

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted December 20, 2001 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

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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.

BH

JEWISH ASTROLOGY©

One of the most common misconceptions in Jewish life today is that astrology is forbidden in Judaism. Perhaps the kind of astrology practiced today may be forbidden by some but it was highly regarded as a science in the days of the sages. Indeed, the sage Samuel said he was as familiar with the paths of heaven as with the streets of Nehardea (his town). (B. Berachot 58b)

To put an even finer point on this, please connect to the following website.

<http://museum.cw.steelcitytelecom.com/hist/03beit-alpha-floor.html>

There you will see the middle panel of an elaborate mosaic floor from a synagogue from around the 5th century C.E. which shows, quite plainly, a zodiac. The panel below it represents the binding of Isaac. The panel above it clearly shows the tools of the Temple. The floor, then, shows the Jewish past (God's covenant with Abraham), present (as represented by the zodiac) and the future (the Temple rebuilt).

Jews of that era conceived of God as supporting all of creation and making the Divine Will manifest through the workings of the sun, planets and stars.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you put any stock in astrology? How do you think it could be best practiced Jewishly?
2. Are there other things that you have been told are "forbidden" to Jews? What are they? Perhaps our discussion can shed some light on these issues.