

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted August 2, 2006 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

A PORTION OF PEACE

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I am not an expert in the subject of war or foreign policy. As a rabbi, what I know is what the sages taught us. It seems important to me, then, that the later sages who compiled tractates of "Talmud" after the Babylonian Talmud was closed thought the merits of peace were so great that an entire tractate is devoted to describing its wonder and worth.

Tractate Perek Hashalom, literally "A Portion of Peace" draws together statements praising peace from throughout rabbinic literature. There we learn how great peace is.

Great is peace, for even the angels among whom there is no enmity, jealousy, hatred, strife, rivalry or dissension have need for the Holy One Blessed be He, to make peace among them, as it is stated, "Dominion and fear are with Him. He makes peace in his high places (Job 25:2)." "Dominion" refers to the angel Michael and "fear" to the angel Gabriel, the first being made of fire and the second of water (Midrash Rabbah Numbers 12:8) and yet they do not harm each other (i.e., God can cause fire and water to exist together), how much more do mortal beings, among whom all these dispositions exist, [have need of peace]. (Perek HaShalom 8)

Even the angels need God's help keeping peace among them!

Discussion Questions:

1. God can cause fire and water to exist together. Is it possible that God can see a solution to the problems in the Middle East that is far larger than anything we can see? Can you imagine what it might be? If so, please tell us what you see.
2. We have just rounded the corner, so to speak, past Tisha B'Av. From here, the Jewish calendar takes a decidedly upbeat tone as we head straight toward Rosh Hashanah with a quick stop on the 15th of Av, one of the happiest days of the Jewish calendar (a Jewish Sadie Hawkin's Day). Is this part of our communal coping mechanism, to turn on a dime from sadness to gladness? How does this give you hope? Meaning? A frame into which to put our current situation?

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