

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 June 19, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

CHARITY AND RAIN: THE SAGES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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As we swing into summer in earnest, the skies above Israel are cloudless and we don't even bother to pray for rain: it will not fall there till autumn. But it occupies our thoughts nonetheless.

The sages believed that there was a dome over the earth and a river above that dome. God controlled the doors in the dome that allowed rain to fall and closed them on account of different sins, as reported in the Yerushalmi.

On account of four sorts of sins are rains withheld: Because of the sins of idolatry, fornication, murder and because of people who pledge charity in public but don't hand over the money. (The prooftexts for each assertion are provided and this is the last:)

How do we know that it is because of the people who pledge charity in public but do not hand over the money? "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.(Proverbs 25:14)" (Y. Taanit 3:3)

The tragedy of no rainfall was pinned on the people's sinfulness and this passage delineates exactly what kind of sin this is. It is a different sort of notion as to what human deeds cause climate disruption than those we have today.

Discussion Questions:

1. Idolatry, fornication and murder are very serious sins. Why is pledging charity publicly and then not coming through on the gift in league with such terrible sins?
2. The sages have the idea that human behavior affects the climate. If they were here today, what do you think they would say about climate change today?