



Michelangelo, *The Prophet Isaiah*, Sistine Chapel

simple—that he **paint a few vines on a blue background** to improve the appearance of the chapel.

Pressured by the pope, he finally relented but planned instead to paint a fairly simple scene which included, not the vines, but the twelve apostles. However, before he began, Michelangelo is said to have locked himself up inside the chapel, letting no one near him. It was

at that point that he began to imagine the overwhelming plan that would eventually include **over 340 figures**, a complete representation of the origin and fall of man. The work covered a space **half the size of a football field**, and it took **four years** to complete it. When he finally finished, he was able to get back to work on another project he had begun several years earlier.

Being a man of great focus, he was able to work hard for very long periods of time. Painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel meant spending long, difficult hours often on his back on a scaffolding that was seven **stories high**. It is told that he was so used to this awkward position that, when given a letter to read (while standing on the floor), he was observed leaning back and holding the letter over his head. Sometimes he even slept on the scaffolding.

The Prophet Joel, shown **on page 6**, and *The Prophet Isaiah*, shown **on this page**, are two of the figures painted into the large composition in the Sistine Chapel. All the prophets are painted as gigantic images, sitting deep in thought, as though they are listening to an inner voice.