

## 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 October 11, 2007, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

## A SURPRISING PERSPECTIVE ON RABBAN GAMLIEL

© Judith Z. Abrams, 2007

Through a series of coincidences, I was made aware of Rabban Gamliel's appearance in Christian Scriptures (!). In Acts of the Apostles, Rabban Gamliel is described as a Pharisee who speaks in the Sanhedrin. Who could possibly be the man in the story?

A group of Jesus' supporters is about to be condemned when...

*A certain Pharisee, Gamliel by name, a teacher of the law esteemed by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered these men out of the court for a short time. He said to them, "Fellow Israelites, be careful about what you are going to do to these men...Keep your distance from these men and let them be. For if this scheme or this undertaking is of human design, it will destroy itself. But if it is of God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against God. They were won over by him. (Acts 5:34-39)*

I confess that I was stunned to discover this text. In Christian writings this is apparently identified as Rabban Gamliel the Elder, i.e., "our" Rabban Gamliel's father. As such, he is a link between Hillel and "our" Rabban Gamliel.

Whether this is Rabban Gamliel the elder or "our" Rabban Gamliel, I can imagine "our" Rabban Gamliel, the contemporary of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, sticking up for a group of Jews (and Judeo-Christians in the years 70-90 C.E. would certainly still seem to be Jews) who seemed to be persecuted.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think this is a conflation in the text, i.e., that this is "our" Rabban Gamliel retrojected into an earlier context?
2. Why would Christian Scriptures portray a leading sage in such a positive light? Who would have lobbied for the inclusion of this story in this light?
3. How do you feel about having one of our sages in Christian Scriptures?

P.S. President Warren G. Harding's middle name is...you guessed it...Gamliel. Go figure!