



E. THE TALMUD AND RASHI ON FOOD ACCESS

The Talmud is an extensive record of roughly 300 years' worth of rabbinic discussions and debates. It comprises the Mishnah (the earliest compilation of rabbinic law from the First and Second Centuries CE) and the Gemara (discussions about the Mishnah, as well as related legal discussions and narratives). The Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) was compiled in approximately 400 CE in Roman Palestine. Tractate Kiddushin is the section of the Talmud devoted to marriage laws. The above quote appears at the very end of the tractate, as part of a short digression on what a person must do in order to life well.

<p>E1. Jerusalem Talmud, Kiddushin 4:12 R. Hezekiah the priest said in the name of Rav: "It is forbidden to dwell in a city that does not have a doctor, a bath, or a court [that administers] corporal punishment and imprisonment." R. Yossi, son of R. Bun, said: "Moreover, it is forbidden to live in a city that does not have a vegetable garden."</p>	<p>תלמוד ירושלמי קידושין ד:י"ב ר' חזקיה רבי כהן בשם רב אסור לדור בעיר שאין בה לא רופא ולא מרחץ ולא ב"ד מכות וחובשין: אמר ר' יוסי בי ר' בון אף אסור לדור בעיר שאין בה גינוניתא של ירק</p>
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The Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli) was compiled in approximately 500 CE in Persian Babylon. It is longer than the Jerusalem Talmud and is traditionally considered to be the more authoritative version. Tractate Eruvin contains regulations for carrying items on Shabbat, particularly the construction of an Eruv: a structure that allows for extended carrying. Rav Huna's statement appears in a discussion of a city's boundaries and the various facilities, amenities and dangers found within it.

<p>E2. Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 55b Rav Huna said: "A scholar is not permitted to live in any city in which there are no vegetables [available]."</p>	<p>תלמוד בבלי עירובין דף נ"ה עמוד ב אמר רב הונא כל עיר שאין בה ירק אין תלמיד חכם רשאי לדור בה:</p>
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Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105), better known as Rashi, wrote the first comprehensive commentaries on the Tanakh, the Mishnah and the Talmud. Rashi begins by quoting a particular word or phrase from a text, then offers his own interpretation of its meaning.

<p>E3. Rashi on Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 55b</p> <p>“A scholar is not permitted...”: Because vegetables are good for food, [can be] purchased at a low price, and allow [a scholar to devote more time] to engage in the study of Torah.</p>	<p>רש"י על תלמוד בבלי עירובין דף נ"ה עמוד ב</p> <p>אין תלמיד חכם כו': לפי שהירק טוב למאכל ונלקח בזול ויכול לעסוק בתורה</p>
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Discussion Questions

1. How do you understand the Talmud's rules against living in spaces without vegetables?
2. Does Rashi's commentary clarify the text? What value or benefit does he attach to vegetables? How does this relate to the Talmud's rules?
3. Do the Talmud's rules against living in space without vegetables seem reasonable to you? Do you think a ban like this would be possible in today's urban environment?
4. Does our society have similar rules around access to nutrition? Does it apply to scholars? To children? To the wealthy?
5. Using Rashi as a model, draft a commentary on Kiddushin 4:12 that accounts for the contemporary perspectives articulated in "Farming the Concrete Jungle." More specifically: If it is "forbidden to live in a city that does not have a vegetable garden," what requirements must be added in order to make R. Yossi's position a reality?