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First captured by NASA's Hubble Telescope in 1995, the Pillars of Creation are among the most iconic astronomical images ever taken. Yet these immense clouds of gas and dust are not only visually stunning, they're scientifically significant too, as inside the pillars, which each stand several light-years tall, new stars are born.

Three decades on from capturing the original image, NASA has created a new 3D visualisation using data from both Hubble and the James Webb Space Telescope.

The detail in this new image is breathtaking. At the top of the central pillar, an infant protostar glows red-hot in infrared light. While on the finger protruding from the left pillar, you can see another embryonic star – a red, laser-like dot – bursting into life.

The pillars form as newborn stars emit streams of ultraviolet light and stellar winds. These erode surrounding clouds of gas and dust, leaving behind only the pillars of denser, more resistant material.

"This region continues to offer us new insights that hone our understanding of how stars form," says Dr Mark Clampin, Astrophysics Division Director at NASA HQ in Washington DC. "With this new visualisation, everyone can experience this rich, captivating landscape in a new way."

NASA/ESA/CSA

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