



EZRA

BY

ALAN YOUNG

CAST OF CHARACTERS

KING ARTAXERXES

EZRA

RACHEL – MOTHER OF LEAH

NATHAN – FATHER OF LEAH

LEAH – WIFE OF AARON

DARON – HUSBAND OF LEAH

ABIGAIL – FRIEND OF RACHEL

SOLOMON – WORK COLLEAGUE OF NATHAN

ISAAC – SON OF ADAM (WORKER)

ACT 1

(Ezra enters)

EZRA: Your majesty...

KING: Ezra....come... be seated (*pause*)...I am well aware of your great devotion to God and how much respect you have for his Law...I also know how you study the Scriptures and your great ability to explain to others the meaning of the Scriptures.

EZRA: Thank you, your majesty.

KING: And because of your qualities, Ezra, I am sending you to Jerusalem. The people there are trying to rebuild the temple of God. You will need to find out as much as you can about them. Are they all working together? Is there any unrest or conflict? Do they still obey the Law of God?

EZRA: Yes, your majesty.

KING: But be prepared, Ezra. These people might have lost faith...

EZRA: Lost faith? In God?

(The King nods)

EZRA: Why?

KING: Their lives have been far from easy. They have suffered hardship, their homes have been destroyed and their temple was left in ruins.

EZRA: It sounds as though God has tested their faith.

KING: Do you think so?

EZRA: He will do that, from time to time...

KING: Explain that to me...

EZRA: God's will is sometimes very hard to understand let alone accept...

KING: Are you saying something bad could happen to a good person?

(Ezra nods)

EZRA: Yes, it can.

KING: And would that be God's will?

ERZA: It could be, but God will have a reason. He always has. And that is the hardest part because only He knows what that reason is.

KING: What do you say to that person? How do you tell them that God has not turned His back on them?

EZRA: It depends, your majesty...

KING: On what?

ERZA: On how much faith the person has in God.

(Pause)

KING: You have spoken to me about God many times, Ezra. I am always very interested in what you say about him. He must be very powerful....

EZRA: Yes, but He will always care for those who love and serve Him.

KING: Does that mean you will need none of my soldiers to go with you and protect you on your journey?

(Ezra shakes his head)

KING: As you wish, Ezra. I do not wish to displease your God...

EZRA: He is not my God...He is there for everyone

KING: I see,, but as a gesture of good will I make sure that you have enough gold and silver to take with you and use in the temple of God.

EZRA: Thank you, your Majesty...

KING: Not only do I want you to find out about the people. Ezra, I also want you to initiate a religious reformation. You will need to teach the laws of God to all the ignorant people..

EZRA: I will teach as many as I can....even the Gentiles...

KING: The Gentiles? You will find Gentiles and Jews have married each other.

EZRA: Surely not. The Law of God does not allow this, your majesty...It is very important that the Law of God is heard by everyone,...

KING: But not everyone is prepared to listen.

EZRA: I know but the lives of those people would change by listening. The Word of God does so many things. It helps you to live your life, gives you strength and a purpose, and keeps you from sin.

KING: I doubt if I will ever meet anyone with a greater devotion than you, Ezra. If these people don't listen to you then they won't listen to anyone.

EZRA: Your majesty, I thank you for giving me this commission and I also thank God that he put this thought into your head.

KING: May God give you a safe journey.

ACT 2

RACHEL: Are you going to the market today, Abigail?...

ABIGAIL: I don't know....I haven't decided....

RACHEL: Do you have to?

ABIGAIL: Probably....it's the thought of coming back home and knowing Jacob won't be back later...

RACHEL: It must be so hard for you.

ABIGAIL: It is, Rachel, but when I am with you, I can now talk to you without thinking of him... there was a time when I couldn't....

RACHEL: So how have you been able to do that? Is it time? (*pause*) They do say time is a great healer...

ABIGAIL: Do they? But doesn't that mean you, one day, get your old life back? That will never happen...

RACHEL: No, it won't...

ABIGAIL: I feel I've been thrown into a fire and the heat is so strong it changes you and your life. There's nothing you can do about it.

RACHEL: But how do you adjust to your new life?

ABIGAIL: You don't have a choice. (*pause*) I keep saying to myself, "there must be someone who's worse off than I am". Either that or I'm being punished for something I have done in my life.

RACHEL: Do you still pray to God?

ABIGAIL: Yes, I do, but not as often as I used to...

RACHEL: Oh?

ABIGAIL: and I always end up asking him "Why, God?.....Why me?"

RACHEL: Only He can answer that, Abigail.

ABIGAIL: I know. I will have to wait, won't I?

RACHEL: So you haven't lost your faith in God?...

(Solomon & Nathan enter)

SOLOMON: He's what?

NATHAN: He told me he doesn't want to help anymore...Hello dear (*Gives Rachel a hug*) Hello Abigail...

SOLOMON: When did he tell you this?

NATHAN: Today..

RACHEL: What's happened, Nathan?

NATHAN; Adam does not want to work with us anymore...

RACHEL: Doesn't he?

NATHAN: He's not the only one. Gideon and Seth don't want to, either.

SOLOMON: What? All three of them? But re-building the Temple of God is so important...

NATHAN: Not to them...not anymore....

RACHEL: Did they all tell you this, Nathan?

NATHAN: No, only Adam, but he spoke for the three of them.

SOLOMON: What did he say?

NATHAN: They've lost faith.

SOLOMON: They've what?

NATHAN: I said, they've all had a loss of faith...

SOLOMON: ..in what exactly?

NATHAN: In God....

SOLOMON: How can they? They live by his laws...

NATHAN: They think He's turned their back on them...

SOLOMON: Is that what they told you?

(Nathan nods)

NATHAN: Look at what has happened to their homes...the temple...

SOLOMON: But God didn't do that...

NATHAN: They don't think God wants us to restore the Temple...

SOLOMON: Of course He does...they must not lose faith...

ABIGAIL: I'm not surprised they have...I never thought I would...

SOLOMON: Is that how you feel too, Abigail?

ABIGAIL: Sometimes...I know I shouldn't...but I can't help it...

(Leah enters)

LEAH: Hello...

RACHEL: Hello dear....

NATHAN: Hello Leah

RACHEL: Where's Daron?

LEAH: He's still working...

RACHEL: Still working? That husband of yours works so hard...

LEAH: I know but he really enjoys what he does...

RACHEL: We hardly see him...

NATHAN: We haven't offended him, have we?

LEAH: Of course not, Father...

SOLOMON: Sounds as though he is the sort of person we need...

NATHAN: But we can't have...

(Solomon looks at Nathan)

SOLOMON: Oh that's right...we can't, can we?...he's a Gentile...

NATHAN: Had you forgotten?

SOLOMON: Well, we need someone to help us....

ACT 3

- LEAH: Do you think Father will be back soon?
- RACHEL: I don't think so, dear. There aren't as many helping now...
- LEAH: Yes, you did tell me...
- RACHEL: It's come as quite a shock to your Father...
- LEAH: What's going to happen?
- RACHEL: It means that all the work will take longer to do.... it might even mean that Solomon will have to work....
- LEAH: Doesn't he help Father?
- RACHEL: As a leader, I think he believes he should be telling people what to do and not do any of the work himself...
- LEAH: Really?
- RACHEL: Your Father would probably disagree,,,
- LEAH: So, Mother, why do you think that?
- RACHEL: it's just the way Solomon talks to your Father...telling him what to do, telling him what the other workers must do...
- LEAH: But He is a leader...
- RACHEL: If he is a leader, then why did Adam and the other two men tell your Father they were going to stop working? Why didn't they tell Solomon?
- LEAH: Father was easier to talk to?
- RACHEL: And then for Solomon to forget that Daron is a Gentile...
- LEAH: Yes, I was surprised too...
- RACHEL: Did you tell Daron?
- LEAH: (*abruptly*) Oh No! I don't think he would have wanted to hear that...
- RACHEL: He's not working too hard, is he?

LEAH: I think he probably is...

RACHEL: Have you told him?

LEAH: I wouldn't do that....

RACHEL: You don't think there's any other reason?

LEAH: What are you getting at, Mother?

RACHEL: I thought...well, we thought...

LEAH: You and Father?

(Rachel nods)

RACHEL: We thought by working so hard, he wouldn't have time to see us...

LEAH: Do you and Father really think that?

RACHEL: We haven't offended him, have we Leah?

LEAH: No, Mother...

RACHEL: We were thinking it might have been something we said...

(Leah shakes her head)

RACHEL: You would tell us, wouldn't you?

(Ezra enters)

EZRA: Hello...

RACHEL: Hello

EZRA: My name is Ezra.

RACHEL: I'm Rachel and this is my daughter, Leah...I'm sorry but I don't recognise your face...

EZRA: I don't live here... I have been sent by King Artaxerxes..

LEAH: The king?

(Ezra nods)

EZRA: Yes, he is well aware of what has happened to your people and he wants to know how you are coping.

RACHEL: It has been a struggle....a real struggle.....

EZRA: I'm sure it has..

LEAH: We've tried to get with on our lives but it hasn't been easy... There's been no one to turn to...

EZRA: What about God?

(Silence)

EZRA: Haven't you prayed to him?

LEAH: I have done.....

RACHEL: So did I... but you will find that most people have...

EZRA: stopped praying? (*pause*) What about your husbands?

RACHEL: My husband, Nathan, is helping to restore the Temple...so we haven't completely lost our faith in God...

EZRA: But you don't pray as often as you did

(*Rachel nods*)

EZRA: What about your husband, Leah?

LEAH: He doesn't pray at all....

EZRA: Doesn't he?

LEAH: He's a Gentile....

EZRA: Is he?.....But you're a Jew, aren't you?

(*Leah nods*)

EZRA: So how did this happen? What made you marry him? You, Leah, have a relationship with God.... he does not.

LEAH: But he is a good man....he really is. He works very hard in the field... I think he works too hard.....

EZRA: Really?

LEAH: He needs to find someone to help him....

(Solomon enters)

SOLOMON: Hello Rachel... Hello Leah..

EZRA: Hello, my name is Ezra...

(Ezra and Solomon shake hands)

SOLOMON: I'm Solomon..I'm one of the Leaders..I haven't seen you before.

EZRA: I have been sent by the King to find out what is happening here.

SOLOMON: The King! We are very honoured! You must be aware that we are trying to re-build the temple.., Allow me to show you what we have done..

EZRA: Yes, I would like to see how much progress you have made.

SOLOMON: Of course. Although progress is slow, I can say that we are all working very hard....

RACHEL: *(Looking at Solomon)* All?

SOLOMON: The spirits of the people are quite low.

EZRA: I will try and lift their spirits...that is why I am here.

SOLOMON: That won't be easy.

EZRA: I will try to convince them that what they are doing is God's will. They might not think it now but I can tell you that God is with them. .

(Ezra and Solomon leave together)

ACT 4

LEAH : There you are...

DARON: Hello Leah...

(Leah and Daron hug each other)

LEAH: Did you have a good day? The weather must have helped.

DARON: It did...

LEAH: I went to see my Mother...

DARON: Did you?

LEAH: She is on her own when Father is away at work, isn't she? So I thought she might like the company

(Silence)

LEAH: Daron, are you alright? You're very quiet...

DARON: I'm just tired..

LEAH: You work such long hours.

DARON: because there is so much to do....

LEAH: Can't you find anyone to help you?

DARON: It would take too much time.. anyway, not all the workers are Gentiles...

LEAH: So a Jewish worker wouldn't work with you? Is that what you're saying?

(Daron nods)

LEAH: Does that really matter? *(pause)* It didn't to us....

DARON: No, but it matters to your parents, doesn't it?...

LEAH: What makes you say that?

DARON: It's obvious, Leah. Every time they talk to me, they're so polite...so careful they say the right things....

LEAH: Every time? But you hardly see them...

DARON: Why do you think that is?

LEAH: They are just being thoughtful...they don't want to offend you...

DARON: But they feel awkward, I know they do

LEAH: Daron...

DARON: And so do I

LEAH: But you're their son-in-law...

DARON: Not by choice...I'm sure they wanted you to marry a Jewish man...

LEAH: But I didn't fall in love with a Jewish man....I fell in love with you...

DARON: Your parents must have said something to you...

LEAH: About what?

DARON: About how I don't see them...

LEAH: They think they have offended you...

DARON: I thought as much...

LEAH: But Daron, what do you expect them to say? What do you expect them to do?

DARON: Nothing really. They are Jews and I am a Gentile.

LEAH: So aren't you being unfair on them?

DARON: I think we both know where we stand.

LEAH: So would you be happy if you didn't ever see them again?

DARON: I'm not saying that...

LEAH: What *are* you saying, Daron?

DARON: Your parents are devout people...they keep the law of God as best they can. I'm the opposite, you know that. In fact, I was surprised when they allowed us to get married.

LEAH: They could see we were in love.

DARON: It was as though there was no one to tell them it was against the law of God.

LEAH: That might change now...

DARON: How? What's happened?

LEAH: A man has been sent by the King to find out what is happening here.

DARON: A man? What man?

LEAH: His name is Ezra...

DARON: And you've met him?

(Leah nods)

LEAH: He is a very devout man...

DARON: A man of God? So a man who will tell everyone what is right and what is wrong..

LEAH: He has his beliefs...

DARON: And they would be the same as yours....

LEAH: Of course, he's a Jew too....why do you say it like that?

(Daron looks at Leah)

LEAH: It's not as though he's going to come between us...

ACT 5

ABIGAIL: So what did Ezra say?

NATHAN: First of all, he told them what an excellent job they were doing. Then he said that it is God's will for His temple to be rebuilt. And then he told them that in life you will have setbacks and you must expect them. But don't let them turn you away from God. Never lose your trust in Him.

ABIGAIL: How did they react to that?

NATHAN: No one said a word...

ABIGAIL: It sounds as though they were stunned into silence.

NATHAN: It was probably the last thing they expected...

ABIGAIL: I didn't think the King would send someone here. Did you?

(Nathan shakes his head)

NATHAN: But they needed to hear those words, Abigail. They really did. And it was said in such an inspiring way...I was quite moved....

ABIGAIL: That explains the silence...

NATHAN: I don't think Solomon needs to speak to the workers again...

ABIGAIL: Won't that be a good thing?

NATHAN: What has Rachel been saying to you?

ABIGAIL: She's been stating the obvious..

NATHAN: But Solomon's intentions are good....

ABIGAIL: Of course they are but it's how they are expressed to people. He is a Leader and you are left in no doubt of that when you talk to him.

NATHAN: I know what you mean...but I still think his heart is in the right place....

(Ezra enters)

EZRA: Hello Nathan...

NATHAN: Ezra! (*Turning to Abigail*) I don't think you've met Abigail...

EZRA: Hello Abigail...

ABIGAIL: Nathan was telling me how you spoke to the workers

EZRA: Hopefully, they understood what I said...

NATHAN: I'm sure they did that....look, I better be getting home..

EZRA: Can I come round later, Nathan? I'd like to have a word with you and Rachel.

NATHAN: Yes, of course...Goodbye Abigail...

ABIGAIL: Goodbye Nathan

(*Nathan leaves*)

EZRA: Have you lived here long, Abigail?

ABIGAIL: All my life...

EZRA: Did you ever think of moving to another town?

ABIGAIL: I met my husband, Jacob, here. We both really liked this town so we decided to live here. We didn't have any children but we made a lot of friends. And that's really helped..

EZRA: Has it?

ABIGAIL: Since Jacob passed away...

EZRA: I see.

ABIGAIL: I can also find Jacob in this town...

EZRA: Can you?

ABIGAIL: I can go to a place and think, "Jacob and I used to come here"...but I find being at home, on my own, very hard. I was used to him coming home from work but now I know he'll never again walk through that door.

EZRA: I'm sorry to hear that...

ABIGAIL: And do you know? Not a single day goes by without me asking God, "Why? Why have you taken Jacob away?"

EZRA: But Abigail, He hasn't taken him away....Jacob has gone back to God.

ABIGAIL: Gone back? What do you mean "gone back?"

EZRA: Our life starts and ends with God. We are here on earth until He calls us.

ABIGAIL: But I want to be with Jacob...

EZRA: Of course you do....and you will....

ABIGAIL: Do you think so?

EZRA: Don't lose your faith in God, Abigail. He knows how you are feeling, He knows how much you miss Jacob...

ABIGAIL: What am I to do?

EZRA: Keep talking to God....

ABIGAIL: And what do I say to Him?

EZRA: Tell him how much you look forward to seeing Jacob again...

ABIGAIL: And you think this will happen?

EZRA: It will...but in God's time, not yours....in His time....

ACT 6

RACHEL: Nathan has changed....

EZRA: In what way?

RACHEL: He's much happier now...he was very worried when Adam and the other two men stopped working...he thought more would follow...

EZRA: But no one did...

RACHEL: And that was all because of what you said to them...

EZRA: All I did was share the word of God with them...I wish I could have shared it with Adam and Gideon and Seth....

RACHEL: Nathan is hoping that someone tells them.....

(Isaac enters)

RACHEL: Hello Isaac...

ISAAC: Hello...

RACHEL: I really have to be getting back....

EZRA: Good bye Rachel...

(Rachel leaves – Ezra turns to Isaac)

EZRA: My name is Ezra....Have you lived here long?

(Isaac nods)

EZRA: Do you like it here?

ISAAC: Yes, I do....I like it a lot....I don't want us to leave...

EZRA: Is that going to happen?

ISAAC: I think so...

EZRA: Why is that?

ISAAC: My father needs to find a job....he doesn't think he'll find another one here...

EZRA: Another one? So he did have a job?

ISAAC: He used to help re-build the temple...

EZRA: What's your father's name?

ISAAC: Adam...

EZRA: I've heard about him...why did he stop helping?

ISAAC: He was fed up...

EZRA: Fed up? But he was doing God's work...

ISAAC: If you say so...

EZRA: How much do you know about God?

ISAAC: My parents have told me how good he is.

EZRA: Do you believe them?

ISAAC: I don't know.....I mean, how can anyone be that good?...

EZRA: There is no one like God and do you know what the best thing is?

ISAAC: What?

EZRA: He loves you....he loves you as much as your parents....

ISAAC: Does he?

EZRA: And he will never turn his back on you...

ISAAC: How will I know that? I can't even see him...

EZRA: You can't see him but he can see you.

ISAAC: So what am I supposed to do? Pretend he's here...

EZRA: He is everywhere you want him to be, Isaac.

ISAAC: What does that mean?

EZRA: You can talk to him in any place at any time...

ISAAC: Why would I want to do that?

EZRA: When you need help, when you are sad, even when you are fed up...

ISAAC: I wonder if my Father has talked to God

EZRA: Why don't you go and ask him?

ACT 7

EZRA : Would you like some help?

DARON: *(Hesitantly)* Yes...yes, I would...

EZRA: Are you sure?

DARON: Yes, it's just that no one has offered before...but I don't think I can pay you...

EZRA: It doesn't matter...

DARON: Really?

(Ezra nods)

DARON: Thank you.

EZRA: You have a very big field here...Do you look after it all by yourself?

DARON: No, I have someone who helps me, but he's not well...

EZRA: Just the one helper?

DARON: Yes, my wife keeps telling me I need to find someone else...

EZRA: Isn't she right?

DARON: *(Aaron nods)* At least, when I get home I can say you helped me. How long are you staying here?

EZRA: I've just arrived

DARON: Do you have family here?

EZRA: No, but I've met a few people already...my name is Ezra...

DARON: Ezra? *(pause)* You've spoken to my wife....

EZRA: Is your wife "Leah"?

(Daron nods)

EZRA: You must be Daron...

(Ezra goes to shake Daron's' hand)

EZRA: What's the matter? Why won't you shake my hand?

DARON: Didn't Leah tell you I was a Gentile?

EZRA: What difference does that make?

DARON: You're a Jew...what more do I have to say?

EZRA: In the eyes of God, we are the same, but in your eyes, we are different.

DARON: Of course we are...God has never been in my life, I've managed very well without him...

EZRA: I couldn't live my life without him....

DARON: Have you tried?

EZRA: All I have to do is remember what my life was like before.... and what my life is like now....

DARON: So your life changed....but at what cost?

EZRA: When does a change for the better involve hardship?

DARON: I'm settled....I don't need a change...

EZRA: We all need God...

DARON: You would say that, wouldn't you?

EZRA: Not if I didn't believe it...

(Daron turns away)

EZRA: Do you have any doubts, Daron?

DARON: Doubts? About what?

EZRA: About yourself. About your job. About your life....

DARON: Sometimes...don't you?

EZRA: Of course I do, but you know there is one thing I can be sure of..

DARON: What's that?

EZRA: God...

DARON: And what does he do for you?...

EZRA: He helps me...he supports me...he guides me...he inspires me...who does that for you?

DARON: I can help and support myself...

EZRA: What about Leah?

DARON: I know she loves me...

EZRA: She does and she prays for you too..

DARON: If she wants to do that, I'm not going to stop her...

EZRA: Have you ever thought about praying with her?

DARON: Why on earth would I do that?

EZRA: You could get to know someone who will add something more to your life...

DARON: What would that be?

EZRA: A greater confidence, a greater strength, and a certainty

DARON: A certainty of what?

EZRA: That God will always be there for you...He will never turn His back on you.

ACT 8

- NATHAN: I know, Ezra, we should have tried to stop them.
- EZRA: But you didn't....
- NATHAN: We made a mistake...
- RACHEL: We were thinking of Leah....she told us how happy she was with Daron...
- EZRA: But marrying him showed no respect to the word of God...
- RACHEL: It wasn't easy to tell them we approved...
- EZRA: Weren't they surprised?
- RACHEL: Of course....but it wasn't just that....
- EZRA: Do carry on....
- RACHEL: We have been through some very hard times, as you know, and when you have one disappointment after another, it affects you...
- EZRA: I can understand that....
- RACHEL: You start to think differently about things...you start to think differently about...
- EZRA: God?
- NATHAN: Where was He when we needed him? We thought he had deserted us....
- EZRA: What happened to you and your people was not God's will. God has no control over what you or I do, The Word of God tells us how we should lead our lives but some people choose to ignore or do not accept it...
- RACHEL: So what are we supposed to do? What does God expect us to do?
- EZRA: Don't lose your faith in Him. It can slip away, unnoticed and unrealized, until it recedes to a minimum. That is what has happened to you.
- NATHAN: But we did pray to God...

EZRA: You did when you went through hard times...and then when you didn't get the answer you hoped for....

RACHEL: But what good is God if He is not there when you really need Him?

EZRA: But Rachel, he is there because he has promised never to leave us.. We are all going to face hardship, we are all going to experience hard times. This is when our faith is tested and this is when we have to remain strong,

(Solomon enters)

SOLOMON: Ah, there you are..Nathan,,...Hello Ezra....

EZRA: Hello Solomon....how are the workers?

SOLOMON: They're fine and working hard....*(Turns to Nathan)* Can you come with me, Nathan....there is something I need to tell you....

EZRA: Is it to do with the re-building work?

SOLOMON: Yes, it is...

EZRA: I'd like to come with you...

SOLOMON: Yes, of course....tell me, Ezra, have you decided when you will be leaving us?

EZRA: No, I have no plans yet of going back. I still have a lot of work to do and I'm sure they are more people I need to talk to...

(Leah and Daron arrive)

RACHEL: Leah...and Daron!!....how lovely to see...both of you...

NATHAN: Hello Daron,,it's good to see you...

EZRA: Hello Daron

DARON: Hello....

RACHEL: How are you, Daron? Leah tells us you have been working very hard...

DARON: I don't have much choice, really...there's a lot to do...which reminds me (*turning to Ezra*) thank you....

EZRA: You've already thanked me for helping you...

DARON: I know....but I haven't thanked you for the talk we had...

EZRA: Has it made any difference to the way you think?

DARON: I don't know....

EZRA: Would you be here if it hadn't made any difference? (*Ezra turns to Nathan and Solomon*) Nathan..Solomon...we should go now...

(*Ezra, Nathan and Solomon leave*)

RACHEL; Are both of you staying? Would you like something to eat? We would love to share our meal...with both of you....

(*Leah turns to Daron*)

DARON: Why not?