

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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Posted September 11, 2008, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

THE BOOKS OF THE RIGHTEOUS, WICKED AND INTERMEDIATE IN THE YERUSHALMI

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We have this teaching in the name of Rabbi Yochanan:

There are three account books before God: one for the fully righteous, one for the fully wicked and one for the intermediates. With the regard to that of the fully righteous, they have received verdicts of life by Rosh Hashanah.

With regard to that of the fully wicked, they have received their verdicts by Rosh Hashanah.

With regard to that of the intermediates, the ten days of repentance between Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur were given to them. If they repented, they are inscribed with the righteous; and if not, they are inscribed with the wicked.

What is the proof? "Let them be blotted out of the book" refers to the wicked. "Of the living" refers to the righteous. "And not be written with the righteous" refers to the intermediates. (All the prooftexts are from Psalm 69:29.) (Y. Rosh Hashanah1:3)

Discussion Questions:

1. This material should be familiar to you from the High Holiday prayers and perhaps from your childhood religious education. It's a hard paradigm to get out of one's head, particularly because it doesn't seem to line up with reality. After all, we see lots of ighteous people who die and rotten people who are living the good life. Is there a way we could salvage this powerful paradigm of what the High Holidays mean? Or should we just cherish it as a teaching reflective of a by-gone era?