

## 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 April 16, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

## THE YERUSHALMI'S EXPLANATIONS OF THE FOUR CUPS OF WINE

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You are probably familiar with the haggadah's explanation of the four cups of wine. Here's some additional information from the Yerushalmi:

From what texts are the four cups of wine derived?

Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Benayah: They correspond to the four redemptions: "Say, therefore, to the Israelites: I am God and I will take you out, etc. (Exodus 6:6-7)" (This is the explanation found in the Haggadah.)

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: They correspond to the four cups of wine associated with Pharaoh. "Pharaoh's cup was in my hand and I took the grapes and I pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand (Genesis 40:11) and ...and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand (Genesis 40:13)"

Rabbi Levi said: They correspond to the four kingdoms that have oppressed Israel: Babylonia, Media, Greece and Rome.

And rabbis say: They correspond to the four cups of retribution that the Holy One Praised be He will give the nations of the world to drink:

1. "For thus said the Lord, the God of Israel to me: Take from My hand this cup of wine (of wrath) and make all the nations to whom I send you drink of it. (Jeremiah 25:15)"
2. "Flee from the midst of Babylon for this is a time of vengeance for the Lord. He will deal retribution to her. Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand and it made the whole earth drunk. (Jeremiah 51:6-7)"
3. "For in the Lord's hand there is a cup with foaming wine fully mixed; from this He pours; all the wicked of the earth drink, draining it to the very dregs. (Psalm 75:9)"
4. "He will rain down upon the wicked blazing coals and sulfur, a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. (Psalm 11:6)"  
(Y. Pesachim 10:1, 37b)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Which of these four meanings do you prefer? If you like them equally, what do you like about them?
2. How is the story of the exodus the photonegative of the story of Joseph?
3. The last two explanations emphasize the triumph of Israel over the nations that tried to destroy us (although, Egypt is not included among them). Could this "four cups of vengeance" idea be part of the liturgy at the end of the Seder when we ask for God's vengeance to be poured out on our oppressors?

Happy Pesach!