

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted January 26, 2005 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

TRACTATE PARKING LOT

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Dear Friends,

The events related below actually happened and, for the most part, I have allowed their expression as my 13 year-old daughter described them.

She writes:

We are in the parking lot and thinking of cars. I look around and see Lexuses and Jaguars, as this is one of the city of Houston's richest synagogues. I say, "There are more luxury cars here than in a dealership." And my mom agrees. We were walking along, looking and labeling the cars out loud when my mom spots a car. She says, "That's a Jaguar... Wait. Is it?" And I say, "No, I don't think so." We walk up to the car, and lo and behold it's a Bentley! My mom walks up with a look of awe on her face. She says, "This is a fancy car. This is more than a Rolls Royce. It's probably \$300,000!" She says a shehecheyanu because this is the first time she's seen a Bentley and the same with me, so I say, "Amen."

We walk to the synagogue, say hello to the policemen, and then right before we enter the sanctuary, my mom asks for the time and realizes she forgot her watch. She asks me if I have my cell, and I realize I've left my purse in the car. We go back and, remembering the fun, we begin walking around again. In this parking lot of luxury vehicles and huge SUVs (and one Hummer!), we spot a rusty old circa-1970's Buick Regal. There is tape over one of the lights and, looking into the car, there is fabric, and no leather, with rusty old seat belts. Yet there is a lock over the wheel which we have not seen on any other car! On this rusty old car we see a lock on the wheel, while none of the other cars, in all their riches, have one! My mom points out, "The person really cares about their car because they have taken the time to tape up the light and put a lock on." We begin to search the parking lot again, looking for more interesting cars. My mom sees the Bentley again and says, "Look, the car us parked in a handicapped space. So even though he has this expensive car, he doesn't have everything."

We begin heading towards more cars when my mom starts telling me a story. "Once I was doing a baby naming. It's just like this, but at a person's house. I saw a Rolls Royce and I thought, "That person must have everything." And the dad said, "What would you say if I told you that the woman that owns that car is currently going through a divorce and is desperately trying to sell that car. But no one will buy it. She can't get food or anything just because of this car." I am like, "Wow. All her problems came from that car." We start heading in and we greet the policemen. I said, "We were busy finding spirituality in the parking lot." All during services I think of the fun we had in the parking lot. And when we leave, we are talking about the experience. My mom says, "That parking lot was a page of Talmud and we just read it. All you have to do is look. It's like the burning bush. How many people just saw it and said, 'Let's call 911!' But how many people took the time to look and say, 'It's burning but it's not burning up?' You just have to look."

Discussion Questions:

1. What other pages of Talmud are out there in the real world? Have you read them? Please tell your stories?
2. Is the image of a page of Talmud a useful paradigm by which you can analyze other things in your life? For example, a baseball stadium can be seen as a page of Talmud. The infield is the Mishnah and Gemara. The

outfield are the commentaries of Rashi and the Tosafists. The spectators are the students in the Study House.
Any other ideas?