

CURRENT 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 August 26, 2010, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

DREADING THE LENGTH OF THE ROSH HASHANAH SERVICES? THE YERUSHALMI FEELS YOUR PAIN

© Judith Z. Abrams, 2010

Ideally, services on Rosh Hashanah are stirring; evoking dread, hope and awe. Sadly, sometimes the dread is that services will never end. They just seem to go on and on. Happily, the Yerushalmi sides with those who wish the whole thing could be shorter.

During Musaf (or the Shofar service, depending what "brand" of services you're attending), there is a long part of the service which focuses on three concepts: (1) God's Kingship, (2) God's Remembering promises made to us and (3) the sound of the Shofar. Many Scripture verses referring to these three ideas are brought as proof of their existence and importance...MANY verses.

To the untutored (and even to those in the know) it feels a bit like overkill. And the Yerushalmi backs us up!

Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri said: If one recited three (verses) he has fulfilled his obligation. We used to think to say: three verses from each [part of the Tanach, i.e., 3 from Torah, 3 from Prophets, 3 from Writings]. But it was found to be taught (T. Rosh Hashanah 2:12): Even three from all of them, [i.e., 1 from Torah, 1 from Prophets, 1 from Writings], he has fulfilled his obligation. (Y. Rosh Hashanah 4:7)

The Yerushalmi continues to explore the topic in typical Yerushalmi fashion: there are plenty of options which all seem valid.

Discussion Questions:

1. The recitation of the verses is probably meaningful if you know the context from which they came, but the Yerushalmi seems to opine that fewer words and more shofar blasts are more effective in evoking dread and awe. Do you agree? Will you put this into practice this new year? For example, will you focus on just one verse instead of speed-reading through the list?
2. In general, Jewish prayer has the problem of adding things without subtracting anything. This is what leads to dreadfully long services and the lack of unscripted moments when you can actually talk to God directly, from your heart. How could you edit services for yourself, to allow yourself some of that individual time with God

Shanah tovah...and please, as you do your charitable giving, please remember to give a donation to Maqom. It's truly needed and appreciated!

