

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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Posted August 13, 2009, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

RABBI YEHUDA HANASI'S DEATH IN THE YERUSHALMI

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The people of Sepphoris said: Whoever tells us that Rabbi has died, we will kill him. Bar Kapparra looked out for them with his head covered and his garments rent. He said to them: Mortals and angels were holding the Tablets of the Covenant and the angels prevailed and snatched the tablets.

They said to him: Rabbi has died. He said to them: You have said it, not I. And they tore their cloths and the sound of tearing reached Guapaphta, a distance of three mils.

R. Nachman in the name of R. Mena said: Miracles were performed on that day. It was Sabbath eve and all of the people of the towns gathered to eulogize Rabbi And they set down his bier eighteen times for this purpose and they took him down to Beit Shearim. And the day was suspended for them until everyone reached his home, filled up a jug of water and lit the Shabbat light. Once the sunset, the cock crowed [indicating that the next morning had already arrived].

A heavenly voice went out and said to them: Whoever did not shirk from eulogizing Rabbi, let it be proclaimed he will have life in the world to come. The launderer did not attend the eulogy and once he heard this, he went up to the roof, and threw himself off. A heavenly voice went out and said: Even the launderer will enter the world to come. (Y. Kilayim 9:3//B. Baba Metsia 85a// B. Ketubot 104a)

Discussion Questions:

1. Remember the story about God and Moss having a tug-of-war with the tablets of the ten commandments (http://www.maqom.com/may21_2009.html)? It would appear that this was a well-known story. It is used here as a metaphor between those below and those above each trying to pull Rabbi to them. Why do you think they used this symbolism here? Why do you think the story about Rabbi's maid going up to the roof and throwing down a jug is omitted here?
2. It seems to be a favorite phrase of Rabbi that some people can earn the world to come in just one instant (e.g., B. Avodah Zarah 17b-18a). 3. The launderer's actions seem odd. He is told that he has no portion in the world to come. Then he kills himself which almost certainly would keep him out of the world to come. Why does the heavenly voice say that the launderer gets a portion in the world to come?