

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 November 6, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

TAKING CARE OF YOUR COMMUNITY = TORAH STUDY

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The sages knew that you can't start praying from a standing start, so to speak. Our brains can't move, in an instant, from worrying about breakfast or the stock markets to communing with God. So they mandate a warm up period as well as a cool down period.

Most of the sages say that one studies Torah first, specifically, practical, every day halachic matters, and then moves into prayer. They use as their exemplar, Elijah. For just before he ascends into heaven in a fiery chariot he speaks. Naturally, the sages want to identify what that talking is about. The Yerushalmi says that it could refer to one of four concepts:

R. Ahava ben R. Zeira said: It refers to the Shema Rabbi Judah ben Pazzai said: It refers to the creation of the world. Rabby Yudan, the son of R. Aybo says: It refers to the consolations of Jerusalem. And the sages say: It refers to the Merkavah (the chariot)

Rabbi Jeremiah takes an even more lenient view. He says:

One who is involved with communal needs is like one who is involved in Torah study [and he may begin praying after doing this mitzvah]. (Y. Berachot 5:1)

Discussion Questions:

1. It seems here we might have an early precursor to the "four-worlds" approach to Jewish mysticism. Can you see it? Do you think there's any connection? If so, how?
2. The idea that working for the welfare of the community can be just as quieting and uplifting as Torah study is pretty radical? Do you agree? If so, why and if now, why not? What could have led Rabbi Jeremiah to make such a statement?
3. How will you put these teachings into practice in your prayer/study life?