

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted July 6, 2005 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

THE ACADEMY ON HIGH: A MODEL FOR TODAY'S YESHIVAH?

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The sages have many different concepts of life after death. One of these is that there is an Academy on High (Yeshivah shel Ma'alah) into which one can be admitted if one has led an exceptionally righteous life. God, Himself, is described as a participant in the learning:

Rabbah b. Shila once met Elijah. He said to him: What is the Holy One, blessed be He, doing? He answered: He utters traditions in the name of all the Rabbis, but in the name of Rabbi Meir he does not utter. Rabbah asked him: Why? God replied: Because he learnt traditions at the mouth of Aher. (B. Hagigah 15b)

In another place we learn the following:

Rabbi Yohanan said: Whoever has labored in the Torah in this world is not allowed to sleep in the next world but is taken to the Academy of Shem and Ever and of Avraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron. (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 5:11, #5)

So one of the concepts of the afterlife is that one studies and God is one's study partner!

How can we bring this heavenly model to earth?

Discussion Questions:

1. Imagine your ideal yeshivah. What would it be like? Could it be distance learning? Would you be a rabbi after you attained a certain level of knowledge? Of what would that body of knowledge consist? Would you like to study just to fulfill the mitzvah of Torah study?
2. Could such a yeshivah be created in real life? How might that happen?

Your ideas are most welcome!