



17 - 23 June, 2018  
4 - 10 Tammuz, 5778

**Torah :**  
Numbers 19:1 - 22:1

**Haftorah:**  
Judges 11:1 - 33

## ■ CALENDARS

We have Jewish Calendars, if you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi / Chaplain to contact us.

## ■ FAMILY PROGRAMS

Do you have family on the outside who are struggling, please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

## ■ GRAPE JUICE & MATZAH

Aleph offers free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll, it is available to all prisons.

## ALEPH INSTITUTE

Hyman & Martha Rogal  
Center

5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412-421-0111

Fax: 412-521-5948

www.alephne.org

info@alephne.org

## COMMITMENT VS. PASSION

Little Michael woke up early Monday morning. He was excited. Today, he was going to preschool. He eagerly helped his mother dress him and enthusiastically chowed down his breakfast. As he entered the classroom, he waved goodbye to his parents and proceeded to have the best first day a preschooler could have.

That night he joyfully reviewed all the activities that had done and the new friends he had met. His parents were thrilled.

Early the next morning, Mommy woke him up saying, "rise and shine, it's time to go to school!"

"No thanks," replied Michael politely, "I did that yesterday."

Everyone has a passion. Perhaps you are passionate about sports, perhaps your job or education. Perhaps your passion lies in marriage and family. There are endless possibilities. Nevertheless, we all have "those days." You know, those days when we wake up in the morning and there is just something missing, something in the air. "Today I'm just not feeling it."

It's very easy to write those days off as "lost cases" right from the get-go. When people take an accounting of each day before going to sleep, they'll often

conclude their review with a commitment: tomorrow will be better. And yet, there are those days when we feel like saying that immediately upon waking up in the morning, "Nah, not today. Tomorrow will be much better..."

But even on such days, even in such times when we just don't feel it, when the passion is not there and the excitement is missing, we would still be expected to take care of our responsibilities like any other day. We would still be required to do the right thing, the responsible thing and complete the tasks which just be completed.

What God is a task done by rote or almost robotically? Is there in fact any value?

In the Torah there are three types of Godly commandments. They are "Eidot, Mishpatim and Chukim." "Eidot" are the commemorative commandments, eating matzah, sitting in a sukkah etc. "Mishpatim" are the mitzvot which have logical reasons, ones which any respectable culture or civilisation would likely implement on their own. Murder or stealing would fall under this category.

And then there are the "Chukim." These are the commandments which seem to have absolutely no logical explanation and no understandable reason in human intellect. An example for this type of mitzvah is recorded in this week's Torah Portion. It is the mitzvah of the Red Heifer.

## Parshat Chukat

When a person would become ritually impure by coming in contact with a dead body, he would go through a prescribed ritual cleansing process which would conclude with being sprinkled with water containing ashes of the Red Heifer. This would render the recipient ritually pure, (and in the process would render the Kohen who administered it ritually impure.)

King Solomon, the wisest of men, admitted, "I have found a logical explanation for every mitzvah in the Torah, other than that of the Red Heifer." Indeed, even Moses himself was not offered an explanation when God transmitted all of the commandments to the people through him.

But there is a special value to these commandments, one which is not applicable to the others.

Doing God's will because and/or when we understand it and are passionate about it is wonderful and noble in its own right. But what happens when we inevitably have one of "those days?" What do we do when that passion, just like any other, waxes and wains? Is it less noble to fulfill the commandments out of dutiful obedience? Is a mitzvah carried out without passion less valuable to God?

This lesson is taught to us by the purposeful existence of "Chukim." Sure, God cherishes the warmth and love of mitzvah done with love. But at the same time,

we are given the chance to fulfill the commandments with pure commitment. There is indeed a great value in doing a mitzvah for no other reason than, “because this is what God needs from me right now.”

In fact, if we take it one step further, “Chukim,” the supra-logical aspect of Torah should even be applied to the commandments which we do understand. In addition to the true passion and love which permeates the mitzvot we do, the underlying reason behind it every action could and should be “because God needs this more than I do.” Every aspect of our lives should be saturated with unwavering commitment to God’s needs and wants, regardless of whether or not we understand their implications.

## THE SHORT-LONG WAY

A young Prince once ordered his attendant to bring him a most delicious looking apple from high up on a tree in the King’s orchards. In an effort to please his young master, the attendant immediately set to work trying to get a hold of that apple, the apple of the prince’s eye, so to speak. When all attempts to climb the tree failed, the man decided he had no choice but to fell the entire tree. This would be referred to as “the short-long way.” The short term goal has been achieved, but the collateral damage is irreparable.

One of the events read in this week’s Torah Portion is the passing of Aaron, the High Priest, brother of Moses. The Torah tells us that the people mourned his passing for many days. This was because, more so than anyone else, Aaron was beloved by all. He was known to be the peace maker between people, between friends and between man and wife.

He made people feel at ease, he showed kindness and compassion to everyone he encountered. In fact the Ethics of our Fathers advises us to learn from Aaron. “Be amongst the disciples of Aaron. Love peace and pursue peace, love all people and bring them closer to the Torah.”

The words, “bring them close to the Torah” teach us an interesting moral. There have been those throughout history who have attempted to “bring the Torah closer to the people,” and at times with the best of intentions. But this is a mistake. Torah, which is God’s infinite wisdom, is infinitely true and unchanging. It is the ultimate truth and the ultimate guidebook for a better life and a better world. By bending the truths of Torah in an effort to make it perhaps more appealing, as it were, invariably the short term goal might be achieved to some extent, but the collateral damage...

You may have heard the saying, “Don’t adjust Big Ben if your watch is two minutes faster.” When there is a discrepancy between Torah and human intellect, it would be foolish to try twisting the ancient and timeless wisdom of the Torah in order to reconcile.

We must bring ourselves and those around us closer

to the ways of Torah and Godliness without compromising the perfect and pristine truth which is the word of God.

*By Rabbi Nissan Isaac*

In parshas Chukas  
Moshe did get frightened  
To fight against Og  
The giant king of Bashan

Although Rashi says  
That had himself in mind  
And take Sara as a wife  
After Avraham died

What reason did Moshe have  
To worry that he would fall  
Og did not do mitzvot  
Even if he was tall

He still did something  
good  
No matter what the reason  
And this merit that he got  
Might help him win

And Moshe was a tzadik  
Who spoke to Hashem directly  
But when Lot was captured by  
the kings  
Og warned Avraham quickly

This teaches us a lesson  
That even for a selfish cause  
Doing something good  
Can someday help us a lot

## In Jewish History

**Sunday, 4 Tammuz, 5778 - June 17, 2018**

**Passing of Rabbeinu Tam (1171)**

Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir of Romereau (1100?-1171), known as “Rabbeinu Tam”, was a grandson of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105), and one of the primary authors of the Tosaphot commentary on the Talmud; the Bet-Din (rabbinical court) he headed was regarded as the leading Torah authority of his generation.

**Maharam Imprisoned (1286)**

Rabbi Meir ben Baruch (“Maharam”) of Rothenburg (1215?-1293), the great Talmudic commentator and leading Halachic authority for German Jewry, was imprisoned in the fortress at Ensisheim. A huge ransom was imposed for his release. The money was raised, but Rabbi Meir refused to allow it to be paid lest this encourage the further hostage taking of Jewish leaders. He died in captivity after seven years of imprisonment.

**Tuesday, 6 Tammuz, 5778 - June 19, 2018**

**Entebbe Rescue (1976)**

Jewish hostages held by Arab terrorists at Entebbe Airport, Uganda, were rescued by Israeli commando units in 1976.

**Friday, 9 Tammuz, 5778 - June 22, 2018**

**Jerusalem Walls Breached (423 BCE)**

The Babylonian armies of King Nebuchadnezzar breached the walls of Jerusalem on the 9th of Tammuz in the year 3338 from creation (423 BCE); King Ziddikiah of Judah was captured and taken to Babylon (Jeremiah 39:5. A month later, the capture of Jerusalem was completed with the destruction of the Holy Temple and the exile of all but a small number of Jews to Babylon). Tammuz 9 was observed as a fast day until the second breaching of Jerusalem’s walls (by the Romans) on the 17th of Tammuz, 3829 (69 CE), at which time the fast was moved to that date. (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah and

Tur Orach Chaim 549).