

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 December 19, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

RADICAL HONESTY IN THE YERUSHALMI

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This week's news about deceit in the halls of business and its impact on the world of Jewish philanthropy causes us to ask, "How honest should we be?" The Yerushalmi (and the Bavli) answer resoundingly: You should be radically honest. You must not even fool the consumer by covering over blemishes in your goods or by making them look better than they, in fact, are:

Rabbi Avdima, from Milcha, would steep his lean meat [in water to improve its appearance]. Said to him Yaakov bar Ahah, "Was it not taught, 'One doesn't [deceive by] beautifying [merchandise]?' From here [the words of Yaakov bar Ahah] we can learn [that the prohibition of] beautifying applies to food.

R. Zeira who worked with flax came to Rabbi Abahu . He said to him, "May I beautify my work?" Said he [Rabbi Abahu] to him [R. Zeira], "Go and do what you know [i.e., act according to your understanding of the law]."

Rabbi Abahu was weaving veils. He came and asked Rabbi Yose ben Hanina and said, "What can we do with these veils?" He said to him, "Go and do what you know[i.e., act according to your understanding of the law]."

Rabbah painted a bath red [to beautify it]. Rabbi Yaakov Amsonya taught, "What does it mean, 'One doesn't [deceive by] beautifying [merchandise]?' That one doesn't paint one's body." (Y. Baba Metsia 4:7,4:9, 9d)

Discussion Questions:

1. As we lurch into the darkest part of the calendar, this year, more than most, Hannukkah can be a time of rebirth. How will you rededicate yourself to the Yerushalmi's brand of radical honesty?
2. What benefits can be gained from such honesty? What might be lost by it? And are those things that are lost better off not being yours?