

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted June 14, 2000 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

RABBI AKIBA'S ABILITY TO SURVIVE

Rabbi Akiba seems to have extraordinary luck, another way of saying that God is watching out for him. Here is an example:

Rabban Gamliel said: Once, while traveling on shipboard, I saw another ship wrecked and grieved greatly for a disciple of the wise was on it. (Who was he? Rabbi Akiba) After I landed, there was Rabbi Akiba, who sat down before me and held forth on decisions in halakhah. I asked him: Who brought you here? He said: A ship's plank came my way and as each wave came toward me I dipped my head under it. (B. Yebamot 121a)

Discussion Questions:

1. Rabbi Akiba takes part in his own survival (i.e., he dips his head under the waves). How can this serve as a role model for us when we are in trouble?
2. The first thing Rabbi Akiba does is hold a discussion of Jewish law with Rabban Gamliel. What is your first response to danger? What is your response to making it through danger safely? Will Rabbi Akiba's example change your responses?

Announcement!

In keeping with Rabbi Akiba's example (B. Yebamot 62b) I would like to teach both broadly and deeply. Until now, Maqom has focused on teaching people across a broad spectrum. Now it is time to teach students who want to go beyond an elementary level. I will take five students to begin with. To enter this program of study you must be willing to purchase and read secondary readings, engage in telephone exchanges with me and hopefully write articles good enough to be published. A knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic are desirable but not necessary. To be considered please email me at maqom@compassnet.com telling me your background, your experience with texts, your motivation for further study and your area of interest (students will be allowed to choose their documents from classical rabbinic literature. I look forward to embarking on this new adventure with you!