



# Likkutei Sichos

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## Do You See the Sun?

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## 1.

### SPRINGTIME

At the beginning of the *Laws of Sanctifying the Month*,<sup>1</sup> *Rambam* states:<sup>2</sup> “The months of the year are lunar months, as it says,<sup>3</sup> ‘The burnt offering of the month when it is renewed,’ and,<sup>4</sup> ‘This month shall be for you the first of months.’... The years that we follow are solar years, as it says,<sup>5</sup> ‘Keep {guard} the month of spring.’”

This means: A “lunar month” consists of approximately 29½ days,<sup>6</sup> which is the length of the moon’s monthly cycle; and a “solar year” consists of approximately 365¼ days,<sup>7</sup> which is the sun’s (annual) cycle.

In this section, *Rambam* teaches two laws:

- a. The “months of the year” must be calculated according to the lunar cycle. Meaning, a month is not one-twelfth of the solar year [which is how most people calculate it, dividing the year (according to the solar cycle) into twelve portions — months], but rather, “**lunar** months.”
- b. At the same time, since Pesach must fall in the spring,<sup>8</sup> and the seasons of the year are determined based on (the cycle of) the sun (a solar year being approximately eleven days longer a lunar year<sup>9</sup>), we have to calculate the **years** based on the sun’s cycle. Therefore, every two or three years, the Jewish court declares a leap year “so that Pesach will fall in the spring.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> {In Hebrew, “*Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh*.”}

<sup>2</sup> {*Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh*,” ch. 1, par. 1.}

<sup>3</sup> *Bamidbar* 28:14.

<sup>4</sup> *Shemos* 12:2.

<sup>5</sup> *Devarim* 16:1.

<sup>6</sup> According to the average lunar cycle of 29 days, 12 hours... 793 units (*Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*, ch. 6, par. 3).

<sup>7</sup> See *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*, beg. of ch. 10, and further in this *sichah*.

<sup>8</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 21a; *Sanhedrin* 13b.

<sup>9</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, *loc cit.*, par. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, ch. 4, par. 2.

*Rambam* then continues in subsequent chapters to say that the calculation we follow today (established by Rabbi Hillel *HaNasi*<sup>11</sup>) was also fixed according to this formula. Namely, every (nineteen year) cycle synchronizes (more or less) the lunar years with the solar years. Thus, “the difference between the days of the solar calendar {and the lunar calendar} every nineteen years will be only one hour and 485 units.”<sup>12</sup>

The *Pirush*<sup>13</sup> asks: “After many years” (accumulating this extra hour and 485 units, many times over), wouldn’t the season of Nissan {i.e., the spring equinox} fall out (not in the spring {i.e., in the month of Nissan}) but in the month of Iyar? He answers, “May our teacher of righteousness<sup>14</sup> come and inform us.”

[Note that even by the time we reach six-thousand years of the world’s existence, the spring equinox will still fall in Nissan.]<sup>15</sup>

We need to clarify: The law to “keep the month of spring” is (not only that Nissan must fall in the spring, but) that **Pesach** must fall during the spring season [as *Rambam* rules, as mentioned, if the court determines that the Nissan {=spring} equinox will fall on “the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nissan,”<sup>16</sup> they would declare a leap year “so that **Pesach** will coincide with the spring.”] As such, the following is unclear:

Due to the accumulated time (an hour and 485 units) {at the end} of the cycle until the present time [and even in *Rambam*’s time (and earlier)], the spring equinox often occurs several days after the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan; how is

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<sup>11</sup> {Also known as Hillel II; the title “*Nasi*” was given to the leader of the Sanhedrin.} See *Baal Hamaor*, on *Rosh Hashanah* 20b; *Ramban* on *Gittin* 36a; et al.

<sup>12</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, loc cit., ch. 6, par. 10. {A “unit” (קלן) is 1/1080 of an hour, or 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> seconds. Each ordinary lunar year is 10 days, 21 hours, and 204 units shorter than a solar year. Thus, the difference between the 12 ordinary lunar years of a nineteen-year cycle and the corresponding solar years is 130 days, 14 hours, and 288 units. A lunar leap year is 18 days, 15 hours, and 589 units longer than a solar year. Thus, the difference between the seven leap years of a nineteen-year cycle and the corresponding solar years is 130 days, 12 hours, and 883 units. When this sum is subtracted from the figure mentioned above, the remainder mentioned by *Rambam* is reached.}

<sup>13</sup> {Unattributed commentary on *Rambam*.}

<sup>14</sup> {I.e., Moshiach. This title is based on the verse in *Hosheah* 10:12, (and used in *Bechoros* 24a).}

<sup>15</sup> {So the question of the *Pirush* is theoretical, since after Moshiach comes, we will know the resolution.}

<sup>16</sup> {I.e., a day after the start of Pesach, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan.}

this consistent with the law to “keep the month of spring” — that **Pesach** must be in the spring?

## 2.

### WHY CHOOSE AN IMPERFECT ALIGNMENT?

Seemingly, this question can be resolved based on what *Rambam* says further.<sup>17</sup> Namely, the remainder of an hour and 485 units at the end of every cycle only exists according to the calculation (referred to as “Shmuel’s formula”) that the solar year is “365 and ¼ days.” But according to the calculation (referred to as “Rav Ada’s formula”) that the solar year is 365 days plus “less-than-a-quarter of a day,” “there will be no remainder **at all** after a nineteen-year cycle.”<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly, our calculation of years today is consistent with the law to “keep the month of spring” because we follow (not Shmuel’s formula, but) the formula of Rav Ada [whose “calculation is more accurate than the former”<sup>19</sup>], as several medieval commentators<sup>20</sup> point out. According to “this calculation,” Pesach will **always** fall in the spring.

But we still need to clarify: The reason we need to reconcile the lunar calendar with the solar calendar is because of {the commandment to} “keep the month of spring.” However, according to Shmuel’s calculation, there is a remainder at the end of every cycle. This being the case, how can *Rambam* write:<sup>21</sup> “This {19 year cycle} formula<sup>22</sup> {was} relied upon? ...(so that) the remainder of the solar calendar... will be only one hour...”? How can we rely upon this “formula” if the whole reconciliation does not (perfectly) conform with the law to “keep the month of spring”?

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<sup>17</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, loc cit., beg. ch. 9.

<sup>18</sup> {Ibid., ch. 10, par. 1.}

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., ch. 10, par. 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Yad Ramah* to *Sanhedrin* 13b, s.v. “*Ve'eika*”; *Yesod Olam*, *maaaar* 4, ch, 2, 14; et al.

<sup>21</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, loc cit., ch. 6, par. 10,

<sup>22</sup> {In the terse Hebrew original, “*minyan*.”}

### 3.

#### GOOD ENOUGH

A possible explanation for this: From *Rambam's* wording, “The years that we follow are solar years, as it says, ‘Keep the month of spring,’” we deduce that the principle to “keep the month of spring” is not only that **Pesach** must be in springtime, but that it must always be at approximately the same time (on the solar calendar).<sup>23</sup>

Thus, as far as the law to “keep the month of spring” as it relates to the **years** is concerned, it suffices for “**this month** (Nissan) to fall in the springtime”<sup>24</sup> — the month of Nissan should overlap with springtime. Therefore, regarding **this** law, it is enough for the spring equinox to be within the month of Nissan, even if it occurs {sometimes} at the end of the month.

This means that even according to Shmuel's formula — that at the end of each {solar} cycle there is a slight remainder — according to the way the 19-year calendar cycle was instituted, we are cognizant of the law to “keep the month of spring” (at least) in regards to the year {in general}<sup>25</sup>, since even according to this calculation, the {spring} equinox will never extend past the month of Nissan.

On this basis, we can also clarify why *Rambam* says the reason that “we relied on this formula” (the formula using the 19-year cycle) is that based on this calculation: “The remainder of the solar calendar... will be only one hour...”: “We have relied on this formula” (for the **years** of the cycle) because “this formula” facilitates our observance of the law that the **years** should follow the “solar calendar.” And as far as this law is

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<sup>23</sup> {As understood from the continuation of this section, the meaning is that there are 2 laws: 1) that Pesach itself should be in the spring; 2) that the years of the Jewish calendar should be aligned with the solar years. For this second law, it suffices for the month of Nissan (and not Pesach) to fall in the spring, as the verse says "keep (guard) the month of spring" (i.e.,Nisan).}

<sup>24</sup> The wording of *Rambam, Mishneh Torah*, loc cit., ch. 4, par. 1.

<sup>25</sup> {I.e., the year (in an overall sense) should be aligned with the solar year, (which is the second law mentioned in the comment above), regarding which it is sufficient that Nissan is in the spring.}

concerned, the calculation of “the remainder... will be only one hour...” is a good enough reason to “rely on this formula,” as discussed above.

#### 4.

ALSO — AND OFTEN PRIMARILY — ACCURATE

However, we still need to clarify: In order to fulfill the law to “keep the month spring,” as it relates to {the date of} **Pesach**, we must still follow the **true** calculation (Rav Ada’s calculation), because only then will there be “no remainder... at all.” Why, then, does *Rambam* have to mention that {the law to “keep the month spring” as it applies to the calculation of} “years” fits even according to Shmuel’s formula, since this is in any case **not** entirely true?

The crux of the explanation:

The very fact that *Rambam* includes Shmuel’s formula in the **Laws of Sanctifying the Month** implies that this formula is (not only an **opinion** within the Torah of Truth, but that it is) acceptable even according to the final halachic **ruling** (being that *halachah* is considered “absolute truth”<sup>26</sup>).

[*Rambam* alluded to this by using the words “this calculation is **truer** {more accurate} than the former one,”<sup>27</sup> {implying} that the “former” calculation (Shmuel’s formula) is also true, but “this calculation” (Rav Ada’s formula) is “truer.”]

Evidence for this (that Shmuel’s formula is also acceptable for making halachic rulings): Regarding several laws that are associated with the solar cycle, **only** Shmuel’s formula is considered. For example, the determination of the equinox for the purpose of the Blessing of the Sun — recited when the sun is seen on the spring equinox marking the beginning of the Greater Cycle (every 28 years), when the equinox occurs at the

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<sup>26</sup> See the series of *maamarim* entitled, “*Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah 5666*,” p. 431 ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, loc cit., ch. 10, par . 6.

beginning of the evening of the fourth day of the week<sup>28</sup> — is determined based on Shmuel’s formula and not Rav Ada’s.<sup>29</sup>

[The same applies to calculating the date that we begin to pray for rain {outside of Israel},<sup>30</sup> and to avoid of drinking water {left out, uncovered} during the equinox<sup>31</sup> — activities for which *halachah* **only** considers Shmuel’s formula.<sup>32</sup>]

## 5.

### MISTAKEN ROSH CHODESH

To explain this {further}, we must first preface by explaining an enigma in the *Laws of Sanctifying the Month*:<sup>33</sup> “Once the court sanctifies the new month — regardless of whether they erred unwittingly, or were led astray {by false witnesses}, or were forced [or, according another version,<sup>34</sup> “did so intentionally”] — it remains sanctified, and everyone is required to calculate the festivals based on the calendar day that they sanctified.”

Seemingly: The term “Rosh **Chodesh**” (which comes from the word “*chidush*” {“new”}) is directly related to the renewal (*molad*) of the moon. So how is it possible for a day on which there is **no** *molad* to become Rosh Chodesh, just because the court sanctified it?

*Rambam* explains that the reason for this halachic ruling — that “everyone is required to calculate the festivals based on the calendar day that they sanctified” — is because “the One who commanded us to observe

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<sup>28</sup> *Berachos* 59b; *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos “Berachos,”* ch. 10, par. 18. {The sun’s revolution in orbit causes it to change positions in the sky, and 28 years are necessary for it to return to the same place in the sky on a particular date. Thus, according to the opinion that the world was created in Nissan (see sec. 9 of this *sichah*), every 28 years, on the first Wednesday after the spring equinox (the anniversary of the sun’s creation) the sun returns to its original position at the time of creation.}

<sup>29</sup> See responsa *Masas Binyomin*, responsum 101.

<sup>30</sup> *Taanis* 10a.

<sup>31</sup> See *Beis Yosef*, *Orach Chaim*, end of sec. 455; *Rema*, *ibid.*, par. 1 (Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*, par. 15-16; sec. 206, par. 14); *Yoreh Deah*, sec. 116, par. 5; et al.

<sup>32</sup> See *Yesod Olam*, *Maamar* 4, end of ch. 12; et al.

<sup>33</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, *loc cit.*, ch. 2, par. 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 25a.

the festivals is the One who commanded us to rely on them.<sup>35</sup> But presumably, this is only sufficient reason for the obligation to rely upon the court's sanctification; the crux of the matter still remains puzzling: How can **this** day become **Rosh** Chodesh if the *molad* occurs on a **different** day?

## 6.

REFLECTION OF ABOVE

A (possible) explanation:

The sun and the moon below (as everything {else} that exists in this world) derive from the supernal levels {in the spiritual worlds} of “sun” and “moon,” and all they represent. Hence, when the day of the moon’s renewal is established as Rosh Chodesh, it is primarily because it reflects the renewal of the moon Above.

Since our knowledge and grasp of esoteric concepts comes via the manner in which they extend below, the Torah therefore instructed us to establish Rosh Chodesh based on the *molad* below (either based on witnesses<sup>36</sup> or on calculations<sup>37</sup>), because this indicates that the *molad* Above occurs at this time.

So in the event that the court established Rosh Chodesh on a different day, and Torah instructs us to “rely on them,” this itself is evidence that specifically on this day, which the Torah of Truth determined to be “Rosh Chodesh,” is the day when the *molad* Above (which is of primary importance) occurs.

[And the fact that below, the *molad* occurs on a different day is because (for whatever reason) this lower world was at the time unworthy of

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<sup>35</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, loc cit.

<sup>36</sup> {In the times of the *Sanhedrin*, the Jewish High Court sanctified the new month based on testimony of witnesses who saw the new moon.}

<sup>37</sup> {Based on the perpetual calendar established by Rabbi Hillel, which is used nowadays since we may no longer sanctify the new moon based on testimony of witnesses.}



having the {spiritual birth of the} moon Above be reflected in the moon below in real-time.]

The same applies to the abovementioned laws that depend on the solar seasons [the Blessing of the Sun, etc.]: The laws of the Torah of Truth are (primarily) connected to the solar seasons **Above**. Therefore, there is no concern with following Shmuel's formula for these laws — despite the true calculation of the equinox **below** following Rav Ada's formula: Since the Torah of **Truth** says that at the conclusion of every 28 years, the *halachah* is such-and-such, and it is related to **this** {calculation of the} equinox, this itself proves that the equinox Above is at **this** time. And only for various reasons, the equinox below is reflected at a different time (as per Rav Ada's formula.)

## 7.

DON'T TAKE *HALACHAH* OUT OF CONTEXT

After all of the above, we still require clarification:

Everything in Torah — especially that which is relevant to practical *halachah* — cannot be taken out of its straightforward (halachic) context, and the *halachah* must be fulfilled literally, despite every concept (in the world and especially in Torah) having a sublime and spiritual root.

[This applies not only to fulfilling *mitzvos* — that only through observing them in actuality, we also “grasp” the spiritual elements of the *mitzvos* [for example *tefillin*, which only through its actual fulfillment do we draw down the level of four *mochin* {i.e., the spiritual source of *tefillin*},<sup>38</sup> etc.] — but also regarding all matters included and commanded in Torah, which as discussed: they cannot be taken out of their straightforward context.]

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<sup>38</sup> {Lit: “brains” or intellectual faculties, typically a generic term for *chochma*, *bina* and *daas*, and often signifies an intellectual mode of divine service. The level of *daas* is divided into two, *chesed* and *gevurah*, for a total of four *mochin*; see *Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar HaTefillin*, ch. 4 .}

Thus, we have a difficulty: The idea of “seeing the sun at the beginning of its cycle”<sup>39</sup> must refer to the physical beginning of the solar cycle. As such, how can we recite the blessing “*oseh maaseh bereishis*”<sup>40</sup> for the commencement of the {spiritual} cycle Above, if while below in this world (at that moment), the beginning of the (physical) cycle is not happening?

## 8.

### MITZVOS MUST BE PHYSICAL

True, regarding the sanctification of the month, we must say (as discussed in section 6) that the sanctification and fixing of Rosh Chodesh does not {necessarily} depend on the time of the *molad* below. There is, however, a {significant} difference between Rosh Chodesh and the beginning of the solar cycle:

Although Rosh Chodesh is related to the moon’s renewal, this phenomenon, intrinsically, is (not a physical reality, but rather) a **Torah** reality. Meaning, once the court sanctifies it, or once it is “sanctified by Heaven,”<sup>41</sup> it becomes a holy day that calls for {special} Rosh Chodesh sacrifices, etc. Accordingly, it is easier to comprehend how the essence of Rosh Chodesh is related to the *molad* Above, despite the *molad* below occurring at a different time.

The “beginning of the solar cycle” phenomenon, on the other hand, is generated (not by the Torah laws governing it, but) from the actual {physical} cycle of the sun — that this is the moment when the sun is positioned at the exact same spot, at the same time, as when it was created.

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<sup>39</sup> {*Berachos*, loc cit; related to say the Blessing for the Sun, as discussed above.}

<sup>40</sup> {Lit., “He who reenacts the act of Creation”; the blessing recited once in 28 years.} For the two versions of this blessing, see *Encyclopedia Talmudis*, ad loc., and *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 10, p. 187.

<sup>41</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 24a (in the *mishnah*); *Sanhedrin* 10b; referring to a month in which no witnesses {testified that they} saw the moon {in which case Rosh Chodesh is set on the following day}.

Thus, we have a difficulty: Since according to Torah law itself, the way things are below are decisive (as mentioned above in section 7), how is it possible to recite a blessing on the “beginning of the solar cycle” {when it occurs} Above?

The question is even stronger: The law is that the Blessing of the Sun is recited upon “**seeing** the sun at the beginning of its cycle,” and should we not see the physical sun, then the blessing may not be recited:<sup>42</sup>

Is the blessing contingent upon seeing the physical sun, although it is not (as it is when) at the beginning of the cycle (since the spiritual sun is at the beginning of the solar cycle)?

## 9.

### STARTING BEFORE CREATION

A solution with the following preface: The cycle of the seasons (both according to both Shmuel’s and Rav Ada’s formulas) does not begin with the first equinox after Creation. Rather, it begins from the equinox of the “year of void,<sup>43</sup>” prior to the world’s {actual} creation.<sup>44</sup>

To explain:

Regarding the dispute<sup>45</sup> between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer as to whether the world was created in Tishrei or Nissan, there are various commentaries<sup>46</sup> (and some<sup>47</sup> even have a version of this in *Tosafos*)<sup>48</sup> who say that both opinions are in fact correct: Nissan is the month when

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<sup>42</sup> See Responsa of *Chasam Sofer*, *Orach Chaim*, responsum 56, at the beg; *Shaarei Teshuvah*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 229, par. 3; *Sdei Chemed*, *Asifas Dinim*, “*Maareches Brachos*,” sec. 2, par 18; *Peyas HaSaddeh*, sec. 33.

<sup>43</sup> {In the Hebrew original, “*shnas tohu*.”}

<sup>44</sup> See *Rosh Hashanah* 8a, et passim, *Tosafos*, s.v., “*Le’tekufos*”; “*Peirush*” on the Rambam, “*Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh*,” ch. 9, par.3; *ibid.*, ch. 10; et al.

<sup>45</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 10b.

<sup>46</sup> See *Nehar Shalom*, “*Seder Kavanas Rosh Hashanah*,” near the end.

<sup>47</sup> *Responsa Bnei Tziyon*, vol. 1, responsum 14, sec. 16.

<sup>48</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 27a, s.v. “*keman*.”

Hashem first had in mind to create the world, while the actual Creation occurred in Tishrei.

And since regarding seasons, we follow the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua — that the world was created in Nissan — we therefore start the calculation beginning with the spring equinox in the “year of void” (the year before Tishrei {of Creation}), when Hashem first thought to create the world.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, regarding the Blessing of the Sun, we consider the equinox as it is Above (although the equinox below occurs at a different time). Similarly, we can apply this idea to all laws that depend on the equinox, concerning which we follow only Shmuel’s formula {which considers} the equinox Above, since the beginning and foundation of the entire calculation of seasons occurs at the equinox of the “void,” when Hashem **had in mind** to create. There is no need, therefore, for the **actual** equinox to occur concurrently.

Nevertheless, as is understood, the equinox Above does affect (spiritually and internally) the sun below (which is why the Blessing of the Sun is contingent upon seeing the physical sun).

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<sup>49</sup> {The calculation of the seasons (as it affects various *halachos*) follows the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua that the world was created in Nissan. Therefore the first season was in the month of Nissan and this is the starting point for calculating all seasons. Accordingly, the blessing on the sun (commemorating the exact day and time when the sun returns to its original celestial position at the beginning of creation) is made in the month on Nissan, not on Tishrei.

On the other hand, *halachah* accepts Tishrei as the month of actual creation (as evidenced by the fact that we celebrate Rosh Hashanah (the day of creation of man) in Tishrei). Thus, since according to *halachah*, actual creation took place in Tishrei, and yet we calculate the seasons as if the world was created six months beforehand (in Nissan), it emerges, that even from the standpoint of *halachah*, the starting point of calculating the seasons, is not based on creation as it materialized, but only on creation as it exists in the spiritual realms (i.e., the plane of Divine *thought*).

## 10.

### A TORAH REALITY

Based on this, we need to clarify the opposite issue: Since the equinox as it is Above accords with Shmuel's formula — and not with Rav Ada's, whose formula relates only to the equinox below — how can we say that the Torah's commandment for Pesach to fall in the spring specifically [which can only occur according to Rav Ada's formula, and not Shmuel's (as discussed above, section 4)] is related only to the equinox below?

The explanation:

The equinox below is at a different time than the equinox Above {in the spiritual realm} because (as mentioned) at the time of the spiritual equinox, the world is unworthy of experiencing the spiritual equinox Above (which is {on a} loftier {level} than the world and its order of time).

Now, this only applies regarding the world's reality, but regarding Pesach (“so that Pesach will fall in the spring”) — since Pesach is a Torah reality — the equinox below occurs at the same time as it is Above. That is, Pesach always falls in the spring (also) corresponding to the equinox Above.

This is not the case, however, regarding worldly matters, for which the equinox Above will be drawn down at a different time, in accord with Shmuel's formula.

## 11.

### IT MUST BE PRACTICAL

With this in mind, we can clarify *Rambam's* words that “we relied on this formula” (regarding the law that a year must be fixed such that the month of Nissan falls in the springtime) because it also fits with Shmuel's method of calculation, despite the fact that for the law of Pesach (that Pesach must fall in the spring), we (still) must apply Rav Ada's formula:

Since regarding worldly matters, eliciting the equinox Above follows Shmuel's formula (as explained), therefore, the law regarding a "year" (which concerns worldly reality), must (also) make sense according to Shmuel's formula.

– Based on a talk delivered on *Acharon Shel Pesach*, 5713 (1953)