

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 August 17, 2007, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

HARRY POTTER, THE HIGH HOLIDAYS AND TALMUD, TOO **© Judith Z. Abrams, 2007**

You all have known me long enough to know that I'm into the Harry Potter series. So it's no surprise that it's in my thoughts now that we're in the month of Elul. Spoiler alert: if you haven't read the last book and don't want to know what happens, read no further!

1. The overwhelming theme that comes through in this book is the importance of mother love. It protects those touched by it long after the mother herself is deceased. Riddle lacks it so he chases dreams of immortality. Harry, who experienced it and is guarded by it as long as he lives...and as long as Voldemort lives...is defended by its powerful shield. How does this relate to the High Holidays? In at least two ways: (1) God's love is not only father love, as in Avinu Malkeinu, our Father our King, it is also mother love. God loves us with that intensity and fervor. (2) The High Holidays are a good time to think about your relationship with your mother. If she gave you this incredible kind of love, thank her. If she is gone, honor her memory. And if she did not give you this kind of love, recognize what you did not receive and vow that this deficit, often passed from generation to generation, will stop with you. Vow to parent yourself and supply yourself with this crucial kind of love.

2. Another point that recurs throughout The Deathly Hallows is the importance of remorse. Remorse is the only way to put back together a soul desecrated through murder and making horcruxes. Remorse is one part of repentance and repentance are what the High Holidays are all about. Look back over the past year. Have you committed sins? Scratch that...what sins have you committed? (We all commit sins. It's a function of being human.) To understand, acknowledge, feel sorry for and ameliorate the pain you've caused is the spiritual work at hand. In Judaism, feeling remorse isn't enough...you have to make it right as best you can.

Finally, the Talmud tells us we are obligated to give everyone the benefit of the doubt (Bavli Shabbat 127b). This ultimately redounds to our credit: "As you judge another favorably, so may God judge you favorably." I knew Snape was a good guy!

Discussion Questions:

1. Does father love differ from mother love? If so, how? How does this manifest itself in our relationship to God?
2. It is interesting, I think, that in Harry Potter, remorse is enough to cure spiritual damage while in Judaism teshuvah, repentance, is needed? What do you make of this cultural/spiritual difference?

3. For those who were not into the books, a bit of explanation: Snape appeared the villain all the way until the end of book seven. Then we find out that he was a tortured soul who was capable of great love and loyalty. At the end of book six he kills one of the series' most beloved characters. At the time, vigorous debate went on in our house on whether he was scum or not. I insisted that the killing must have been prearranged and that he was not the bad guy (although I wouldn't know precisely why until the end of book seven). As you get ready for the High Holidays, is there someone in your life who could use the benefit of the doubt? Could you use it?

Shanah tovah!