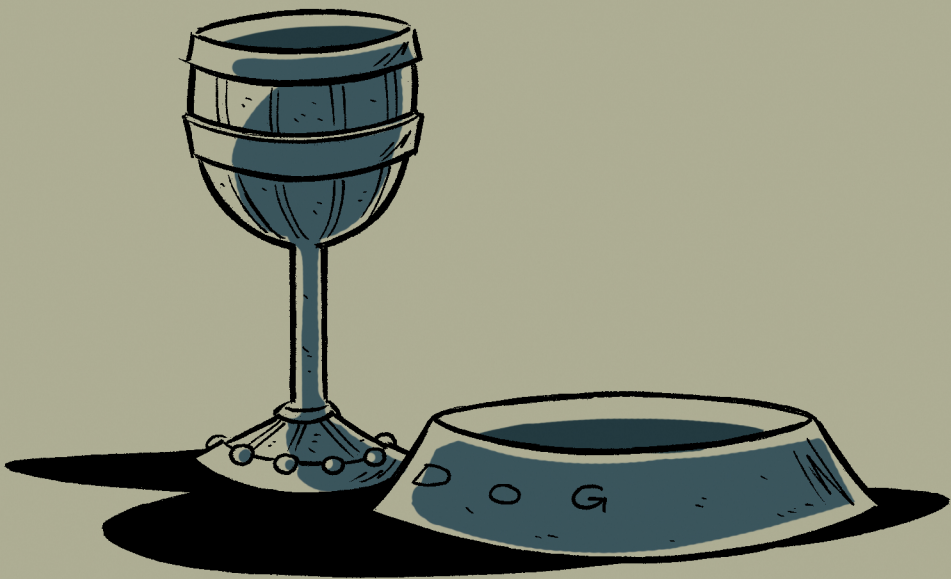
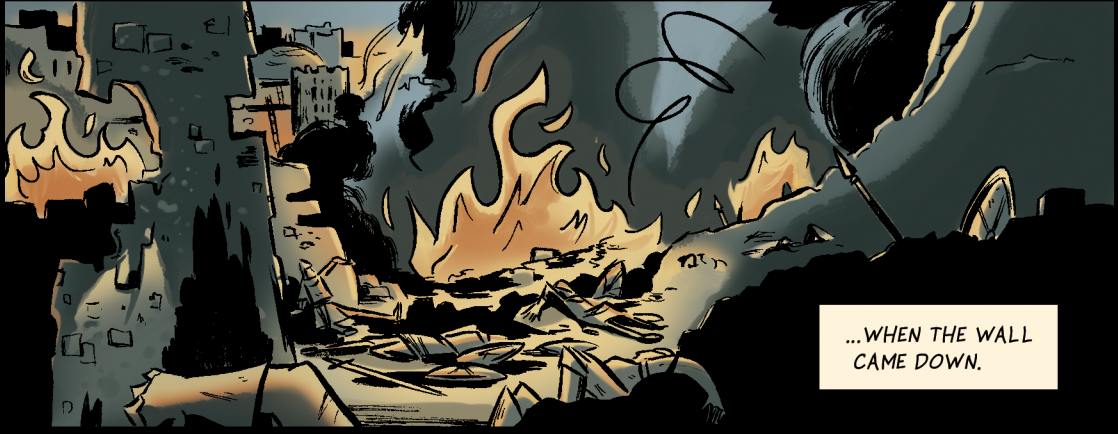


"NEHEMIAH"

by
MIKE MAIHACK



IT WAS LATE AUTUMN IN
THE TWENTIETH YEAR OF
KING ARTAXERXES' REIGN...



...WHEN THE WALL
CAME DOWN.



hmmmm....





IT WAS MY JOB TO DETERMINE IF ANY OF KING ARTAXERXES' FOOD AND DRINK WAS EITHER HARMFUL...



...OR HEALTHY



I'M FAIRLY SURE IF NOT FOR ME NEHEMIAH WOULD NEVER HAVE GAINED SUCH FAVOR WITH THE KING.

UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE OF OUR POSITION AND THE KING'S RELIANCE ON OUR SERVICES, IT WAS NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TO STRAY FAR FROM THE CASTLE GROUNDS.



G4.



BROTHER!

SO IT WAS ALWAYS A MOMENTOUS OCCASION WHEN FAMILY WOULD COME TO VISIT.



HANANI!

IT IS SO GREAT TO SEE YOU!



WHAT'S WRONG?



NEHEMIAH...

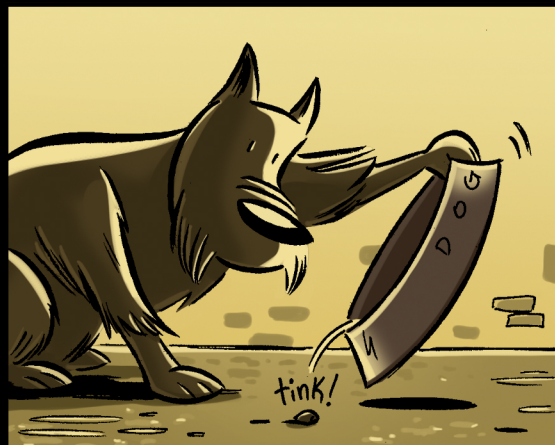
I'M AFRAID I DON'T COME WITH ONLY BREAD AND CROPS. I ALSO BEAR NEWS OF OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND THE SHAME-- THE DANGER THAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT UPON THEM.



THE WALL OF JERUSALEM HAS BEEN DESTROYED.



EXCEPT THAT DAY.



AN INTERESTING THING ABOUT DEPRESSION...



IF THE MASTER'S NOT EATING, APPARENTLY NEITHER IS HIS DOG.









I BEGAN TO FEEL TRAPPED WITHIN OUR OWN ROOM IN THE PALACE.

WITH NO FOOD...

...NO PLAY...

...AND NO COMPANY.



I'D LIKE TO SAY IT DIDN'T HAVE ANY SERIOUS AFFECT ON ME...



AT LEAST I STARTED GETTING FED MORE AFTER THAT.

EVENTUALLY THINGS STARTED RETURNING TO NORMAL.



TRY THIS.

SOMEWHAT.



TASTE ONLY.

NEHEMIAH STARTED TO VENTURE OUT OF HIS ROOM.



HE GAVE ME MORE ATTENTION.



GOOD BOY.

AND HE CLEANED HIMSELF UP A BIT.



HE EVEN RETURNED TO SERVING THE KING.





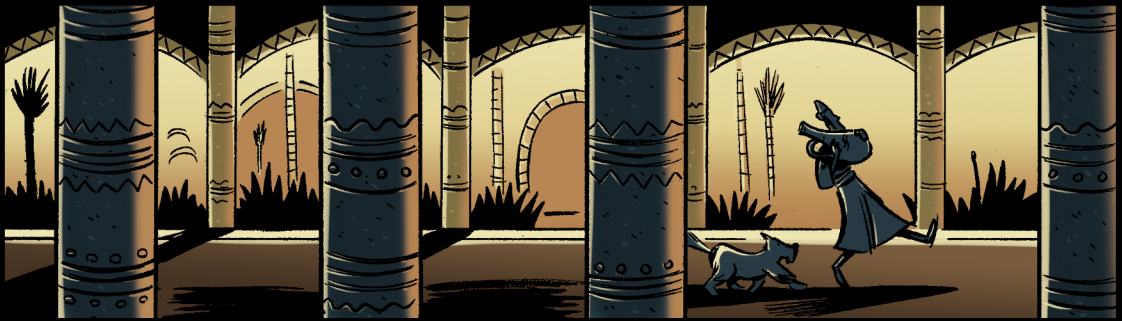
IT WAS EARLY
SPRING, IN
THE MONTH OF
NISAN...



hmmm...



TIME TO PUT
ON YOUR
HAPPY FACE,
BOY.



AH! NEHEMIAH!
MY FAITHFUL
CUP BEARER!



WITHOUT YOUR
EXPERTISE, I **SURELY**
WOULD'VE PERISHED
BY NOW.



OR WORSE-
HE MIGHT LOSE
WEIGHT!



SORRY,
DEAR.



YOU SEEM
TROUBLED,
NEHEMIAH.



TROUBLED?

uh..



AND YOUR DOG LOOKS THIN.



I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE FORBID THAT FAST OF YOURS.



SIRE, I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT JERUSALEM.



AH, YES. TERRIBLE NEWS.



Umm... I'D LIKE PERMISSION TO LEAVE AND SHEPHERD THE REBUILDING OF THE WALL.



P=TOO!!



LEAVE?



YOU ARE MY BEST CUP BEARER!



MY MEALS ARE FAR TOO IMPORTANT TO LOSE YOU.



THOMAS HAS MORE THEN PROVEN HIS FAITHFULNESS. HE CAN SERVE IN MY ABSENCE.





(SIGH)
YOU HAVE
MY LEAVE.



UM,
THANK
YOU.

IF IT
PLEASE THE KING,
I ALSO NEED LETTERS
ALLOWING **SAFE**
PASSAGE THROUGH
THE EUPHRATES
TERRITORIES.



I
WILL SEE TO
IT THAT YOUR
JOURNEY IS A
SAFE ONE.

AND I PROMISE
TO RETURN TO
SERVICE AS **SOON**
AS THE BUILDING
IS COMPLETE.



ARE YOU **PRE-**
PARED FOR THIS,
NEHEMIAH?

MAKE SURE
THOMAS PAYS EXTRA
ATTENTION TO THE
CREAM PUFFS.

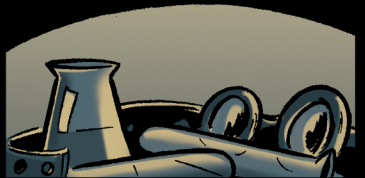
I'VE
ALREADY BEGAN
WRITING THE
PLANS, MY
QUEEN.

OF
COURSE,
MY KING.

IN THE SPRING OF THE
TWENTIETH YEAR OF KING
ARTAXERXES' REIGN,
NEHEMIAH ASKED FOR
PERMISSION TO LEAVE.




AND TO HIS SURPRISE, THE
KING GRANTED HIS REQUEST.



I WAS THE DOG
OF THE MAN WHO
WOULD GO ON
TO LEAD THE
REBUILDING
OF THE WALL
OF JERUSALEM.



READY,
BOY?



IT WAS A
VERY IMPORTANT
POSITION.