



Volume 8. Issue 47

Tzaraat and an Introduction to Moed Katan

This week we start learning *Masechet Moed Katan*, which deals with the status of *Chol Hamoed* – the intermediate days of festivals. *Chol Hamoed Pesach* is a very appropriate time to be learning this *Masechet*!

Chol Hamoed has a unique status – *melachah* is prohibited so that these days should not be like ordinary days, however not every form of *melachah* is forbidden like on *Yom Tov* (*Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 7:1*).

There are two basic views as to the status of the prohibition against *melachah* on *Chol Hamoed*. According to one view (the *Rambam* and the *Rosh*) it is an *issur d'Rabbanan*. According to the other view (*Rashi* and the *Rif*) it is an *issur d'Oraita*. However, even according to the latter view, the *Torah* gave authority to *Chazal* to determine what types of *melachah* are forbidden and what types are permitted.

Masechet Moed Katan discusses what work is permitted on *Chol Hamoed*. One area that is discussed is whether *Kohanim* may examine *negaim* on *Chol Hamoed*.

In general, if a person had a suspected *nega* (skin affliction), a *Kohen* would need to inspect it to determine whether they had *Tzaraat*. If the victim was found to have *Tzaraat* they were declared *Tameh* and must leave the community until they recover. However, such inspections were not carried out on certain days. The *Mishnah* (1:5) discusses whether inspections were carried out on *Chol Hamoed*.

R' Meir holds that inspections were carried out on *Chol Hamoed* but that the *Kohanim* were limited to rendering a positive judgement or remaining silent. The *Rabbanan* hold that the *Kohanim* were not permitted to examine the *nega* at all until after the festival was over. The *Halacha* follows the *Rabbanan*, but both opinions seek to prevent an individual from being banished from the community during the festival.

This may seem surprising. Generally, if a person was found to be *tameh* with *Tzaraat*, they must take great care not to spread their *tumah* to other people and items. They would immediately leave the community and warn other people not to get too close to them. During the *chagim*, people are

more likely to be surrounded by their family and friends. So it might be assumed that the *Kohanim* would want to diagnose *Tzaraat* as quickly as possible during these times so as to minimise the spread of *tumah*.

This anomaly can be explained by examining the true meaning of *Tzaraat*. *Tzaraat* is often mistranslated as leprosy (a contagious bacterial infection). However this translation cannot be correct. Rather, *Tzaraat* is a spiritual disease. A person only becomes *Tameh* with *Tzaraat* once the *Kohen* declares them to be impure. They are not considered 'contagious' unless and until this declaration is made. This contrasts with the quarantine placed on someone with a physically contagious disease.

This *Halacha* teaches us some important insights.

Firstly, it emphasises the power of words. Before the *Kohen* declares the victim of the *nega* to be impure, they are *tahor*. Only once the *Kohen* renders his judgement and makes his declaration, the victim's life is essentially turned upside down. One of the sins for which a person is stricken with *Tzaraat* is *lashon hara* – negative speech about another. A person may justify *lashon hara* on the basis that it is 'just words' which cannot really harm. However this *Halacha* demonstrates the real power that words can have.

This *Halacha* also demonstrates the importance of mercy. Even though the victim is guilty of a serious sin, such as *lashon hara*, mercy is still employed in that the *Kohanim* postpone the punishment in order to avoid spoiling their festive time.

Thirdly, it is significant that only a *Kohen* can render judgement as to whether a person has *Tzaraat*. Even the greatest *Talmid Chacham* is not qualified to diagnose *Tzaraat* if they are not a *Kohen*. The *Kohanim* are descendants of Aaron, about whom it is said 'loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them closer to the Torah' (*Pirkei Avot 1:12*). The *Kohanim* love their fellow Jews and would be reluctant to declare someone *Tameh*. This attribute of loving kindness inherent in a *Kohen* can be used as an example to teach the victim to guard their tongue before hurting another.

Allon Ledder

Revision Questions

מגילה ד': י

- Which of the following are read (from the *Torah*) but not translated: (ד': י)
 - *Ma'aseh Reuven?*
 - *Ma'aseh Tamar?*
 - *Ma'aseh egel?* (Be specific)
 - *Birkat Kohanim?*
 - *Ma'aseh David ve'Amnon?*

מועד קטן א' א' ב' ג':

- What restrictions are placed on watering fields during *Chol Ha'moed*? (א': א)
- What is the difference regarding installing and fixing irrigation pipes in a field during *Chol Ha'moed* and the *shmittah* year? (Include both opinions) (א': ב)
- List some of the work for public needs that are permitted on *Chol Ha'moed*? (א': ב)
- Can one water seeds during *Chol Ha'moed* that were not watered previously? (א': ג)
- Can one hunt field mice on *Chol Ha'moed*? (א': ד)
- Can one fix a breach in a fence in a regular manner on *Chol Ha'moed*? (א': ד)
- Explain the debate regarding whether a *kohen* can check *nega'im* on *Chol Ha'moed*. (א': ה)

All the following questions relate to *Chol Ha'moed*:

- Can any work be performed on burial chambers? (א': ו)
- When can coffins be constructed? (Include both opinions) (א': ו)
- Are marriages allowed? (Careful) (א': ז)
- Are women allowed to apply makeup? (א': ז)
- In what manners is sewing permissible? (א': ח)
- Can one erect an oven, stove or millstone? (א': ט)
- Can one erect a rail on a balcony? (א': ט)
- In what manner can one make repairs to his roof? (א': י)
- On what condition is one allowed to repair the lock on his house? (א': י)
- On what condition is one allowed to begin pickling food? (א': י)

- To what extent can a person that began preparing olives for pressing yet for reasons beyond his control, was unable to complete the pressing before *Yom Tov*, continue the process during *Chol Ha'moed*? (א': ב)
- Regarding the previous question, what were the three reasons brought that may have prevented him from completing the pressing before *Yom Tov*? (א': ב)
- What other case was brought in the *Mishnah* similar to the one mentioned in the previous questions? (ב': ב)
- Can one bring his fruit in from the orchards during *Chol Ha'moed*? (א': ג)
- What is the law regarding a person that deliberately delayed an activity that is permitted during *Chol Ha'moed*, till *Chol Ha'moed*? (א': ג)

Local Shiurim

Melbourne, Australia

Sunday -Thursday

10 minutes before *Mincha*
Mizrachi Shul
 Melbourne, Australia

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before *Mincha*
Beit Ha'Roeh
 Melbourne, Australia

Efrat, Israel

Shiur in English

Sunday -Thursday

Rabbi Mordechai Scharf
 9:00am
Kollel Magen Avraham
 Reemon Neighbourhood

ONLINE SHIURIM

Rabbi Chaim Brown
www.shemayisrael.com/mishna/

Rav Meir Pogrow
613.org/mishnah.html

Rabbi E. Kornfeld
Rabbi C. Brown
<http://www.dafyomi.co.il/calendars/myomi/myomi-thisweek.htm>

SHIUR ON KOL HALOSHON

Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss
 In US dial: 718 906 6400
 Then select: 1 – 2 – 4

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
15 th April כ"ג ניסן	16 th April כ"ד ניסן	17 th April כ"ה ניסן	18 th April כ"ו ניסן	19 th April כ"ז ניסן	20 th April כ"ח אדר	21 st April כ"ט ניסן
Moed Katan 2:4-5	Moed Katan 3:1-2	Moed Katan 3:3-4	Moed Katan 3:5-6	Moed Katan 3:7-8	Moed Katan 3:9 Chagigah 1:1	Chagigah 1:2-3

