When Does a Scriptural Day Begin?

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Yahweh is the Mighty One of mercy. We should live lives of obedience to Him and His Son, but for every mistake we make, mercy is there, and we believe we can and should always strive to do better. It's not about us, it should be about Him and His Son and how we can serve Them better. One way to serve Yahweh is to set aside the day He commanded in His word, but there is a controversy over when a Scriptural day begins, which in turn brings to the forefront the timing of when the weekly Sabbath begins. Our goal in this study is to present what we believe is the correct understanding, based on Scripture and historical understanding.

We are persuaded that a Scriptural Day begins at sunset. However, there are a number of individuals and groups who disagree. Here's an example of their primary Scripture "proof text" and summary explanation:

> Gen 1:3 And Elohim said, Let there be light: and there was light. *(Note that this is the very first thing to be renewed/created in this account, it is the very first thing that happens in this day of creation, Light is necessary in the restoration of life on the earth for heat and energy. The re-creation started with creating the light/heat for the earth to come out of the darkness. This is how the 1st day of recreation started!)*
> Gen 1:4 And Elohim saw the light, that it was good: and Elohim divided the light from the darkness.
> Gen 1:5 And Elohim called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. *(Elohim did this work and then...)* And the evening *(it <u>became</u> evening/dusk)* and the morning *(it became morning/dawn)* were the first day *(thus the 1st 24 hour day. The context of darkness and daylight shows it is talking about a 24 hour period.).*[1]

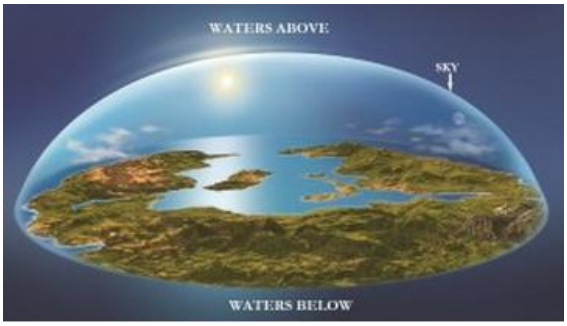
A general summary of the above conclusion is this: Yahweh's first act of creation was to create light; therefore light is the beginning. Then, in verse 5, Yahweh calls the light "Day." From this, we can extrapolate that since light is day and light is also the beginning, then a day begins when the light appears.

Normative Judaism disputes the above claim:

> The reason why Torah writes "one day" instead of "the first day" is because its intent is to teach that both day and night are one day and since Torah states "it was evening and it was morning," this instructs that day follows night. Some seem to think that night should follow day, but **this is not logical since light was created out of darkness**.

[1] Excerpted from "When does the Day begin? At Sunset or Dawn?" By an anonymous author, I Saw The Light Ministries, Copyright 2009.

> Evening, and morning, and at noon, I pray, and cry aloud; and he hears my voice. (Tehillim 55:18)[2]



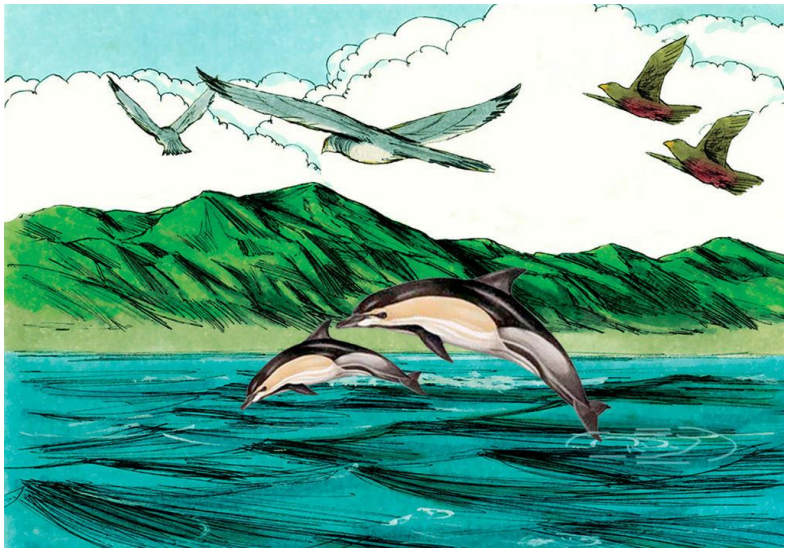
REASONABLE CONCLUSION: If you want to base the beginning of a day on when the "beginning act" first occurred, you might choose daylight. However, regardless of when the beginning act happened, *darkness came first*. As stated above, "Light was created out of darkness."

It can also be disputed that light was the first act of creation because when we examine Genesis 1:1, we see that in the beginning Elohim created *the heavens and the earth*. On which day of creation did this occur? If this step of the creation process occurred on the first day, as we believe it did, then the *final* creative act of the first day was to create light. Once this final creative act was completed, we read, "And the evening and the morning were the first day." The literal Hebrew reading is, "And was evening (Heb. *ereb*) and was morning (Heb. *boqer*) day one." Evening preceded morning.

Moreover, with each successive day of creation, the time frame/sequence is specified in terms of evening/morning:

> verse 8: And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.
> verse: 13: And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.
> verse 19: And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.
> verse 23: And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.
> verse 31: And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

None of the above verses offer any conflicting time frames—they're all only given in terms of "evening/morning," as if to reinforce that we should come away with this same understanding in Genesis 1:5, i.e., that evening comes first.



Since Scripture divides the days of creation into two segments, evening (*ereb*) and morning (*boqer*), it is not unreasonable to conclude that *ereb* is inclusive of more than just the late afternoon/evening hours and *boqer* is inclusive of more than just the early morning hours. It is said that *ereb* begins at around the noon hour, when the sun begins its downward trek and ends after sunset; if this is true, then the daylight hours preceding the *ereb* are *boqer* hours.

[2] From a discussion board forum posting submitted by "Rivkah" on 02/02/2015. The topic was "When does the 'even-to-even' day start?" and the last we checked, all postings on that topic are still available for reading at this link. Note: *Tehillim* is the Hebrew word for Psalms.

When Does An Unclean Person Become Clean?

In Leviticus 22:6, we learn that if a man touches anything that is “unclean," he is considered “unclean until even,” and he is to bathe. In the very next verse we read,

> 7 And when the sun is down, he shall be clean, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it is his food.

Please notice that it *doesn't* say, “And when the sun has been down for a half hour” or any such thing. It simply says, “When the sun is down.” The sun is “down” when it is no longer visible. Sundown makes for an easy-to-use marker, serving as the demarcation point between “unclean” and “clean.” It’s as though Yahweh gives us a “clean slate” with a new day.

Another pertinent verse is found in II Samuel 3:35. This is when King David mourned over the death of Abner:

> 35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do the Almighty to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down.

From reading the above verse, we can understand that King David refused to eat that entire day, essentially treating it like a “Day of Atonement.” Once the sun was down, his fast was over because the day had ended.

In Ephesians 4:26, we are told to not let the sun go down on our wrath:

> 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

In other words, don't let the day end on a sour note.

In Mark 1:32, we read about the general populace bringing diseased and demon-possessed individuals to Yeshua for healing—but notice the time of day on which this occurred:

> 32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

From context, beginning with Mark 1:21, we know that particular day on which the sun set was a Sabbath day; in fact, when we read the entire account, we know Yeshua healed on that Sabbath day. Even though Yeshua healed on the Sabbath, we believe it was the general understanding of those people that they should wait until the Sabbath was over before bringing the diseased for healing. This they did when the sun had set.

We have never believed it is wrong to heal on the Sabbath, yet we know this was definitely the way some folks felt back then. You can catch a glimpse of the general attitude of the priests in Luke 13:14:

> 14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Yeshua had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.

Why did the people in Mark 1:32 wait until sun-down to bring the diseased and those who were demon-possessed to Yeshua? Why didn't they bring them earlier, especially since we know there wasn't *really* anything wrong with being healed on the Sabbath day? Could it possibly be because their view of going somewhere to be healed is the same view that we have today of going to the doctor? Unless it's an emergency, we schedule an appointment—and we wouldn't *dream* of scheduling an appointment for a date that falls on the day of the weekly Sabbath. In the same way, the general populace waited until the day had ended—*at sunset*—before bringing their loved ones to Yeshua for healing. Like the synagogue ruler, the people considered healing to be "work"—something not to be sought after on the Sabbath day.

Executing Criminals – and Their Burial

According to Deuteronomy 21:22-23, if we hang a criminal for his offense, he is to be buried ***that day***:

> 22 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:
> 23 His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of Elohim; that thy land be not defiled, which Yahweh thy Elohim giveth thee *for* an inheritance.

We are persuaded that Joshua heeded the above command when he had the five kings who conspired against Israel hanged. Displayed below is the text of Joshua 10:24-27:

> 24 And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.
> 25 And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall Yahweh do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.
> 26 And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.
> 27 And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, *that* Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, *which remain* until this very day.

Please notice that it was *before sunset*—"at the time of the going down of the sun"—on that same day when Joshua commanded that the bodies of the five dead kings be taken down from the trees and cast into the cave. Had he waited until after sunset to have buried them, he would have violated the Torah command of Deuteronomy 21:23 because it would have been the "next day." Joshua understood that a day ended at sunset and when one day *ends*, another day *begins*.

Let's also take a look at the Septuagint's rendering of Joshua 10:27 because it even *more* clearly presents the bodies being taken down before sunset:

> 27 And it came to pass toward the setting of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees, and cast them into the cave into which they *had* fled for refuge, and rolled stones to the cave, *which remain* till this day.

The above English translation of the Septuagint text reflects Judaism's understanding of the Hebrew expression *l'ët bô haShemesh tziûäh* as of 282 BCE. According to the Septuagint reading, it was "toward the setting of the sun" when Joshua commanded the bodies to be taken down. It was "evening" (Heb.

ereb) yet the sun was still shining. Thus, the ancient understanding was that "evening" begins *prior* to sunset.

Another passage validating first-century Judaism's understanding of when a day begins can be found within the text of Mark 15:42-47. Yeshua is the Son of Yahweh and our High Priest who did no sin, yet He was executed as a criminal. The Jews of His day fervently believed that He was an imposter and a blasphemer who deserved a criminal's execution. They also followed the Jewish understanding of the instruction found in Deuteronomy 21:23—that He should be buried on the same day as His death:

> 42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,
> 43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of Elohim, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Yeshua.
> 44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.
> 45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.
> 46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.
> 47 And Miriam Magdalene and Miriam *the mother of* Joseph beheld where he was laid.

Please note that it was still the day of preparation (Passover day) when Joseph took Yeshua's body. The sun had not yet set.

Luke confirms the timing as presented within Mark's account. The following is taken from Luke 23:50-56:

> 50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:
> 51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of Elohim.
> 52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Yeshua.
> 53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.
> 54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

According to the text of Luke 23:54, Yeshua's body was laid in a sepulchre *on the day of preparation*. The next day—*a Sabbath day*—had not yet begun. It began *later*—at sunset. This, then, is not only the timing of a new day as presented within the pages of Scripture, but it *also* represents historical understanding. To begin a new day at any other time simply reflects a skewed interpretation of Scripture that is simultaneously void of historical support.

Historical Evidence: The Testimony from Josephus

Jewish historian Flavius Josephus offered clear testimony that ancient Judaism began a new day after sunset. In his work *The Jewish War*, he described how and *when* the Jews would usher in the weekly Sabbath day. You will notice that trumpet blasts announced the approaching Sabbath, *not* in the pre-dawn hours, but in the *afternoon*. Here is what Josephus wrote:

> The casualties in Simon's ranks were numerous, both in dead and wounded; for the Zealots from their higher ground could maintain an easy and well-directed fire. They, moreover, improved this advantage of position by erecting four huge towers in order to increase the elevation from which their missiles were discharged: one at the north-east corner, the second above the Xystus, the third at another corner opposite the lower town. The last was erected above the roof of the priests' chambers, at the point where it was the custom for one of the priests to stand and to give notice, by sound of trumpet, in the afternoon of the approach, and on the following evening of the close, of every seventh day, announcing to the people the respective hours for ceasing work and for resuming their labours.[3]

As plainly stated above by Josephus, the priests signaled the beginning of the weekly Sabbath "**in the afternoon**" of its approach, *not* at or before dawn. The time frame for the account by Josephus is circa 70 CE, as his complete narrative details the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman emperor Vespasian.

We are thus given corroborating testimony from both the Messianic Account (c. 31 CE) as well as the account of Jerusalem's destruction (c. 70 CE), attesting to when Judaism reckoned the beginning of a new day.

We can expect those who are adamant that the Scriptural day begins at dawn to dismiss Josephus' description of when the Jews reckoned the beginning of the weekly Sabbath day. Those individuals tend to go to great lengths in an *ad hominem* attempt to discredit him; some folks may even go so far as to declare the Jews of that day were following a "vain tradition." However, to the best of our knowledge, these same individuals have not been able to produce their own "historical witness" supporting their view. They are left to go by their interpretation of Scripture, and their interpretation alone. We believe it is important to understand that Josephus had no "axe to grind" in composing his report. As a prisoner of Rome, his works were written at the request of his captors, so he had nothing to gain by falsifying anything. He simply told his readers "how it was done." The fact that his description of when the Sabbath begins dovetails with the information provided in the Messianic Accounts adds further weight to his testimony. The fact that it aligns with our understanding of Torah seals the matter for us.

There are certainly more texts supporting the belief that a Scriptural day begins at sunset, such as Nehemiah 13:19, where we read about Nehemiah commanding the gates of Jerusalem to be shut "as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath," which alludes to a general understanding that as the sun was going down, the Sabbath was drawing on. For those who are interested in deeper, more in-depth studies on this topic, please contact us.

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[3] *Josephus*, Vol. III, "The Jewish War," ch. IX, § 12, Translated by Henry St. John Thackeray, The Loeb Classical Library, William Heinemann LTD, London, UK, pp. 171 and 173.

For further study:

When Did Joshua Have the King of Ai Removed from the Tree? Joshua 8:29 (LXX)

1519	3588	165	516.2		2193	3588	2250—3778			2532
εις	**τον**	**αιώνα**	**αοίκητον**		**έως**	**της**	**ημέρας ταύτης**	**8:29**		**και**
into	the	eon,	uninhabited		until		this day.			And
3588	935		3588	*	2910		1909	3586	1324	2532
τον	**βασιλέα**		**της**	**Γαί**	**εκρέμασεν**		**επί**	**ξύλου**	**διδύμου**	**και**
the	king			of Ai	he hung		upon	[2tree	1a twin].	And
1510.7.3	1909	3588	3586		2193	2540		2073		2532
ην	**επί**	**του**	**ξύλου**		**έως**	**καιρού**	**της**	**εσπέρας**		**και**
he was	upon	the	tree		until	*the* time	of the	evening.		And
1931		3588	2246		4929—*			2532	2507	
επιδύνοντος		**του**	**ηλίου**		**συνέταξεν Ιησούς**			**και**	**καθείλον**	
at the setting		of the	sun		Joshua gave orders,			and	they lowered	
3588	4983—1473		575	3588	3586	2532	4495	1473	1519	3588
το	**σώμα αυτού**		**από**	**του**	**ξύλου**	**και**	**έρριψαν**	**αυτόν**	**εις**	**τον**
	his body		from	the	tree,	and	they tossed	him	into	the
998.1	4314	3588	4439	3588	4172	2532	2186		1473	
βόθρον	**προς**	**την**	**πύλην**	**της**	**πόλεως**	**και**	**επέστησαν**		**αυτώ**	
cesspool	before	the	gate	of the	city,	and	set over		him	
4987.2	3037	3173	2193	3588	2250—3778				5119	
σωρόν	**λίθων**	**μέγαν**	**έως**	**της**	**ημέρας ταύτης**		**8:30**		**τότε**	
[2heap	3of stones	1a large]	until		this day.				Then	

When Did Joshua Have Five Kings Removed from the Tree?
Joshua 10:26-27 (LXX)

3586	2532	1510.7.6	2910	1909	3588	3586	2193
ξύλων	**και**	**ἦσαν**	**κρεμάμενοι**	**επί**	**των**	**ξύλων**	**έως**
trees.	And	they were	hanging	upon	the	trees	until

2073		2532	1096	4314	1424	2246
εσπέρας	**10:27**	**και**	**εγενήθη**	**προς**	**δυσμάς**	**ηλίου**
evening.		And it came to pass		towards	*the* descent of	*the* sun,

2532	1781—*		2532	2507	1473	575	3588
και	**ενετείλατο**	**Ιησούς**	**και**	**καθείλοσαν**	**αυτούς**	**από**	**των**
and	Joshua gave charge,		and	they lowered	them	from	the

3586	2532	4495	1473	1519	3588	4693	1519	3739
ξύλων	**και**	**έρριψαν**	**αυτούς**	**εις**	**το**	**σπήλαιον**	**εις**	**ο**
trees.	And	they tossed	them	into	the	cave	into	which

2703	1563	2532	1948.3	3037	3173	1909
κατεφύγοσαν	**εκεί**	**και**	**επεκύλισαν**	**λίθους**	**μεγάλους**	**επί**
they took refuge	there.	And	they rolled	[2stones	1great]	upon

3588	4693	2193	3588	2250	4594		2532
το	**σπήλαιον**	**έως**	**της**	**ημέρας**	**σήμερον**	**10:28**	**και**
the	cave,	*which remain* until	the	day	today.		And

When Does an Unclean Person Become "Clean"?
Leviticus 22:7

22:6	5590	3748	302	680		1473	169—1510.8.3							
	ψυχὴ	**ἥτις**	**αν**	**ἅψηται**		**αυτῶν**	**ακάθαρτος ἔσται**							
	the soul	who	ever	should touch		them	will be unclean							
	2193	2073	3756		2068	575	3588	39		1437				
	ἕως	**εσπέρας**	**ουκ**		**ἔδεται**	**απὸ**	**των**	**αγίων**		**εὰν**				
	until	evening;	he shall not		eat	from	the	holy *things*		if				
	3361	3068		3588	4983—1473		5204		**22:7**	2532				
	μη	**λούσηται**		**το**	**σώμα αυτοὺ**		**ὑδατι**			**και**				
	he should not	have bathed			his body		in water,			and				
	1416		3588	2246	2532	2513—1510.8.3			2532	5119				
	δὺη		**ο**	**ἡλιος**	**και**	**καθαρὸς ἔσται**			**και**	**τότε**				
	[3should go down		1the	2sun],	and	he will be clean,			and	then				
	2068	575	3588	39		3754	740	1473—1510.2.3						
	φάγεται	**απὸ**	**των**	**αγίων**		**ὁτι**	**ἄρτος**	**αυτοὺ εστί**						
	he shall eat	from	the	holy *things*,		for	[2bread	1it is his].						
22:8	2347.1		2532	2340.1				3756						
	θνησιμαίον		**και**	**θηριάλωτον**				**ου**						
	Decaying flesh		and	that taken by wild beasts				he shall not						
	2068	3392	1722	1473	1473	2962			**22:9**	2532				
	φάγεται	**μιανθήναι**	**εν**	**αυτὼ**	**εγὼ**	**κύριος**				**και**				
	eat,	to be defiled	by	it.	I *am*	*the* LORD.				And				

When Did the People Bring Their Sick Loved Ones to Yeshua to Be Healed? Mark 1:32

[32]And evening coming, when the sun set, they brought to Him all those having illness, and those having been demon-possessed. [33]And the whole city was gathered at the door. [34]And He healed many who had illness of various diseases. And he cast out many demons, and did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

at once. And she served them.
3798 1096 3753 1416 2246 5342 4314 846
32 Ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης, ὅτε ἔδυ ὁ ἥλιος, ἔφερον πρὸς αὐτὸν
evening and coming, when set the sun, they brought to Him
3956 2560 2192 1139
33 πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας καὶ τοὺς δαιμονιζομένους· καὶ
all the (ones) illness having, and the (ones) demon-possessed. And
4172 3650 1996 2258 4314 2374 2323
34 ἡ πόλις ὅλη ἐπισυνηγμένη ἦν πρὸς τὴν θύραν. καὶ ἐθεράπευσε
the city whole having gathered was at the door. And He healed
4183 1544 2192 4164 3554 1140
πολλοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ποικίλαις νόσοις, καὶ δαιμόνια
many illness having of various diseases, and demons
4183 1544 3756 863 2980 1140 3754 1492
πολλὰ ἐξέβαλε, καὶ οὐκ ἤφιε λαλεῖν τὰ δαιμόνια, ὅτι ἤδεισαν
many He cast out, and not allowed to speak the demons, because they knew
846
αὐτόν.
Him.