

# Honoring Identity, Advocacy, and Teshuvah

What can we learn from the moon? In the midrash below the moon pushes back against God during creation and being considered a “lesser light.” Use these texts to discuss what it means to show up as your full authentic self, how to advocate for yourself and for others, and the importance of recognizing and repairing harm.



## **Bereshit 1:16**

God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars.



## **Chullin 60b:2**

Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi raises a contradiction between two verses. It is written: “And God made the two great lights” (Genesis 1:16), and it is also written in the same verse: “The greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night,” indicating that only one was great. Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi explains: When God first created the sun and the moon, they were equally bright. Then, the moon said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, is it possible for two kings to serve with one crown? One of us must be subservient to the other. God therefore said to her, i.e., the moon: If so, go and diminish yourself.

## **Questions**

1. When was a time you felt you couldn't be your full self? What made you feel that way? What would have made you feel like you could be your full self in that situation?
2. Have you ever advocated for someone whether it was yourself or another person? What was that experience like? (Was it easy or challenging? Did you have support? Did you feel scared, courageous, both?)



### Chullin 60b:3-4

She said before Him: Master of the Universe, since I said a correct observation before You, must I diminish myself? God said to her: As compensation, go and rule both during the day along with the sun and during the night. She said to Him: What is the greatness of shining alongside the sun? What use is a candle in the middle of the day? God said to her: Go; let the Jewish people count the days and years with you, and this will be your greatness. She said to Him: But the Jewish people will count with the sun as well, as it is impossible that they will not count seasons with it, as it is written: “And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years” (Genesis 1:14). God said to her: Go; let righteous men be named after you. Just as you are called the lesser [hakatan] light, there will be Ya’akov HaKatan, i.e., Jacob our forefather (see Amos 7:2), Shmuel HaKatan the tanna, and David HaKatan, i.e., King David (see I Samuel 17:14).

God saw that the moon was not comforted. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Bring atonement for me, since I diminished the moon. The Gemara notes: And this is what Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says: What is different about the goat offering of the New Moon, that it is stated with regard to it: “For the Lord” (Numbers 28:15)? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: This goat shall be an atonement for Me for having diminished the size of the moon.

### Questions

1. What can we learn from the moon in this midrash about advocating for others and ourselves? How might you use these lessons in your own advocacy work?
2. When was a time you felt you could show up in community as your full self? How did you know? What did that feel like?
3. What can we learn from God about teshuvah and repairing harm?
4. When was a time you had to repair harm? What about a time someone came to you to repair harm they caused? What were those experiences like?

