

## CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted July 19, 2001 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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BH

Dear Friends,

As we begin to round the bend toward Av and heading for Elul, may I ask you to please become Maqom Associates again this year by making a \$36 (or less or more) donation? Your contributions are what keep us on the ether. Thanks!  
Judy

## HOW TO LIVE LONGER AND MORE HAPPILY

Is there a secret for living a long and happy life? The Bavli's answer is most definitively, "Yes!" In tractate Megillah 27b-28a many different sages explain how they have earned a long life. Two of these sages are truly extraordinary men. Rabbi N'hunia ben Hakana is known in the Mishnah as a prayerful man and the early kabbalistic work, Sefer Yetsirah, is attributed to him. The other is Rabbi Prida, a man of infinite patience and generosity of spirit as the second passage, below, demonstrates.

Rabbi Prida's students asked [him]: How have you lengthened your days? In [all] my days I did not let anyone go before me in the Academy and I did not bless [a meal] before a Kohen.... Rabbi N'hunia ben Hakana's students asked him: How have you lengthened your days? He said to them: In all my days I never sought honor by friend's shame nor have I ever cursed a friend while in bed and I was generous with my money. (B. Megillah 28a)

Rabbi Prida had a pupil whom he taught his lesson four hundred times before the latter could master it. One day it was requested that he participate in a mitzvah [after he taught this student]. He taught him [in the usual manner] but he could not grasp the lesson. He [Rabbi Prida] said to him, "What is the matter today?" The student said to him, "From the moment the Master was told that there was a religious matter to be attended to I could not concentrate my thoughts, for at every moment I imagined, now the Master will get up or now the Master will get up." He [Rabbi Prida] said to him, "Give me your attention and I will teach you again", and so he taught him another four hundred times. A Bat Kol [a Heavenly Voice] issued forth asking him, "Do you prefer that four hundred years shall be added to your life or that you and

your generation shall be privileged to have a share in the world to come?" He said, "That I and my generation shall be privileged to have a share in the world to come." The Holy One blessed be He said, "Give him both that [reward] and the other [reward]." (B. Eruvin 54b)

Clearly, this child has a learning disability. Instead of giving up or losing his temper, Rabbi Prida values this child and his learning. (Credit must also be given to the student for sticking to his studies until he masters his subject.) As we might expect, Rabbi Prida, when given the option to receive a private reward or one in which his whole generation might participate, chooses the latter. And because of that, he gains both rewards.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. In American Jewish culture there is enormous pressure to succeed academically. How could Rabbi Prida's patience and caring about his student serve as a role model for parents and Jewish schools?
2. If you had to write a prescription for long life, what would it be? Would you take your own prescription?