**THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH (PART FOUR)**

**By Rod**

*A retelling of Nehemiah chapter 8. 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*

*Ezra In turns plays Sanballat, X factor judge, jew, rich jew*

*Levite I n turns plays Tobiah, X factor judge, jew, poor jew*

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

A The further adventures of Nehemiah.

*[Nehemiah steps forward ]*

B Which chapter are we in now?

A Chapter 8. It’s actually more about Ezra than Nehemiah.

*[Ezra steps forward and Nehemiah steps back. Levite holds up “8”]*

B That was my favourite poem at school:

 “Here lies the body of Ezra Pound;

 Lost at sea and never found.”

*[Ezra falls to ground as if dead. Levite acts as priest and Nehemiah is mourner]*

A This is not about Ezra Pound; and the Ezra in our story was very much alive.

*[Ezra gets up looking relieved. Nehemiah and Levite retire]*

B Who was he?

A He was an expert on the law.

B O, a policeman then. Evenin’ all.

*[Ezra does policeman’s knees bend]*

A No, he was an expert in God’s law – he was a priest.

B Oh right.

A The people all gathered in the square by the Water Gate.

B Oh good. I like a bit of scandal. No wonder they needed an expert on the law.

*[Nehemiah & Levite mime listening into scandal]*

A No, it has got nothing to do with the Watergate scandal. They got Ezra to read from the Book Of The Law – part of the Bible.

*[Nehemiah gives bible to Ezra]*

B Oh, is that all.

A From dawn until noon.

B What! That’s one.. two hours.. er… three… That’s a long time that is!

*[Nehemiah and Levite yawn]*

A Six people stood on his right hand.

*[Nehemiah steps up alongside Ezra on his right]*

B That must have been painful.

A And seven stood on his left hand.

*[Levite steps up alongside Ezra on his left]*

B How did he turn the pages?

A And when he had finished some other people called Levites……

*[Levite steps aside]*

B Who were experts in jeans.

*[Levite indicates trousers]*

A …… explained what it all meant.

*[Levite mimes explaining to the people]*

B What was the people’s reaction?

A They cried.

*[All 3 cry]*

B I’m not surprised. Having to stand still and listen for such a long time would probably make me cry.

A No, they cried because they realised how much of the Law they had broken.

B A fair cop?

*[Ezra repeats policeman’s knees bend]*

A Indeed. But Nehemiah stepped up at this point and told the people to go home and have a feast.

*[Nehemiah steps forward and gestures to go and eat]*

B I expect they were peckish. He could probably hear their tummies rumbling.

*[All 3 rub tummies]*

A A feast to celebrate the fact that God’s Word had been read in public in Jerusalem for the first time in many years.

*[All 3 look happy]*

B Still, they must have wanted to start to obey the Law.

A They did, and Ezra and the other experts told them they should all build temporary shelters.

*[All3 put heads together and then Ezra indicates to build tents]*

B Why? Were they moving out? That was a bit silly since they had only just finished rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. What a waste of time.

*[All 3 move off to collect tent. They then start to erect tent during next few lines]*

A No, because the Book of the Law said it was the time of the Festival of Shelters.

B Oh, I see.

A So the people built their temporary shelters and were happy and excited.

*[They enter tent and look happy]*

B So you could say – wait for it – that the excitement was intense!

A Indeed it was, because it was the first time the festival had been celebrated since the time of Joshua, son of Nun.

*[Levite steps forward as Joshua, looking sad]*

B Poor chap. It must have been rotten not knowing who his parents were.

A No, Nun was his dad’s name.

*[Nehemiah puts arm around ‘Joshua’ as his dad, Nun]*

B I didn’t know dads could be nuns.

*[Nun holds hands together in prayer]*

A Well this one was. He was called Nun.

B Oh, right. If he was clever I expect they called him Nun the Wiser.

A The people celebrated for seven days.

*[All 3 return to tents to party]*

B In their tents?

A Yes, and on the eighth day there was a big closing service.

*[They emerge from tent celebrating]*

B It sounds like Soul Survivor.

A It was even better.

B No mud, you mean?

*[They mime treading in mud]*

A No mud, and a great sense of coming back to God.

*[All 3 hold hands aloft for ‘Hallelujah’ and then sink to knees on ‘Amen’]*

A &B Hallelujah. Amen.

THE END