

Friend of God

There is an ancient legend, which tells us of old fishing village on the outskirts of a prosperous city. Now the story goes that every few weeks a gang of youths would travel up to this tiny village from the capital and terrorise the locals.

The village elders were powerless to stop these attacks, for the leader of the gang happened to be the son of an important and well-respected official.

Not sure what to do they eventually decided to seek counsel from the village Rabbi, who was so moved by the people's concern that he decided to take matters into his own hands.

Late that evening the Rabbi called on the leader of the gang and told him that if he didn't change his ways he would personally inform his father of what had been going on.

But this didn't faze the young man at all, he simply laughed and replied that as an only child and his father allowed him to live as he pleased.

'Well then', replied the Rabbi 'I shall pray to the LORD, for He stands in judgement over us all, and he will strike forth in vengeance'.

But again the youth laughed,

'Why should I fear your God, from your own lips you have said he always forgives, and anyway I have no care for the gods, let them do as they will'.

As you would expect the Rabbi left that place with a heavy heart.

Well months passed and things just grew worse. The village elders again approached the Great Rabbi who, this time, decided to take action.

The next day he approached the leader's house with anger in his heart and knocked on the door. But as he waited he heard a voice from heaven declare,

'Do not dare to touch my friend, for he lives under my protection'.

By the time the youth opened the door the Rabbi was utterly speechless.

'What is it this time old man' said the young troublemaker

But the Rabbi, dejected and confused, simply turned and walked away, repeating what had just happened over his shoulder.

The young man paused and then replied, 'Did he call me "friend"', but by this time the Rabbi was too far away to hear.

Well about 18 years later, by chance, the Rabbi met this troublemaker while on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It turns out the youth had been so moved by the Rabbi's words he had given everything he possessed to the poor and become a desert pilgrim.

When he saw the Rabbi he ran up and embraced his feet.

'I have come all this way to seek out my friend' he whispered through tears.

Shortly after, he died.