

## CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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Posted February 25, 2010, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

### **KARMA SOMETIMES NEEDS A POKE IN THE RIBS IN THE YERUSHALMI**

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Once, it happened that there was a certain pious man who would dig pits, ditches and vaults so that travelers would have water. Once his daughter was going to get married and the river swept her away. All the people went to him to visit him. They tried to console him but he would not accept their consolation. He was utterly inconsolable.

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair went to see him. He sought to console him but he would not accept the consolation. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yaid said to the people: This is your chassid?!? They said to him: Rabbi, this man used to do good deeds with water and he cannot understand how this tragedy befell him at the hands of water.

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair said: Could it be that he honors his Creator with water and God cut him down with water? No, such a thing could not be. Immediately word went out in the city: The man's daughter has returned! Some say that she grabbed hold of a branch and so was saved. And there are those who say that an angel came down in the form of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair and he saved her. (Y. Demai 1:3//Y. Shekalim 5:1//B. Yebamot 121b//Baba Kamma 50a)

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. There is a clear assumption that "what goes around comes around", i.e., that a righteous man who supplies travelers water would have a tragedy befall him through water. Do we still believe this? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. The daughter plays a somewhat secondary role in the telling of this story. If we were telling the story from her point of view, how would we tell it? Did she, perhaps, participate in digging the wells and ditches? How did her merit figure into the scenario?
3. With the disaster in Haiti fresh in our minds, is it possible to think that all those who died and/or were maimed deserved it? How, then, do we make sense of such destruction.