

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 May 24, 2007, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

PUTTING THE FUN BACK IN DYSFUNCTION

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The portrayal of Jewish family life in Tanach could be described as "warts and all." Violence, incest, dishonesty and marital strife are par for the course. (Indeed, if it weren't Scripture, it would probably be banned from some libraries as an unwholesome book!)

The Talmud's depictions of family life are no less honest. This somewhat amusing passage shows that trouble with the in-laws is an old one. We are discussing, here, the sorts of transgressions a wife can commit which allow her husband to divorce her without paying her her ketubah. In other words, he can divorce her without any monetary penalty to himself and she does not receive any settlement at all.

Abba Shaul said: [an example of such a situation is] also a wife who curses her husband's parents in his presence. Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: [This also includes] one who curses his parents in the presence of his children...Rabbah explained: When she is in the presence of her husband's son and says: May a lion eat your grandfather! (B. Ketubot 72b)

What a scene is portrayed here! The wife is seen to be poisoning her children against their grandparent. There is, however, recourse...at least for the husband. He can divorce a wife who brings such discord into the home.

Discussion Questions:

1. The Tanach and the Talmud are unflinchingly honest about family life. Why do you think this was the editorial choice of preference? How does it enrich these documents? Does it detract from them? If so, how does it?
2. Jews of a long and lusty history of cursing. One particularly thinks of such Yiddish curses as, "You should grow like an onion with your head in the ground!" Are there some creative curses that show special élan? Please share them.
3. Seriously, what kind of impact does such discord have on a family? Is it worthy of the dissolution of a marriage?