

## CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted February 14, 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.

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## STARTING YOUR DAY OFF WITH PRAYER

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In developing a spiritual practice, getting started on the right foot can help a great deal. If you look in almost any prayer book you'll see the following prayer to be said upon waking up:

Modeh/Modah lifanecha melech chai v'kayyam shehechezarti bi nishmati b'chemla, rabbah emunatecha.

I give thanks before You living and existing Ruler that you returned my soul to me in great mercy and faithfulness.

Since sleep is considered 1/60 of death, we thank God for giving us our souls and life back each morning. Notice that none of God's actual names are mentioned here lest one be in a state of ritual impurity because of something that occurred during the night. (The sages did not want us to say God's name in a state of ritual impurity or nakedness.) Upon awakening, most siddurim direct one to ritually wash one's hands so that one may then go on to recite blessings that use God's name.

But from whence did this prayer come? Surprisingly, it cannot be found in any of the standard works of Tanakh, rabbinic literature, halakhic literature or kabbalistic literature. What we find, instead, is the following passage from the Yerushalmi:

In the morning a person should say, I give thanks before You, my God and God of my ancestors that you have brought me from darkness to light.

In the afternoon a person should say, I give thanks before You, my God and God of my ancestors that just as you found me worthy to see the sun in the East so you have found that I merit seeing it in the West.

In the evening a person should say, May it be Your will, Merciful One, my God and God of my ancestors that just as I was in darkness and you brought me out of it to the light that you will bring me out of

darkness to light again. (Y. Berachot 4:1, 29b)

Instead of checking in with God only at the beginning of the day, the Yerushalmi suggests that we check in with God throughout the day; keeping us aware of God's gifts to us.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Compare the wording of the prayer in the siddur with the ones in the Yerushalmi. What is different? What is the same?
2. Will you change your practice now that you are aware of the more ancient form of this prayer that seeks to connect you with God, in gratitude, three times a day instead of just once?
3. Think about your day and how it goes. For what are you thankful for in the morning? The afternoon? The evening?