

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted April 16, 2000 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

HOW RABBI AKIBA ENJOYED LIFE

As we clean (and clean and clean and cook) preparing for Pesach, I thought a bit of Rabbi Akiba's exuberance might lighten our mood:

Once Rabbi Akiba made a feast for his son Shimon. He recited a blessing over each barrel of wine which he opened. And he said, "Good wine! Here's to the life of the rabbis and their students!" (Y. Berachot 6:8)

The Mishnah here is determining whether one blessing covers an entire meal, or even an entire experience of one kind of food or whether you should say blessings over each individual item you eat. Here, Rabbi Akiba says the blessings again and again and gives a toast to the learning community each time.

Discussion Questions:

1. Soon you'll be saying blessings over four cups of wine. What will your toasts be? Think of all that you enjoy and for all the things which you may be thankful.
2. We so often think of Rabbi Akiba the scholar. Here we see him as a fully-rounded person, enjoying a party as much as anyone, yet not forgetting who he is and what his mission in life is. How could you follow his example of holding on and letting go at the same time at your seder?

My friends, may you have a joyous Pesach!