

URRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Learn with Rabbi Abrams! If you like the website, you'll love learning with Rabbi Abrams in person even more! She can come to your synagogue or group as a scholar-in-residence or you can learn with her long distance via phone or skype. You can also have her teach single lectures to your group. Click [here](#) for a list of just a few of the talks available.

Posted April 15, 2011, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

THE FUN OF SLEUTHING AROUND THE YERUSHALMI

© Judith Z. Abrams, 2011

One of the really fun aspects about studying the Yerushalmi is that there are many different versions of the material out there. And I'm not talking about just the numbering, I'm talking about actual, substantive differences.

Let's take a look at two texts from tractate Peah:

There are four things which are good in this world and the merit stands for a person in the World to Come: honoring parents, deeds of lovingkindness, bringing peace between a person and his fellow and Torah study is equal to them all. (M. Peah 1:1)

There are six main manuscripts and in two of them (Paris and London) that third item reads as follows:

bringing peace between a person and his fellow and between a man and his wife.

Let's take another text from tractate Peah: the very last mishnah there. All but one version (Amsterdam) reads as follows:

One who has 50 zuz and does business with them does not take charity money. And anyone that does not need to take charity and does so, will not die of old age before he is dependent on others.

And anyone who needs to take charity money and doesn't take it will not die of old age until he feeds others from his bounteous portion, as it is said, "Blessed is the man who trusts in God and made God his security." (M. Peah 8:9)

There's only one version (Amsterdam) of this mishnah that's longer, yet that's the one that everyone knows:

One who has 50 zuz and does business with them does not take charity money. And anyone that does not need to take charity and does so, will not die of old age before he is dependent on others.

And anyone who needs to take charity money and doesn't take it will not die of old age until he feeds others from his bounteous portion, as it is said, "Blessed is the man who trusts in God and made God his security."

And similarly in the case of a judge who judges according to the correct law. And he who is not lame or blind or limping and pretends to be so will not die of old age before he becomes like one of them, as it is

said, "And he who seeks evil, it shall come to him (Proverbs 2:27)." And it is further said, "Justice, justice shall you pursue (Deuteronomy 16:20)" And any judge who takes bribes and perverts justice will not die of old age before his eyes have grown dim, as it is said, "And a bribe you shall not take, for the bribe blinds the eye from seeing (Deuteronomy 16:19)". (M. Peah 8:9)

Discussion Questions:

1. We have a lot more variation among the texts in the Yerushalmi than in the Bavli. Do you have any theories about why this is? Please spell them out.
2. Which of the versions appeals to you, both at the beginning and at the end of tractate Peah? Why?
3. How do you think we ended up with the "accepted" version we have when there were so many variants?

I look forward to your answers and wish you a happy Pesach!