

## 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 25, 2007, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

### **THE CALIFORNIA FIRES, KATRINA AND TWO PRAYERS TO SAY © Judith Z. Abrams, 2007**

Watching Southern Californians being driven from their homes and congregating in their stadium brings back palpable memories of Katrina and the evacuees that fled here and Houston's response to the situation. I am, frankly, proud of the job Houston did during that emergency and it looks as if Californians are doing the same: banding together and giving aid when and where it's needed most.

Living in a hurricane zone, I am intimately aware of how we are at the mercy of forces much stronger than we are. At such times, sometimes our only option is prayer. The Talmud, naturally, gives us an example of what prayers we might offer at such a time:

Our Rabbis taught: Once all Israel went up on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and they did not have water to drink. Nakdimon ben Guryon approached a certain governor, [and] said to him: Lend me twelve wells of water for the pilgrims, and I will give you twelve wells of water. And if I do not give [them] to you, I will give you twelve talents of silver. And he set a time for him.

When the time arrived and the rain had not fallen, he sent to him in the morning: Send me either the water or the money you owe me. He sent to him: I still have time, [for] the entire day is mine.

At midday he sent to him: Send me either the water or the money that you owe me. He sent to him: I still have time left in the day.

In the afternoon he sent to him: Send me the water or the money that you owe me. He sent to him: I still have time left in the day. That governor sneered at him [and] said: All year long rains have not fallen, and rains will fall now? He entered the bathhouse joyfully.

As the lord entered the bathhouse joyfully, Nakdimon entered the Temple in sadness. He wrapped himself and stood in prayer. He said before Him: Master of the Universe! It is revealed and known before You that I did not do [this] for my [own] honor, nor did I do [it] for the honor of my father's house. Rather, I did [it] for Your honor, so that water would be available for the pilgrims. Immediately the sky became covered with clouds and rain fell until the twelve wells filled and overflowed.

As the lord left the bathhouse, Nakdimon ben Guryon left the Temple. When they met each other, he said to him: Give me the money for the extra water which you owe me. He said to him: I know that the Holy One blessed be He, did not shake His world except on account of you. But I still have a claim against you that I may collect me money from you, for the sun has already set and the rains fell in my possession.

He went back and entered the Temple, wrapped himself and stood in prayer, and said before Him: Master

of the Universe! Make it known that You have loved ones in Your world. Immediately the clouds dispersed and the sun shone. At that time the lord said to him: If the sun had not broken through, I would have had a claim against you that I could have collected my money from you [but now, I cannot]. (B. Taanit 19b-20a)

I love this story about Nakdimon ben Gurion for so many reasons. In the present crisis, it's a great example of leadership and proper prayer.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Nakdimon first supplies what is needed, then he prays. How can we use this as a model for acting in a crisis?
2. Nakdimon's second prayer is most poignant. He does not ask for anything in specific; he can't, as he is asking for something for himself and that seems to go against his personal principles. Again, how can we use his prayer as a model for prayer when we want to ask something of God but don't want to seem selfish?

May the winds die down and the rains come soon!