

## 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 August 30, 2007, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

### **This Year, Resolve not to Give Satan a Chance**

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Do Jews believe in Satan? Of course we do...but not in the sense that others understand the concept. Think of Satan as the lawyer for the prosecution. The key is not to give the prosecution an opportunity to come after you in the first place. The Talmud of the land of Israel (the Yerushalmi) has some remarkably down-to-earth advice on this point:

Satan takes up his prosecution only in a time of danger. So, for example, in the case of a board stretched from one roof to the next, even if it is ever so broad, it is forbidden to walk across it. Why? Because Satan takes up his prosecution only in a time of danger.

**Rav said: He who dwells in a shaky house turns the angel of death into his creditor [who comes to visit on him all his sins]....**

**In three situations Satan is waiting to prosecute: he who makes a trip all by himself, he who sleeps by himself in a closed-up house and he who sets sail on the Great Sea (i.e., the Mediterranean)...If you have to make a sea voyage, when you bind up the branches of your lulav at the end of Sukkot, bind your feet together, too, and do not go out on the sea in winter. (Y. Shabbat 2:6)**

It is this sort of wisdom that makes me love Talmud! Satan isn't some lurid temptation. Satan simply takes advantage of opens that we, ourselves, give him. Each of us has some misdeed for which we deserve judgment. So when we engage in risky behavior, God points out our demerits to God and hastens the punishments that we, ourselves, have earned.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How does this image of "Satan as prosecuting attorney" differ from that which we find in popular culture? Why do you think Judaism invests the concept of Satan with less power than does the general culture?
2. According to this passage, you should avoid engaging in physically risky pursuits. How would you extend, or not extend, this precept to the emotional, intellectual and spiritual realms?
3. When is a physical risk worth taking? For example, when are the risks of paragliding worth taking and when are they not? Or, more seriously, when are the risks entailed in making a living by mining or in the armed services, justifiable? What would protect one spiritually in such cases?

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Shanah tovah!