ב"ה

Ki Heim CHAYEINU

יגדיל תורה
מבצע תורה

Issue 9 • Chol Hamoed

Learning Torah on Chol Hamoed

Preface

In honor of the upcoming Yom Tov, Yagdil Torah brings you a compilation of sources describing the significance of Limmud Hatorah on Chol Hamoed.

Although one has the constant obligation to learn Torah; due to the demands of earning a living and providing for one's family, most of us are forced to fulfill this requirement by setting up regular times for learning instead. Even when Shabbos and YomTov come around, our time is occupied with Davening, Seudos and other spiritual things. On a daily basis there remains only a precious few hours or minutes that one can devote to his own Torah learning.

Specifically on Chol Hamoed, when one is free from his weekday work, and is not otherwise engaged in YomTov responsibilities, he is able to literally do his duty of "V'hagisa Bo Yomom Valayla" – And he should strive in Torah Learning both day and night.

May it be Hashem's will that through learning Torah during these days, we should be zoche to the times when the knowledge of Torah will be so vast that it will fill the entire world, with the coming of Moshiach Now!

Publishing Department,
Yagdil Torah

"For the basis for the Issur of Melacha was in order that one should eat, drink, celebrate and immerse himself in Torah Study"

"One is Required to Toil in Torah Day and Night"

Excerpt of a Sicha Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5731

A Specific Lesson In One's Service Of Hashem During These Days

The Alter Rebbe rules in his Shulchan Aruch, that "one who is unable to immerse himself in the study of Torah constantly, is required to set times for study during the day and at night, commensurate with his ability. This applies to one who receives his livelihood by the work of his own hands, but for one whose work is done by others, he is required to immerse himself in Torah day and night literally. This is relevant to all people, since 'every person is required to fulfill the Mitzvah of learning Torah, whether he is wealthy or impoverished'".

And just as during the ordinary weekday, the requirement of constant involvement in Torah learning does not pertain to those who personally toil with their hands, as mentioned above – the implication is the same regarding Yom Tov: Since Yom Tov is "Partially for You", meaning during "the part for you" one is absolved from the obligation of Torah Learning, and similarly on Shabbos where we find "there are those who arrive late to Shul" for instead they were fulfilling the Mitzvah of "enjoying the Shabbos". This indicates, that during that time one is not required to **constantly** learn.

Even Greater Obligation to Study Torah During These Days

During Chol Hamoed, the reasons which make one absolved from his requirement to study Torah [due to special Mitzvahs of Shabbos and Yom Tov which take precedence over Torah Learning, or because of his responsibility towards week-day work] are not applicable (because there aren't those special Mitzvas, and ordinary work is prohibited). Thus, during Chol Hamoed we are fully required to "Immerse ourselves in Torah study day and night". (It is understood that this does not apply during times of Davening and special Mitzvahs of these days.)

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To Try To Influence Others To Learn During These Days

Based on all we have said above, and as a continuation to what was said at the farbrengens of Tu Bshvat and Purim – about "conquering" the whole world through adding in Torah Learning with greater energy – it is proper and right, that during the days of Chol Hamoed, one should add in his own learning, and in learning with others. He should try to influence anyone he can, that he too should add in his learning during these days, and continue thereafter.

Specifically Yeshiva Bachurim Should Add in Learning during These Days

It is plainly obvious, that this applies particularly to Yeshiva Bachurim; even though regularly the Torah is their set occupation (also in the sense of time), they still have the added duty during this time to use out all the days of Chol Hamoed to their fullest and add even more in learning with a greater passion.

And may it be Hashem's will that these words should have their desired effect and be fulfilled.

"In Perspective"

What is Chol Hamoed all about?

Issur of Melacha in Order to Learn Torah

R' Abba Bar Mammal said: "had there been one who would rule with me, I would have permitted doing melacha on Chol Hamoed. For the basis for the Issur of Melacha was in order that one should eat, drink, celebrate and immerse himself in Torah Study, and now, people are eating, drinking and behaving frivolously".

(Yerushalmi Moed Katan Perek Bais, Halacha Daled)

To Gather In The Batei Midrashos And Listen To The Sweetness Of The Words Of Torah

The days of Chol Hamoed were not established in order to do Melacha, but in order to rejoice before Hashem. This means, to gather in Shuls and listen to the sweet words of Torah, the laws of Pesach during Pesach and the Laws of Sukkos during Sukkos.

(Sefer Hachinuch Mitzvah 323)

Yimei Ratzon and Days of Success in Learning

The days in between the first and last days of Pesach are called Chol Hamoed. The reason for this is, because in comparison with the days of Yom Tov, these are like regular weekdays, but when compared with an ordinary weekday, they are called Moed; Yom Tov. Therefore, on these days one should not do any Melacha, whether large or small. The only work that is permissible is something which will otherwise be lost provided that it is easy to do [see Shulchan Aruch at length for details]. But one should not say, since I am not able to work during these days, I will eat, drink and go touring. This is not what was intended with these Yomim Tovim Chas Vshalom, and those who are inclined to think this way are foolish and unwise.

In truth, these days were given to Yidden in order that they should be free from their work related obligations and they should be able to occupy themselves with Torah study without pressure and stress. These are Yimei Ratzon and days of success, and therefore one should not waste them with eating, drinking, relaxing and sleeping. Rather, each person should go to his designated spot and occupy himself with that which Hashem has bestowed upon him; those who are keen on learning Chumash should learn Chumash, and so on with Mishna and Gemara…

On these days, there is an added Kedusha, additionally, there is a Korbon Mussaf brought daily on these days [a sign of elevated Kedusha], a person should take care to guard this added Kedusha. An extra person is called up to the Torah during these days [another sign of elevated Kedusha]. It is obvious from all of this that there is great holiness during these days, and logically there is no place to think that these days were given to us in order that we can add in eating, drinking and behave in a weekday manner. One who is using these days for such things, is acting senselessly and eventually he will need to 'make an accounting' for such behavior is considered to be transgressing upon the holiness and greatness of these days.

(Seder Hayom of Rabbi Moshe Even Makir, in Seder Sefiras Haomer)

"To Occupy Himself With Hashem's Perfect Torah"

It is common knowledge that the warning against behaving in an undisciplined and wild way is considered a greater Issur then doing actual work on Chol Hamoed. And indeed the truth is, that one who is occupied with work is "settling the world" and is performing a great Mitzvah, as we find with one who is building a house or planting a vineyard returns from a war against the enemies of Hashem, since he is busy with the important work of "settling the world". However, the Torah's intention with the Yomim Tovim is in order to come closer to Hashem and learn his torah. These days are times to learn to fear Hashem from the great Chachamim and Chassidim who would ascend to see the face of Hashem the G-d of the Yidden, three times a year.

(Sefer Kalbo, Siman Samech)

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