

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted March 14, 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.)

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

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

© Judith Z. Abrams, 2002

We all do our best to clean our houses before Pesach and get rid of all leavened products. Invariably, though, it almost always turns out that we open some unexplored cabinet and find ourselves staring at a bag of pretzels or a box of cereal. Rabbinic literature, of course, has a remedy.

One who was on his way to slaughter his Passover sacrifice
or to circumcise his son
or eat at a betrothal feast at his father-in-law's house
and he was reminded that he [still] has leaven[ed products] in his house,
if he can go back and burn it and return to his mitzvah, he goes back and burns it.
But if he cannot [go back and burn it and still participate in the other mitzvah] then he nullifies [the
leavened products] in his heart.

[If] it was to save someone from bandits or from a river or from robbers or from a fire or from a ruin, he
nullifies it in his heart.

But if [he does not want to go back because he wants] simply to rest, he must return immediately [to his
home and burn the leavened products]. (M. Pesachim 3:7)

Nullifying chameits (leavened products) is done before the Seder after one has searched the house for chameits and gotten rid of it. (One should also get rid of the chameits in one's office and car.)

What is so wonderful about this mishnah is that it balances the need to get rid of chameits with living the rest of one's life and doing mitzvot which can only be done at certain times, such as circumcision or betrothal. You can't get away with this nullification just to save time or for convenience, though. There has to be a tension between two mitzvot.

One can get obsessive about this mitzvah and the ability to nullify chameits gives us an "out" so we don't have to worry about a thunderbolt coming down when we find the odd fruit loop behind a door.

Discussion Questions:

1. The search for chameits can liberate one in many ways. It lets us evaluate our physical world and release items that we no longer need to charity. How does the Passover cleaning effect you?
2. What Egypt are you leaving this year? Which Egypts have you left in the past? How do you imagine your freedom will feel?