Presentations and other scholarship

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Lost & Found: Order in the Court -- The Party Game

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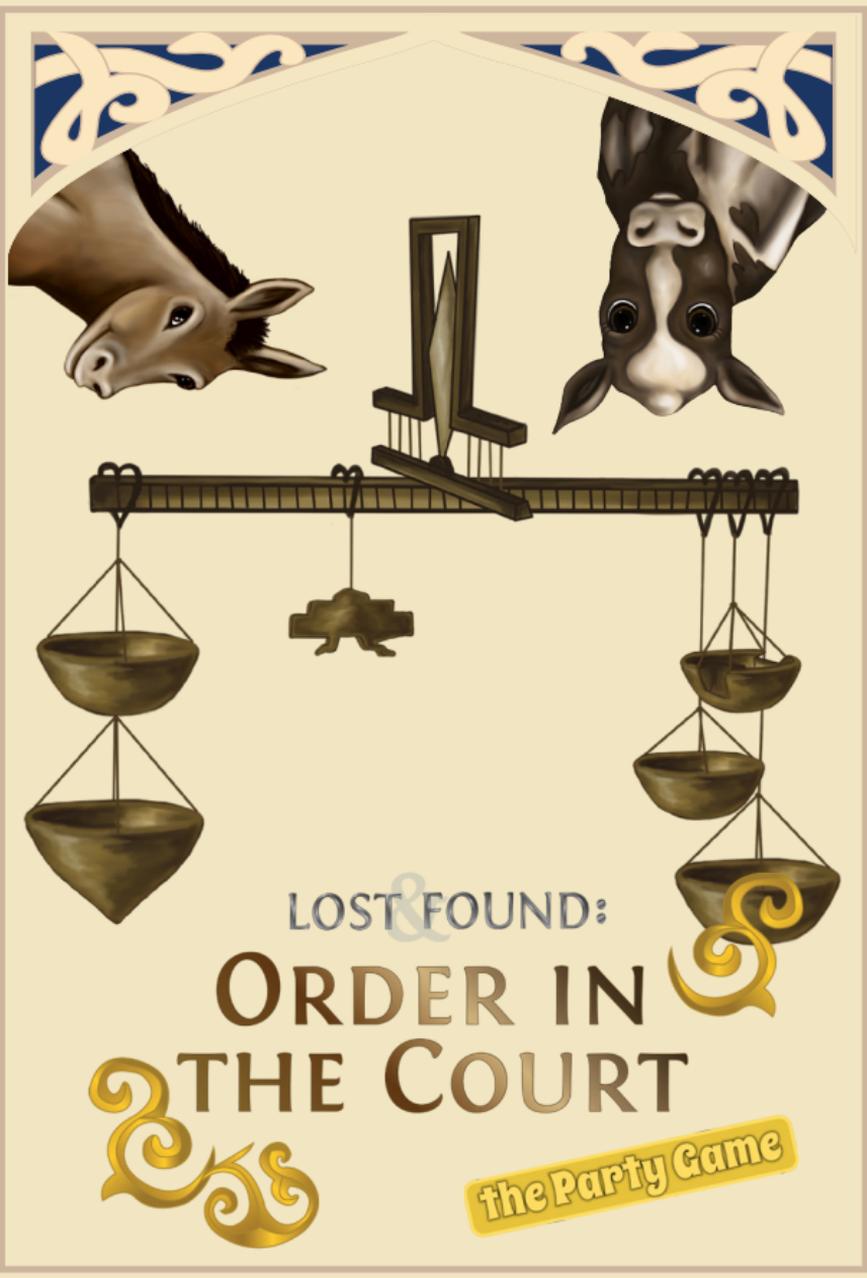
Rules

Starting only with the law, work backwards to construct a scenario that would have led people to seek out a legal ruling in the first place. What in the world could have led to the ruling? And if that isn't challenging enough, just try it with religious laws, written in North Africa, that are almost a thousand years old...

CONTENT
- 184 Story cards
- 32 Ruling-Case cards
- This rule booklet

SETUP
Shuffle both decks of cards separately. Place the Story deck in the center of the table where all players can reach it, and deal six Story cards to each player. Choose one player to be the first Judge; that player takes the Ruling-Case deck.

PLAY

Each turn, play through the following steps in order.

DRAW STORY CARDS

Any player other than the Judge may discard any cards they desire from their hand, and then draw from the Story deck until they have six cards. Players can even do this on the first turn of the game, if they do not like some of the cards in their opening hand.

READING THE CASE

The Judge draws the top card from the Ruling-Case deck and reads aloud from the Ruling side, which is the verdict of a court case. It is then up to the remaining players to invent a scenario that might have led to this legal decision. If the players are concerned about game length, the judge may optionally start a 90-second timer (not included) after reading the ruling.

CREATING SCENARIOS

Independently, each non-Judge player must construct a scenario that led to a disagreement between two parties, such that it went to court and ended with the verdict on the Ruling card, along with a rationale for why this ruling was just. Each player's scenario *must* use the concepts named on at least three Story cards from their hand, although they may use more. The player should take the cards they are using and place them face-down in the order that they will be used when describing their scenario.

DESCRIBING SCENARIOS

When all players are ready (or after the timer expires, if used), starting with the person to the left of the Judge and proceeding in clockwise order, each player describes their scenario and reveals their Story cards as they are mentioned. Each scenario should lead to the case coming to court and the rationale for

the ruling, ending with "Thus, the court rules [text of the ruling]."

Player Bob is the judge for the round. From the Ruling-Case deck, he draws Heavy Clothes and reads the ruling:

> "If you know the weight of the garment, it should be returned to you."

Player Ann draws the Story cards *Olives*, *Cashbox*, *Shepherd*, *Homeowner*, *Distinctive Mark* and *Silver*. She begins planning a story by selecting Shepherd as the main character because she can imagine the garments of a shepherd getting lost. She then moves on to specifying that the garment has no *Distinctive Mark* on it, meaning that the garment cannot be identified by the marks, as was common in this time period. Ann then must bring the weight of the garment into the story and chooses to do so by saying the shepherd knows

the garment weighs as much as a jar of *Olives*. Her story goes like this:

"One day, a shepherd" (she turns over the *Shepherd* card) "was out tending field when he lost his overcoat. He later found it in another's possession and said, 'Hey, that's mine,' to which the other person said, 'Prove it!' Since the overcoat had no distinctive marks," (she reveals the *Distinctive Marks* card) "he instead identified it by correctly stating that it weighed as much as a small jar of olives." (She flips over the *Olives* card) "The two of them went to court, where the other person argued that knowing the weight was not a valid method of proving ownership. The court ruled for the shepherd, saying that, 'Because it would be very difficult to determine the weight of a garment based solely on sight," (the

rationale for why this is just) "if you know the weight of the garment, it should be returned to you.'"

JUDGING
After hearing all scenarios, the Judge must choose whichever answer they liked best, by whatever criteria they wish: humor, creativity, storytelling, or anything else. The player who created the scenario receives the Ruling-Case card. If the players are curious, the actual historical case and rationale are listed on the Case side of the Ruling-Case card. (It is recommended that you not play with people who would award a card solely to the person who isn't winning for the purpose of not giving an extra card to the player in the lead, because those people are no fun.)

END OF THE TURN
The Judge passes the Ruling-Case deck to the next player in clockwise order; that player is the Judge for the next turn.

END OF GAME

After every player has been Judge once, the game ends. The player with the most Ruling-Case cards is declared the winner. In case of a tie, the tied players share a victory.

For a longer game, keep playing to a predetermined point total.

NOTES ON CARD IMAGES AND CARDS

The images on the cards are often a 12th century scale from the region of Egypt where the game is set. We are using the scale to represent balance and fairness in legal systems the way the scale is used today in contemporary times. We also have incorporated illustrations on various cards, many of which, like the scale image, were researched for historical accuracy. Those researched include a line explaining the image.

When Story Cards list a halacha (law), it means

that the particular law mentions the element listed on the card.

Cards sometimes have descriptive text explaining what a term means. Cards also sometimes have flavor text, text just for fun. Flavor text is in italics.

Historical Notes

Lost & Found: Order in the Court is a party game based on religious laws compiled in 12th Century Fustat (Old Cairo). The laws in the *Lost & Found* series are drawn from medieval, religious legal systems, the first module from Moses Maimonides' law code (set of laws) *Mishneh Torah*. Specifically, the laws in this game are from a section dealing with lost and found objects.

Maimonides was a renowned physician, philosopher, legal scholar, and rabbi. He learned from surrounding Muslim legal philosophers and scholars and also influenced Muslim legal scholars and philosophers. When Maimonides wrote the *Mishneh Torah*, from 1170-1180 CE, he was drawing from the earlier law code, the *Mishnah* (edited circa 250CE), which was the first written code after the *Hebrew Bible*, and the *Talmud* (edited circa 650 CE). The

Talmud comprises legal debates and stories commenting on the *Mishnah*. He worked to make the long history of legal debates and conversations accessible for people in his time period. Maimonides was also drawing on contemporary knowledge, including medicine of the time.

You will notice that religious laws in the *Mishneh Torah* often hold people to different, sometimes higher standards than we do today. And sometimes, it becomes obvious that the contexts have changed a great deal since the 12th century.

The illustrations of objects, settings, and architectural patterns in this game are researched to be historically accurate and can give you a feel for the time and place—Medieval North Africa.
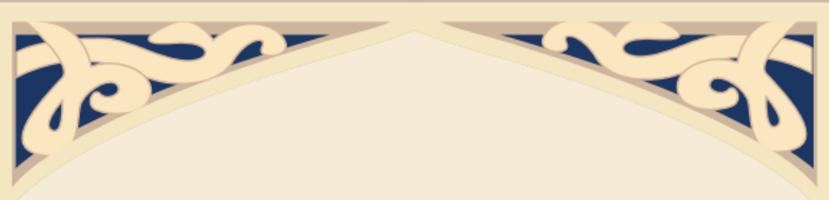
CREDITS

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If you're interested in checking out the *Mishneh Torah* itself, one of our favorite English translations and commentaries is this one:

> Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah. English & Hebrew Mishneh Torah*: a new translation with commentaries and notes by Eliyahu Touger, Moznayim Publications, 1988-1995.

Stay tuned to ConverJent (converjent.org) and RCP@ MAGIC (magic.rit.edu/rcp) for more *Lost & Found* developments.