



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Jared Schmidt



It's the year 1600 in feudal Japan. John Blackthorne is the pilot of an English merchant ship that has been blown ashore with his crew, completely by chance.

He's worked his way up in their society and now owns property and is being educated in their language and culture. One of his crew has been tortured and murdered by a *Samurai*, or a Japanese citizen of the warrior class who lives to serve a liege lord, and he is biding his time until he gets the chance to have his revenge.

All of a sudden I realize it's two fifty; time for *Mincha*. I close the book I was reading and don my jacket, jog up the steps to the door and walk out onto the slick cobblestone, into the crisp afternoon sun. As I walk, I think offhandedly about the way to go about evaluating what is owed by the farmer whose ox bites off the arm of a child to the family of the child. Should he be evaluated on the slave market to see how much an arm is worth these days? **Rava** seems to say so; but didn't he say earlier that in *Bavel*, the courts can't make the farmer pay the family, because there aren't expert judges in *Bavel* to judge such cases? Why then should one evaluate his worth? Or maybe, the child *should* be evaluated on the slave market, so that if the family decides to be very proactive and take what they're owed by the farmer on their own free time, in a less than savory way, then the court can determine that the amount stolen by the family is the amount owed by the farmer, and therefore the theft can be deemed acceptable. But if that happens, should the evaluation be done before the theft takes place, or after? Is the family supposed to take from the farmer, or not; and if they're not supposed to, but they do, is the evaluation done just to determine what exactly should be done now?

I phase back in from the *Gemara*, not quite sure I know the answer, and turn my attention to where I'm going. I'm in the Old City of Jerusalem, after all. This is the spiritual center of - well, everything! This is the place in the physical world that corresponds to the source of all existence. It seems a waste to be somewhere else while here.

That's precisely the challenge. We all enter and leave a million worlds, every single day. Every thought that leads us down a particular path, every "what if?" that we ask ourselves; every plan we have for the future, every moment we fondly recall from the past; and those moments we recall with less pleasure; all of them, worlds upon worlds, reaching out into infinity. There simply is no limit to the capacity of the human mind to imagine, and to create fantasy.

But what of the present? The world with the most presence, the one with the most serious implications, and yet the one we least focus on sometimes. Even in this world, there are so many worlds in which to get lost, and stuck. One particular interaction with one person in one day, and it remains on the mind even hours later; to the exclusion of all else. What of the present moment, in the present place? Why do we run away with such gusto, so often; even if it means we have to make some other place up to go to?

Perhaps the work we have to do is on our feeling of purpose here, now; of the truth, which we must know is true, that we have something dear and precious to give here, now.

So for today, for this week, for this month, for this year, I'm here in the Old City of Jerusalem; but I think I'll stop by Japan for a few minutes more today. After I figure out what to do with that ox.

Jared graduated from The HHNE (Hebrew High School of New England) in West Hartford, Connecticut. He has studied violin for the past 9 years, composes his own music and is the un-official musician of Orayta. He was in the break dancing club at school and is also a black belt in Tae Kwan Do.

Jared's favorite part of Orayta is: "The healthiness of the perspective being taught here. How all the parts that before seemed to be in conflict, have now harmonized with each other to form a perfect world view.

I also love the Gemara shiurim, the guys in it and the dynamic between us. And I love the dynamic of having the back and forth and slowly pushing through new levels of understanding."

After Orayta, Jared will be attending Yeshiva University.