

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted January 31, 2003 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

THE SONG FOR THE DAY

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It has been taught: 'R. Judah said in the name of R. Akiba: On the first day [of the week] what [psalm] did they [the Levites] say? [Psalm 24. The one commencing] The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, because He took possession and gave possession and was [sole] ruler in His universe.

On the second day what did they say? [Psalm 48. The one commencing], Great is the Lord and highly to be praised, because he divided His works and reigned over them like a king.

On the third day they said, [Psalm 82. The one commencing], God stands in the congregation of God, because He revealed the earth in His wisdom and established the world for His community.

On the fourth day they said, [Psalm 94. The one commencing], O Lord, Thou God, to whom vengeance belongeth, because He created the sun and the moon and will one day punish those who serve them.

On the fifth day they said, [Psalm 81. The one commencing], Sing aloud to the God of our strength, because He created fishes and birds to praise His name.

On the sixth day they said, [Psalm 93. The one commencing], The Lord reigns, He is clothed in majesty, because He completed His work and reigned over His creatures.

On the seventh day they said, [Psalm 92. The one commencing], A psalm a song for the Sabbath day, to wit, for the day which will be all Sabbath.

...On the first day [the reason for the psalm said is] because He took possession and gave possession and was [sole] ruler in His world; on the second day because He divided and ruled over them; on the third day because He revealed the earth in His wisdom and established the world for His community; on the fourth

day, because He created the sun and the moon and will one day punish those who serve them; on the fifth day because He created birds and fishes to praise His name; on the sixth day because He completed His work and reigned over His creatures; on the seventh day, because He rested. (B. Rosh Hashanah 31a)

The Gemara here is making sense out of the selection of the psalms for each day of the week. They hearken back to the priestly account of creation. As we have seen elsewhere (e.g., reading the first chapter of Genesis as a community when one's local priests go down to Jerusalem to serve in the Temple), the functioning of the cult is the platform and motor that contains and propels the very creation and existence of the world.

Discussion Questions:

1. Without the Temple service, could we make a case for the synagogue service taking its place and ensuring the continuation of the world's existence? How would that change our attitude toward the synagogue and toward worship?
2. If you could pick out psalms for each day of the week, what do you think they'd be? Why?
3. It is Rabbi Akiba, the great mystic, in whom this teaching is transmitted. How would a recitation of the daily psalms as outlined in the Mishnah help you tap into the energy that creates the universe?