

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 April 6, 2009, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

THE YERUSHALMI'S DEFINITION OF THE AFIKOMEN

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The afikomen looms large in the life of a child. They are at last freed from the dinner table and scatter around the house looking for the piece of matsah that will win them a reward. The haggadah tells us that the afikomen is this piece of matsah and that the meal cannot be finished without it. A closer look at the Yerushalmi reveals that, actually, there was no set definition of the term.

What is the afikomen [the Yerushalmi asks]?

Rabbi Shimon said in the name of R. Inanini bar R. Sisi: It is a kind of music.

Rav Ami [one text says it's Rabbi Yochanan] says: It's a kind of sweet.

Shmuel said: It's like the mushrooms and pigeons of Hananiah bar Shilat. (Y. Pesachim 10:8)

This last definition requires a text from the Bavli to make it comprehensible:

Once Rav and Shmuel were sitting at a meal and Rav Shimi bar Hiyya joined them and ate very hurriedly. Said Rav to him: What do you want? To join us? We have already finished. Said Shmuel to him: If they were to bring me mushrooms, and pigeon to Abba, would we not go on eating? (B. Berachot 47a)

This text comes up in a discussion about etiquette of eating a meal and saying the blessings over it. Rav Shimi comes late to the table and eats hurriedly so that they can say grace together. Rav apparently doesn't want to say the grace after meals with Rav Shimi. Shmuel says to Rav, "Hey, if they suddenly brought us delicacies, we'd lengthen our time at the table, so cut this guy some slack and let him say grace with us." Mushrooms and pigeons must have been our equivalent of caviar's special treat that's unexpected.

What all three definitions of afikomen have in common is that they extend the meal.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think there was such latitude in the definition of the afikomen?

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2. What other things could you do to extend the meal? Is extending the meal even desirable? (I know the seder is supposed to be long, but is that really a desirable thing?)
3. Will you change, or add to, your definition of the afikomen this year? How?

Chag Sameiach!