

## CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted February 28, 2002 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.

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## WHY ARE BLESSING SO IMPORTANT?

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Why are blessings so important? A person new to Judaism would likely be awed at the number of blessings we can say each day. But the reason behind the blessings is to keep us in a state of constant awareness of God's gifts in every moment.

Our Rabbis taught: It is forbidden for a person to enjoy anything of this world without a benediction, and anyone who enjoys anything of this world without a benediction, commits sacrilege. . .

Rav Judah said in the name of Samuel, "To enjoy anything of this world without a benediction is like making use of things consecrated to heaven, since it says, 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.(Psalms 24:1)'" . . .

Rabbi Hanina bar Papa said, "Anyone who enjoys this world without a benediction, it is as if he robbed the Holy One, blessed be He, and the congregation of Israel. (B. Berachot 35a)

Blessings we say over things we experience or enjoy (as opposed to blessings we say preceding the performance of a mitzvah) are "experience/pleasure transfer mechanisms". That piece of fruit you're about to eat or that butterfly you delight in seeing belong to God. But all you have to do to legitimately enjoy these things is say a blessing acknowledging God as the source of your enjoyment.

Many of these blessings are recounted in standard Jewish prayer books. But many blessings in rabbinic literature are not recorded there. Check out these examples.

When good and bad come from same event:

If they told someone his father died, he recites, "Blessed . . .the true judge."

If someone's father died and he inherited his estate he [also] recites, "Blessed . . .who is good and does good." (Y. Berachot 9:2)

For financial loss:

To one whose slave or animal died you say to him, "May God restore your loss." (Y. Berachot 2:7)

Making the best of a bad situation:

If one's wine turned to vinegar, he says, "Blessed be the true judge." If he goes to drink it, he says, "For all came into being by his word." If one saw locusts, he says, "Blessed be the true judge." If he goes to eat them he says, "For all came into being by his word." If one saw fruit that did not ripen, he says, "Blessed be the true judge." If he eats them he says, "For all came into being by his word." (Y. Berachot 6:3)

Over water to quench one's thirst:

[Blessed . . .] Creator of creatures and their needs. (T. Berachot 4:16)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Clearly, there are many more blessings to say than are listed in standard prayer books. Those presented above are but a tiny sample. What blessings would you add to the mix?
2. Do you understand the "making the best of a bad situation" blessings? Please explain.
3. Does the "frame" that everything belongs to God change your view on life? How?