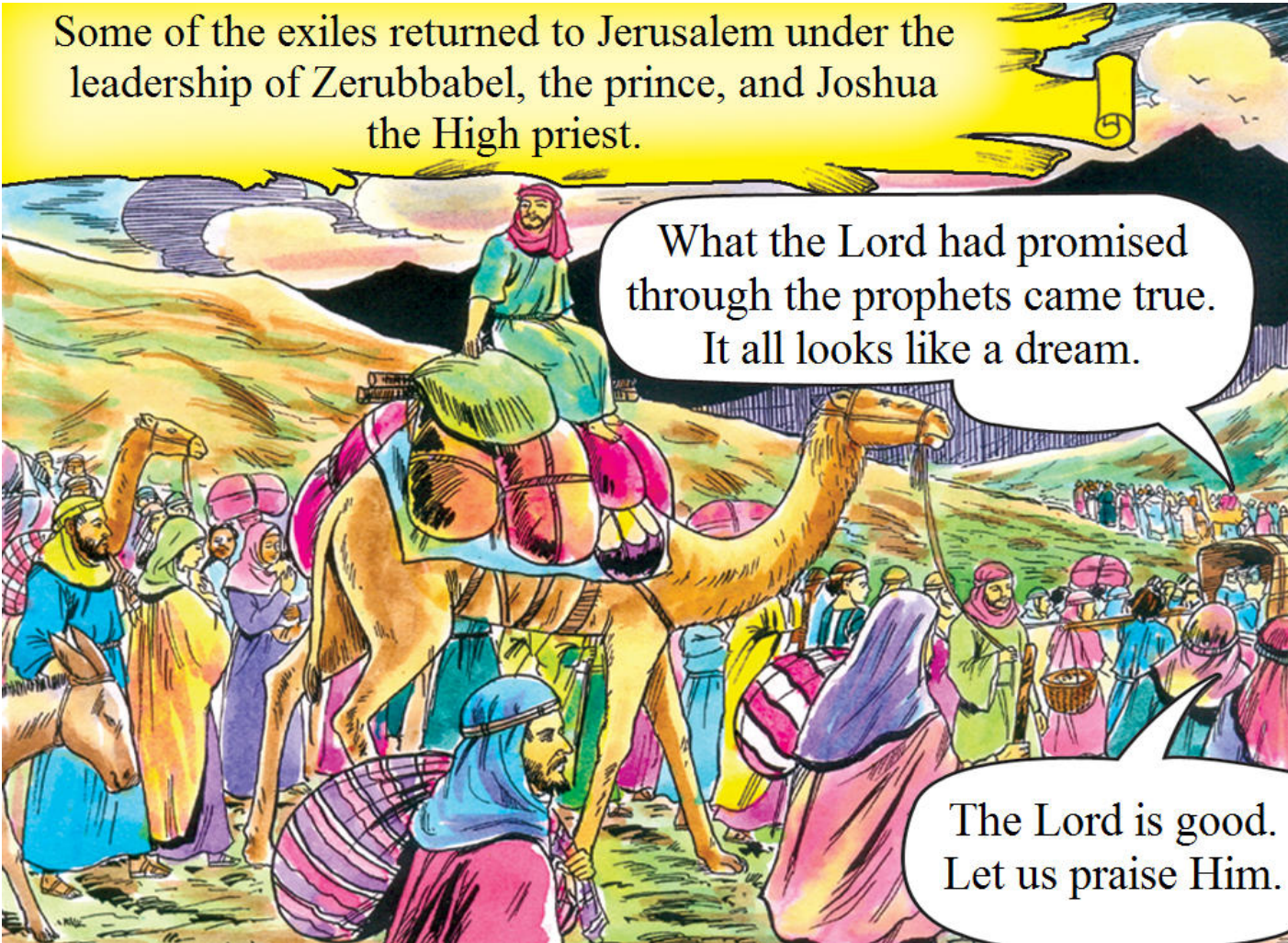


Lord, God of heaven, has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of His people may go up. All the vessels taken from the Temple of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar must be returned. The money for the construction must be given from imperial treasury.

This edict must be proclaimed throughout the empire. A copy of it must be kept in our archive.



Some of the exiles returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the prince, and Joshua the High priest.



What the Lord had promised through the prophets came true. It all looks like a dream.

The Lord is good. Let us praise Him.

Only so few were ready to return!



The wealth they accumulated in Babylon is more important to them.

What a generation!

They too will come back when we
have rebuilt the holy city.



The exiles reached Jerusalem.

My God, is this the condition of the holy city!

Where shall we start?

First of all, we must reclaim our property and build our houses.

Why are these coming back?

!!?

People of Jerusalem.

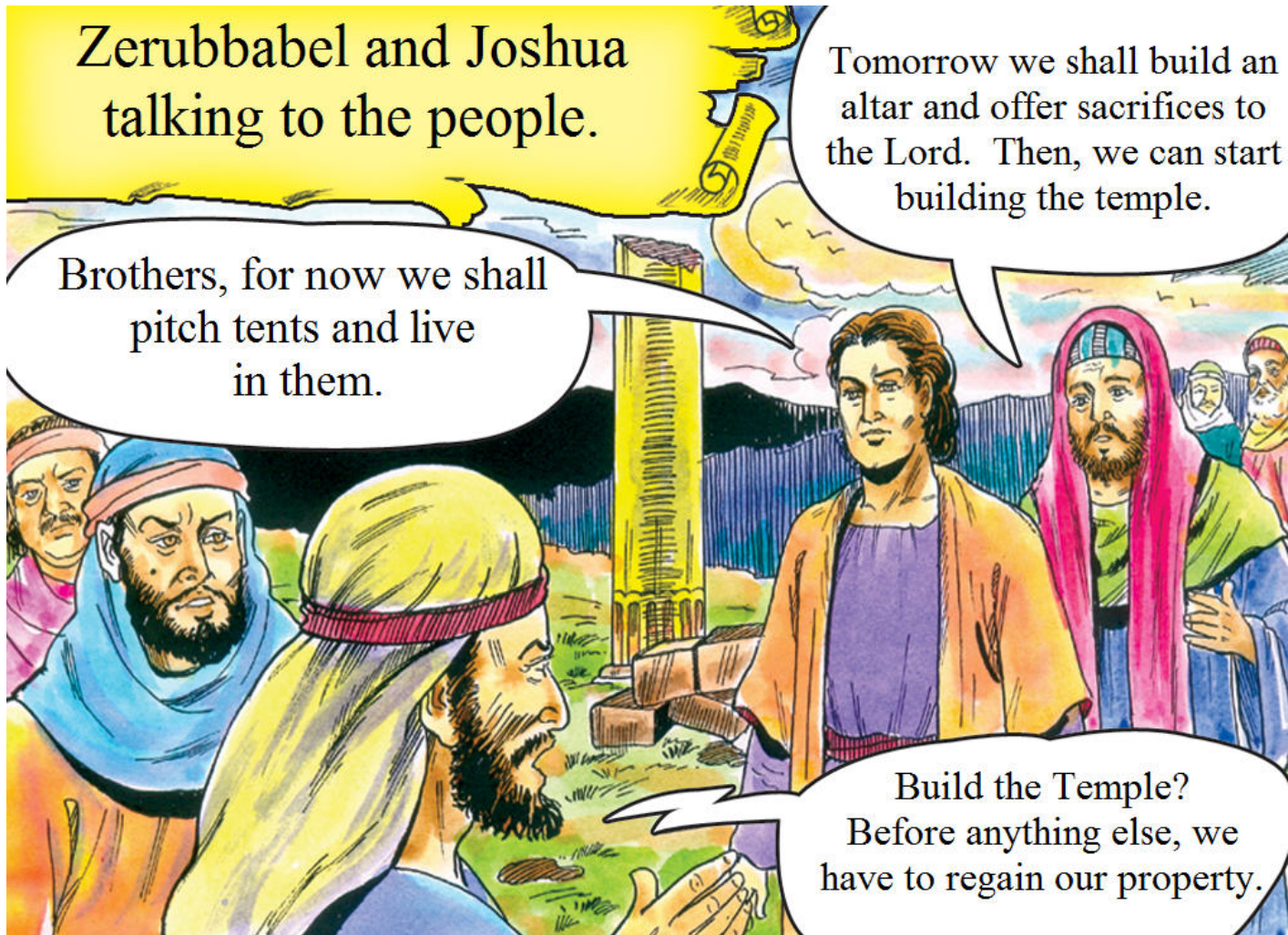


Zerubbabel and Joshua
talking to the people.

Tomorrow we shall build an
altar and offer sacrifices to
the Lord. Then, we can start
building the temple.

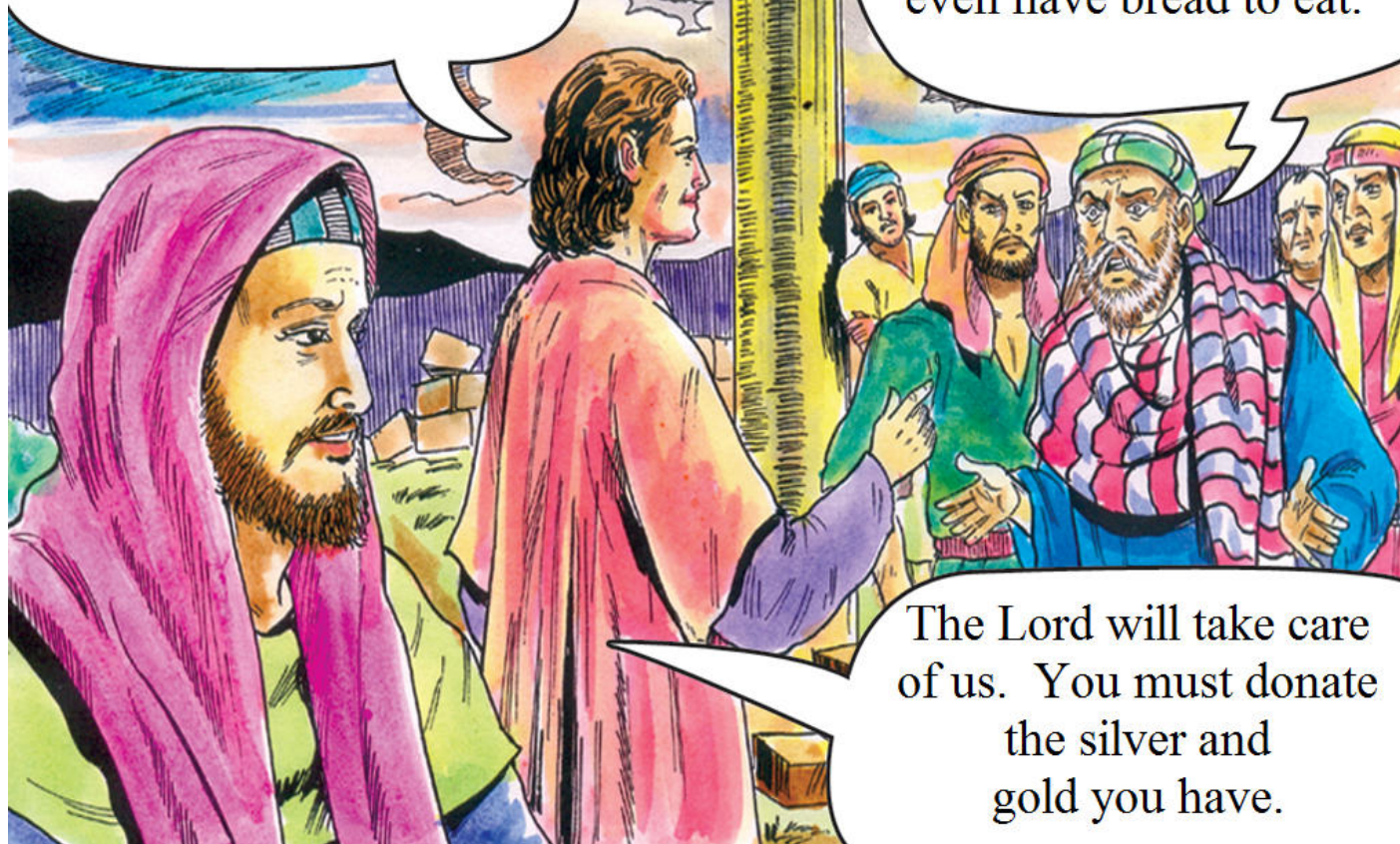
Brothers, for now we shall
pitch tents and live
in them.

Build the Temple?
Before anything else, we
have to regain our property.



Slowly each family can get back their property. First let us build the Temple.

How are we going to build now? We don't even have bread to eat.



The Lord will take care of us. You must donate the silver and gold you have.



Let us make an altar now. The Temple can wait.

On the Altar built in the midst of ruins,
they offered sacrifices.

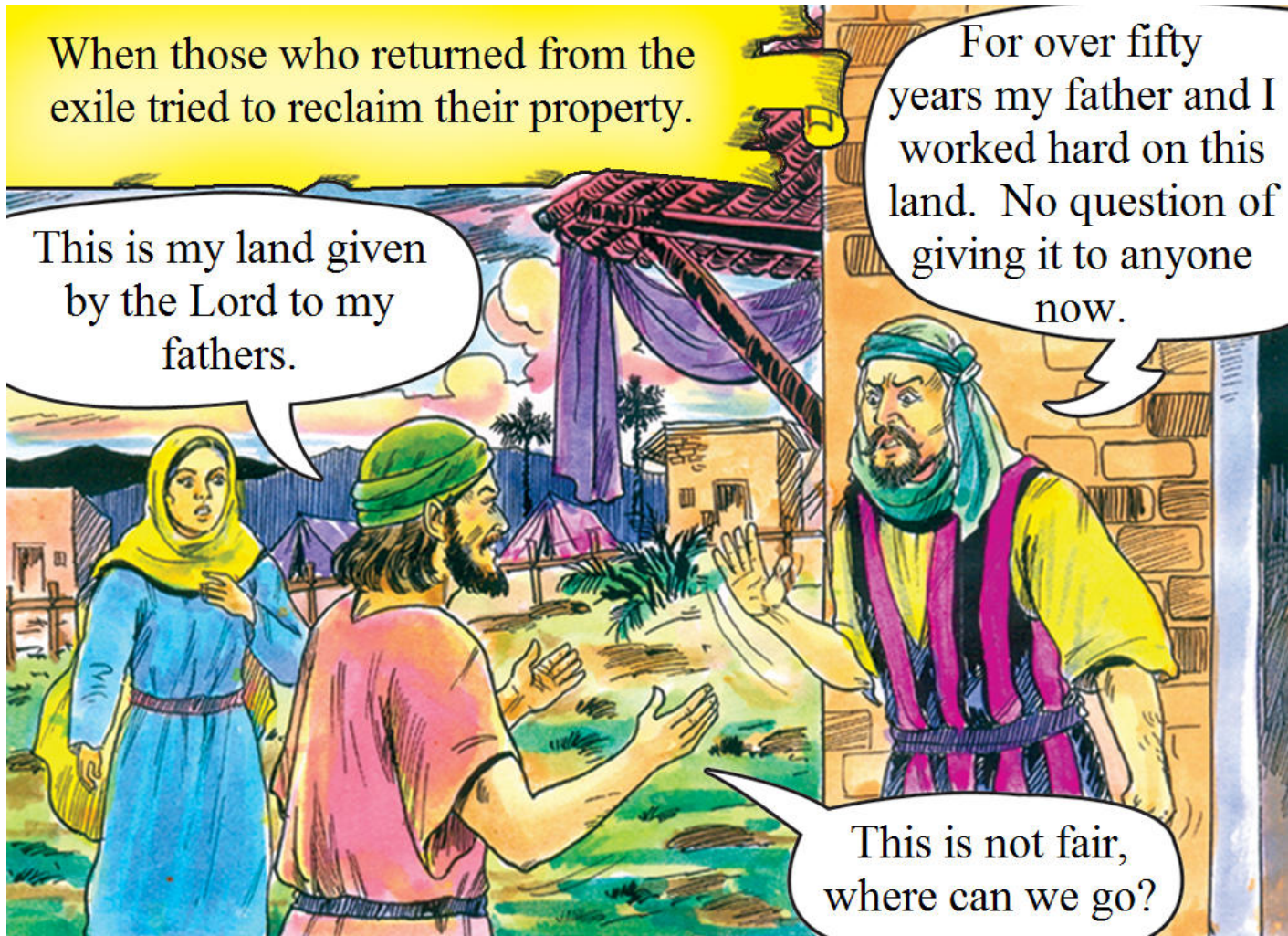


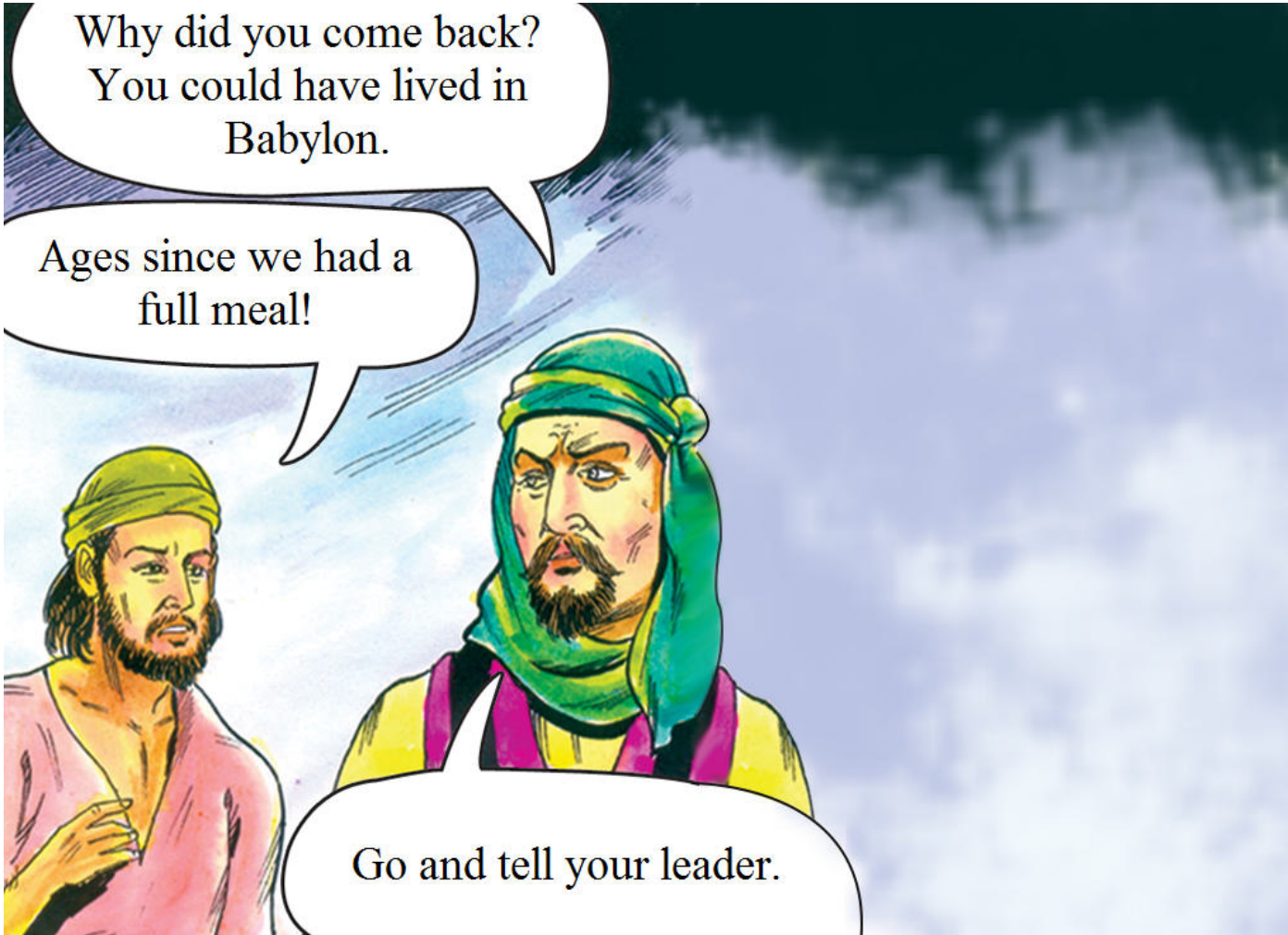
When those who returned from the exile tried to reclaim their property.

This is my land given by the Lord to my fathers.

For over fifty years my father and I worked hard on this land. No question of giving it to anyone now.

This is not fair, where can we go?





Why did you come back?
You could have lived in
Babylon.

Ages since we had a
full meal!

Go and tell your leader.

Well, you too are an Israelite. You may make a hut in that corner. But don't ask for any rights.

?!

!!



Within two years, the returned exiles
laid the foundation of the Temple.

Today we begin
the work of the house of the Lord.
The High priest
will lay the
foundation stone.

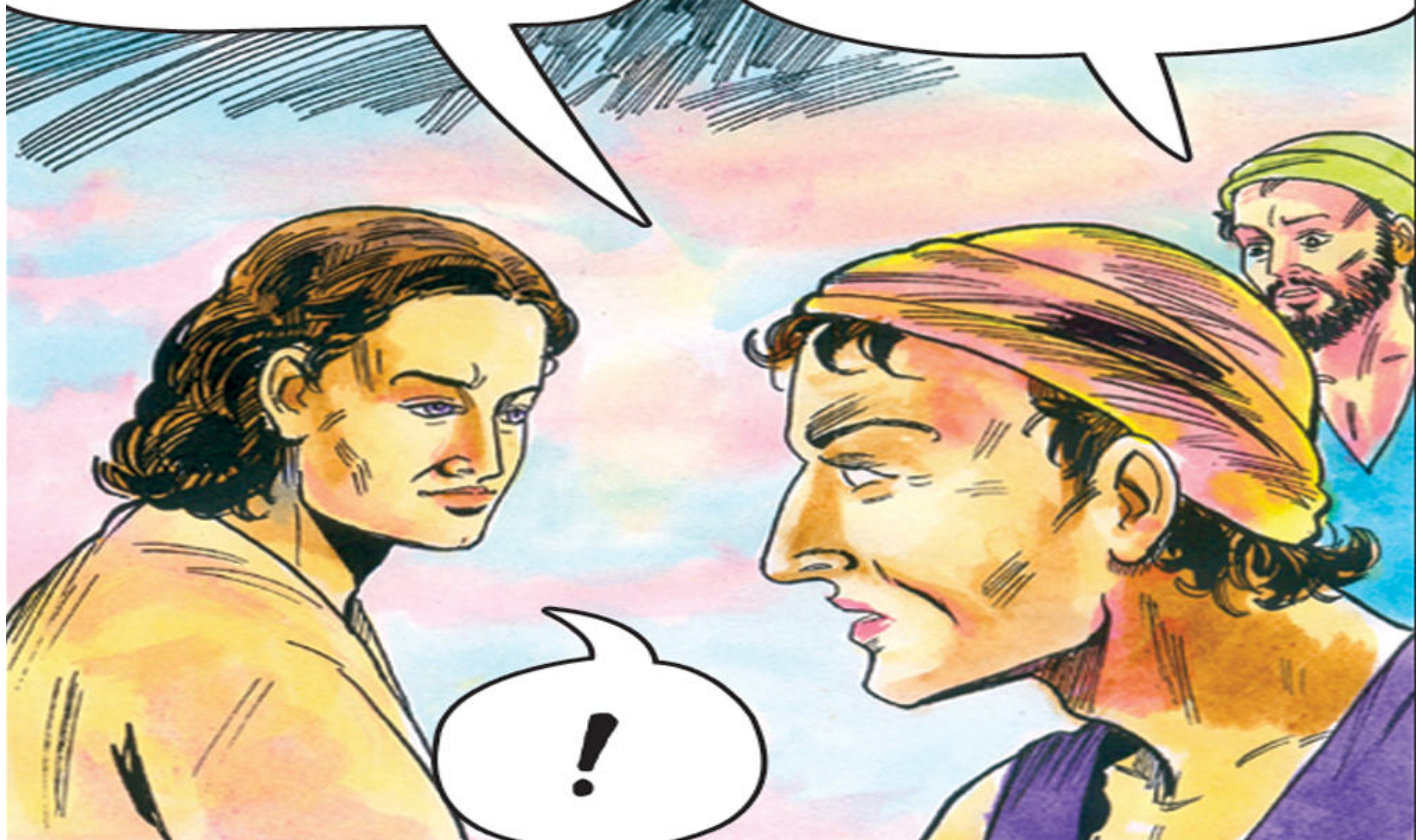




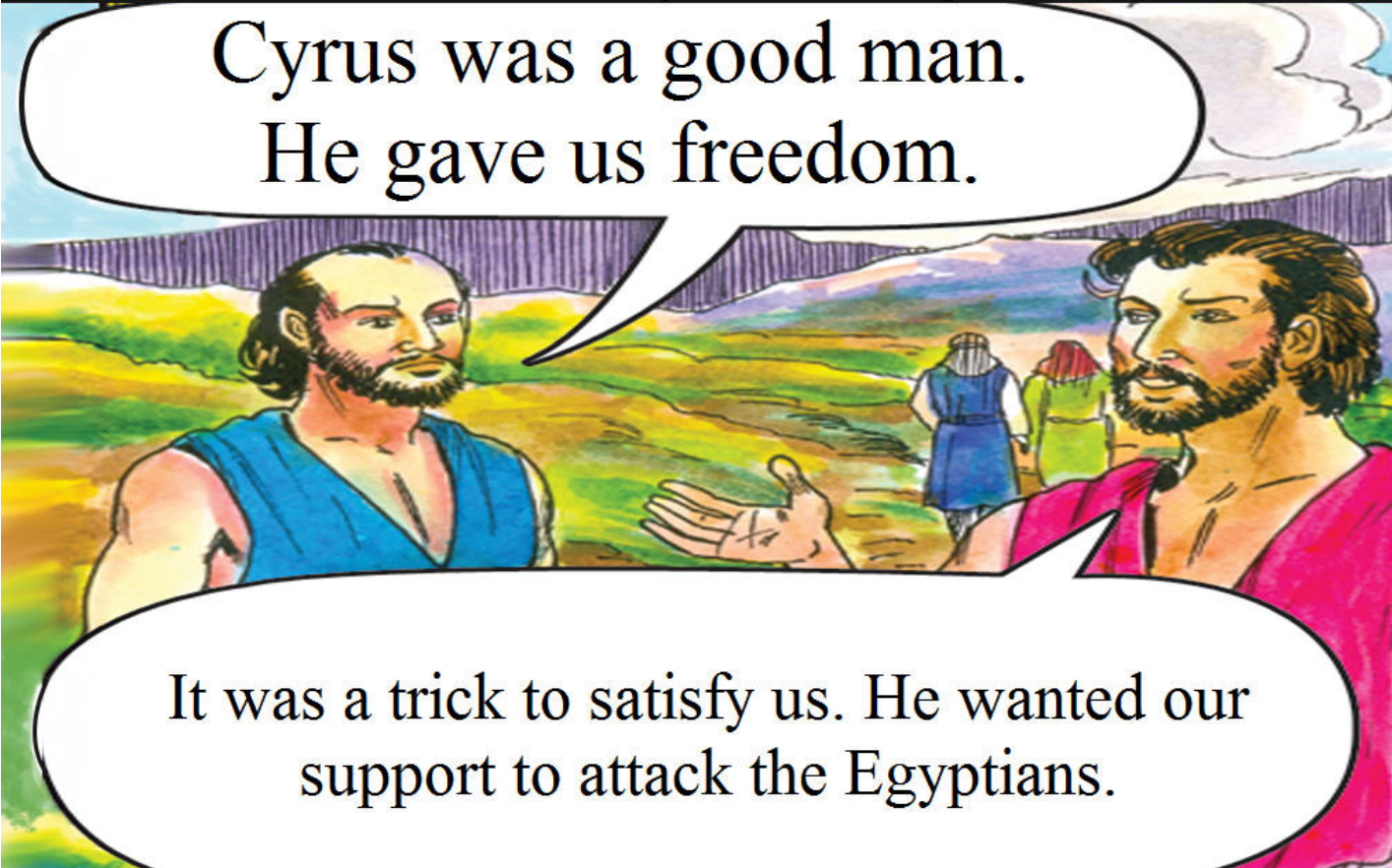
With the money we got from the emperor and your generous donations, we have ordered Cedar from Lebanon. The masons will come from Tyre.

Still, we have no land, no home, not even food.

First make sure that we get our land back.



Though the foundation was laid, the construction of the Temple stagnated due to poverty and opposition from the Samaritans. In 530 B.C. Cyrus died and his son Cambyses became king.

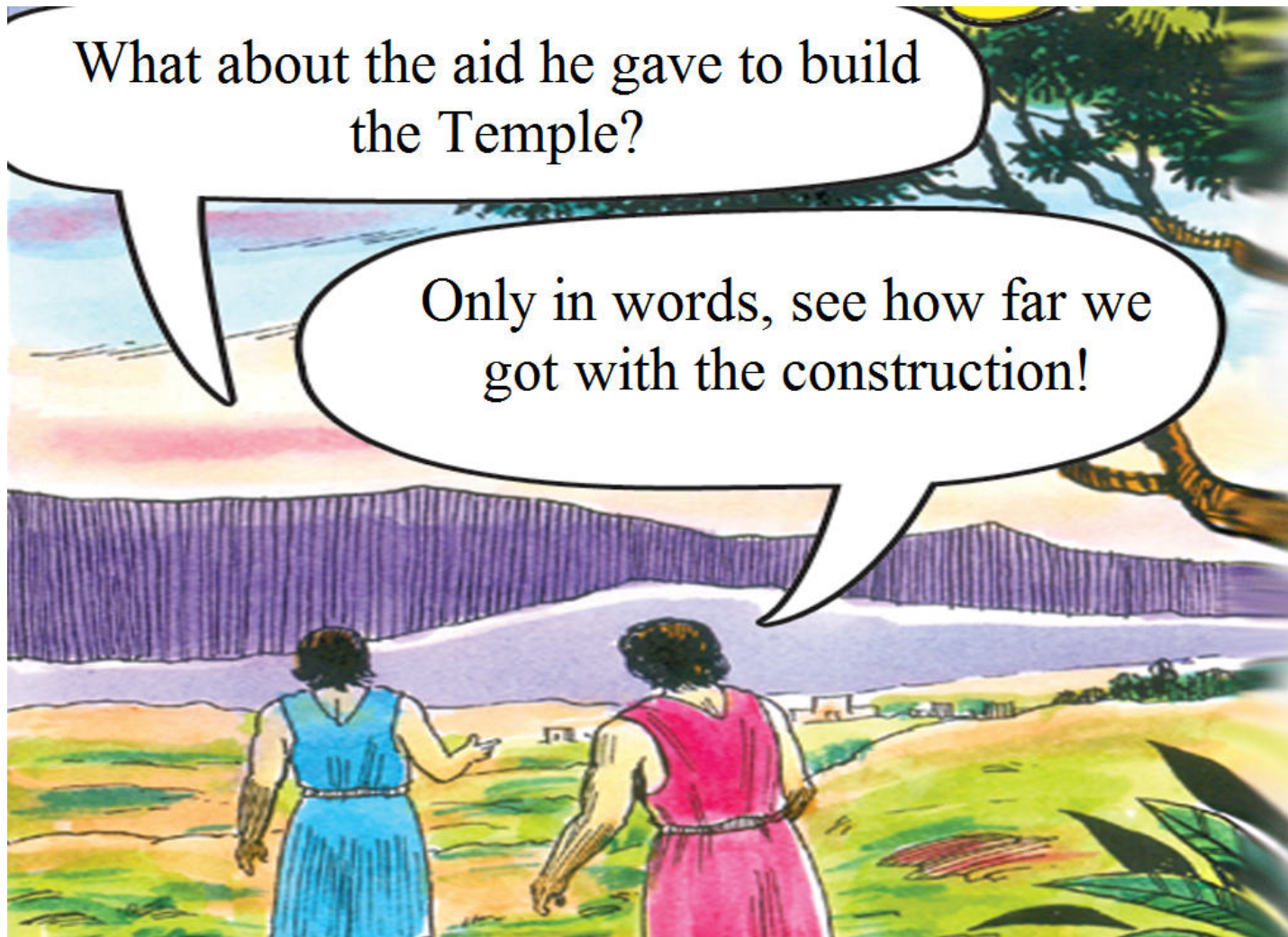


Cyrus was a good man.
He gave us freedom.

It was a trick to satisfy us. He wanted our support to attack the Egyptians.

What about the aid he gave to build
the Temple?

Only in words, see how far we
got with the construction!



Cambyses
conquered Egypt.

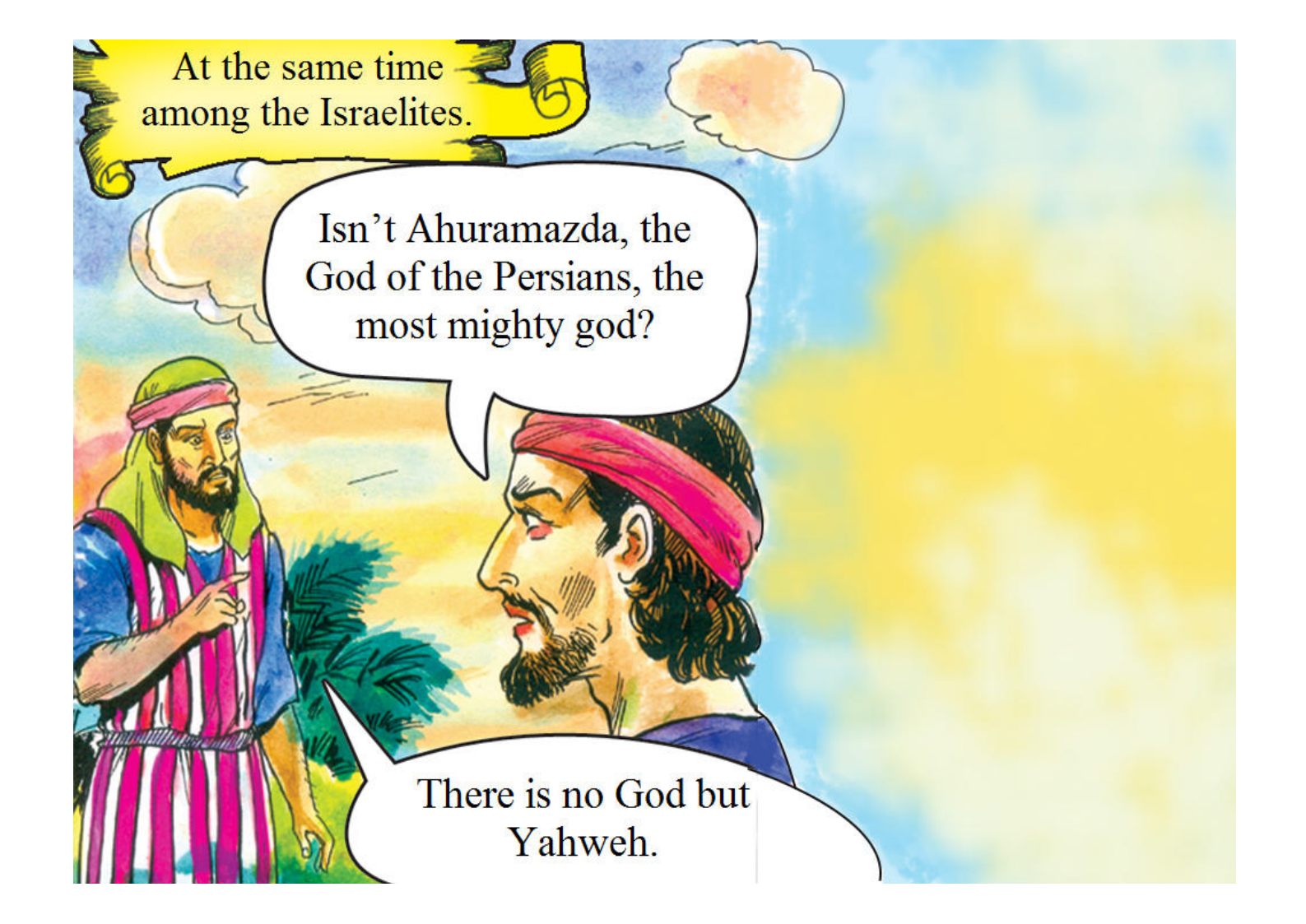


While Cambyses was campaigning in Egypt, revolution broke out in Persia. Hearing this Cambyses committed suicide. Darius, commander of the Persian army, became king in 522 B. C.

Long live king Darius!

Cheers to our great emperor Darius!

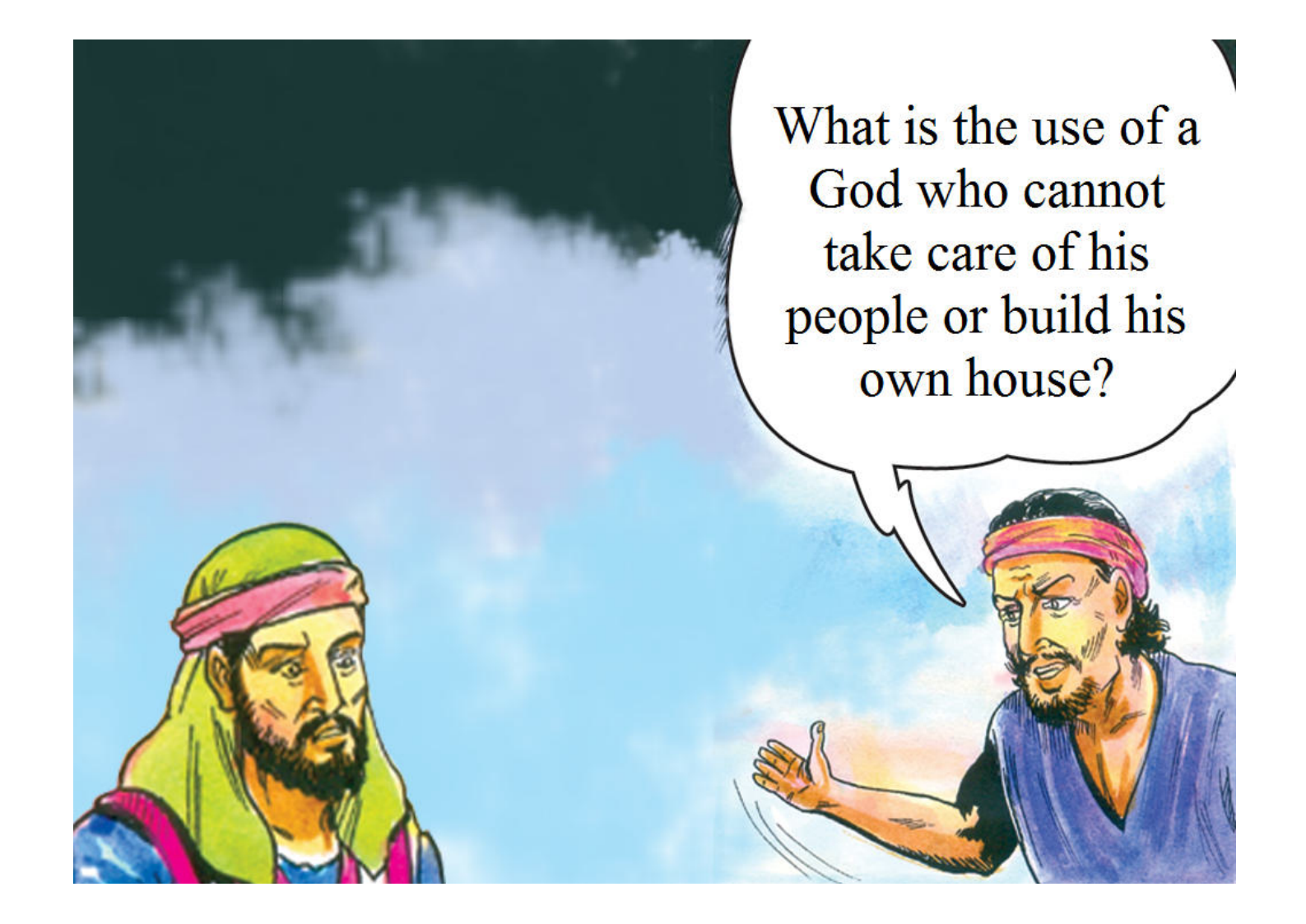




At the same time
among the Israelites.

Isn't Ahuramazda, the
God of the Persians, the
most mighty god?

There is no God but
Yahweh.



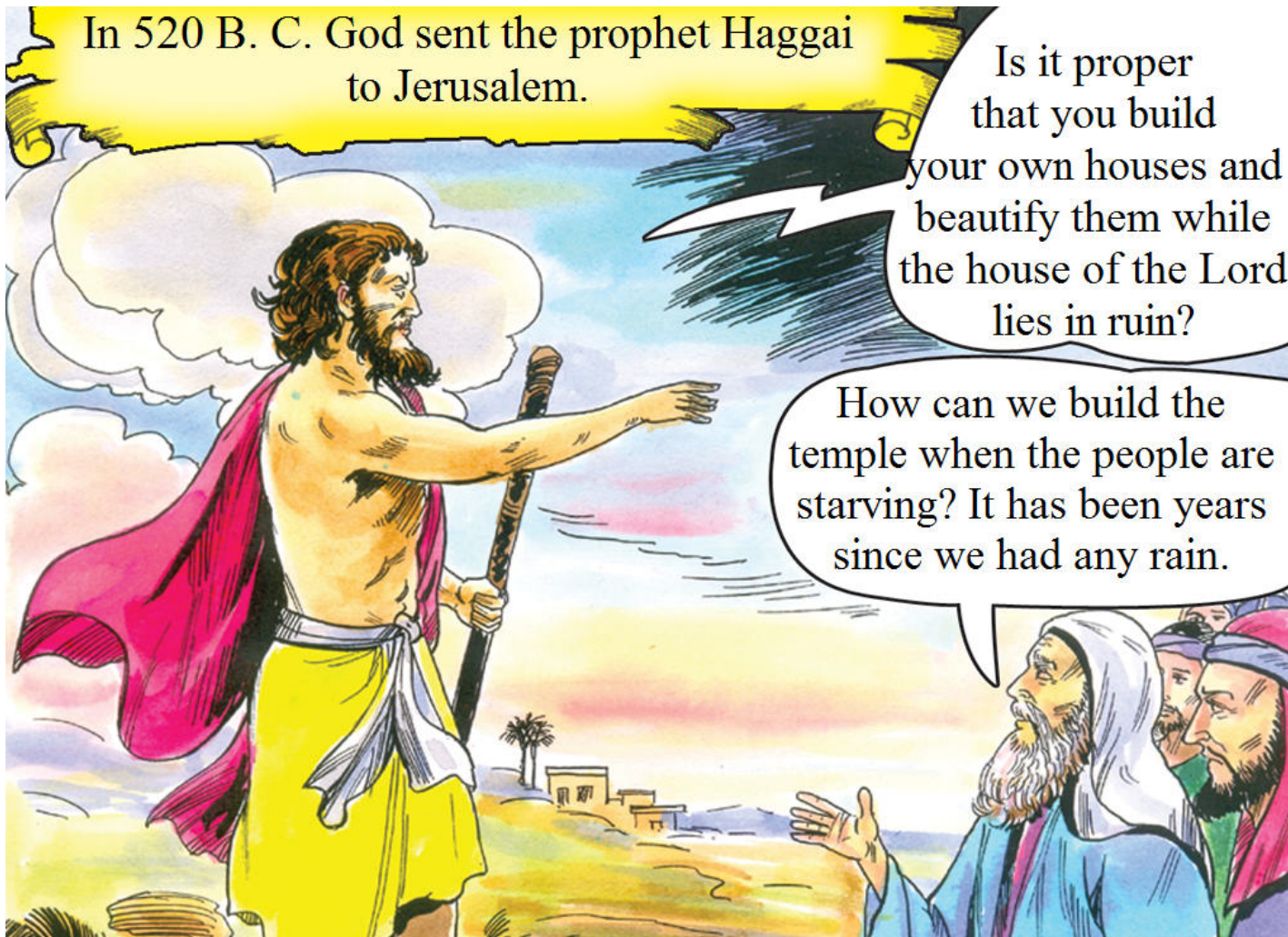
What is the use of a
God who cannot
take care of his
people or build his
own house?

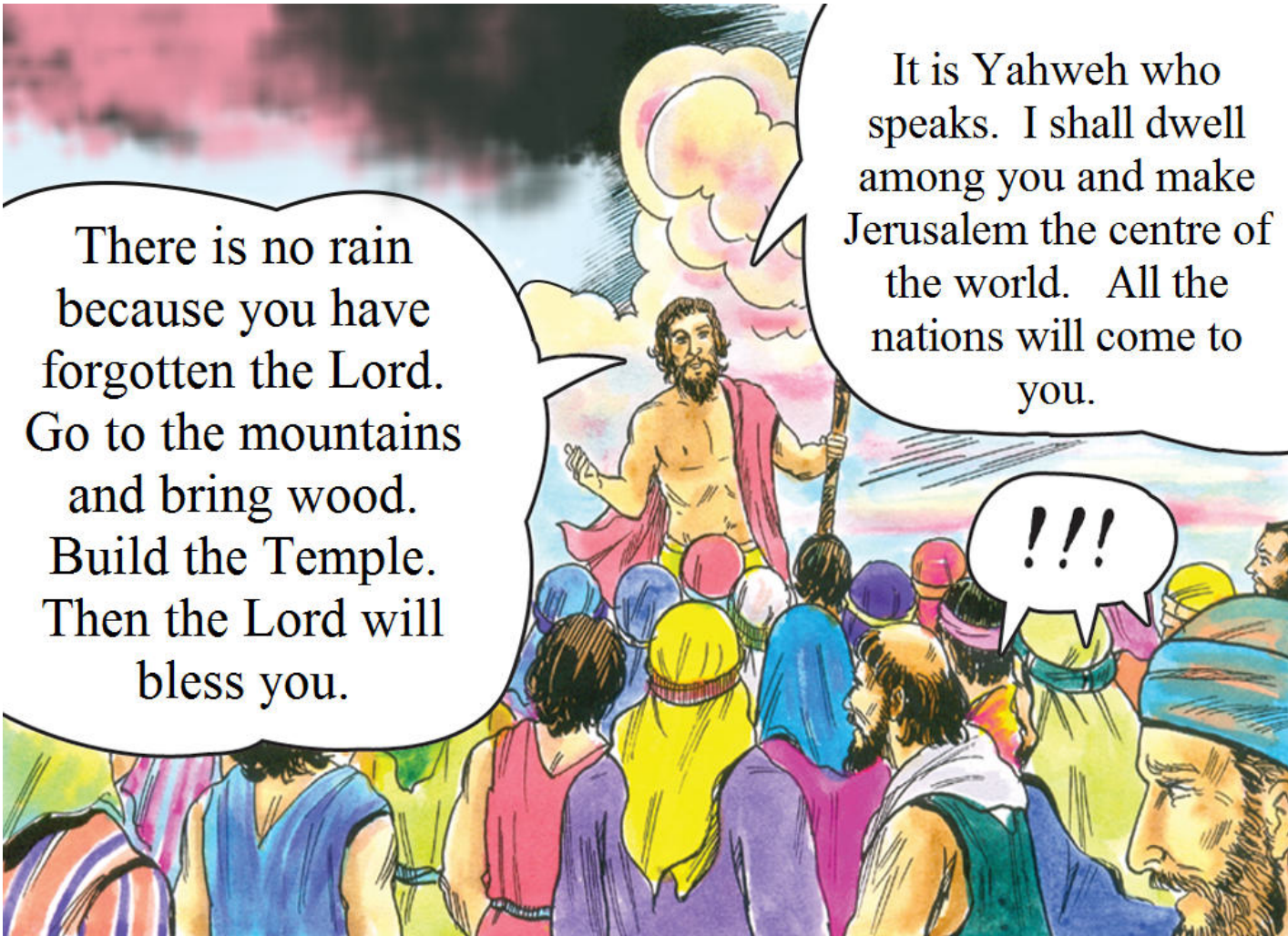


In 520 B. C. God sent the prophet Haggai to Jerusalem.

Is it proper that you build your own houses and beautify them while the house of the Lord lies in ruin?

How can we build the temple when the people are starving? It has been years since we had any rain.

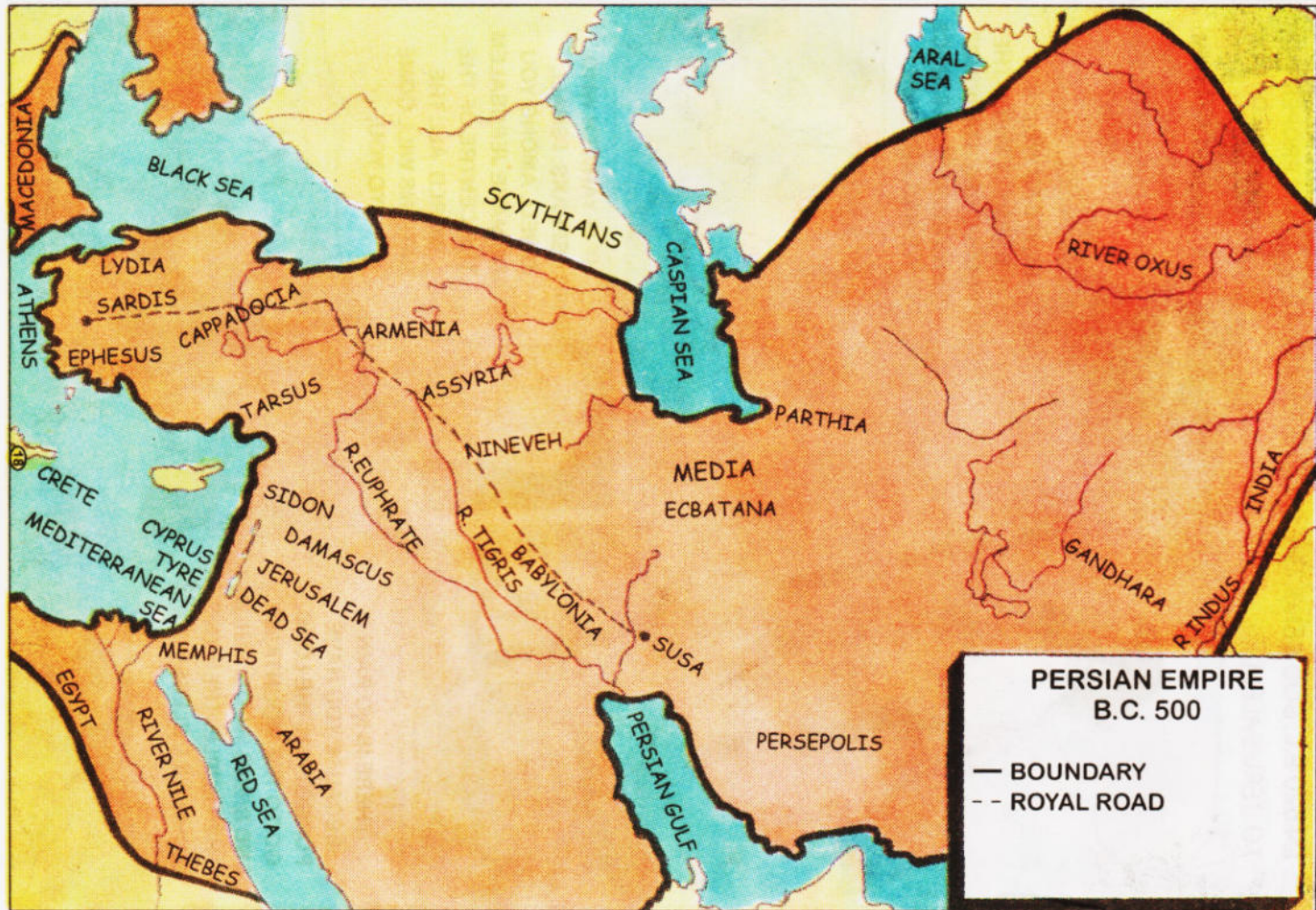




There is no rain
because you have
forgotten the Lord.
Go to the mountains
and bring wood.
Build the Temple.
Then the Lord will
bless you.

It is Yahweh who
speaks. I shall dwell
among you and make
Jerusalem the centre of
the world. All the
nations will come to
you.

!!!

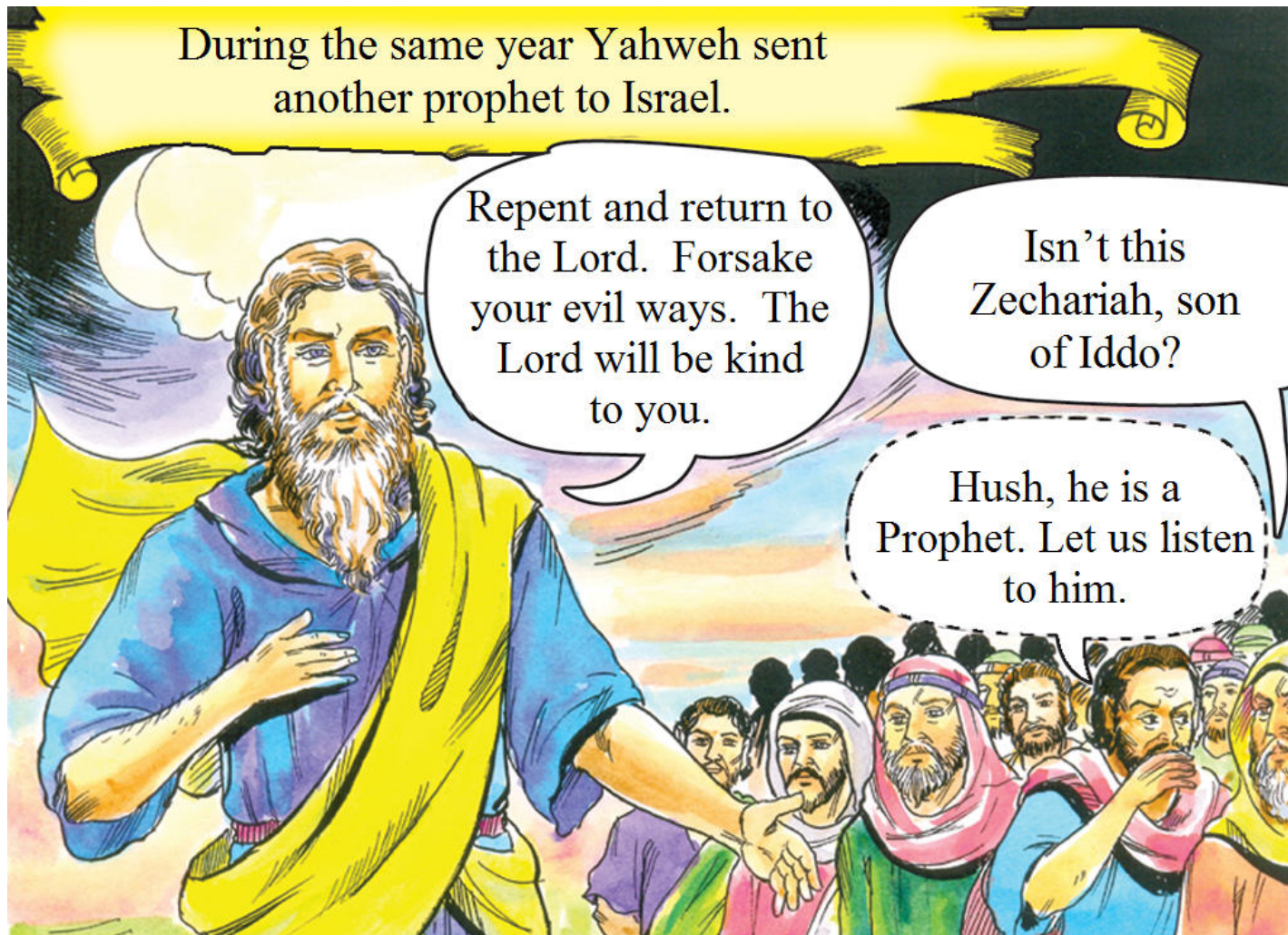


During the same year Yahweh sent another prophet to Israel.

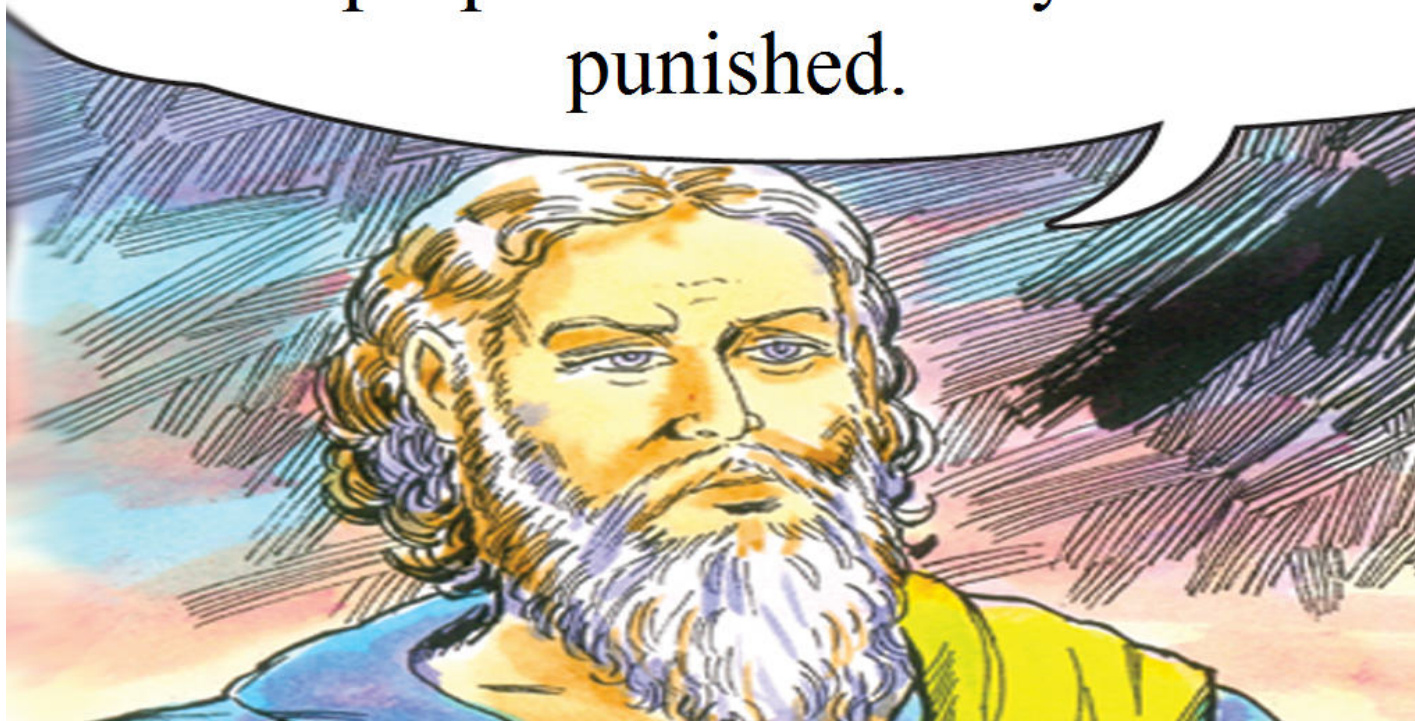
Repent and return to the Lord. Forsake your evil ways. The Lord will be kind to you.

Isn't this Zechariah, son of Iddo?

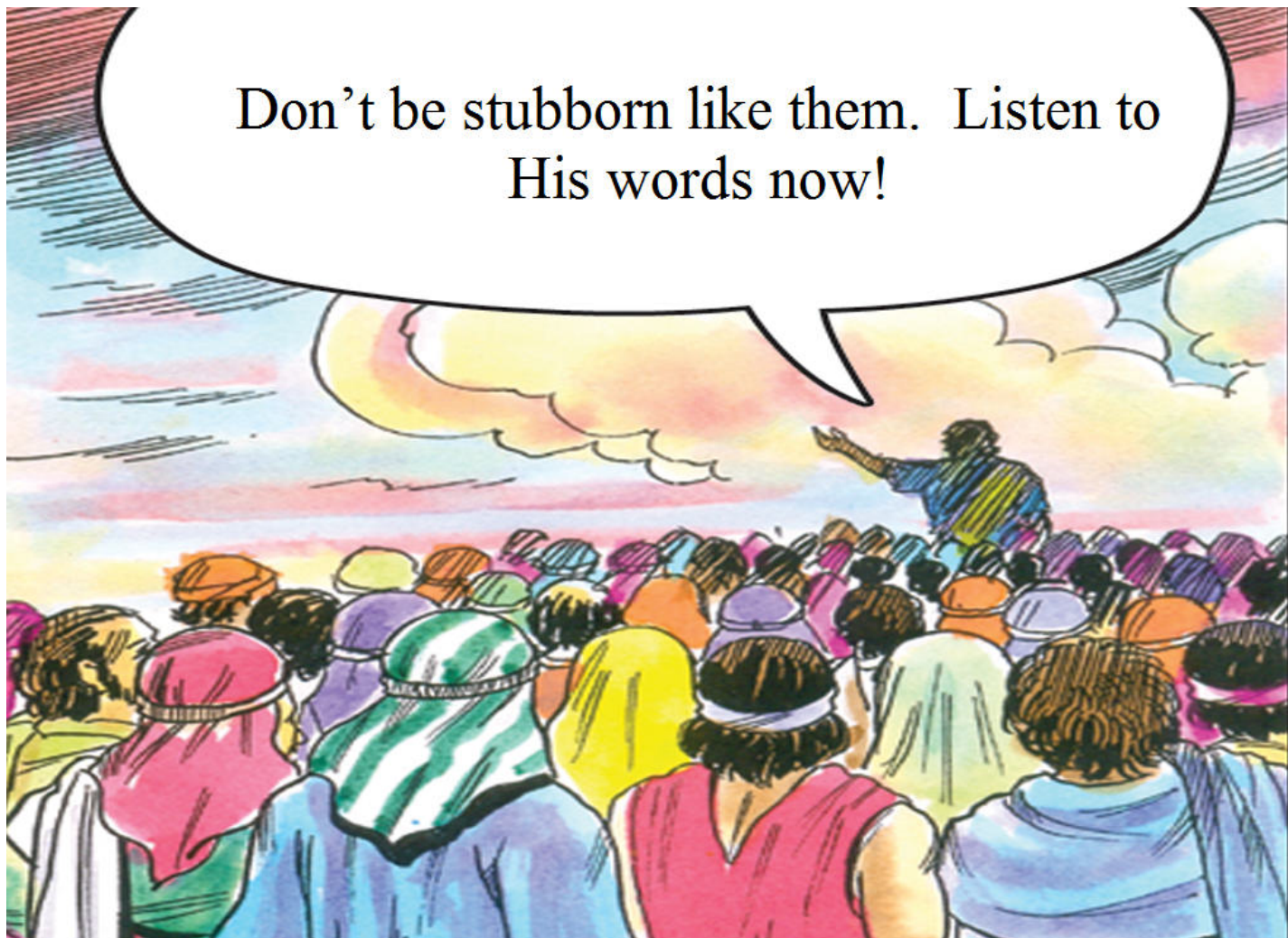
Hush, he is a Prophet. Let us listen to him.



Your fathers didn't listen to the words of Yahweh spoken through the prophets and so they were punished.



Don't be stubborn like them. Listen to His words now!



Look! The angels of the Lord are galloping to the four corners of the world! They will establish peace everywhere.



These four horns are the four empires, Assyria, Egypt, Babylon and Persia, who scattered the people of God. Now, Yahweh will cut them down.

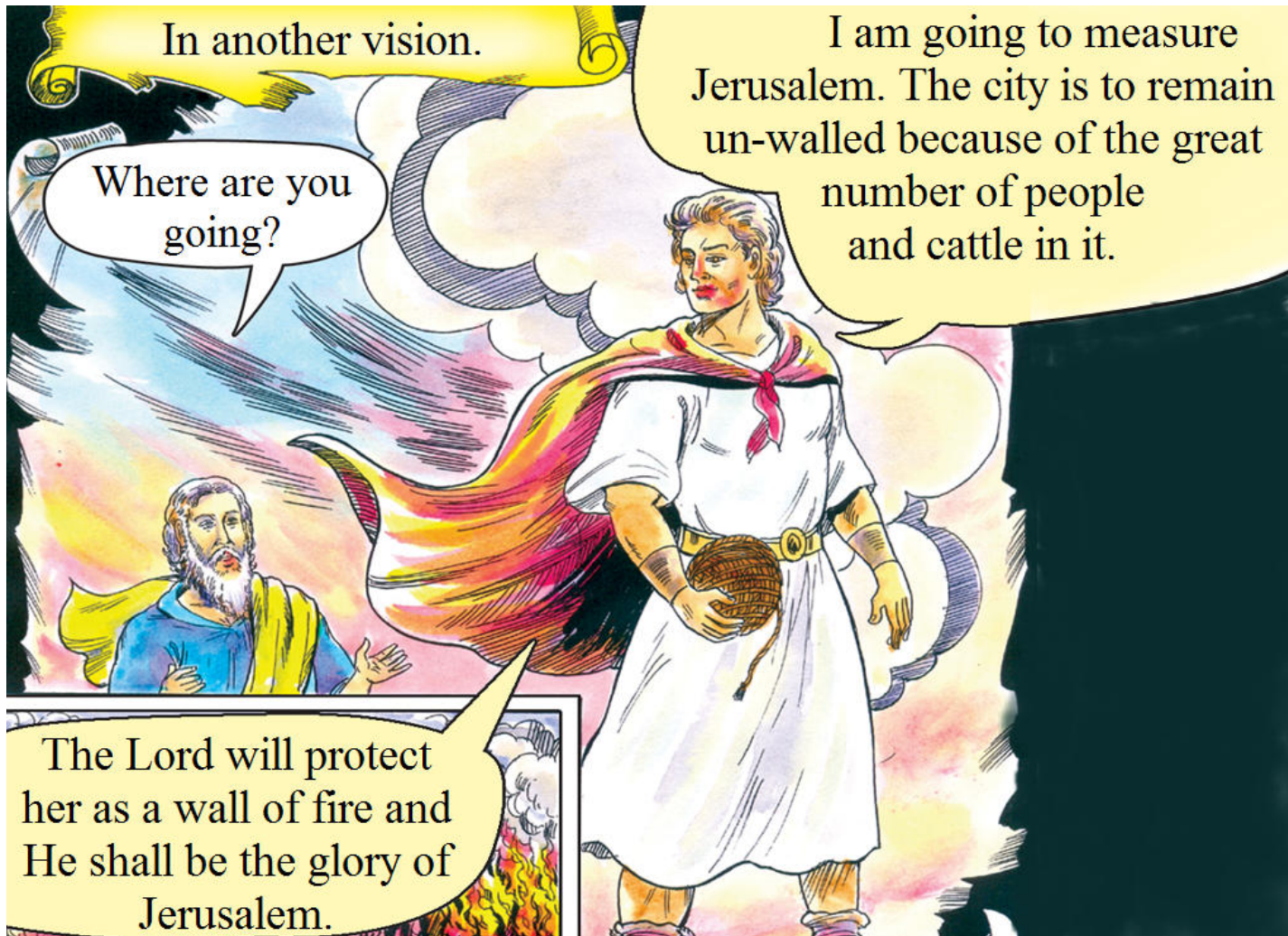


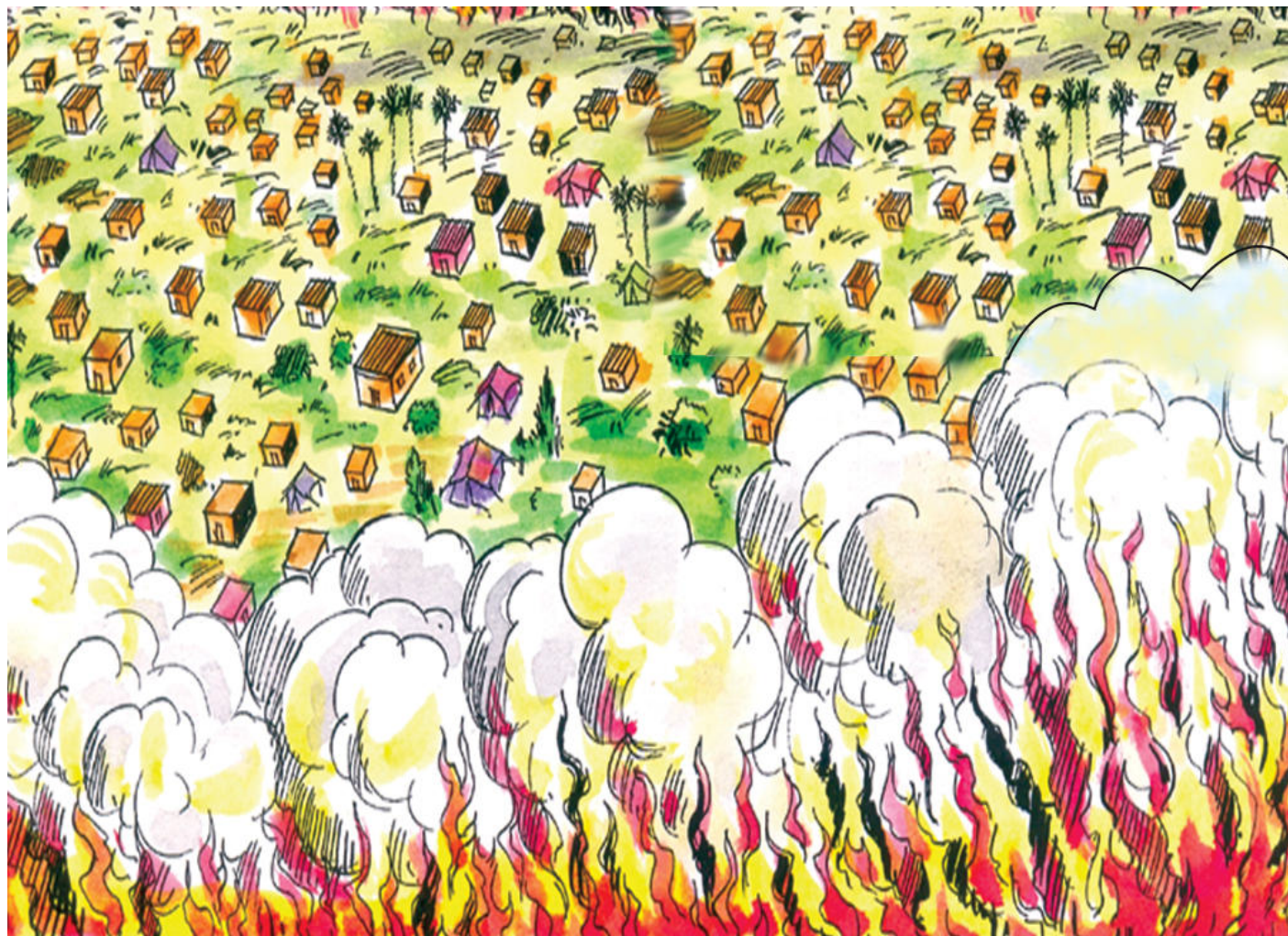
In another vision.

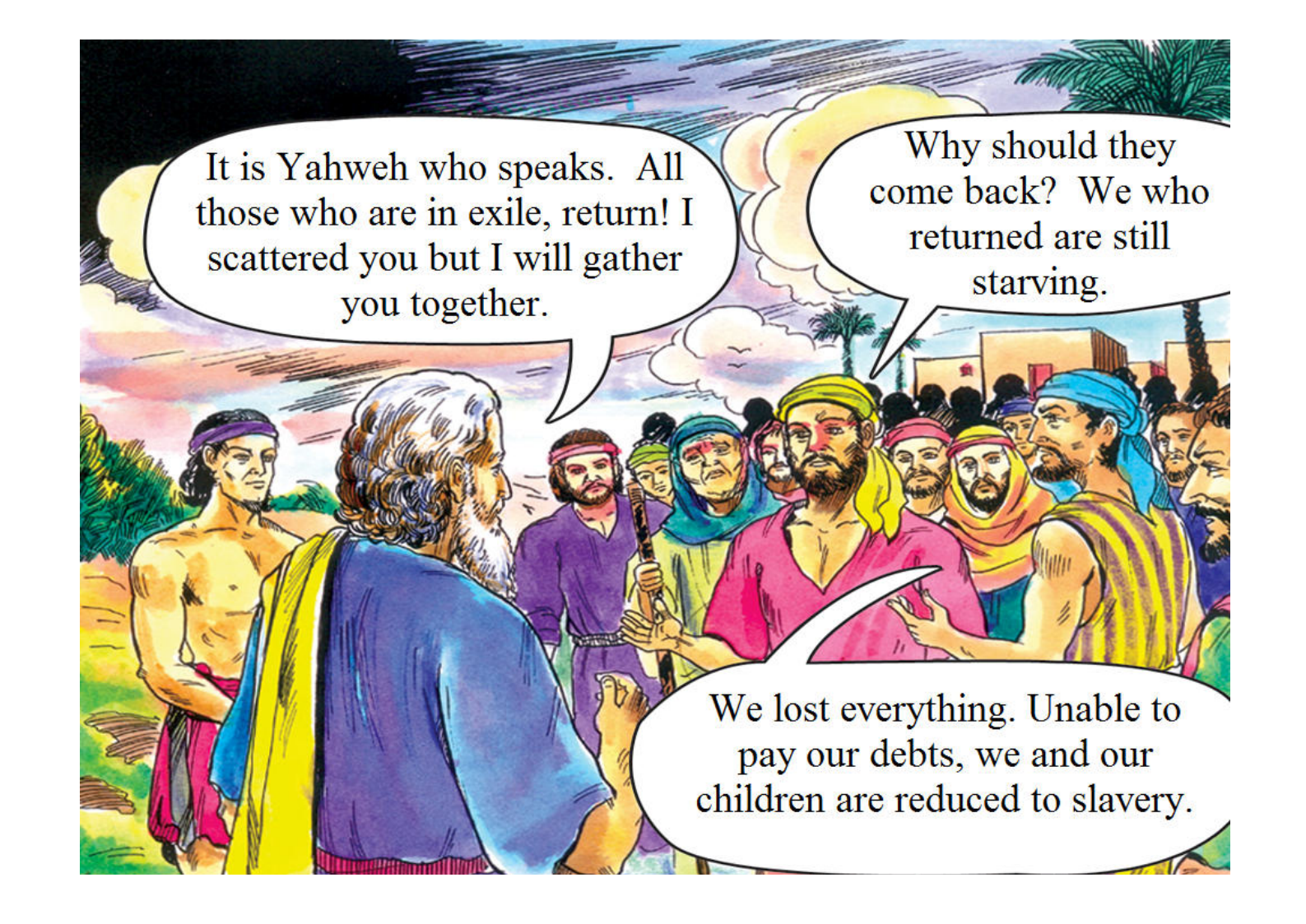
Where are you going?

I am going to measure Jerusalem. The city is to remain un-walled because of the great number of people and cattle in it.

The Lord will protect her as a wall of fire and He shall be the glory of Jerusalem.







It is Yahweh who speaks. All those who are in exile, return! I scattered you but I will gather you together.

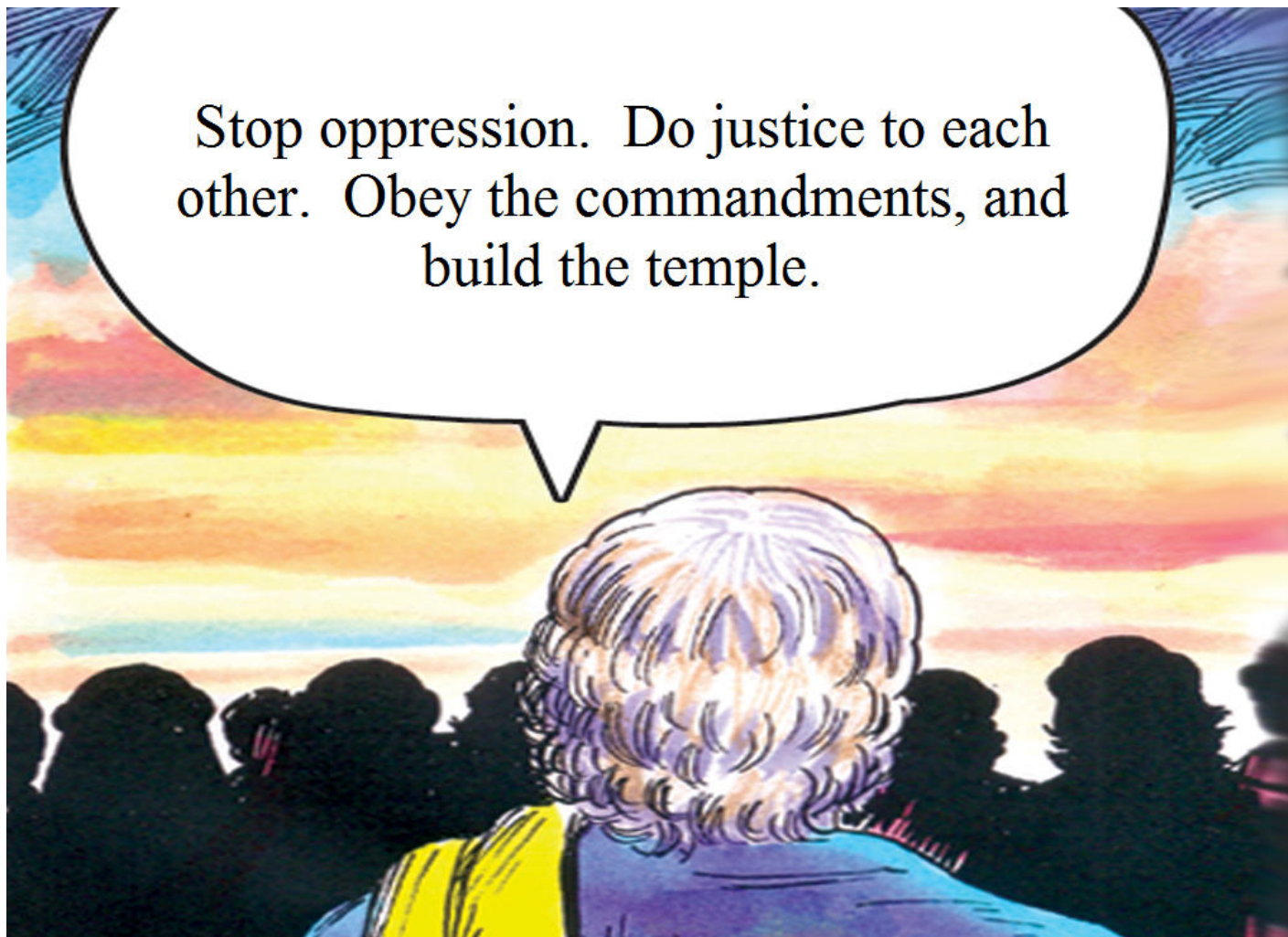
Why should they come back? We who returned are still starving.

We lost everything. Unable to pay our debts, we and our children are reduced to slavery.

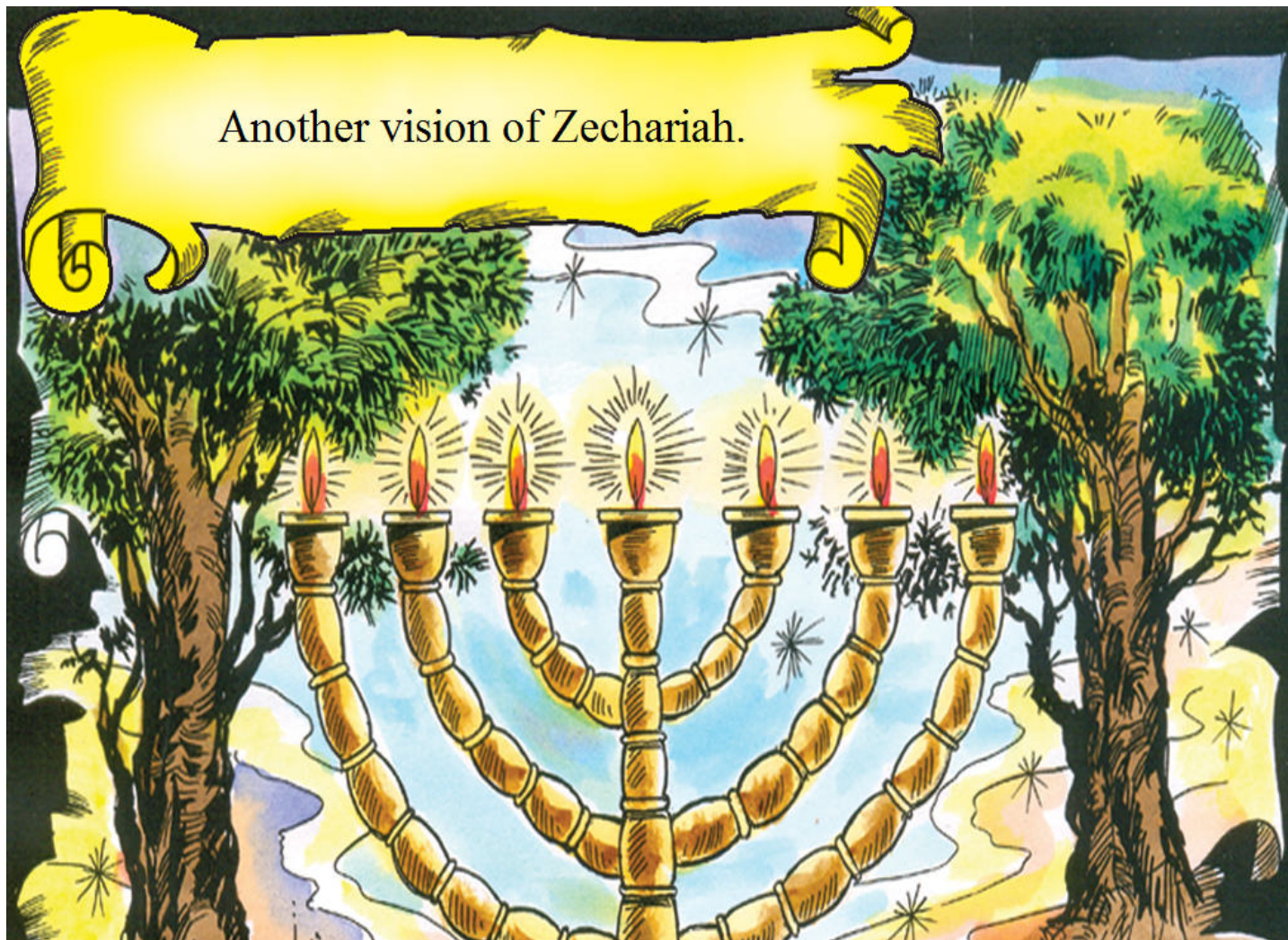
The Lord says: you are the apple
of my eye. I will protect you.
Return to me!

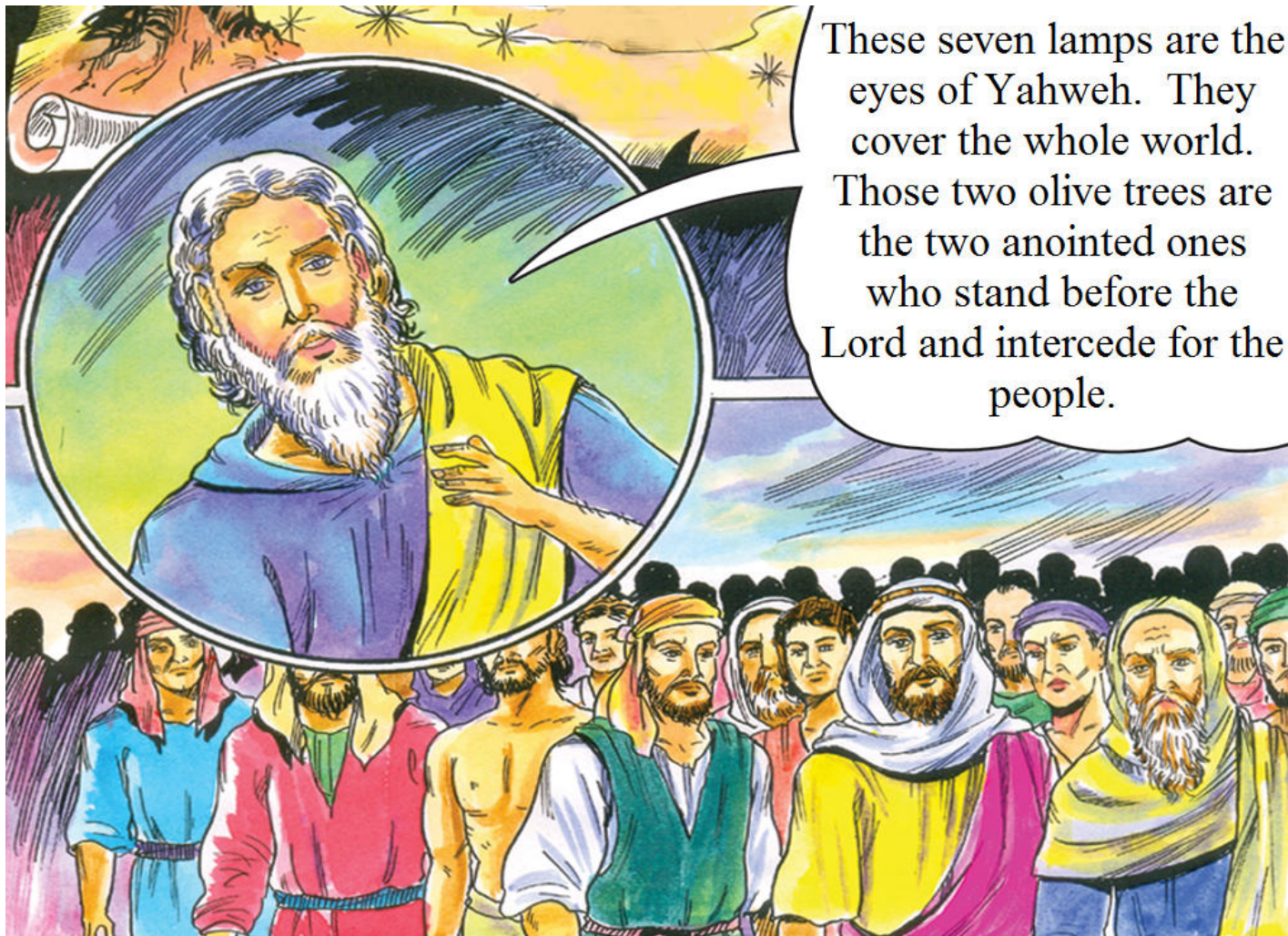


Stop oppression. Do justice to each other. Obey the commandments, and build the temple.



Another vision of Zechariah.



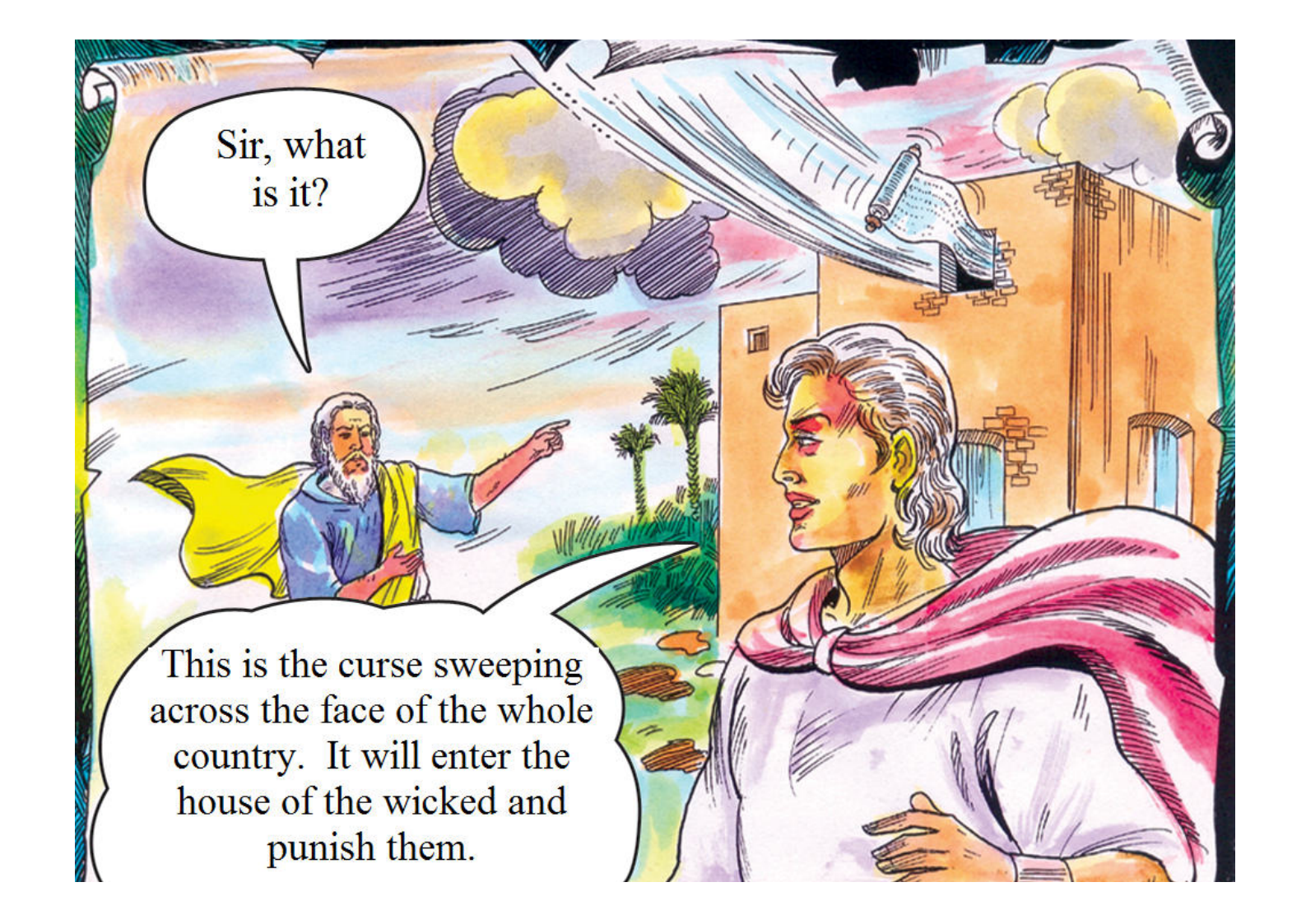


These seven lamps are the eyes of Yahweh. They cover the whole world. Those two olive trees are the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord and intercede for the people.

Another vision

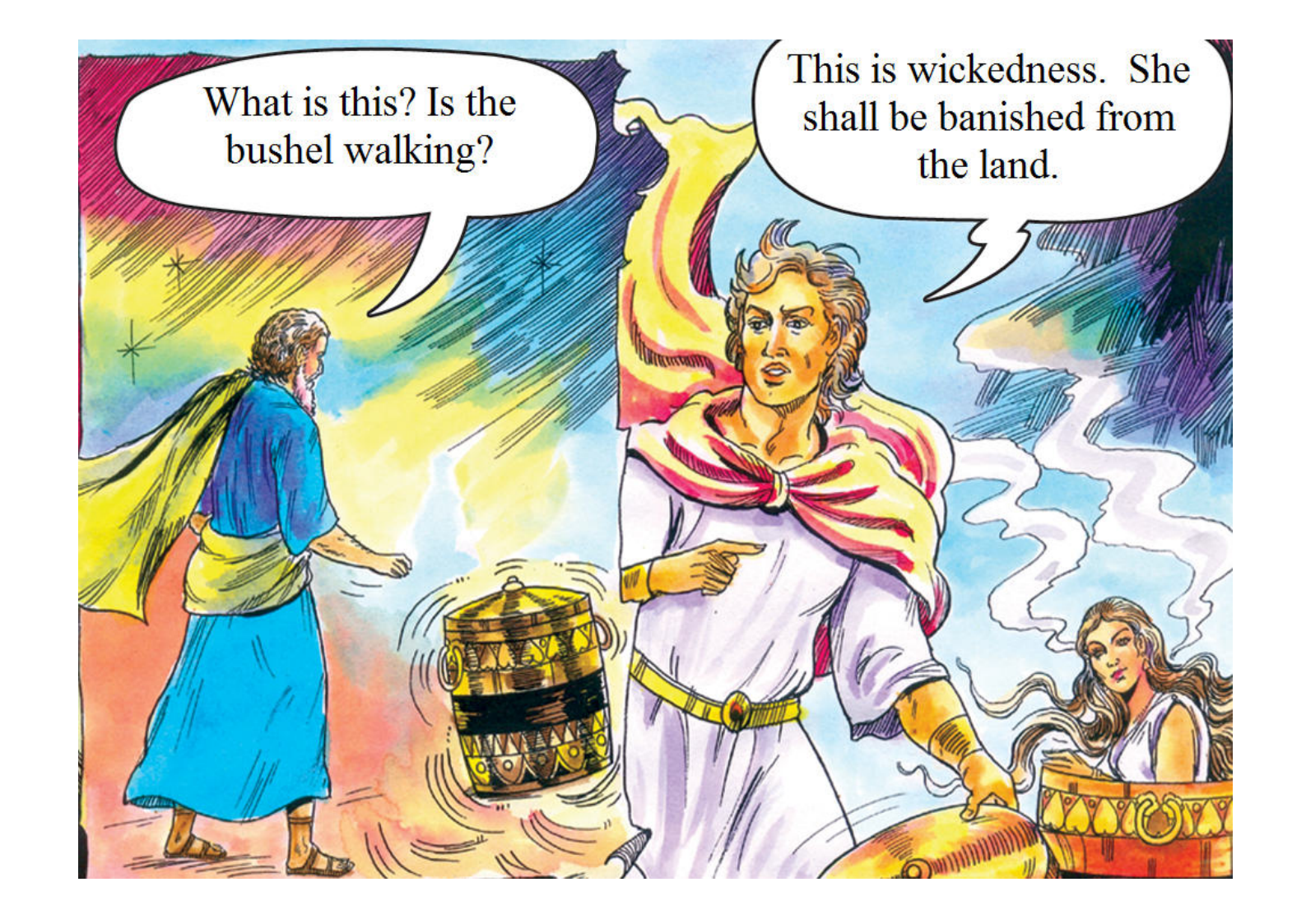
What? A flying scroll! Where is it going? What is written on it?





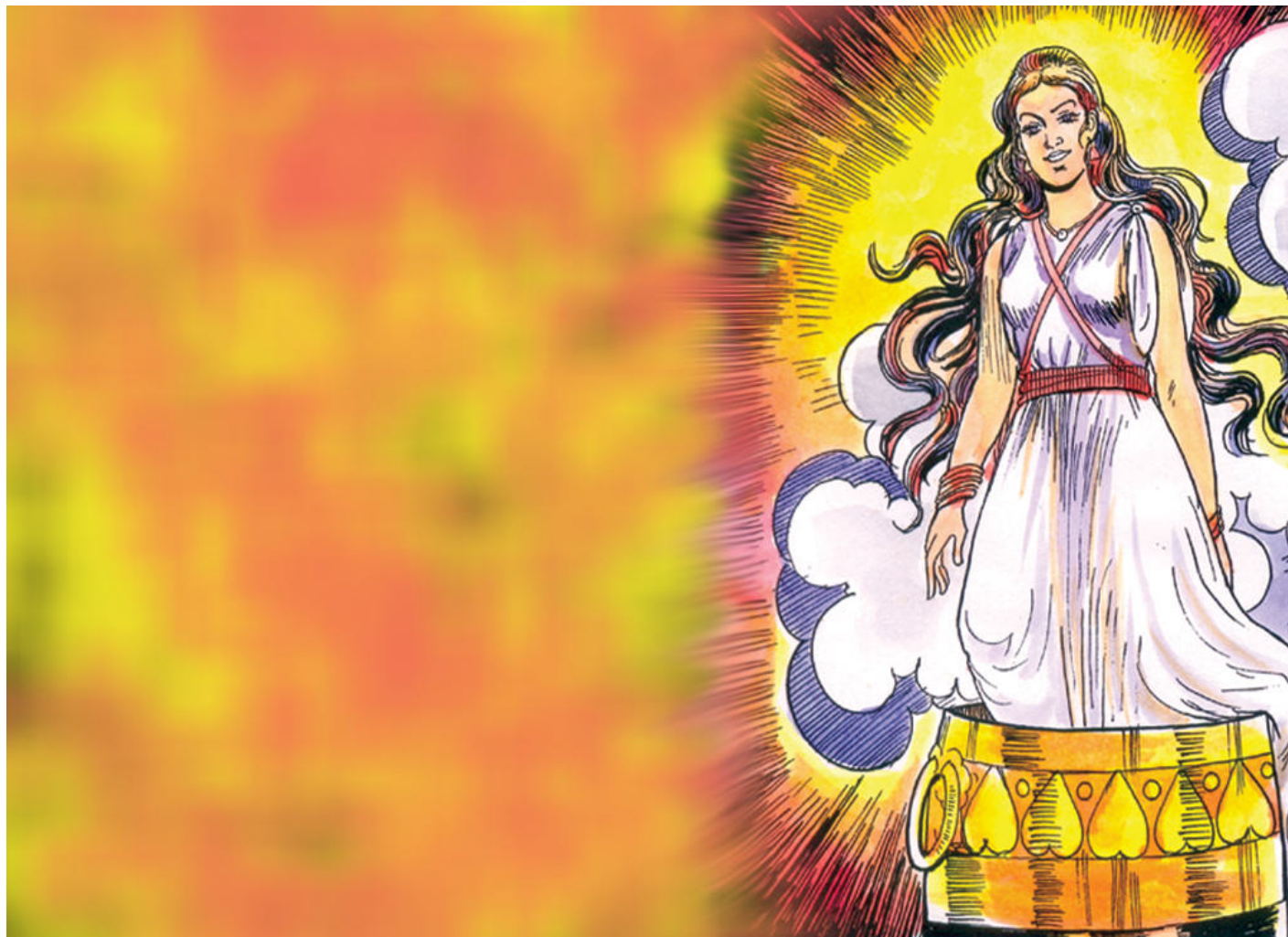
Sir, what
is it?

This is the curse sweeping
across the face of the whole
country. It will enter the
house of the wicked and
punish them.

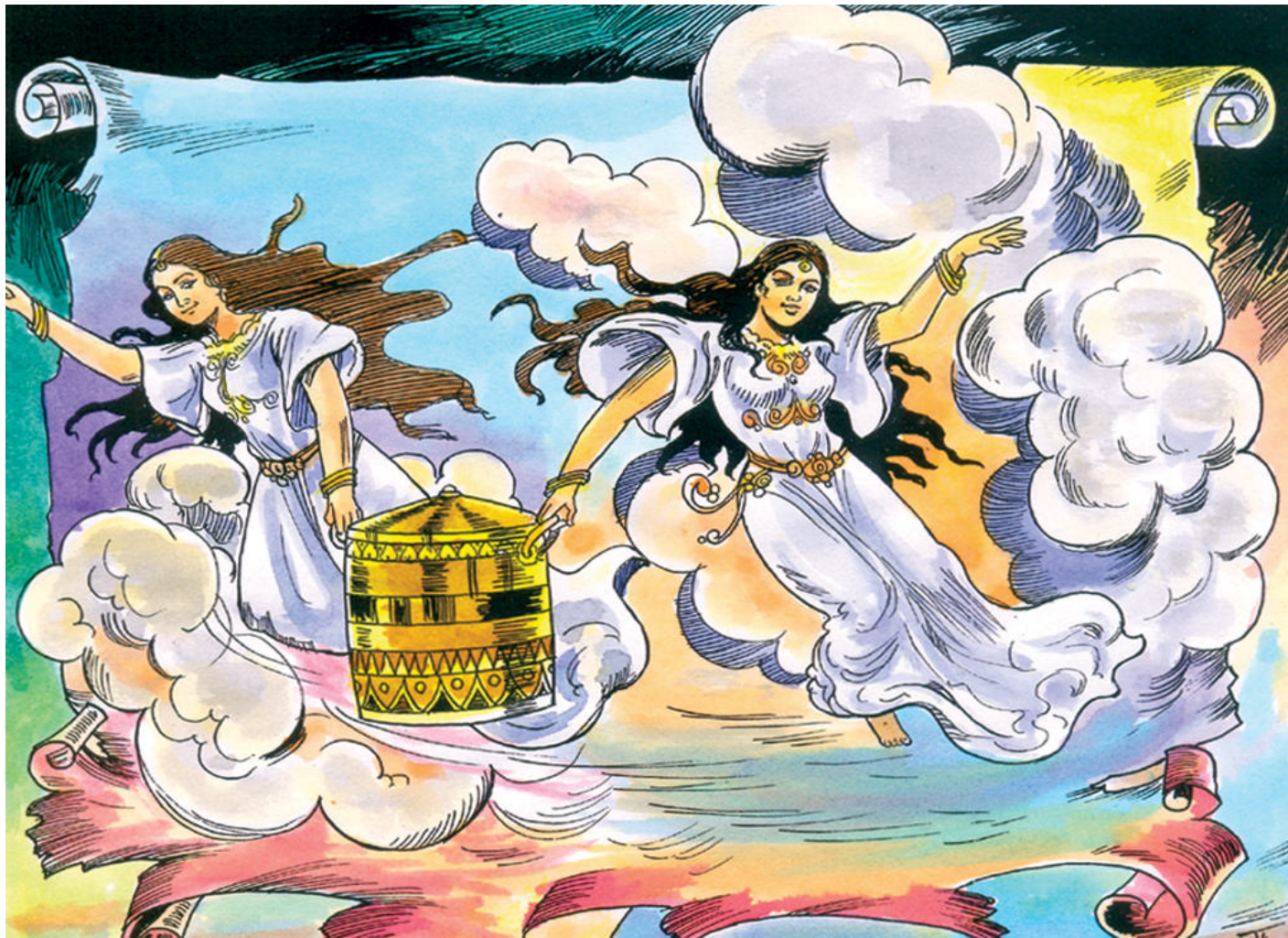


What is this? Is the bushel walking?

This is wickedness. She shall be banished from the land.

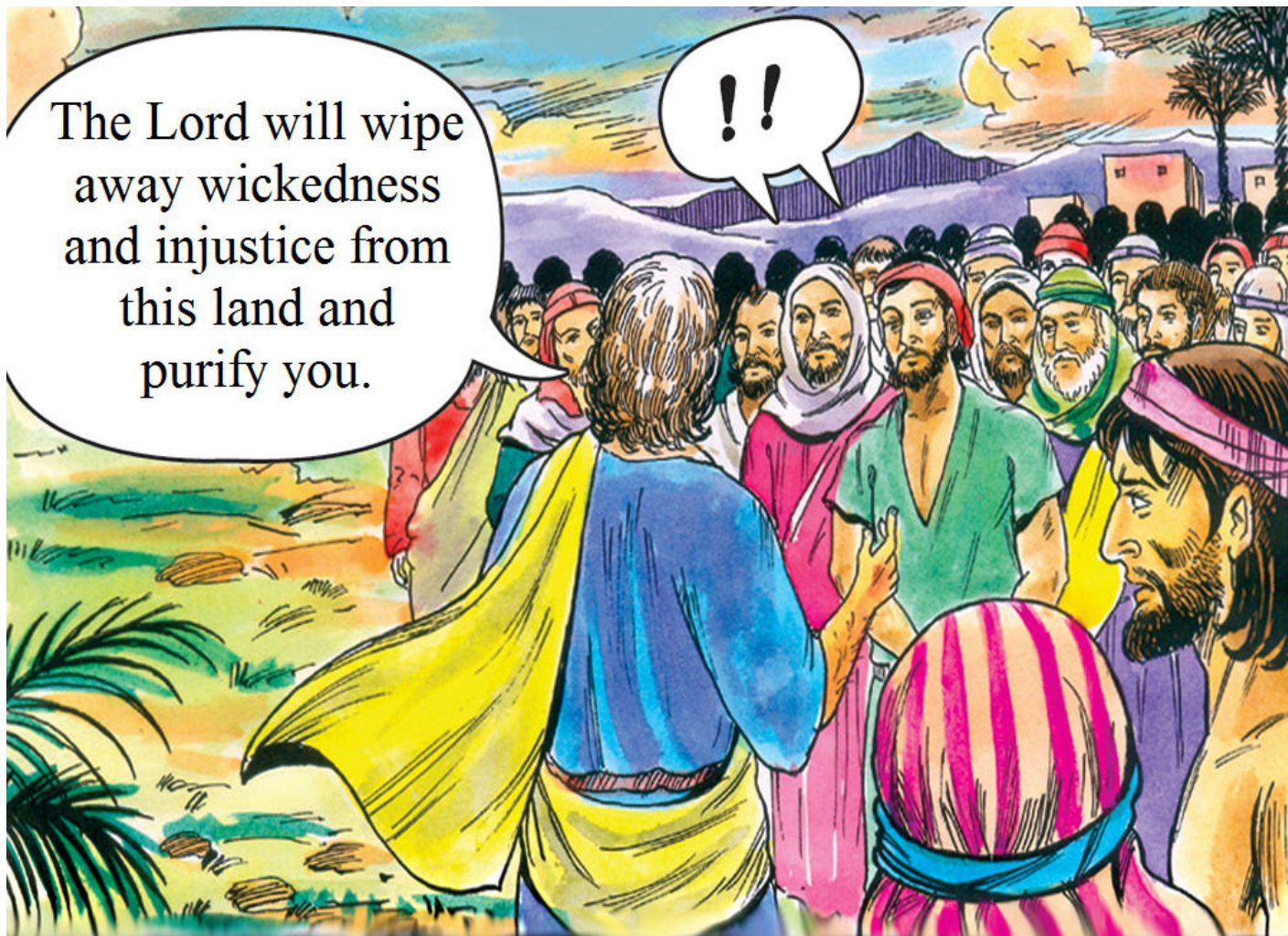






The Lord will wipe
away wickedness
and injustice from
this land and
purify you.

!!



A few of the elders of Israel came to Zechariah.

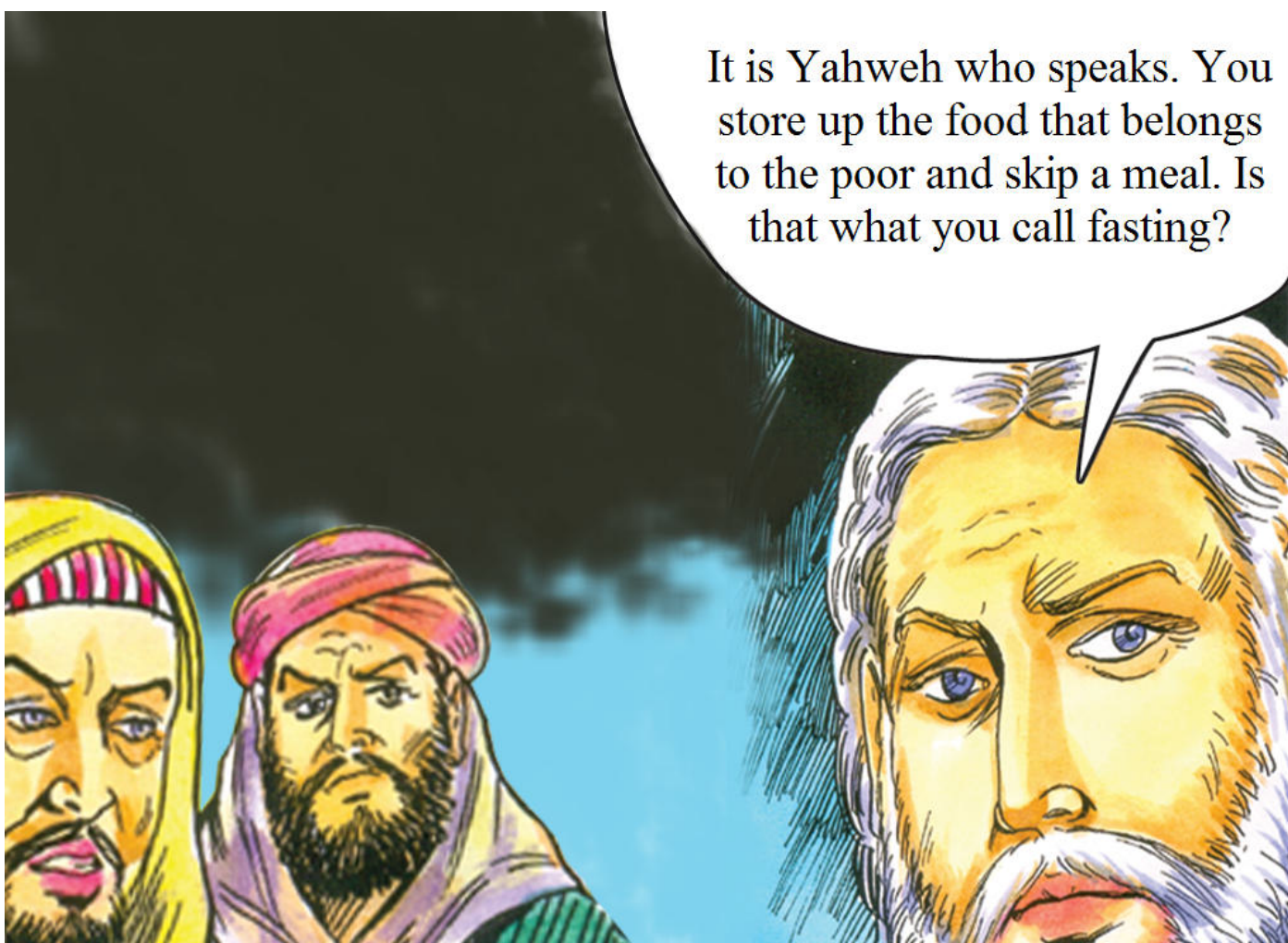
Master, should we fast and mourn in the fifth month as we have been doing since the fall of Jerusalem?

Fasting? For whom do you fast?

!?



It is Yahweh who speaks. You store up the food that belongs to the poor and skip a meal. Is that what you call fasting?



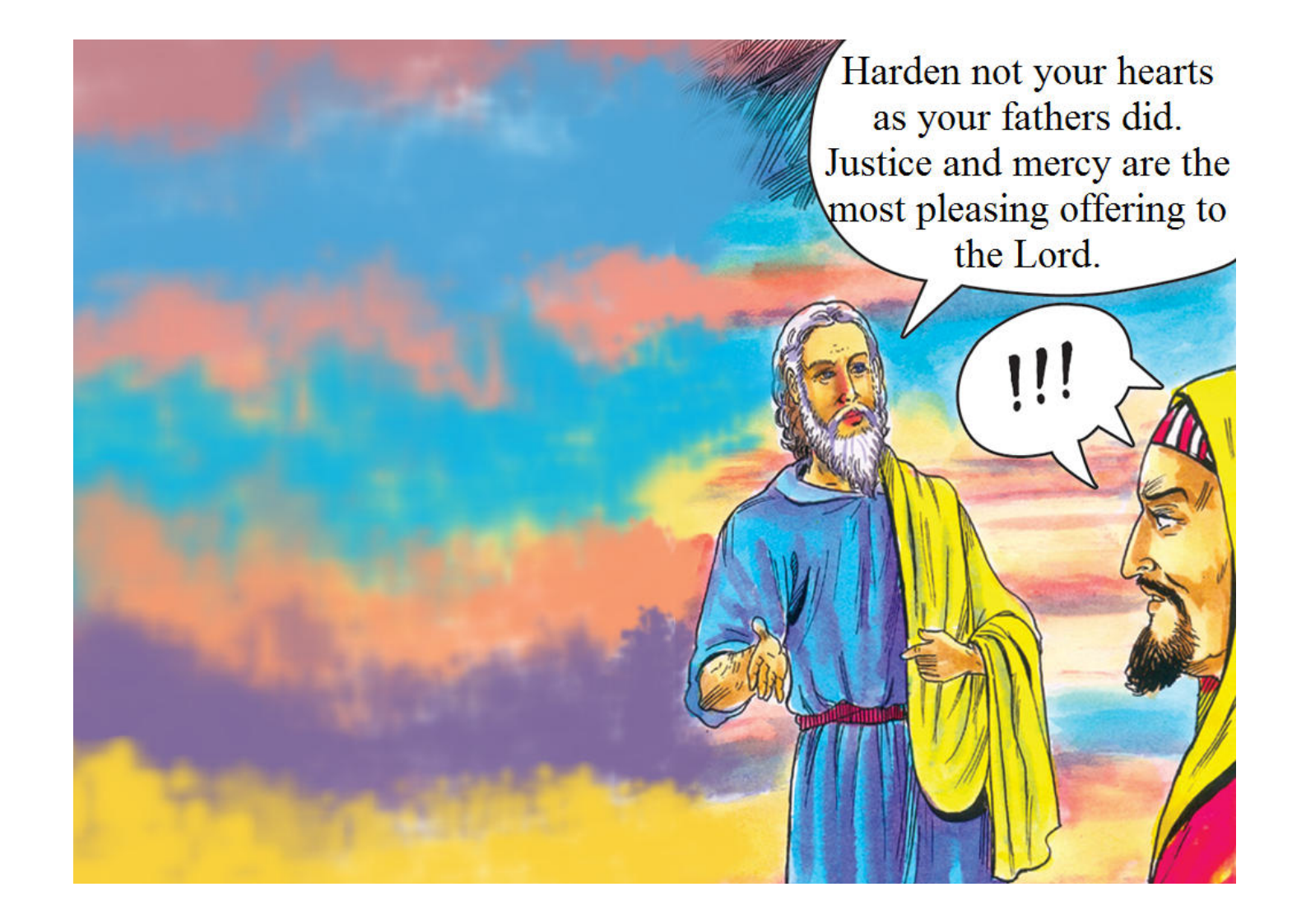
The Lord will not accept your
fasting because you exploit
the poor.

Then, what shall
we do?



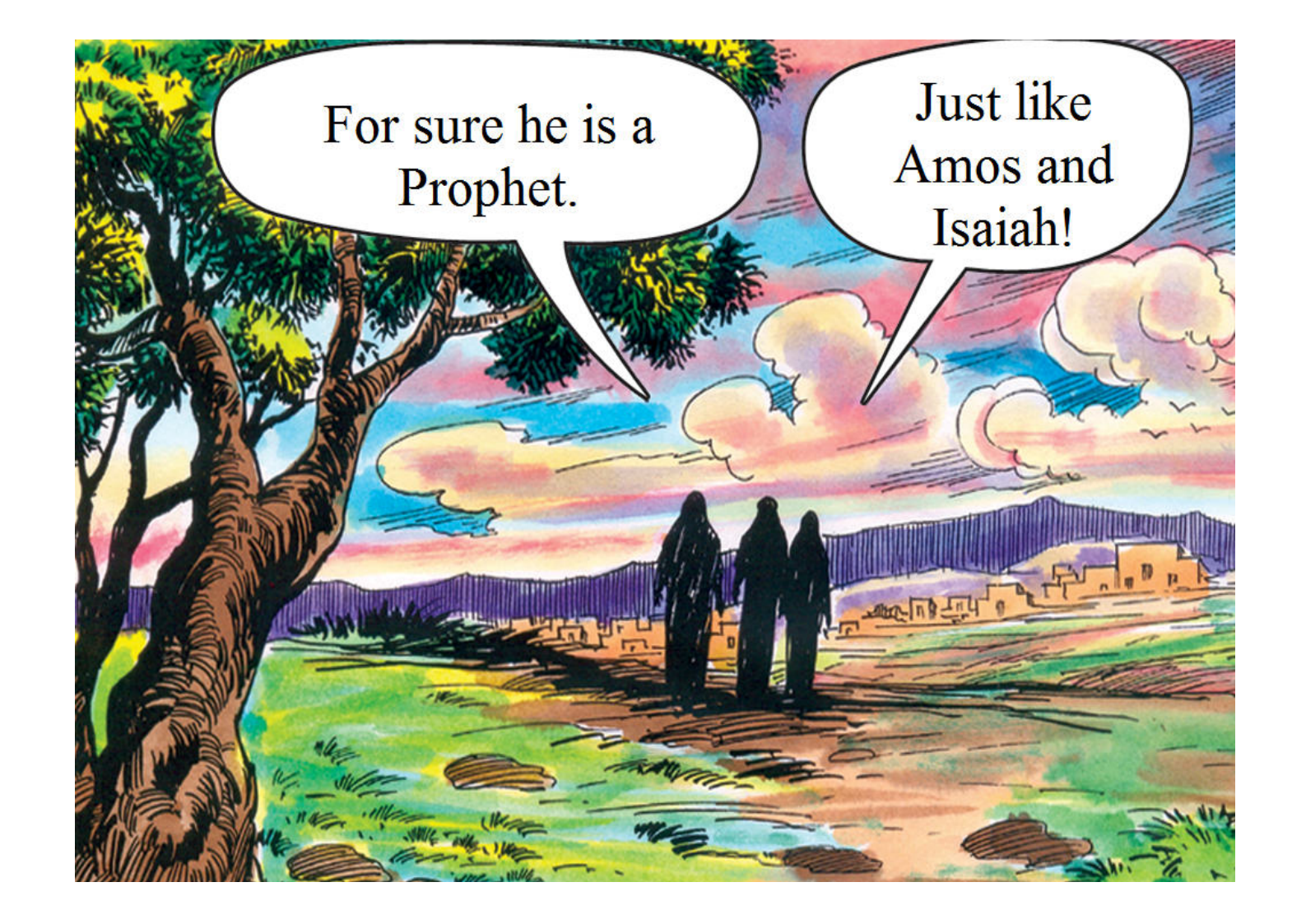
Haven't the prophets told you?
Let justice reign. Be kind to the
widows and the orphans. Share
your goods with aliens
and the poor.





Harden not your hearts
as your fathers did.
Justice and mercy are the
most pleasing offering to
the Lord.

!!!



For sure he is a
Prophet.

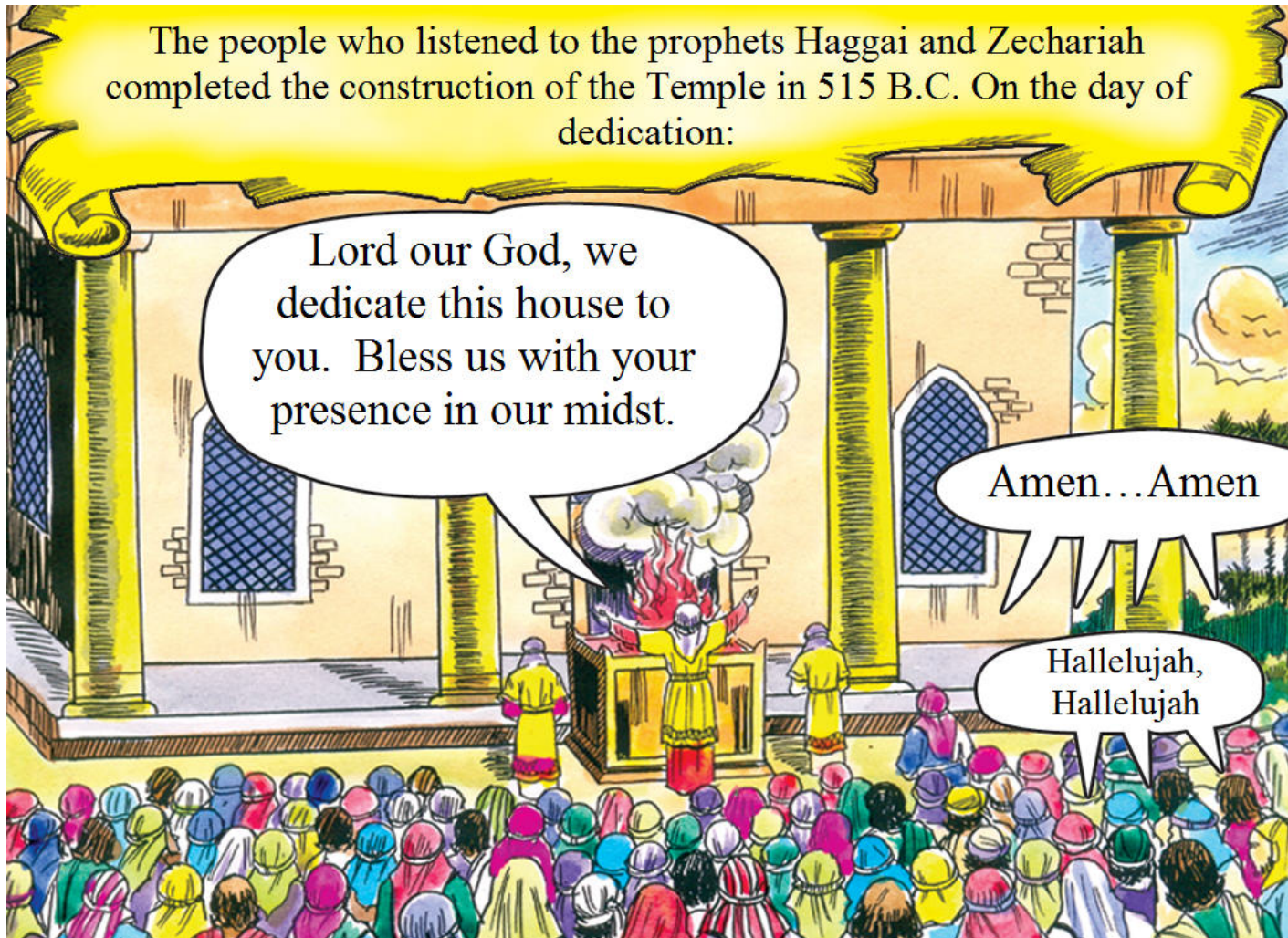
Just like
Amos and
Isaiah!

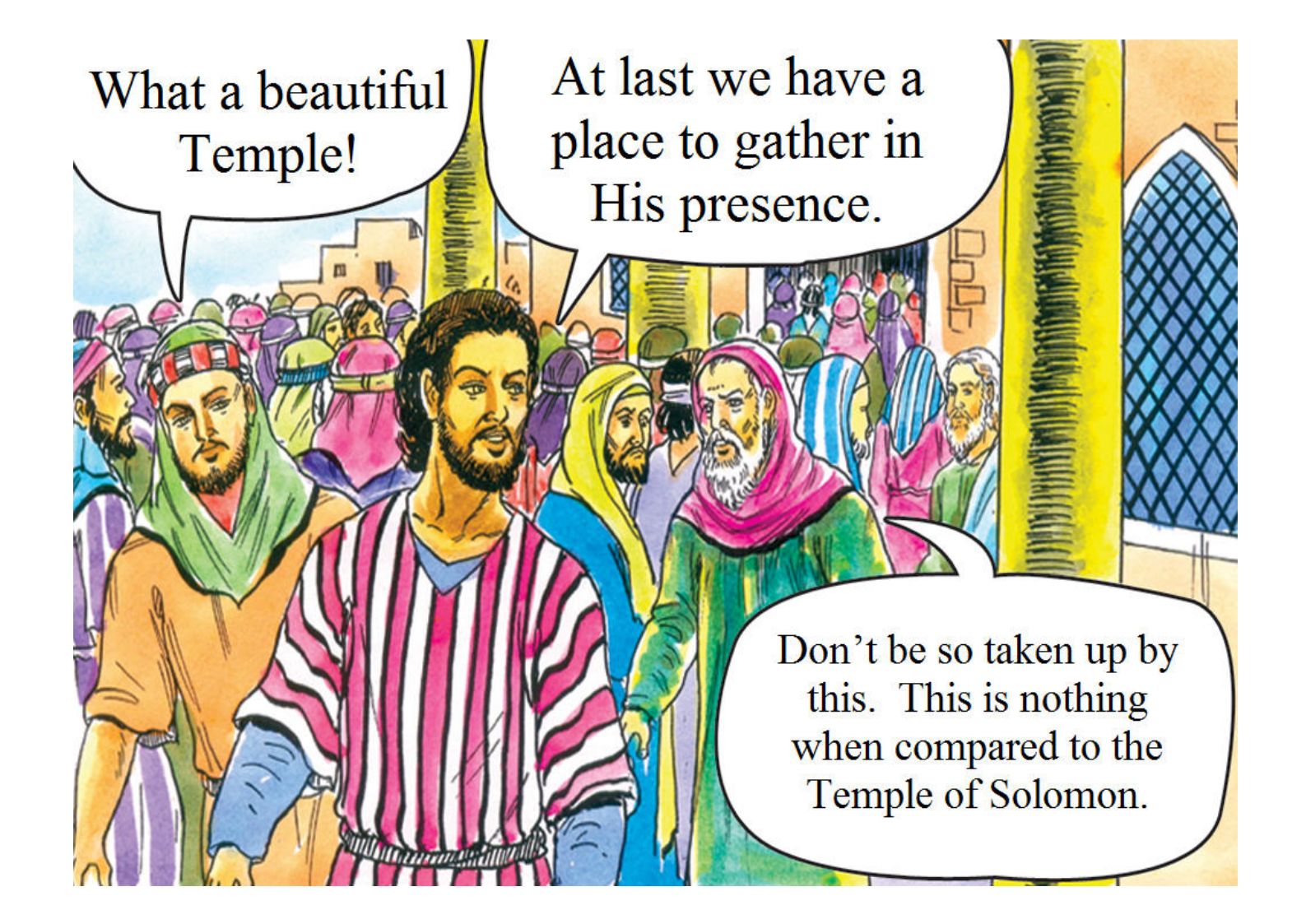
The people who listened to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah completed the construction of the Temple in 515 B.C. On the day of dedication:

Lord our God, we
dedicate this house to
you. Bless us with your
presence in our midst.

Amen...Amen

Hallelujah,
Hallelujah





What a beautiful
Temple!

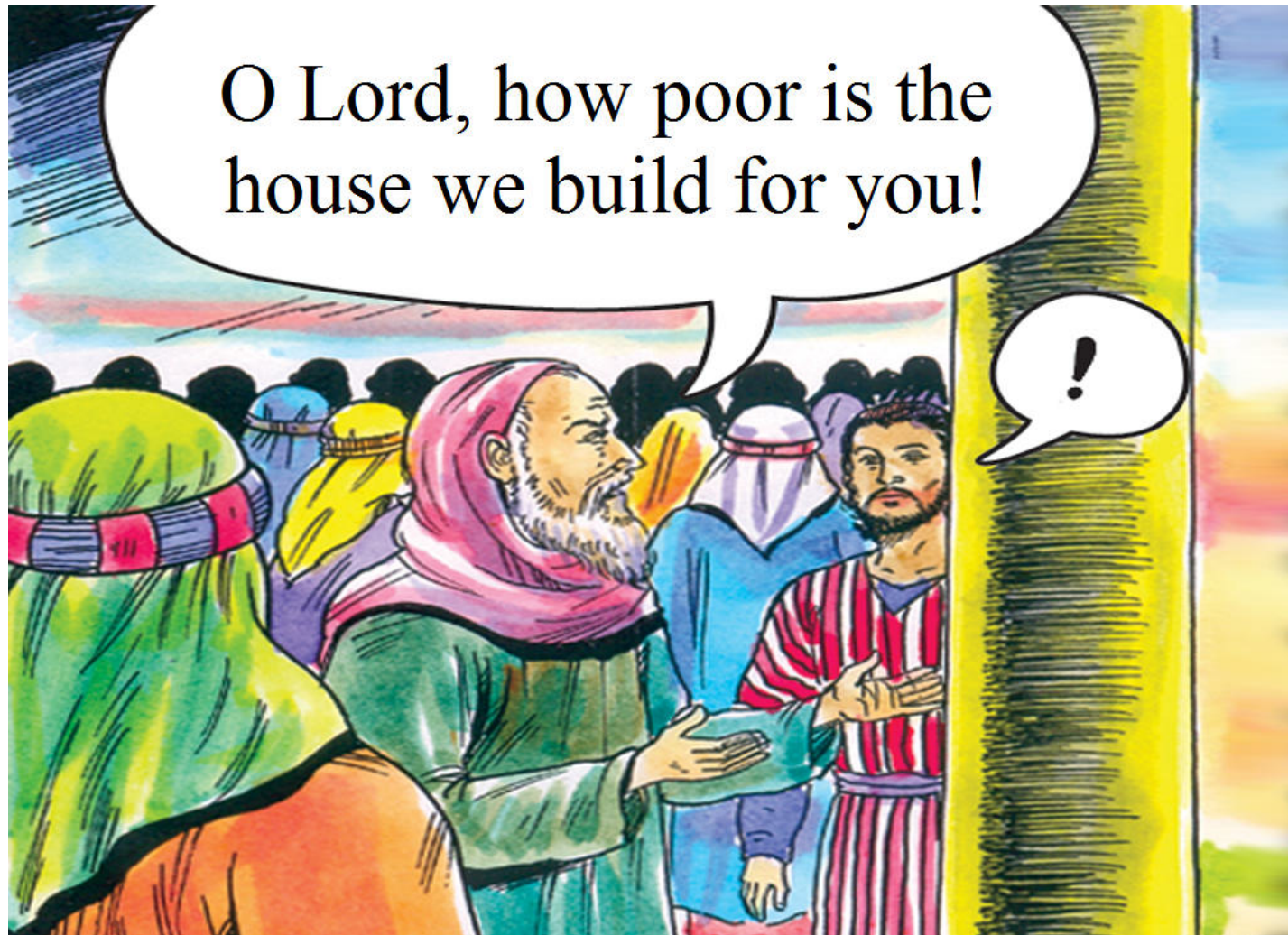
At last we have a
place to gather in
His presence.

Don't be so taken up by
this. This is nothing
when compared to the
Temple of Solomon.

The Temple Solomon built was a beauty. The pillars were inlaid with gold and Jewels.



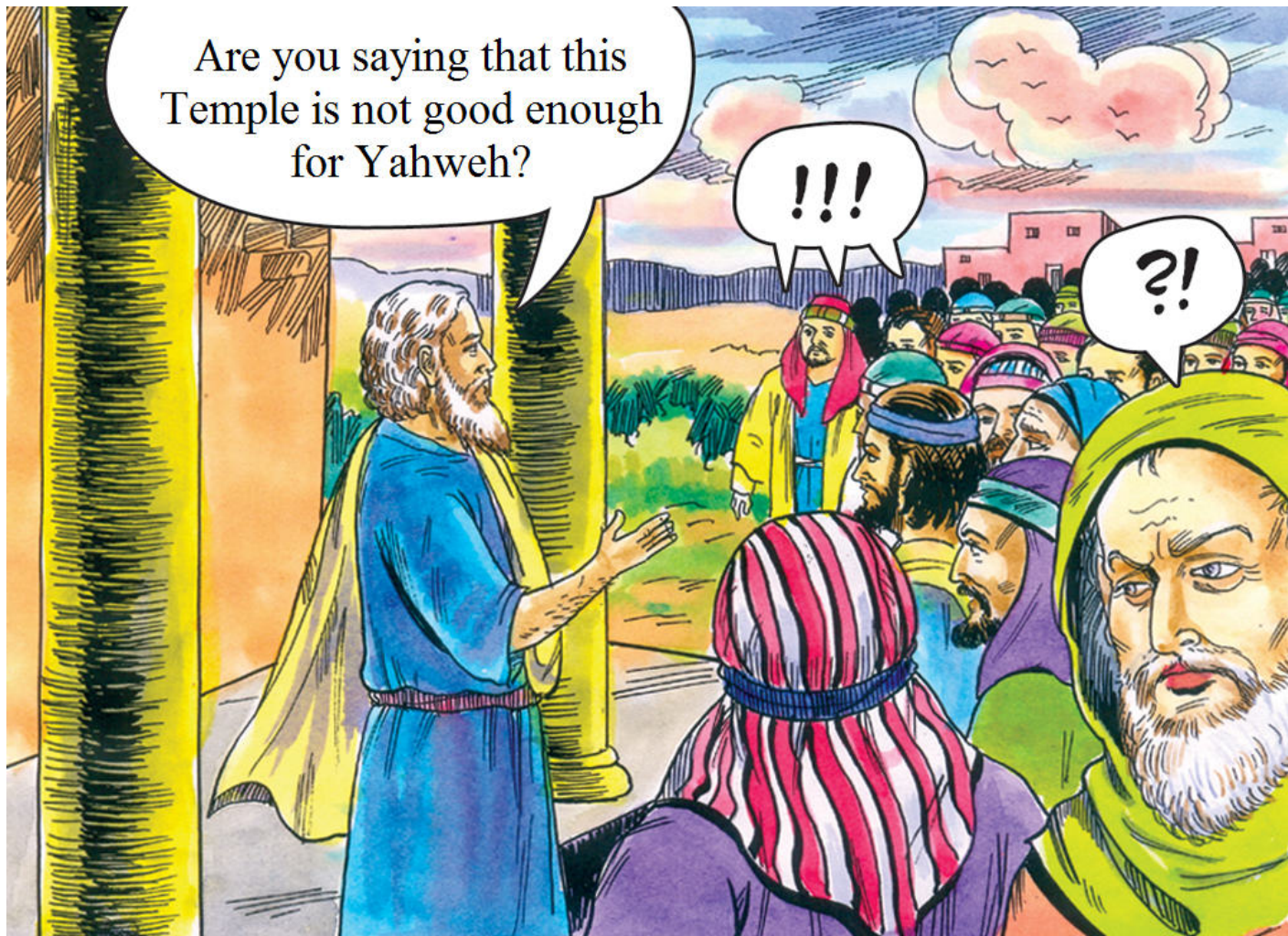
O Lord, how poor is the house we build for you!



Are you saying that this Temple is not good enough for Yahweh?

!!!

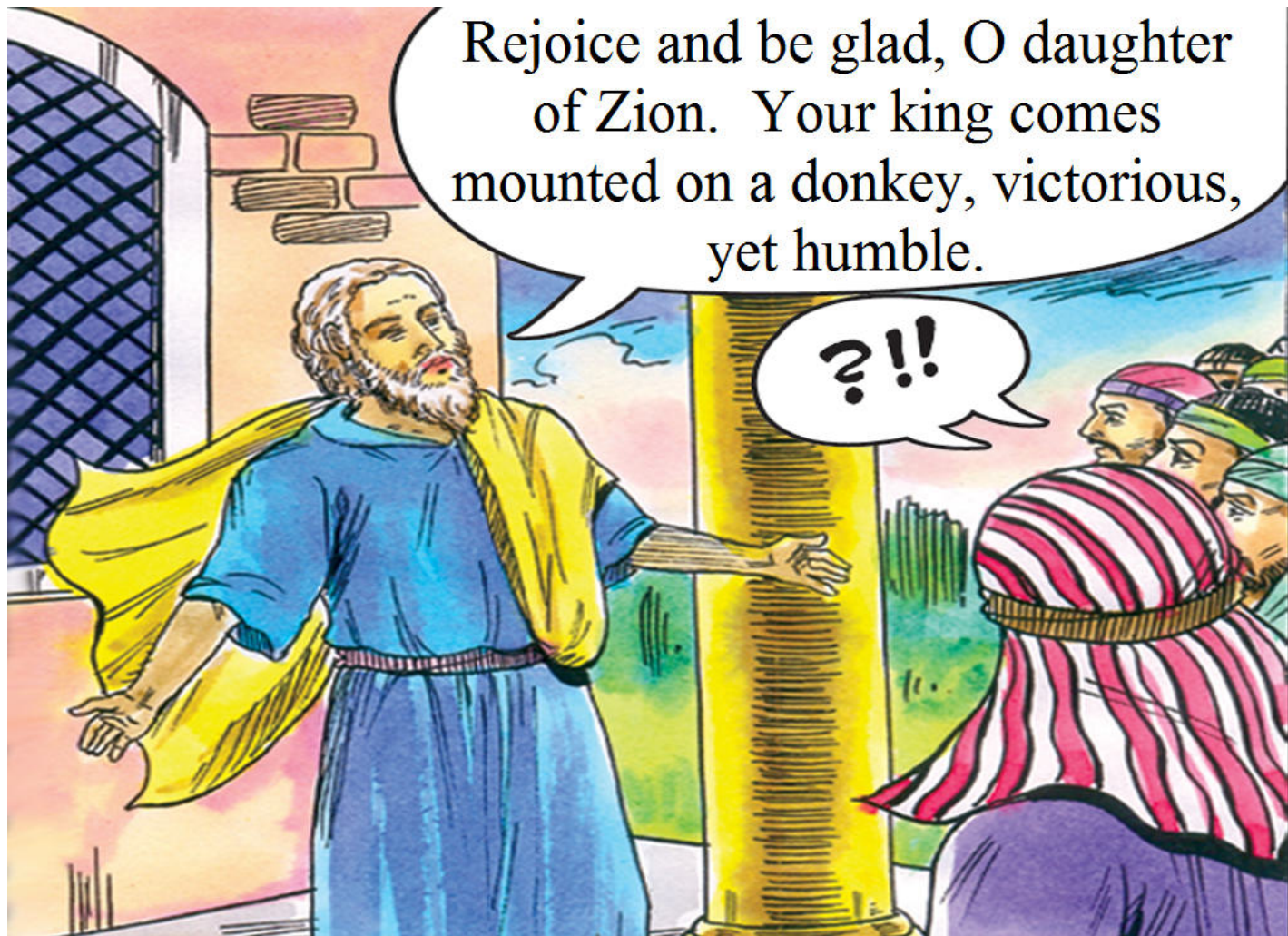
?!



We did our best. The Lord
has accepted this house and
will dwell here forever.



Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Zion. Your king comes mounted on a donkey, victorious, yet humble.





The Lord will
enthroned Joshua,
the High Priest.
He shall lead us
in holiness and
justice.



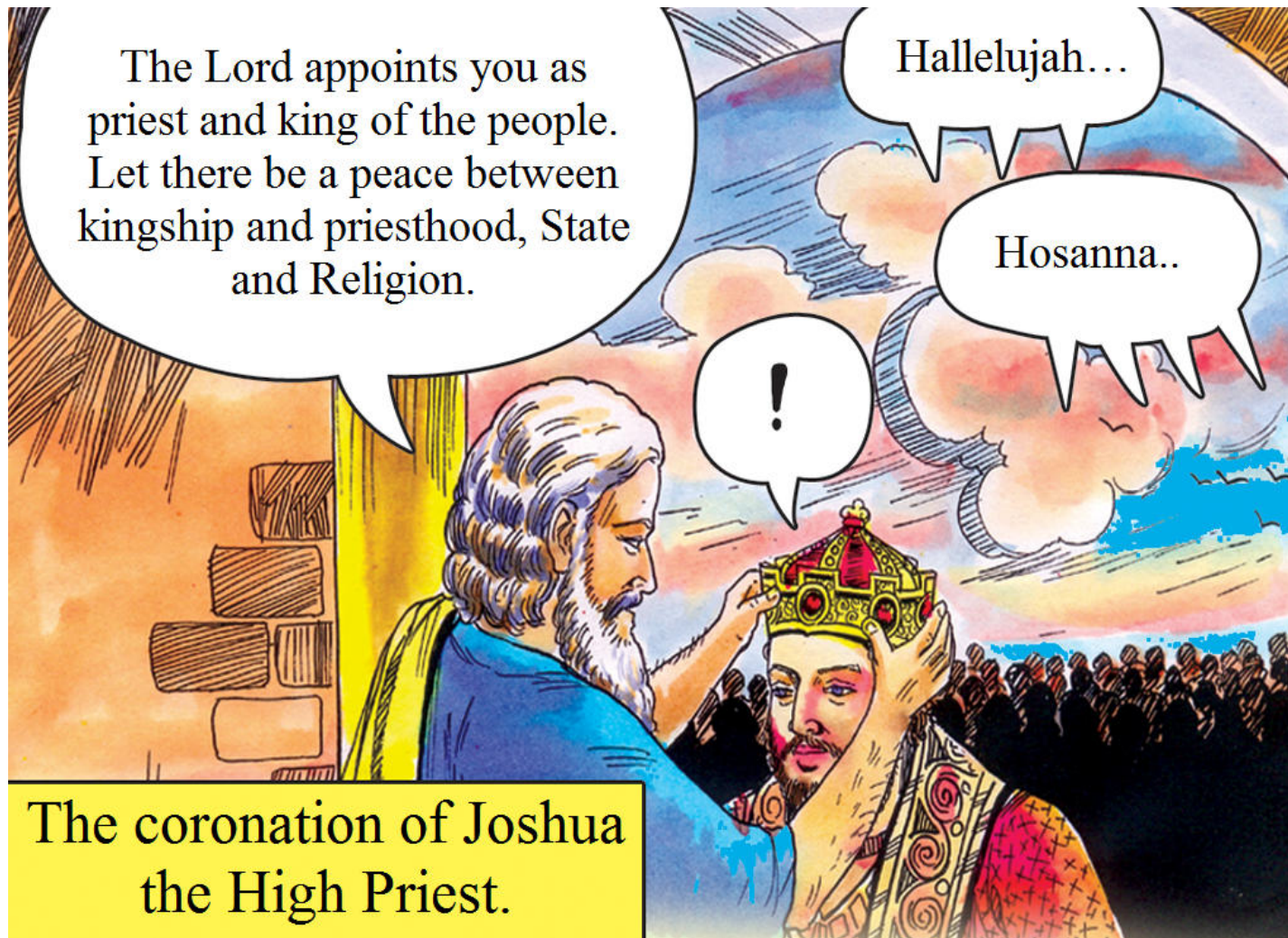
The Lord appoints you as
priest and king of the people.
Let there be a peace between
kingship and priesthood, State
and Religion.

Hallelujah...

Hosanna..

!

The coronation of Joshua
the High Priest.



The people accepted the teachings of Zachariah, who was priest and prophet at the same time. Under the dominion of Persia, the Israelites enjoyed religious freedom. The Priests became their only leaders and they gave great importance to the observance of the law and religious rituals.

The conviction that Israel was the only chosen people of Yahweh made them arrogant. Israel believed that all the other peoples, whom they called gentiles, were destined to destruction. To challenge this conviction, there came into existence a story of a prophet who ran away from God.



Next Story

PROPHET IN WHALE'S BELLY

JONAH

Questions

1. Name the Persian king who conquered Babylon.
2. Isaiah II asked to prepare a way in the desert. For what?
3. On what did the religious reform of Nabonidus concentrate?
4. Who succeeded Cambisus in Persia?
5. What was the central message of prophet Haggai?
6. What is the meaning of the name “Zechariah”?
7. What is the message conveyed by the cover picture of the book?
8. The New Jerusalem will remain un-walled. Why?
9. What do the Lamp-stand and two olive trees signify?
10. Write down two prophecies of Zechariah that were fulfilled In Jesus Christ.

THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN COMICS

1. Cain and Abel
2. Abraham
3. Jacob
4. Joseph
5. Moses
6. Joshua
7. Samson
8. Ruth
9. Samuel
10. Saul
11. David
12. King David
13. Solomon
14. Elijah
15. Amos
16. Hosea
17. Micah

18. Isaiah
19. Jeremiah
20. Ezekiel
21. Zechariah
22. Jonah
23. Job
24. Tobit
25. Daniel
26. Susanna
27. Esther
28. Judith
29. Maccabeus
30. The Maccabees
31. A World Awaiting
32. Light of the world
33. The Herald
34. The Prophet
35. The Liberator

36. The One to come
37. The Lord of the Universe
38. Son of God
39. The Son of Man
40. In the shadow of the cross
41. The Way
42. Son of David
43. Bread of Life
44. The Redeemer
45. With us forever
46. Tongues of fire
47. Baptism in blood
48. The chosen vessel
49. Libation
50. Come, Lord Jesus
51. Woman