

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted February 2, 2006 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

TALMUD, LIES AND THE INTERNET: A FORM OF ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE WEB, PART III **© Judith Z. Abrams, 2006**

Perhaps the most inflammatory statement made against the Judaism of rabbinic literature is this quote:

Kethuboth 11b. "When a grown-up man has intercourse with a little girl it is nothing."

Out of context, this statement would seem to legitimate the demonization of the Talmud. Within its context it is actually a protection for the girl.

This statement comes up in the discussion of what happens to those females who have accidentally broken their hymen or have had it broken through other, aberrant, means. The Talmud here means to say that such intercourse is not held against the girl. She is able to demand the full, virgin bride-price without penalty because of what was done to her. In this context, the sages are protecting the girl, making sure she will not be penalized twice because of what was done to her.

Discussion Questions:

1. Even though the notion of a bride price (containing within itself the idea that virgins are entitled to a higher bride price than non-virgins) may seem strange to us, can you see now how the sages are using this concept to illustrate the principle that a child should not be penalized for having been molested?
2. What does this exercise teach us about reading things in context? How can we transmit this message about Talmud more effectively, on the internet and in the world?