



BO

TIME: HUMANITY'S LAST FRONTIER

*Every Hour Is a Holy Hour, Every Second, Sacred*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Bo

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan.

G-d commands the first *mitzvah* to be given to the people of Israel: to establish a calendar based on the monthly rebirth of the moon. The Israelites are also instructed to bring a “Passover offering” to G-d: A lamb or kid is to be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts

and lintels of every Israelite home so that G-d should pass over these homes when He comes to kill the Egyptian firstborn. The roasted meat of the offering is to be eaten that night together with matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs.

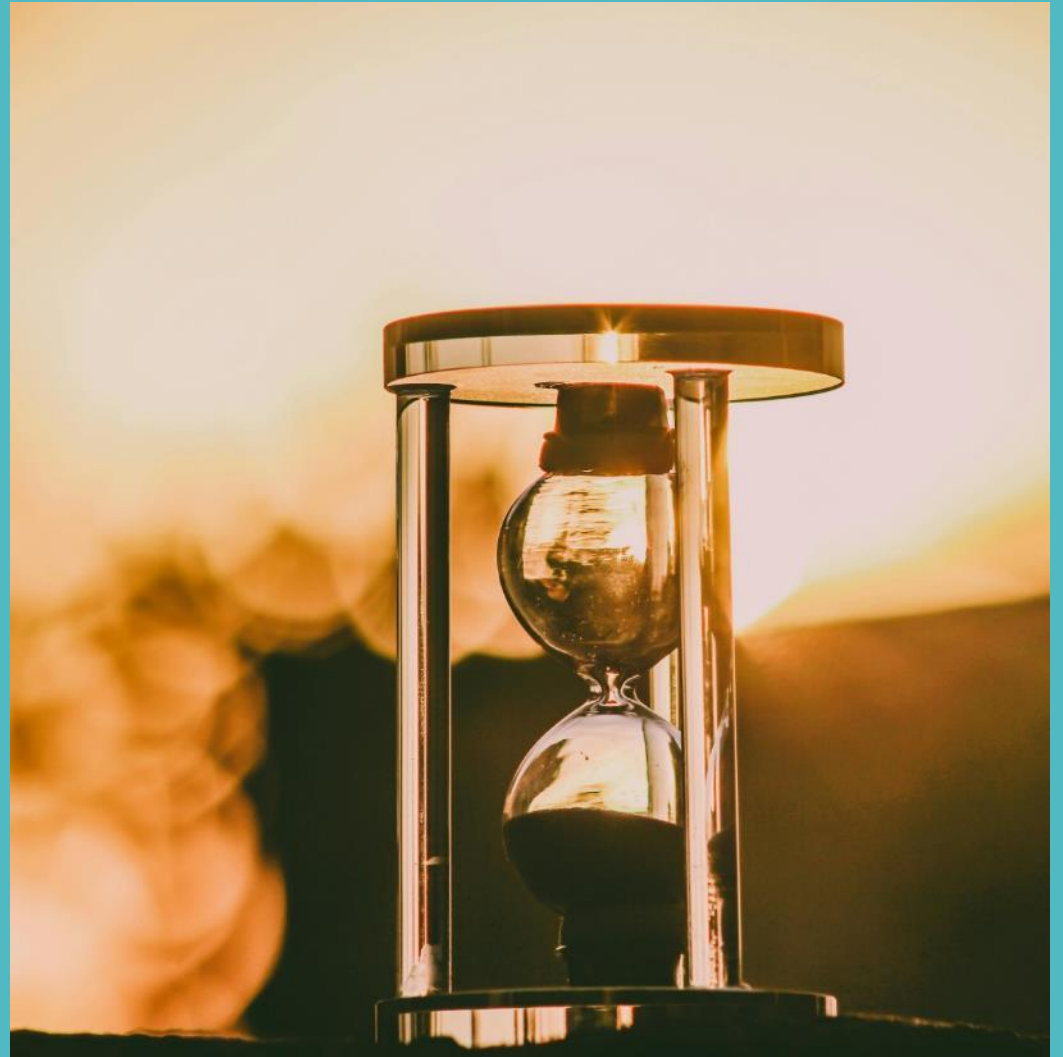
The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh’s resistance, and he literally drives the Children of Israel from his land. So hastily do they depart that there is no time for their dough to rise, and the only provisions they take along are unleavened. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver, and garments—fulfilling

the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with great wealth.

The Children of Israel are commanded to consecrate all firstborn and to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children. They are also commanded to wear *tefilin* on the arm and head as a reminder of the Exodus and their resultant commitment to G-d.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Is there a *mitzvah* we do with time itself to make it holy?



# TEXT 1A

*Exodus 12:1-2*

- א. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאַל אֶהְרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר.  
ב. הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית חֳדָשִׁים, רֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה לָכֶם לְחֹדֶשֶׁי הַשָּׁנָה.

1. And G-d said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying:
2. "This [point of the moon's] renewal marks for you the beginning of the months; this month will be for you the first of the months of the year."

## TEXT 1B

*Rashi, ad loc.*

הִרְאָהוּ לְבִנָּהּ בְּחִדּוּשָׁהּ, וְאָמַר לוֹ, כְּשֶׁהִיָּרַח מִתְחַדָּשׁ יִהְיֶה לָּךְ רֵאשׁ חֹדֶשׁ.  
וְאִין מְקַרָּא יוֹצֵא מִיָּדֵי פְּשׁוּטוֹ. עַל חֹדֶשׁ נִיסָן אָמַר לוֹ, זֶה יִהְיֶה רֵאשׁ  
לְסֵדֶר מִנְיַן הַחֹדָשִׁים, שְׂיִהְיֶה אֵר קְרוֹי שְׁנֵי, סִינּוֹן שְׁלִישִׁי.

1. G-d showed them the moon at its point of renewal. He said to Moses, "When the moon renews, it will mark the beginning of the month for you."
2. However, Torah passages cannot depart from their straightforward meaning. G-d was referring to the month of Nisan and saying, "This will be the first in the order of months." The following month, Iyar, will be the second month, and Sivan will be the third month.

## THE FIRST *MITZVAH*

calculating and establishing  
the Jewish calendar

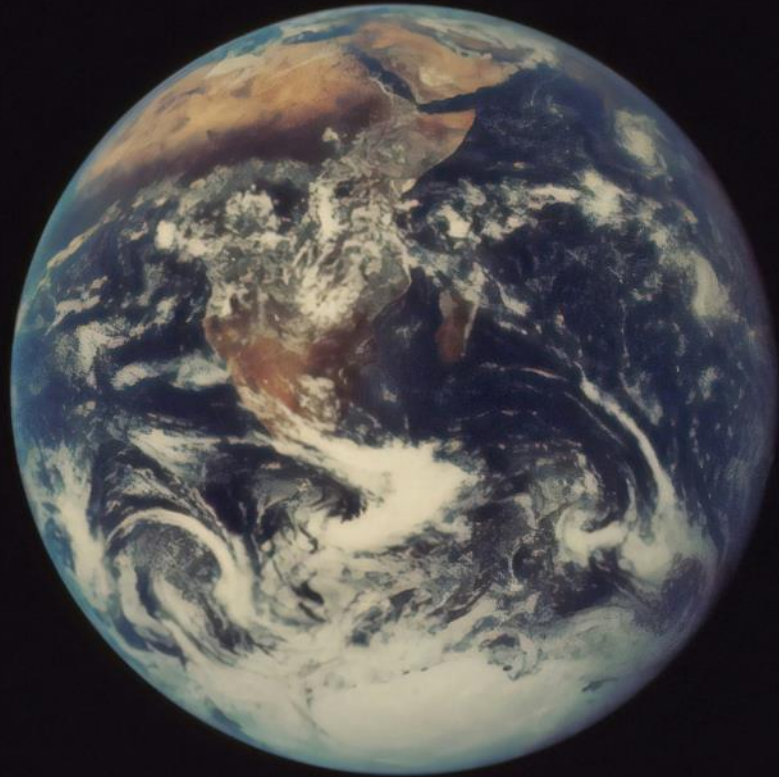


## TEXT 2

*Rashi, Genesis 1:1*

אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהַתְחִיל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה  
אֶלָּא מִ"הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם" (שְׁמוֹת יב, ב) שֶׁהִיא מִצְוָה  
רֵאשׁוֹנָה שְׁנִצְטוּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Rabbi Yitzchak says, "The Torah should have begun with the passage, 'This [point of the moon's] renewal marks for you' (Exodus 12:2), since it is the first *mitzvah* the Jews were instructed."



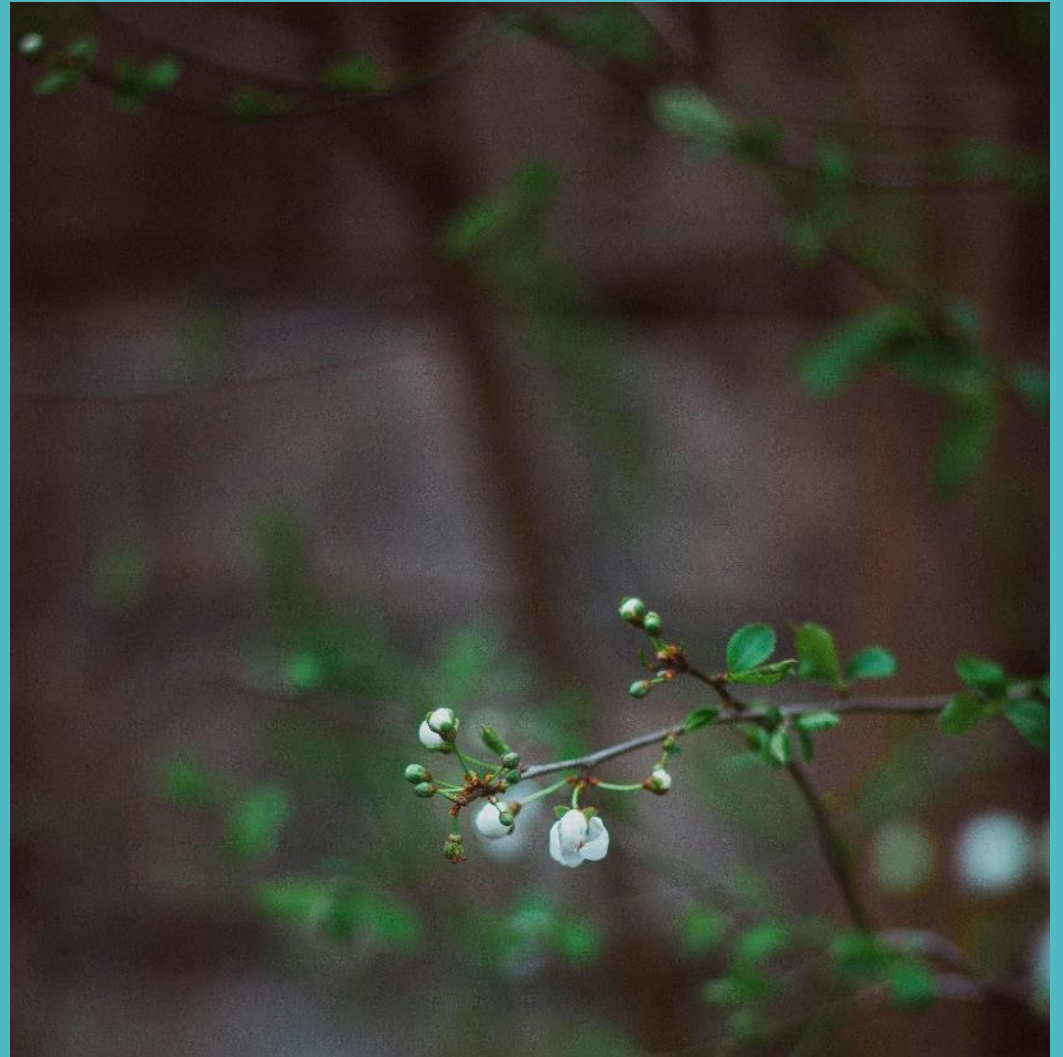
The Torah begins with Creation to establish G-d's authority. Only then is the first *mitzvah* introduced.

## QUESTION

What makes this *mitzvah* so special that it deserves to be first?

RENEWAL

a central theme to  
the Jewish mission



# TEXT 3

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 21, p. 65*

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם אֵיזוֹ דֵּי מַטְרָה וְתַכְלִית פּוֹן תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת אוֹן דְּעֶרְפָּאָר אֵיזוֹ דָּאָס . . .  
מִצְוָה רֵאשׁוֹנָה.

דֵּי כּוֹנֵה פּוֹן תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת אֵיזוֹ אַז אֵיזוֹ זָאָלן אוֹיִפֶטָאָן אַ חִידוּשׁ אֵין דְּעֶר בְּרִיאָה . . .  
חֹדֶשׁ אֵיזוֹ מְלִשׁוֹן חִידוּשׁ. אוֹן דְּעֶר כֹּס פּוֹן חִידוּשׁ אֵיזוֹ אֵיבְעֶרְגֶעָעָבֶן צוֹ אֵיזוֹ, לָכֶם. וְוֵאָס  
דוֹרְךְ תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת מֵאָכֶן זַיִי דֵּי וְוֵעֶלֶט פֶּאָר אַ דִּירָה לוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ.

The passage, “This renewal marks for you” (Exodus 12:2) encapsulates the aim and purpose of the entire Torah and its commandments. This is why it is . . . the first commandment.

The Torah and its commandments were designed for Jews to bring newness into Creation. *Chodesh*, the Hebrew word for month, means *chidush*—newness. The power of renewing [Creation] was given “to you,” to the Jewish people, who transform the world into a home for G-d through studying Torah and observing its commandments.

חֹדֶשׁ—month

*chodesh*

חִידוּשׁ—newness

*chidush*

The Torah's purpose is to  
renew creation with holiness.



Using time to declare a new month makes time itself holy.

# TEXT 4

Midrash, Shemot  
Rabah 15:24

שְׁהִקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא קֹדֵשׁ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
שְׁנֵאמַר, "וְהֵייתֶם לִי קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ  
אֲנִי ה' (וַיִּקְרָא כ, כו). וּלְפִי שְׁהֵם  
מְקַדְּשִׁים לְשָׂמִים, לְכַף מָה שְׁהֵם  
מְקַדְּשִׁים הוּא מְקַדְּשׁ.

רְצוּנָה לִידַע? צֵא וּלְמַד מְכַלֵּי הַשָּׂרֵת.  
מִשֶּׁה קֹדֵשׁ אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן, וְאֵת כָּל כְּלִי  
מִי הָיָה מְקַדְּשֵׁם? יָכוֹל הָיָה מִשֶּׁה לָּבוֹא  
וּלְקַדְּשׁוֹ. אֵלֶּא מָה הָיָה עוֹשִׂין? הָיָה  
הַכֹּהֵן מְקַבֵּל בּוֹ דְבַר שֶׁל קֹדֵשׁ וְהַכְּלִי  
מִתְקַדְּשֵׁת . . .

וְאִם כְּלִי חַל כְּשֶׁהוּא מִתְמַלֵּא מִן הַקֹּדֵשׁ  
מִתְקַדְּשֵׁת, עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל  
שְׁהֵם קְדוֹשִׁים וּמְקַדְּשִׁים אֶת הַחֹדֶשׁ.

G-d sanctified the Jewish people, as it is written, "Be holy unto Me for I, G-d, am holy" (Leviticus 20:26). As a result of our being holy unto G-d, whatever we sanctify becomes sacred.

Would you like to see an example? Consider the Tabernacle's vessels. Moses sanctified the Tabernacle; who sanctified its vessels? Moses could have come along and sanctified those, too. Instead, it was left to [the priests. The] priest used it to receive a sacred object, and the vessel became holy. . . .

If a mundane vessel becomes holy when it is filled with something sacred, how much more so [does time become holy] when holy Jews sanctify a new month?

This *mitzvah* isn't first only for its theme of renewal. It fulfills the Torah's mission most deeply by sanctifying **time** itself.





TIME AND SPACE

the foundations  
of all existence

## TEXT 5A

*Rabbi Shneur  
Zalman of Liadi,  
Shaar Hayichud  
Veha'emunah, ch. 7*

הַגִּדְר וּבְחִינַת שֵׁם "עוֹלָם" נוֹפֵל עַל בְּחִינַת מְקוֹם וּבְחִינַת זְמַן דְּוָקָא.  
בְּחִינַת מְקוֹם הוּא מְזַרְח וּמַעְרָב, צָפוֹן דָּרוֹם, מַעְלָה וּמַטָּה.  
בְּחִינַת זְמַן, עָבָר הִנֵּה וְעָתִיד.

The term "world" applies exclusively within space and time.

Space denotes east, west, north, south, up, and down.

Time represents the past, present, and future.

## TEXT 5B

*Rabbi Shlomo ibn  
Gabirol, Keter  
Malchut, ch. 3*

אַתָּה נִמְצָא. וּבְטֵרֵם הַיּוֹת כָּל זְמַן הָיִיתָ,  
וּבְלִי מְקוֹם חָנִיתָ.

You exist. Before there was time, You  
were there, and before there was space,  
You were at rest.

G-d transcends  
time and space.





G-d first created  
time, then space.

## TEXT 5C

Rabbi Ovadiah  
Seforno, Genesis 1:1

"בְּרֵאשִׁית" (בְּרֵאשִׁית א, א).  
בְּתַחֲלִיל הַזְּמַן. וְהוּא רְגַע רֵאשׁוֹן בְּלִתִּי מִתְחִלָּה, וְשֶׁלֹּא  
הָיָה זְמַן קוֹדֵם לוֹ.

"In the beginning" (Genesis 1:1).

This refers to the beginning of time. This was the first indivisible moment of existence; there was no time before this.

## ANSWER

The *mitzvah* of the calendar sanctifies the foundation of all existence: **time.**



## QUESTIONS

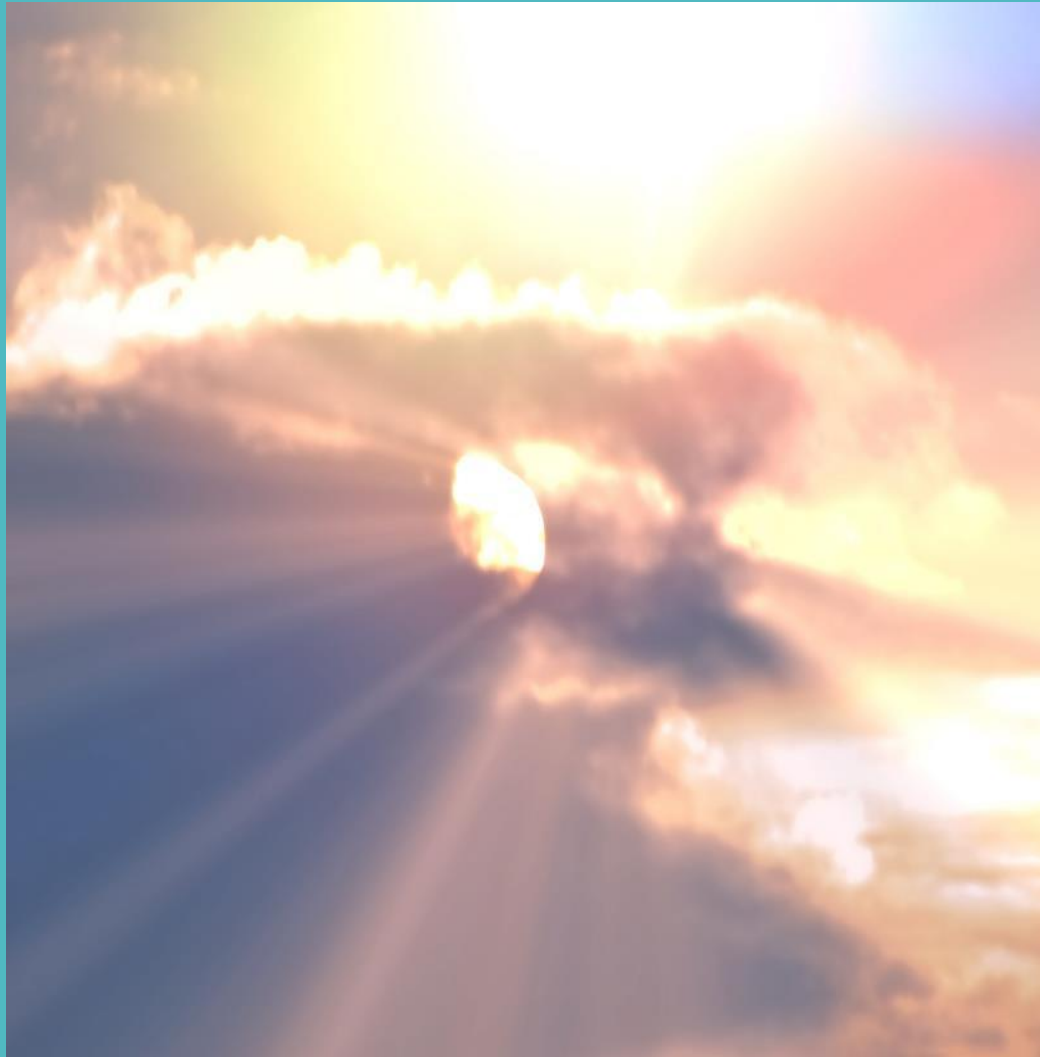
1. How does this *mitzvah* bring holiness to the mundane days of the month?
2. How do we bring holiness to time in the modern age, when we do not practice this *mitzvah*?

## TEXT 6

*Maimonides,  
Mishneh Torah,  
Laws of Sanctifying  
the Month 5:1*

בְּזִמְנוֹ שֶׁאֵין שָׁם סִנְהֶדְרִין בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֵין קוֹבְעִין הַדָּשִׁים  
וְאֵין מְעַבְרִין שָׁנִים, אֶלָּא בְּהַשְׁבּוֹן זֶה שֶׁאֲנוּ מְחַשְׁבִּין בּוֹ הַיּוֹם  
. . . וְאֵין נִזְקָקִין לְרֵאִיָּה.

When there is no Jewish High Court, we establish the monthly calendar and institute leap years solely according to the fixed calendar that is followed today, . . . and testimony of new moon sightings are of no consequence.



Everything in this world  
was created to serve G-d.

## TEXT 7A

*Avot 6:11*

כָּל מַה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא  
בְּעוֹלָמוֹ, לֹא בְּרָאוֹ אֱלֹא לְכְבוֹדוֹ.

Everything that G-d created in His world, He created for His glory.

## TEXT 7B

*Mishnah, Kidushin*  
4:14

וְאֲנִי נִבְרָאתִי לְשִׁמְשׁ אֶת קוֹנִי.

I was created (for no purpose other than) to serve my Master.

## TEXT 7C

Zohar, vol. 2, p.  
161a

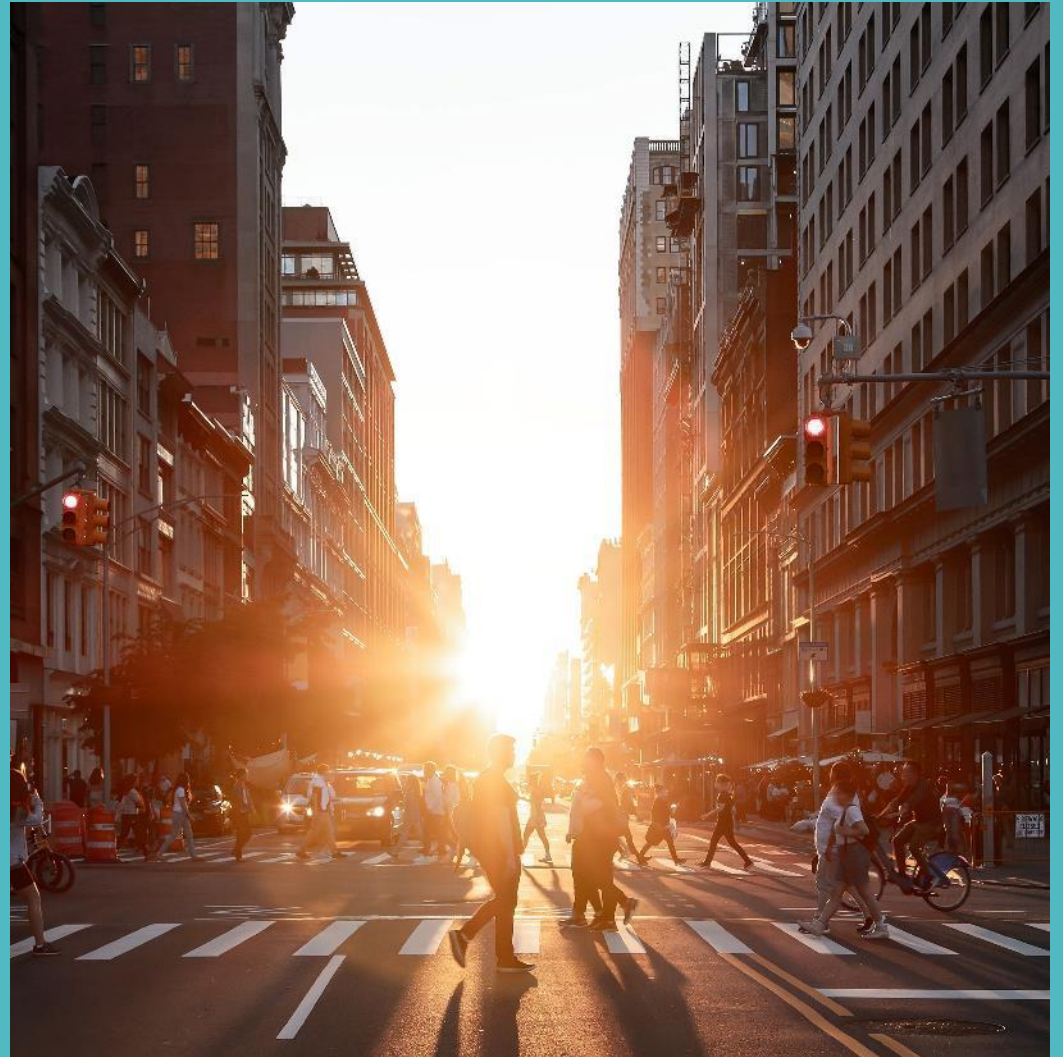
דְּכַד בְּרָא קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא עֲלֵמָא, אֶסְתַּכֵּל בָּהּ בְּאוּרֵייתָא וּבְרָא  
עֲלֵמָא, וּבְאוּרֵייתָא אֶתְבְּרִי עֲלֵמָא.

כְּמָה דְּאוּקְמוּהָ דְּכְתִיב "וְאֶהְיֶה אֶצְלוֹ אָמוֹן" (מִשְׁלֵי ח, ל). אֵל תְּקִרִי  
אָמוֹן אֶלָּא אוֹמָן.

When G-d created the universe, He looked into the Torah and [used it as a blueprint to] create the world. Through the Torah, the world was created.

The Torah itself establishes this: "I [the Torah] was a nursling beside G-d" (Proverbs 8:30). Don't read the word as nursling (*amon*); read it as architect (*oman*).

Time, too, was created  
to serve G-d. Even the  
mundane times.



# TEXT 8A

*Psalms 104:19*

עָשָׂה יָרֵחַ לְמוֹעֲדִים.

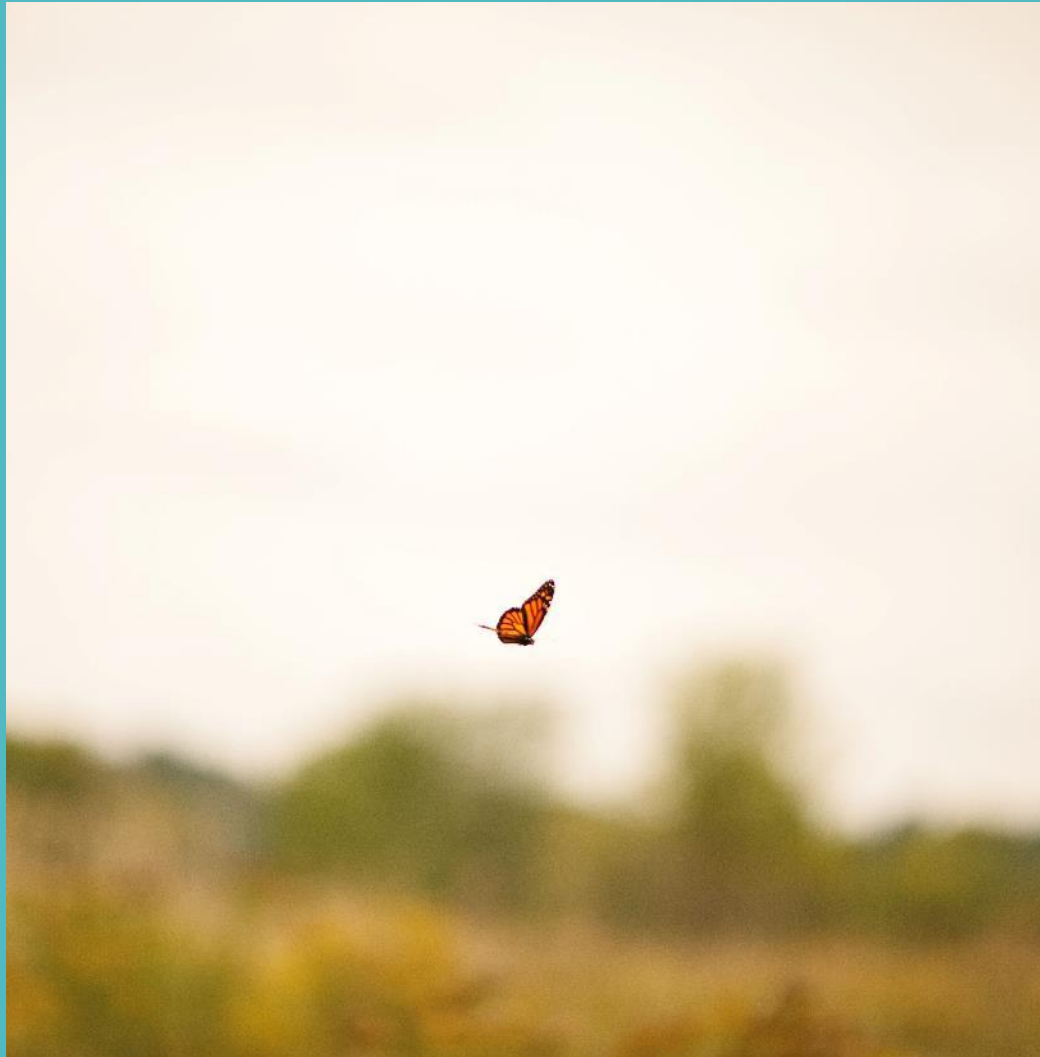
He made a moon for the festivals.

## TEXT 8B

*Rashi, ad loc.*

"לְמוֹעֲדִים". לְמִנּוֹת בּוֹ זְמַנִּים וְרִגְלִים.

"For the festivals." This refers to calculating the times and the festivals.



**Rashi:** every day is  
a *mo'ed*, a Divinely  
appointed moment.

## TEXT 9A

*Maimonides,  
Mishneh Torah, Laws  
of Consecrating the  
New Month*

מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה אַחַת, וְהִיא לְחַשֵּׁב וְלִידַע וְלִקְבֹּעַ בְּאֵיזָה  
יוֹם הוּא תְּחִלַּת כָּל חֹדֶשׁ וְחֹדֶשׁ מִחֲדָשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה.

It is a *mitzvah* to calculate, know, and determine the first day of each month of the year.

## TEXT 9B

*Maimonides, ibid.*

בֵּית דִּין מְחַשְׁבִּין בְּחֻשְׁבוֹנוֹת כְּדָרְךָ שְׁמַחֲשָׁבִים הָאֲצִטְגְּנִינִים,  
שְׂיֻדְעִין מְקוֹמוֹת הַכּוֹכָבִים וּמַהֲלָכָם. וְחוֹקְרִים וּמְדַקְדְּקִים עַד  
שְׂיֻדְעוּ אִם אֶפְשָׁר שְׂיִרְאֶה הַיָּרֵחַ בְּזִמְנוֹ, שֶׁהוּא לַיִל שְׁלוֹשִׁים,  
אוֹ אֵי אֶפְשָׁר.

The High Court makes calculations like those of astronomers, who know the location of the stars and their paths in their orbits. They conduct careful research to determine whether or not the moon will be visible at the appropriate time—i.e., the thirtieth night of the month.

## ANSWER 1

By calculating the lunar cycle daily, the sages transformed each moment into service of G-d.



# TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 26, pp. 64-65*

די השלמת מטרת הבריאה פון די חדשי השנה  
איז נישט בלויז בנה נואס מ'איז קובע און מקדש  
דעם ראש חודש אדער מועדי השנה, דאס הייסט,  
ימים מסוימים בחודש. נאר ווען עס ווערט  
דעהערט אין דעם גאנצן המשך הזמן, אויף  
לאחרי הראש חודש כו', דער בשביל התורה  
ובשביל ישראל.

און דאס איז דורכדעם נואס בית דין איז מקיים  
די מצות עשה לחשב ולידע ולקבוע באי זה יום  
תחלת כל חדש מחדשי השנה. נואס צוליב דעם  
דארף דאך בית דין אויסרעכענען און וויסן די  
פירטי החשבונות פון מהלך הלבנה כו', און יודעין  
מקומות הכוכבים, ומהלכם כו'.

G-d's purpose in creating the months of the year is not entirely fulfilled by consecrating the first of the month and the festivals, meaning specific days of the month. It is fulfilled when we reveal that the entire spectrum of time, all the days of the month, was created for G-d's sake.

This is accomplished by fulfilling the *mitzvah* of calculating and knowing all the details of the lunar cycle, the moon's orbit, and the position of the stars to determine when the first of each month will fall.



# TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 26, pp. 64-65*

דאס הייסט, נוסף אויף דער פֿעולָה אין דעם זמן פון  
הַדָּשִׁי הַשָּׁנָה דוּרְךָ דְּעַר קְבִיעוֹת וְקִדּוּשׁ רֵאשׁ חוֹדֶשׁ  
אויף צוליב די מוֹעֲדוֹת, וואס אין דעם אופן איז דער  
זמן שְׁבִינְתִּים בְּלוֹיז ווי מַעֲיֵן אַ הַכָּשֵׁר צו קִדּוּשׁת  
הַזְּמַן פֿון די מוֹעֲדוֹת. (ווייל בְּכַדִּי עָס זָאל זיין ראש  
הַשָּׁנָה וּמוֹעֲדֵי הַשָּׁנָה דאַרף מַעַן הָאָבֶן (און וויסן)  
דעם גאַנצן הַמָּשָׁף הַזְּמַן פֿון דעם חוֹדֶשׁ וכו'.)

איז נאכמער, דער עָצֶם חֲשָׁבוֹן וואס בית דין יחֲשָׁבוּ  
וְיִדְעוּ אַם יִרְאֶה הַיָּרֵחַ, וואס דאס איז דאך בְּנוֹגֵעַ  
דעם גאַנצן הַמָּשָׁף פֿון מְהֵלֶךְ הַלְּבָנָה פֿון דעם גאַנצן  
חוֹדֶשׁ, איז אַ טייל פֿון דער מְצֻנֹת עֲשֵׂה גּוֹפָא. די  
מְצֻנֹת עֲשֵׂה איז נִיט נָאָר דְּעַר מְקַדֵּשׁ זיין דעם טָאָג  
פֿון ראש חוֹדֶשׁ, נָאָר דְּעַר יִחְשָׁבוּ וְיִדְעוּ אַז אין דעם  
גאַנצן הַמָּשָׁף הַזְּמַן גּוֹפָא שְׁטִיט בְּגִלּוּי דְּעַר בְּשָׁבִיל  
הַתּוֹרָה וּבְשָׁבִיל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Merely establishing and consecrating the first of the month and the festival dates leaves the intervening days to serve as placeholders for the sacred festival dates. (Meaning we only need [and calculate] the entire month to know when Rosh Hashanah and the other holidays will fall.)

However, when we calculate the entire lunar orbit for the whole month to know when the first of the month falls, the entire month becomes part of the *mitzvah*. The *mitzvah* is not just to consecrate the first of the month. The *mitzvah* is to calculate and know that the entire time continuum was created for a Divine purpose.

## ANSWER 2

Even though in this modern age we no longer consecrate the months, we can still fulfill the primary part of the *mitzvah* by performing the calculations for each day of the month and recognizing the holiness of each day.



The calculation of the Jewish calendar is the first *mitzvah* because it turns every moment into a *mitzvah*.

## KEY POINTS

1. The *mitzvah* to establish and manage the Jewish calendar is the first to be given in the Torah. This demonstrates that it is the most fundamental *mitzvah*.
2. Time was G-d's first Creation. It is the basic ingredient of the universe.
3. G-d created the world for His glory. If time, the platform for all existence, is made holy by using it to fulfill G-d's will, the rest of the universe will follow.
4. We make time holy by celebrating the sacred days of the month. When we celebrate Shabbat and the festivals, time itself becomes a receptacle of holiness.
5. Moreover, every day of the month becomes a vehicle through which the *mitzvah* of establishing the calendar is fulfilled. This is why the *mitzvah* of the Jewish calendar is so fundamental.

