



This unusual tombstone was found in a Jewish catacomb (underground tomb-complex) on the Via Appia in Rome. The man's name, Alexander, is clearly written at the top. At the bottom, there is a rough carving of a *menorah*, the seven-branched candlestick which is a symbol of Judaism.

The inscription tells us that Alexander worked in the market as a meat-seller. Because there are very strict Jewish laws about how meat must be prepared, it is very probably that he sold ritually-pure meat suitable for Jewish customers.

The inscription reads:

Alexander bubularus de macello qui vixit annis XXX anima bona omniorum
amicus dormitio tua inter dicaeis
'Alexander, beef-seller from the market, who lived thirty years, good soul, friend of all, may your sleep be amongst the just.'

Compare:

4th century gold-glass bowl base with *menorah*, in the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art, New York: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/18.145.1ab>

Details:

3rd-4th century AD. Marble, with red painted letters. Diameter 32cm, thickness 8cm. Ashmolean Museum AN2007.51.