

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 12, 2009, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

YOUR SEDER AND THE YERUSHALMI

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You already know at least one Yerushalmi for your seder: the story of the four sons (Y. Pesachim 10:4/Mekhilta Bo 18). Let's add some more for you in time for you to use at your seder!

Mishnah Pesachim 10:3 talks about the bitter herbs (or lettuce) and charoset. There is a revealing bit in the Yerushalmi regarding the reality of these two items:

Merchants of Jerusalem used to say: Come and take the spices of the commandment!

Issi's wife said in her husband's name: And why is the charoset called dokhah (i.e. pounded)? Because the charoset is pounded with bitter herbs.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: It needs to be thick.

This implies that the charoset is a remembrance of the mud.

There are those who teach: It needs to be soft. This implies that the charoset is a remembrance of the blood (of the 10th plague and/or the blood on the doorposts that protected the Israelites from that plague). (Y. Pesachim 10:3)

Discussion Questions:

1. I love that we get a bit of a view on what is one of the most salient features of Passover (for me, at least): the hawking of wares for the seder meal. Our local grocery store gave over a huge space for Passover goods two weeks before Purim. It fills me with guilt and dread each time I enter as it reminds me of all the cleaning and cooking that will come. These grocers have ancient roots (no pun intended) apparently. Both in Jerusalem and in Lod (T. Pesachim 10:10), merchants were hocking these spices. Why do you think it is this cry that both Tosefta and the Yerushalmi remember? Is it because the merchants were saying that the spices were a commandment? If so, need they be referring to bitter herbs (which are commanded in the Torah) or could they be referring to the spices needed for the charoset? Is it either/or or both? On a more visceral level, I'm interested to know if anyone shares my sense of dread when seeing all those Passover goods in the grocery store. Please tell me! There seems to be a great deal of confusion about who Issi is (see B. Pesachim at the bottom of 113b) and all the more so about his wife. It certainly seems that she knows what her charoset has: something pounded and bitter herbs. Will you, perhaps, make some "Issi's wife charoset" this year made with bitter herbs? Let me know.

