

## CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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Posted July 14, 2011, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

## HEADING INTO THE HIGH HOLIDAYS

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Let's begin with a true story. The Central Intelligence Agency went to a college campus to recruit people to work there. The recruiter explained that you had to have an absolutely blemishless record so that you would never fall prey to an enemy's attempt to blackmail you. The recruiter asked people to leave if they did anything on the list that he then read out loud.

- If you had used illegal drugs, you were out.
- If you had cheated on your taxes, you were out.
- If you stole paper clips from work, you were out.
- If you had illegally downloaded movies, you were out.

The list went on and on and, not surprisingly, almost no one was left by the time the list was finished.

So, as we turn the corner heading into the High Holiday season of evaluation, we have to wonder: is God as demanding as the CIA? Is just one sin going to earn us a stint in Hell? Will God cut us a break? Well, if you have a lot of sins, God's going to hold your feet to the fire for those. And if you have a lot of good deeds, it's straight to the front of the line for Heaven. But what if you have an equal number of good deeds and sins? Where do you go, then? You'll be glad to know that God does some "creative accounting" in our favor in such a case:

**If the majority of your actions are meritorious, you inherit the Garden of Eden. If the majority of your actions are sins, you inherit Hell. But if they are equally balanced...God will take one of the sins out of the stack, so that your merits will outweigh your sins. (Yerushalmi Peah 1:1, 10a2)**

Whew. So God cuts us more slack than the CIA would.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Could you pass the CIA test?
2. Is it a relief or a disappointment that the CIA is tougher on people than God?
3. If you were not Jewish, would you like the idea that God will cut us some slack?

Looking forward to your answers!