

Setting time...

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The first commandment given to the Jewish people is to establish for themselves a calendar through the observance of a new moon¹. This command was not given in the miraculous moments of Sinai, or in the wandering of the desert, it was given in the moments before the exodus from Egypt.

Can you imagine the Jewish people at this stage? They had lived through 210 years of slavery, they were estranged from their homeland, they had no control over time. Rashi explains that the month begins with the renewal of the moon to showcase the renewal of the people². But it is the notion of owning time that becomes the dominant reason for this command being presented to the Jewish people on the precipice of their moment of freedom.

Seforno tells us that the ability to organise our calendar showed us the importance of owning our time. We finally get to schedule our day, our time, our routing. This is the mark of freedom³. I would argue though, that true freedom, is not just the freedom of time, but utilising our time to bring goodness and godliness into the world.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks makes this point in his commentary on the Haggada. When we make Kiddush on Seder night, as with any other festival, we acknowledge the sanctity first of the Jewish people and then of the time. The Jewish people were commanded to set time, and through that they were able to sanctify the year, establish the festivals, and engage with the Almighty not just through spirit, but action as well.

The command of setting time comes with it not just the ability to work and to create, but to truly imitate God, one sets time to rest. The Shabbat comes along each week, but it is through our setting time to take a moment to rest, recover, and spiritually connect with God elevates the time we spend in the rest of the week⁵.

Time really is the greatest gift. Each of us gets it in equal doses. 365 days a year. 24 hours in a day. 60 minutes in an hour. Some might have more years than others, and some might be busier than others, but time is egalitarian⁶. The choices we make, how we use our time, that is the mark of freedom. The way in which we maximise our time, using it to bring goodness and godliness in the world, is the chief concern for each of us. As Benjamin Franklin reminds us “lost time is never found again.”⁷

All citations can be found in **A New Page of Talmud**