

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

"A TALMUD TALE" PREMIERED FEBRUARY IN HOUSTON, TX!

The musical was an enormous hit! If you'd like a dvd of the show, please send a [contribution](#) of \$18 for an enjoyable, entertaining and inspiring look at the world of the Talmud!

Posted June 4, 2009, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND AVARICE IN THE YERUSHALMI **© Judith Z. Abrams, 2009**

Alexander of Macedon went to the king of Kasya. He showed him that he had a great deal of gold and silver. Alexander said to him: I don't need your gold and silver. I came only to see your customs, how you distribute alms and how you judge cases. While he was chatting with him, someone came with a case against his fellow. He had bought a piece of a field with its rubbish dump and he had found a trove of money in it. The one who had bought the property said: I bought a junk pile, not a trove. The one who had sold the property said: I sold you a junk pile and everything in it.

While they were arguing with one another, the king said to one of them: Do you have a son? He said yes. He asked the other: Do you have a daughter? He said yes. He said to them: Let this one marry that one and let the treasure belong to both of them.

Alexander began to laugh. He said: Why are you laughing? Didn't I judge the case properly? If you judged the case how would you have judged it? He said: We would have killed them both and kept the treasure for the king.

He said: Do you love gold all that much? He made a banquet for him and laid out before him gold loaves and gold chickens.

Alexander said to him: Can I eat the gold? He replied: You don't eat gold? Why do you love it so much? (Y. Baba Metsia 2:5//Genesis Rabbah 33:1//B. Tamid32a)

Discussion Questions:

The story begins with Alexander making a disclaimer that he is not interested in gold. Yet as the story goes on, we see that Alexander, for all his supposed-enlightenment, cares so much for it that he would sanction murder to get what was not rightfully his. The country he's visiting is somewhere in the "back of beyond," but it's not a Jewish place.

1. This story is set in the context of many stories of people going above and beyond to do the righteous thing to return property that wasn't rightfully theirs (or was doubtfully theirs). What good energy is sent out into the world when we behave above and beyond the letter of the law?
2. Recall a time you lost something and someone returned it to you. What happened? What did it mean to you? Can you recall a time you returned someone's lost property? What happened and how did you feel?

