

## CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted October 24, 2002 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

Visit [Talmud: the Musical](#) or download a song! 

[Song 1 \(2409kb\)](#)    [Song 2 \(4222kb\)](#)

(If you have trouble playing it as streaming audio, "right click" to download the entire file and then open it.)

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## Exciting Developments in Long-Term, Intensive Talmud Study at Maqom!

About one year ago, I offered those who study Talmud with Maqom the option of working with me on a one-on-one basis to do research and create articles about rabbinic literature that would be posted [here](#) at Maqom. With this article, that project is bearing its first fruit. I hope you enjoy reading Rabbi Louis Rieser's research and the papers that have yet to come.

--Rabbi Judith Z. Abrams, Ph.D.

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## THE TEMPLE'S CANDELABRA "LITURGIZED"

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Of all the symbols of the Temple, the most recognizable is, perhaps, the seven branched candelabra. The menorah lit the inside of the windowless Temple building. It is a stylized tree (i.e., the tree of life). Its seven lights also correspond to the seven levels of heaven in which people of that time believed (hence, the phrase, "I'm in seventh heaven"). The bottom semi-circles of the menorah corresponded with semi-circular spheres of heaven above.

The menorah remained a powerful Jewish symbol of light/hope/enlightenment/safety after the Temple was destroyed and the menorah was taken off as booty. So Jewish liturgists took the path similar to Ezekiel's. The prophet Ezekiel was a priest detained in Babylonia. He did not have access to the Temple so he envisioned the heavenly Temple that corresponds to the earthly one. Seen in this way, some of his less comprehensible passages make sense. One can easily correlate the accoutrements of the First Temple with his visions.

Liturgists found a psalm with 7 sentences, 49 words (discounting the first verse) and whose pyramidal structure made it easy to shape it into a menorah. The psalm's most interesting feature is that the center verse is preceded and followed by the exact same words.

For the Leader; with string-music. A Psalm, a Song.

God be gracious unto us and bless us; May He cause His face to shine toward us; Selah.

That Your way may be known upon earth, Your salvation among all nations

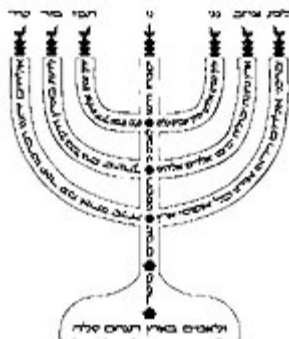
Let the peoples give thanks to You, o God; Let the peoples give thanks to You, all of them.

O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples equity, and lead the nations upon the earth. Selah.

Let the peoples give thanks to You, o God; Let the peoples give thanks to You, all of them.

The earth has yielded her increase; may God, our own God, bless us.

May God bless us and let all the ends of the earth fear Him. (Psalm 67)



לְכַנֵּעַת בְּנֵי־נֹחַ סִמְכוֹר שִׁיר: אֱלֹהִים יִתְּנֵנוּ וְיִבְרַכְנוּ וְיֵאָר פְּנֵינוּ  
 אֲתֵנוּ סֵלָה: לְדָעַת בְּאֶרֶץ דְּרוֹמָה כְּבִלְיָנוּם יִמְוַעְתְּךָ: יְהוֹדִיךָ  
 עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים יְהוֹדִיךָ עַמִּים כָּלֵם: וְיִסְתּוּ וְיִרְגְּזוּ לְאִמִּים כִּי  
 תִשְׁפֹּט עַמִּים נוֹשֵׂא וְלֹאֲמִים בְּאֶרֶץ תִּנְחַם סֵלָה: יְהוֹדִיךָ  
 עַמִּים אֱלֹהִים יְהוֹדִיךָ עַמִּים כָּלֵם: אֶרֶץ נִתְּנָה יְבוּלָהּ  
 וְיִבְרַכְנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵינוּ: וְיִבְרַכְנוּ אֱלֹהִים וְיִזְדַּא אֹתֵנוּ כָּל־  
 אֶפְסֵי־אָרֶץ:

Thus, liturgists recreated the menorah out of text, just as the blood of the lamb on the doorpost "morphed" into mezuzot.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Do visual devices such as these help your creativity in prayer? If not, why not? If so, how so?
2. Jews have often prayed before a "shiviti", a piece of artwork placed on a wall facing eastward so that the one praying would face the proper direction. Maqom has its own shiviti (<http://www.maqom.com/shiviti.html>) which is really a graphic representation of my soul and my hopes for Maqom. Have you ever tried to draw a picture of your soul? If you have (or if you've been inspired to do so) would you please email it in and explain it so that the group can see it?
3. While the menorah is a priestly symbol, this psalm has a very inclusive bent to it. It is addressed to the entire world; not just to Jews. How can Jews be "metaphorical menorahs", i.e., a light to the nations?
4. As you can see, the recitation of this psalm came to be tied intimately with the counting of the Omer (which takes 49 days). What connections, other than the obvious numerical ones, can you find between this psalm, the menorah and the counting of the omer?