

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **The Purse of Gold**, a Jewish Folktale



Once on Hanukkah, a poor beggar found a leather purse that someone had dropped in the marketplace. Opening it, he discovered that it contained 100 pieces of gold.

"Should I keep the money?" he wondered. "Or should I try to find the owner. After all, whoever dropped the purse may need the money even more than I do."

Just then he heard a merchant shouting, "A reward! A reward to the one who finds my leather purse!"

Being an honest man, the beggar came forward and handed the purse to the merchant saying, "Here is your purse. I am the one who found it. May I have the reward?"

Now the merchant was *not* so honest a man as the beggar. He greedily counted his gold to make sure it was all there. Then he turned to the beggar and said, "Reward! What are you talking about? When I dropped my purse it had 200 pieces of gold in it. You have already stolen more than the reward. Go away or I'll call the police."

"I am no thief!" said the beggar defiantly. "I took none of your gold, and you offered a reward for the return of your purse. Let us go to the judge and let him decide the matter."

"Fine." said the merchant. "Let's go, then. Do you really think that the judge will believe your word against mine? I am an important person in this town, and you are nothing but a worthless vagabond."

So the merchant and the beggar brought the case before the judge, who patiently listened to what the two men had to say.

Now the judge was a clever man who quite easily guessed the truth of the matter. "Well," he said, when the men had finished. "I've heard both sides of the story. And you know what?—I believe you both."

"Merchant, you stated that the purse you lost contained 200 pieces of gold. That's a considerable loss. It's understandable that you should be upset by it. But, the purse this beggar found had only 100 pieces of gold in it. Therefore, the purse he found couldn't be the one you lost. Now, could it?"

And, with that, the judge gave the purse and all the gold to the beggar.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. If you had been the beggar and didn't know to whom the purse belonged, would you have tried to find the owner or just kept the gold? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What about once the beggar knew whose purse it was? At that point would you have given the merchant the purse or just kept it and said nothing? Explain.

What if there was no reward being offered? What would you have done?

3. Do you think the judge really believed both of the men's stories?

If not, why did he say that he did?

4. What is lesson here?