
Setting Time

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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Bo 5782



This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you.- **Shemot 12:2¹** He showed him the moon in the first stage of its renewal, and He said to him, “The time when the moon renews itself thus, shall be unto you the beginning of the month” – **Rashi on Shemot 12:2²** from now on these months will be yours, to do with as you like. [you have My authority to organise your own calendar. Ed.] This is by way of contrast to the years when you were enslaved when you had no control over your time or timetable at all.

[Freedom, i.e. retirement from the “rat race,” means being able to formulate one’s own timetable. Ed.] While you were enslaved, your days, hours, minutes even, were always at the beck and call of your taskmasters. – **Seforno on Shemot 12:2³** We begin the seder by the formal act of sanctifying the day. The Kiddush tonight is the same as for other festivals. Nonetheless Kiddush as such has a particular connection with Pesach, since the command to establish the calendar was first given to the Israelites in Egypt prior to the exodus... Rabbi Avraham Pam explained this in the following way: the difference between a slave and a free human being does not lie in how long or how hard each works... the difference lies in who controls time... They were given authority over time. – **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks on the Haggada⁴** There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to

be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern. Nothing – **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in The Sabbath⁵** It’s part of the beauty of Judaism that it asks us, on Rosh Hashanah, to ask just that question. Time is God’s greatest gift and one of the few He gives each of us on equal terms. Whether we are rich or poor, powerful or powerless, there are only twenty-four hours in a day, and a span of years that is all too short. For each of us (as for Moses) there will be a future

This month shall mark...

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְכֶם
Shemot 12:2

we will not see, a River Jordan we will not cross, a promised land we will not enter. Therefore we have to make choices, and the most consequential is how we use our time. –

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks in Forget the tyranny of the clock and follow the calendar of life⁶ Lost time is never found again. – **Benjamin Franklin⁷**

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