MICHAEL GOMEZ is an adventurous and active 10-year-old boy. He is kindhearted but often acts before he thinks. He’s friendly and talkative and blissfully unaware that most of his classmates think he’s a bit geeky. Michael is super excited to be in fifth grade, which, in his mind, makes him “grade school royalty!”
MERLE SQUIRREL may be thousands of years old, but he never really grew up. He has endless enthusiasm for anything new and interesting—especially this strange modern world he finds himself in. He marvels at the self-refilling bowl of fresh drinking water (otherwise known as a toilet) and supplements his regular diet of tree nuts with what he believes might be the world’s most perfect food: chicken nuggets. He’s old enough to know better, but he often finds it hard to do better. Good thing he’s got his wife, Pearl, to help him make wise choices.
PEARL SQUIRREL is wise beyond her many, many, many years, with enough common sense for both her and Merle. When Michael’s in a bind, she loves to share a lesson or bit of wisdom from Bible events she witnessed in her youth. Pearl’s biggest quirk is that she is a nut hoarder. Having come from a world where food is scarce, her instinct is to grab whatever she can. The abundance and variety of nuts in present-day Tennessee can lead to distraction and storage issues.
JUSTIN KESSLER is Michael’s best friend. Justin is quieter and has better judgment than Michael, and he is super smart. He’s a rule follower and is obsessed with being on time. He’ll usually give in to what Michael wants to do after warning him of the likely consequences.
SADIE HENDERSON is Michael and Justin’s other best friend. She enjoys video games and bowling just as much as cheerleading and pajama parties. She gets mad respect from her classmates as the only kid at Walnut Creek Elementary who’s not afraid of school bully Edgar. Though Sadie’s in a different homeroom than her two best friends, the three always sit together at lunch and hang out after class.
DR. GOMEZ, a professor of anthropology, is not thrilled when he finds out that his son, Michael, smuggled two ancient squirrels home from their summer trip to the Dead Sea, but he ends up seeing great value in having them around as original sources for his research. Dad loves his son’s adventurous spirit but wishes Michael would look (or at least peek) before he leaps.
**MRS. GOMEZ** teaches part-time at her daughter’s preschool and is a full-time mom to Michael and Jane. She feels sorry for the fish-out-of-water squirrels and looks for ways to help them feel at home, including constructing and decorating an over-the-top hamster mansion for Merle and Pearl in Michael’s room. She also can’t help but call Michael by her favorite (and his least favorite) nickname, Cookies.
**MR. NEMESIS** is the Gomez family cat who becomes Merle and Pearl’s true nemesis. Jealous of the time and attention given to the squirrels by his family, Mr. Nemesis is continuously coming up with brilliant and creative ways to get rid of them. He hides his ability to talk from the family, but not the squirrels.

**JANE GOMEZ** is Michael’s little sister. She’s super adorable but delights in getting her brother busted so she can be known as the “good child.” She thinks Merle and Pearl are the cutest things she has ever seen in her whole life (next to Mr. Nemesis) and is fond of dressing them up in her doll clothes.
So now you’ve heard of the Dead Sea Squirrels, but what about the **Dead Sea Scrolls**?

Way back in 1946, just after the end of World War II, in a cave along the banks of the Dead Sea, a 15-year-old boy came across some jars containing ancient scrolls while looking after his goats. When scholars and archaeologists found out about his discovery, the hunt for more scrolls was on! Over the next 10 years, many more scrolls and pieces of scrolls were found in 11 different caves.
There are different theories about exactly who wrote on the scrolls and hid them in the caves. One of the most popular ideas is that they belonged to a group of Jewish priests called Essenes, who lived in the desert because they had been thrown out of Jerusalem. One thing is for sure—the scrolls are very, very old! They were placed in the caves between the years 300 BC and AD 100!

Forty percent of the words on the scrolls come from the Bible. Parts of every Old Testament book except for the book of Esther have been discovered.

Of the remaining 60 percent, half are religious texts not found in the Bible, and half are historical records about the way people lived 2,000 years ago.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is one of the most important archaeological finds in history!
As co-creator of VeggieTales, co-founder of Big Idea Entertainment, and the voice of the beloved Larry the Cucumber, MIKE NAWROCKI has been dedicated to helping parents pass on biblical values to their kids through storytelling for over two decades. Mike currently serves as Assistant Professor of Film and Animation at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, and makes his home in nearby Franklin with his wife, Lisa, and their two children. The Dead Sea Squirrels is Mike’s first children’s book series.