

## 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 28, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

## **GOD MAKES THE WINDS GENTLE, SAYS THE YERUSHALMI** **© Judith Z. Abrams, 2008**

As Tropical Storm Gustav appears to be heading toward the area of New Orleans, the issue of prayer during a hurricane comes again to the fore. According to the Mishnah (Berachot 9:2). That prayer is to say the blessing, "Blessed are You, our God, Ruler of the Universe, whose power fills the world."

The Yerushalmi adds the following:

The Mishnah speaks of strong winds. But for gentle winds one recites, "Blessed are You, our God, who made all of creation."

Said Rabbi Joshua ben Channaniah: When a wind comes upon the earth, the Holy One, blessed be He, breaks it up on the mountains, and weakens it on the hills and says to it, "Make sure you do not damage my creations."

What is the Scriptural basis for this? "For from me proceeds the wind. (Isaiah 57:16)" He weakens it, as it says, "When my wind is faint. (Psalm 142:3)"

And why does God weaken the winds? Rav Huna in the name of Rav Aha: I have made the breath (i.e., soul, wind) of life (Isaiah 57:16). I weakened the winds on behalf of the safety of the souls that I have made.  
(Y. Berachot 9:2)

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. The Yerushalmi is acutely aware of how geography, i.e., God's creation, slows down an ocean-produced storm. How would they have known about hurricanes? I don't know if there were ever hurricanes in the Mediterranean or near Babylonia (modern day Iraq). Do you?
2. This passage suggests that God does not want wind to destroy life. How would you make this passage a basis for God's mercy during a hurricane?

May God show mercy on New Orleans and to all those who deal with the most destructive force God creates: hurricanes.