

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

"A TALMUD TALE" PREMIERED FEBRUARY IN HOUSTON, TX!

The musical was an enormous hit! If you'd like a dvd of the show, please send a [contribution](#) of \$18 for an enjoyable, entertaining and inspiring look at the world of the Talmud!

Posted January 29, 2009, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

THE NEW YEAR FOR TREES: WHEN IS IT ALL SEALED UP?

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At four times in the year the world is judged.

Some teach: all of them are judged on Rosh Hashanah and the divine sentence of each one is sealed on Rosh Hashanah.

Others teach: all of them are judged on Rosh Hashanah and the divine sentence of each is sealed on Yom Kippur.

Others teach: all of them are judged on Rosh Hashanah and the divine sentence of each one is sealed at its appointed time.

Others teach: each one is judged at its appointed time and the divine sentence is sealed at its appointed time. (Y. Rosh Hashanah 1:3)

Some background is necessary to understand this Gemara. The Mishnah states that there are four new years: (1) Nissan (the month of Passover) is the new year for kings and festivals. (2) Elul (the month before Rosh Hashanah) is the new year for the tithes on cattle. (3) Tishrei (Rosh Hashanah) is the new year for years, Sabbatical years, Jubilees, young trees and vegetables and (4) Shevat is the new year for trees. Beit Shammai says this new year is the first of Shevat. Beit Hillel says this new year is the 15th of Shevat. Some suggest that the trees of Beit Shammai (the upper class) would be healthier and/or be planted in better soil and therefore would bloom earlier than the trees of Beit Hillel.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the "new years" of our contemporary society? When do the judgments of these years fall?
2. How can these new years be adapted to our agricultural seasons? Or should they be adapted? What purpose could be served by keeping them tied to Israel's agricultural cycle?
3. Do you have a Tu Bishvat seder? How do you observe the holiday?