

## 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 September 23, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

### **IKE: A REAL SUKKOT EXPERIENCE**

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I'm living in a world of skhakh (the vegetation we put on the top of our sukkot). There are so many whole trees down, so many branches piled at the edge of the streets in huge piles, it feels as if we could provide skhakh for the whole world.

We don't know when the power will be turned back on: it's been more than a week that we've lived in the dark and the heat. I've had four hot meals in that time. I'm surprised to find out how much of a difference it makes. On the other hand, it's a great dieting tool: between the heat and eating crackers, you definitely lose weight.

Questions of a true Talmudic nature fill the airwaves (radio, since we can't get television). If a boat lands on your property, do you get to claim the boat as your property? (Answer: No. But the owner of the boat has to pay for the damage the boat caused to your property.) Can you break your lease if your apartment is unlivable? Can you keep your apartment if you can't pay rent due to the hurricane. (The answer to both questions is yes.)

Closer to home, what for lack of a better word I'd call civic responsibility, becomes incredibly important during and after a storm. We maintain our trees very, very well: feeding them and trimming them yearly. We had only a few big branches come down from one tree then just leaves from the other. Neighbors who did not maintain their trees so well were not so fortunate. And the branches and whole trees came down not necessarily on the owners' property, causing damage.

Four houses down, one elm tree was ripped cleanly from the ground as if cut with a knife. It fell across the street and toppled another tree onto a house. As soon as the rains had passed, two neighbors with chain saws spent the next six hours cutting into the trunk of the tree across the road so that one lane of traffic could get through. We shared ice, a precious commodity now.

Because we've been in such primitive conditions, we haven't even been able to know about our friends in Galveston and what has happened to them. Theirs is a "Katrina" -like experience.

Ike has given me a Sukkot experience unlike any other. For that, I'm thankful. I have a new appreciation for every branch and bough that stayed up and a sadness for the trees that have been shattered. Yet, now that there are no lights in the neighborhood, I can see a moon shadow, even this late in Elul...and more stars than I've ever been able to see here.

So I have to praise God even for the mosquitos (do I?...ok, yes, I do.) and for a roof over my head, for destroying winds and rain, for causing the sea to swamp Galveston as it has not done since 1900, for acts of kindness and generosity (not only amongst neighbors...the power crews that showed up today to cut trees are from Baltimore (!)) for the gift of a new year, and a new perspective.

May we all be inscribed and sealed in the book of Life and may you enjoy a joyous Sukkot.

