**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.]*

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?

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