

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted July 19, 2005 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

THE TALMUD AND HARRY POTTER

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Up until now, I have not brought together the enjoyment I derive from reading the Harry Potter series of books and my love of Talmud. But this last book, *The Half Blood Prince*, really begs for a droll (PLEASE note the tone) look at how we might use children's (and adults') enjoyment of the book to help them learn about Judaism.

For example, throughout all the books the importance of heritage and whether one is a witch or wizard born to a "Pureblood" family (i.e., parents are wizard and witch), "Half-blood" (one parent is magic, one is muggle, i.e., not magic) or "Muggle born" (both parents are not magic) could provide an interesting paradigm by which to study the question of Cohanite, Levite, Patrilineal and Matrilineal descent. (The ten types of lineage are outlined in M. Kiddushin 4:1.)

The importance of adoption in Judaism (e.g., in the case of Moses) could be brought forth...especially treating adopted children as one would one's biological children.

The importance of teachers as parental figures is certainly borne forth in the Harry Potter books. (See B. Baba Metsia 33a-b.)

Let's not even get into likenesses between the magical creatures described in the Harry Potter books and the many magical beings that people the pages of rabbinic literature and Jewish works that never made it into the canon. (Check out the Books of Enoch for some angelologies and demonologies that will blow you away with their pyrotechnics.)

Am I saying there are deep connections between Harry Potter and Judaism? No. Am I saying that we can use people's enthusiasm about these books to help them see how cool Judaism is? Yes. If Bhuddist monks in Bhutan can make a movie about the World Cup that turns out to be a moral tale ("The Cup"...a charming film) then I see nothing wrong in using another form of popular culture to teach people about the wonders of Judaism.

Enjoy!