

This month shall be for you the beginning of the months. (12:2)

Time is our most precious Divine gift. Time is life. When we give someone our time, we are giving him a part of our life. The time we give up is a part of our life, which we can no longer retrieve. Thus, it is best that we take great care in how we spend that time. The quantity and quality of time we spend with our children manifests how much we value our relationship with them. If our relationship is all about talk, but does not involve our input of time, it is a sad commentary on that relationship.

As *Yidden*, we must view time not, merely from an objective perspective, but rather, a subjective perspective, as well. We fill time with meaning; otherwise, it goes by and is wasted. We have the opportunity to elevate time when we use it appropriately. We can sanctify time by using it for *devarim she'b'kedushah*, holy observances. Therefore, the first *mitzvah* with which we were commanded as we prepared to leave Egypt was the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush HaChodesh*, Sanctifying the New Moon. This is the process in which we declare a certain day to be *Rosh Chodesh*. At the beginning of the month, the calendar year was determined by the *bais din*, Jewish court. The decision rendered by the *bais din* determined when the various *Yamim Tovim*, Festivals, occur. This is unlike *Shabbos*, which occurs every seven days, regardless of the calendar date. *Shabbos* is determined by Hashem; the Festivals, by man.

Sforno observes the distinct connection between *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Egyptian exodus, with the ensuing freedom from slavery, and the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush HaChodesh*, sanctifying time *vis-à-vis* the new moon. Slaves have no clear perception of time, since it does not belong to them. They work for a master. Thus, their time is his. Only a free man who has limited control over his time can spend his time properly. He may, therefore, sanctify it. The concepts of freedom and the sanctity of time go hand in hand, for they define the quality of one's life.

Of all of the "things" that Hashem created, only *Shabbos* represents the sanctity of time that was blessed by Hashem. *Shabbos* thereby became an experience in time permeated by Heavenly sanctity. The following discussion between two *Chassidic* Masters underscores this idea. The *Kotzker Rebbe* and the *Vorker Rebbe* were debating the holiness of certain *mitzvos*. The *Vorker* maintained that the *mitzvah* of *Succah* has greater sanctity than the Four Species. We are busy preparing for their use, purchasing the finest, most pleasant, perfect and beautiful species; once they are used, however, the holiness departs from them. When a Jew sits within the confines of the *Succah*, he is ensconced in *kedushah*, holiness; he is surrounded by the *mitzvah*. Thus, *Succah* should be considered the greatest *mitzvah*. The *Kotzker* countered with the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos*. A Jew can leave the *Succah*, and the holiness no longer encompasses him. A Jew, however, cannot walk out of *Shabbos*. The sanctity of time is the ultimate sanctity, since it embraces him wherever he goes. Life is measured in time; therefore, time is life. A life whose "time" is holy is a holy life. A life whose "time" has been wasted is essentially without meaning and is of limited value. Hashem

grants life; who are we to waste it?