

## 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 March 6, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

## ANOTHER TEXT FOR YOUR SEDER

© Judith Z. Abrams, 2008

Part of the Exodus story is Moses' escape from Egypt after he commits murder. How could he get away given the Pharaoh's presumed power? The Yerushalmi gives this answer:

When Moses fled from before Pharaoh, all Pharaoh's people who were there were incapacitated: some of them mute, some of them deaf and some of them blind.

When Pharaoh said to those who were mute, "Where is Moses?" They did not speak.

When he asked those who were deaf, they did not hear.

When he asked those who were blind, they did not see.

This demonstrates what the Holy One Blessed be He said (at the burning bush when Moses protested that he had a speech impediment), "Who gave man a mouth or who makes him mute (Exodus 4:11)." (Y. Berachot 87a)

God renders the Egyptians unable to answer Pharaoh's questions. Thus, when God tells Moses at the burning bush that He is the one that gives people the power to speak, to hear and to see, he has already experienced this for himself.

### Discussion Questions:

1. How do you think it was that Moses was able to escape? Do you think this scenario was likely or that the storyteller needed some pretext to make Moses' character leave Egypt? If so, why is the pretext murder? What else could have made Moses flee?
2. This concept, that God gives us our faculties shows up in another much-beloved passage:

Our Rabbis taught: There are three partners in [making] a person, the Holy One, blessed be He, his father and his mother. His father supplies the semen of the white substance out of which are formed the child's bones, sinews, nails, the brain in his head and the white in his eye; his mother supplies the semen of the red substance out of which is formed his skin, flesh, hair, blood and the black of the eye; and the Holy One, blessed be He, gives him spirit (ruah) and soul (n'shamah), beauty of features, eyesight and the power of hearing, and the ability to

speaking and to walk, understanding and discernment. When his time to depart from the world approaches, the Holy One, blessed be He, takes away His share and leaves the shares of his father and mother with them. (B. Niddah 31a)

Does our passage from the Yerushalmi suggest that God can take away our faculties at will and, one hopes, return them?