



The Joy of Torah - For Life

Parshas Noach - Amazing becomes Normal!

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The Midrash Rabbah (Bereishis Rabba 73) brings a story about how Alexander the Great traveled to a far away land that he heard had a great system of judgment. He went to a court case where one person found a treasure in dirt he bought from his friend. The buyer said, "I didn't buy the treasure, only the dirt," and the seller said, "I sold the dirt and everything in it." The king said - "Let the son of one of them and the daughter of the other get married and then give them the money."

The king saw Alexander was astonished and asked, "What, did I not judge well?" Alexander admitted he had. The king asked Alexander how he would've judged the case. Alexander replied "I would've killed both of them and taken the treasure!" The king asked Alexander - "Does it rain in your land? Does the sun shine in your land? Are there animals in your land?" Alexander answered yes. "If so," said the king, "The rain and sun must be in the merit of the animals!" The king saw that Alexander was shocked by his judgment. There are two possible explanations for his being shocked – he thought the judgment was very good or very bad! To us, it seems like an amazingly good judgment. But the king asked, "Did I not judge well?" He saw Alexander shocked and assumed Alexander thought his judgment was shockingly bad. Why would he think that? Didn't he know how good and just brilliant his decision was? It must be that the king was so used to judging like that that he didn't see anything amazing about it. The only possible explanation for Alexander's surprise then must have been that he had not judged well! The king was so steeped in and used to his amazing accomplishment that he thought it was normal and nothing to be shocked at! As people we sometimes are so far apart. One person's normal is the other persons amazing! This human dynamic can be very impactful when we deal with people with different backgrounds and perspectives.