

## CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted February 15, 2005 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

**BH**

### **A WEDDING GIFT FOR MAQOM'S WEBMEISTER: COPPER LAVERS**

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The man who makes Maqom really run, Chris Benton, has recently celebrated his marriage. As you know, I like to give creative Jewish wedding presents (e.g., [http://www.maqom.com/may21\\_2004.html](http://www.maqom.com/may21_2004.html)), so I decided to give the couple three flat-bottomed copper bowls. Two were smaller (about 5 inches across) and equal in size. The third was larger (about 9 inches across) These are meant to hold water, just as the copper water laver in the Temple did. The bowls were of a size that, when each of the smaller ones was filled, their contents could be poured into the larger bowl together, and that bowl would hold the combined waters.

Water is frequently used as a symbol of Torah in rabbinic literature:

R. Hanina b. Ida said: Why are the words of the Torah likened unto water-as it is written, 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye for water'? This is to teach you, just as water flows from a higher level to a lower, so too the words of the Torah endure only with him who is meek-minded. R. Oshaia said: Why are the words of the Torah likened unto these three liquids, water, wine and milk - as it is written, 'Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye for water'; and it is written, Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price? This is to teach you, just as these three liquids can only be preserved in the most inferior of vessels, so too the words of the Torah endure only with him who is meek-minded. This is illustrated by the story of the daughter of the Roman Emperor who addressed R. Joshua b. Hanania, 'O glorious Wisdom in an ugly vessel'. He replied, 'Does not your father keep wine in an earthenware vessel?' She asked, 'Wherein else shall he keep it?' He said to her, 'You who are nobles should keep it in vessels of gold and silver'. Thereupon she went and told this to her father and he had the wine put into vessels of gold and silver and it became sour. When he was informed of this he asked his daughter, 'Who gave you this advice?' She replied. 'R. Joshua b. Hanania' - Thereupon the Emperor had him summoned before him and asked him, 'Why did you give her such advice?' He replied, 'I answered her according to the way that she spoke to me'. But are there not good-looking people who are learned? (B. Taanit 7a)

#### About Copper

Copper is a mineral found in trace amounts in all tissues in the body. Although only a small amount is needed, copper is an essential nutrient that plays a role in the production of hemoglobin (the main component of red blood cells), myelin (the substance that surrounds nerve fibers), collagen (a key component of bones and connective tissue), and melanin (a dark pigment that colors the hair and skin). Copper also works with vitamin C to help make a component of connective tissue known as elastin.

#### Dietary Sources

- Among the best dietary sources of copper are:
- Organ meats (such as beef liver, kidneys, and heart)
- Nuts and nut butters (such as cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, pecans, almonds, and pistachios)
- Legumes (such as soybeans, lentils, navy beans, and peanuts)

- Chocolate (such as unsweetened or semisweet baker's chocolate and cocoa)
- Enriched cereals (such as bran flakes, shredded wheat, and raisin bran)
  - Fruits and vegetables (such as dried fruits, mushrooms, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, bananas, grapes, and avocado)
  - Blackstrap molasses
  - Black pepper

**Discussion Questions:**

1. The "Unity candle" has become a frequent symbol used in weddings of all religions. Does the set of "unity lavers" have the same sort of power as a symbol? Why or why not?
2. What sorts of wedding gifts with roots in rabbinic literature and/or Torah would you create and give to a couple? Please describe them.