

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Learn with Rabbi Abrams! If you like the website, you'll love learning with Rabbi Abrams in person even more! She can come to your synagogue or group as a scholar-in-residence or you can learn with her long distance via phone or skype. You can also have her teach single lectures to your group. Click [here](#) for a list of just a few of the talks available.

Posted December 4, 2009, by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

RABBI YEHOShUA LOVES HANNUKKAH IN THE YERUSHALMI **© Judith Z. Abrams, 2009**

Rabbinic literature generally begins with the Mishnah. But that doesn't mean that Jews didn't write anything before then. One of the things we have that Jews wrote in the Second Temple period is The Scroll of Fasts (Megillat Taanit). Confusingly, this is a list of happy days in the Jewish calendar, when one musn't fast.

Rabbi Yochanan said: The Fasting Scroll has been nullified.

Said Rabbi Yochanan: Last night I was sitting and repeating the following: An incident happened that they decreed a fast in Lod during Hannukkah. Rabbi Eliezer went and told Rabbi Joshua about it. Rabbi Joshua washed himself (which one musn't do while fasting) and said to them: Go and observe a fast as a penalty for having fasted. (That is, you shouldn't have fasted on Hannukkah; so now go fast for this sin.)

Now how can you say, then, that the rules of the Fasting-Scroll have been nullified since the Scroll says that one may not fast on Hannukkah and we see that Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua maintain that, in fact, one may not fast on Hannukkah?

Said Rabbi Abba: Even though you maintain that the rules of the Fasting-Scroll have been nullified, as to the celebration of Hannukkah and Purim they have not been nullified.

Rabbi Yonatan fasted on the entire eve of the New Year. Rabbi Avin fasted on the entire eve of the festival of Sukkot.

Rabbi Zeira fasted 300 fasts, and some say, 900 fasts, and he paid no attention at all to the days listed by the Fasting Scroll on which one is not supposed to fast. (Y. Nedarim 8:1)

Don't you love the Yerushalmi? God bless it; it leaves us a buffet of options. Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua both seem to be in favor of observing Hannukkah; pretty strongly, too, if the even-tempered Rabbi Yehoshua is willing to make such a fuss about it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Of all the merry-making days of the Second Temple period, only Purim and Hannukkah make the cut. The other days tend to be celebrations of military victories. You could even make the case that Hannukkah and Purim had military aspects to them. Why do you think all these holidays faded away except for Hannukkah and Purim?

2. Other rabbis seem to fast more than they eat. How would fasting contribute to your happiness on Rosh Hashanah or Sukkot? (In some households, on Shabbat, the family fasts from noon until the evening meal. Would that increase your joy in the Sabbath meal?)
3. In typical Yerushalmi style, we are presented a list of possible right answers. However, it is clear that Hannukkah and Purim are to be observed. Do you think any modern holiday from the State of Israel will someday attain the stature of Hannukkah and Purim? If yes, which ones and why? If not, why not?

Happy Hannukkah!