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Posted August 25, 2011, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

REPENTANCE AND REST WIN IN THE YERUSHALMI

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Now that Tisha B'Av is behind us, it is time for rabbis to start writing their High Holiday sermons and for congregants to take inventory of their virtues and vices. If your balance sheet is overburdened with the latter, the Yerushalmi has a prescription to repair your "credit rating", so to speak. What follows is an explanation of an odd verse in Isaiah.

Isaiah said to [the Israelites]: "The watchman says, 'Morning comes; and also night. (Isaiah 21:12)."

They said to him: What does "also the night" mean?

He said to them: It's not what you are thinking. But there will be morning for the righteous and night for the wicked; morning for Israel and night for idolaters.

They said to him: When?

He said: Whenever you wish. God, too, wants it. If you want it he wants it.

They said to Isaiah: Who is delaying [this messianic dawn]?

Isaiah said: "Repentance. Come back again (Isaiah 21:12)"

R. Aha in the name of R. Tanhum ben R. Hiyya: If Israel repents for one day, the son of David will come. How do we know? Because it is written, "O that today you would listen to God's voice (Psalm 95:7)."

Said R. Levi: If Israel would keep a single Shabbat in the proper way, the son of David would come immediately...How do we know? It says, "In returning and rest you shall be saved (Isaiah 30:15)." (Y. Taanit 1:1)

Discussion Questions:

1. Being saved by repentance makes sense, but why would rest save us? What is it about the two of them combined that would bring immediate redemption?
2. Have you ever felt that you needed salvation? Please describe this. Were you in trouble, sick or depressed? Do you think the idea of salvation has a place in our world today? Why or why not?