

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted January 31, 2002 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

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Exciting Developments in Long-Term, Intensive Talmud Study at Maqom!

About one year ago, I offered those who study Talmud with Maqom the option of working with me on a one-on-one basis to do research and create articles about rabbinic literature that would be posted [here](#) at Maqom. With this article, that project is bearing its first fruit. I hope you enjoy reading Rabbi Louis Rieser's research and the papers that have yet to come.

--Rabbi Judith Z. Abrams, Ph.D.

BH

BEING GRATEFUL IN EVERY MOMENT

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Dear Friends,

Our tradition mandates that we cultivate an attitude of thankfulness for all that God gives us. There can be a tendency to take things for granted, so the Gemara gives us a list of examples for prayers we could use throughout the day to express our thanks to God.

When one hears the cock crowing one should say:

Blessed be the One who has given the cock the understanding to distinguish between day and night.

[OR...who knows the secrets Y. Berachot 9:1]

When one opens one's eyes one should say:

Blessed be the One who opens the eyes of the blind.

When one stretches oneself and sits up, one should say:

Blessed be the One who loosens the bound.

When one dresses one should say:

Blessed be the One who clothes the naked.

When one draws oneself up he should say:

Blessed be the One who raises the bowed.

When one steps on to the ground one should say:

Blessed be the One who spread the earth on the waters.

When one commences to walk one should say:
Blessed be the One who makes firm the steps of humanity.

When one ties ones shoes one should say:
Blessed be the One who has supplied all my wants.

When one puts on one's belt, one should say:
Blessed be the One who girds Israel with might.

When one spreads a kerchief over one's head one should say:
Blessed be the One who crowns Israel with glory. (B. Berachot 60b)

We are to say 100 blessings a day (B. Menachot 43b). Enjoying a hummingbird by your window, or a sunrise or waking up are all great gifts that must be acknowledged:

Rabbi Hanina bar Papa said, "Anyone who enjoys this world without a benediction, it is as if he robbed the Holy One, blessed be He, and the congregation of Israel. (B. Berachot 35a)

The blessings recorded here are to be said at home, at work, everywhere, as the occasion arises. The point is to appreciate each gift from God as you receive it. Rambam states as much in his code of law Mishneh Torah:

These blessings have no appointed order. Each blessing is recited at the appropriate time and occasion. For example: If one put on his girdle, while still on his couch, he recites the blessing "Who girds Israel with strength". When he hears the cock crow, he recites the blessing, "Who has given the cock intelligence, etc." any of the above blessings for which there is no occasion is not recited. (Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 7:7)

The people in most of our cities have the custom of reciting these blessings in the synagogue, consecutively, whether they were under an obligation to do so or not. This however is an erroneous practice which should not be followed. No blessings should be recited unless there is an obligation to do so. (Rambam, Hilchot Tefillah 7:9)

Discussion Questions:

1. Unfortunately, what was true in Rambam's day is still true in ours. Instead of thanking God as these things occur, they are lumped together and said in the synagogue which completely misses the point of the whole spiritual exercise. How would you feel if these prayers were deleted from the service and the congregants were held responsible for saying them at home? (By the way, you can say the blessings in English...God understands all languages.)
2. What other events make you say a blessing? How do you thank God?
3. Sometimes, Jews feel envious of the spontaneity in prayer that some Christian sects achieve. We are allowed, even encouraged by rabbinic literature, to be just as extemporaneous in our thanks to God. Practice, in English, just talking to God and saying "Thank you" for food, life, roof, whatever you have. How does it feel?