

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH (PART TWO)

By Rod

A retelling of Nehemiah chapter 2. Narrators tell the story while the actors mime the actions.

CAST

Narrator A Main storyteller

Narrator B Asks questions. A bit of a joker.

Nehemiah

Actor 1 In turns plays King Artaxerxes, governor, Sanballat

Actor 2 In turns plays Hanani, aide, master of forest, Tobiah

[Nehemiah, Actors 1 and 2 are on stage in a line with Nehemiah in the middle]

A The continuing story of Nehemiah

[Nehemiah steps forward]

B I remember him from last week. He worked for a king called Susan.

[Artaxerxes(1) steps forward but looks confused]

A No, he worked for a king called Artaxerxes in Susa the capital of Persia.

B Oh, sorry. What did he do for the king?

A He was his sommelier.

B Why did the king need someone to do his smelling for him?

[Nehemiah sniffs the air]

A No som-elier; it means wine steward. He selected the wines for the king's meals. It was an important position.

[Nehemiah collects bottle of wine and glass]

B He must have had a good nose then, So he did do some smelling after all.

[Nehemiah sniffs bouquet in glass]

A Indeed. But he also had a heavy heart.

B Ah yes, because of the bad news he had received from his brother Banana.

[Step forward Hanani(2) holding a banana]

A Yes, Hanani had told him how his home city of Jerusalem was in ruins.

[Hanani throws banana away]

B And this made him sad.

[Nehemiah presents wine to king with sad face]

A Yes, and the king noticed and asked him what was troubling him.

[Artaxerxes shows concern.]

[Type text]

B That was kind of him.

A Yes, but it made Nehemiah afraid; it wasn't good to be sad in the king's presence.

[Nehemiah turns away from Artaxerxes looking worried]

B So what did he do?

A He sent off a fast prayer.

[Nehemiah puts hands together in prayer]

B Oh he did one of those fast prayers last week. It lasted several days and he didn't eat. I don't think that would have pleased the king.

A Not prayer and fasting – a fast prayer. He just said a quick silent prayer to God.

B What, like "Help. Amen"?

[Nehemiah mouths prayer and turns to Artaxerxes]

A Probably, and then he launched in with his request.

[Nehemiah holds hands out, upturned palms as if beseeching]

B Which was?

A That he be allowed to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls.

[Nehemiah points off stage]

B What did the king say?

A He said "Yes", and the king was so supportive that he even made two more requests.

[Artaxerxes nods]

B What were they?

A Letters for free passage to get there and for some free wood from the king's forests as building materials.

[Nehemiah asks and king gives letters – passed to him by aide(2)]

B Oh that sounds great. So off went Nehemiah and they all lived happily ever after. The end.

[B and 3 actors go to walk off stage]

A Not exactly.

[They all stop and return. Nehemiah to centre stage, the other actors behind]

B Oh, didn't he get to Jerusalem?

[Type text]

A Oh he managed that all right; the letters did the trick.
[Nehemiah gives letters to other two acting as governor(1) and master of the forest(2)]

B So what was the problem?

A There were some local officials who were not too keen on Nehemiah's plans to rebuild Jerusalem. Their names were Sanballat (1) and Tobiah(2).
[Sanballat and Tobiah step forward looking angry. A holds up sign saying 'BOO'.]

B Tobiah or not Tobiah, that is the question.
[Tobiah steps forward as if a Shakespearean actor]

A So Nehemiah inspected the walls by night.
[Nehemiah sets off on a tour round the front of stage]

B That must have been tricky. It is dark at night – at least it is where I live.

A He travelled from the Valley Gate to the Dung Gate....
[Nehemiah has got as far as the centre aisle. He stops.]

B The Dung Gate! That explains it. Pooh. He must have used his trained somelier's nose to guide him in the dark.
[Nehemiah sniffs the air]

A ... and back to the Valley Gate. Then he called the people together...
[Nehemiah has returned to stage. He makes as if drawing in the congregation as his people]

B That must have confused them. I thought they were called the Jews.

A and persuaded them to rebuild the city walls.

B Oh great. So they set to work and lived happily ever after. The end.
[B and Nehemiah go to leave again]

A Not exactly.
[They return]

B I think I smell a rat.

A Or maybe two...
[A holds up sign 'BOO']

THE END

[Type text]