

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted August 3, 2000 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

BH

WHAT DO WE REALLY NEED? (PART III)

Although we do not usually study halakhah in this forum, this time I think it would be interesting to see what became of the Yerushalmi's and Bavli's lists in later Jewish law. Rambam, a sage and physician, rules as follows:

A Torah scholar is not permitted to live in a city that does not have:

a doctor,
a bloodletter,
a bathhouse,
an outhouse,
a water source,
a synagogue,
a teacher of young children,
a scribe,
charity collectors,
and a court which administers punishments in accordance with the Baraita.
(Rambam, Sefer Mada, Hilkhhot De'ot 4:23)

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of the Rambam's list of necessities? How does it differ from the Yerushalmi's and the Bavli's? (Look closely, it does.) Is this closer, or farther away from, your list of necessities for a modern city?
2. Obviously, it would be difficult to use many of these criteria today for practical purposes. A bloodletter, for example, is almost unknown (although leeches, yes leeches, are used for medicinal purposes in hospitals). Bathhouses and outhouses have given way to private baths and toilets in homes and apartments. If you were to rule on the halakhah today, what would you say?
3. Do you think Rambam's work as a physician influenced his ruling? If so, how?