

How to Determine the Beginning and End of the Day

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For most of western society our days begin and end at 12:00am midnight. Is this the same time the days began and ended in the Bible? Let's look to scripture to find out,

God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (Gen. 1:5; *NASB throughout unless noted*).

In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* an alien or a native of the land (Ex. 12:18).

In Genesis 1:5 God shows that evening preceded the morning on the first day. Evening appears to begin at darkness or night according to how the Hebrew word is used in this verse.

The Hebrew word for evening is Strong's Dictionary # H6153 *'ereb*; from H6150; *dusk*: - + day, even (-ing, tide), night. This same word is also used in the phrase *beṽn ha'arbayim* or "between the evenings" (Nu. 9:3; in the NKJV the margin states, "between the evenings"). The term "between the evenings" can be used to denote anytime after the sun has reached its apex in the sky and its setting on the horizon. (i.e., noon to dark, "from sun declining to sunset," according to the Pharisees and Rabbinitists; *notes from Barnes commentary on Gen. 1:5*). Therefore we must look at other scriptures to help us better identify the usage of *'ereb* (SHD 6153) and when the biblical day begins and ends,

It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath (Lev. 23:32).

From this scripture we see that sabbaths, such as the Day of Atonement, are to be kept from evening to evening. Judaism teaches that the day is reckoned from sunset to sunset. Although *'ereb* can be used to refer sunset, as we saw above, it also covers a large portion of the day. Examining more scriptures provide the context and timing of the term "evening".

On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight (between the evenings), you shall observe it at its appointed time; you shall observe it according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances" (Num. 9:3; Ed. note in parentheses).

Between the two evenings can be used to denote anytime after the sun has reached its apex in the sky and its setting on the horizon. Therefore, we must look at other scriptures to help us better identify the usage of *'ereb* SHD 6153 and when the biblical day begins and ends,

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Judaism teaches that the day is reckoned from sunset to sunset. Although *'ereb* can be used to refer to the time around sunset as discussed previously, it also includes a portion of the day prior to sunset. Looking at more scriptures can provide the context and timing of the term "evening",

It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates *so that* no load would enter on the sabbath day (Neh. 13:19).

This verse shows that as it grew dark the gates were shut. While we might consider sunset as a time of growing darkness, the Sabbath had not yet come and the gates were closed before the Sabbath started. Therefore, sunset is not the beginning of the Sabbath or the point from which any day can commence.

We can see from Deuteronomy that a corpse was not to hang on a tree into the night but was to be buried that same day,

His corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance (Dt. 21:23).

So afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees; and they hung on the trees until evening. It came about at sunset that Joshua gave a command, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and put large stones over the mouth of the cave, to this very day (Jos. 10:26-27).

In the verses above, we see that the five people hung on trees were brought down in the evening at sunset so they could then be transferred to a cave. This shows that sunset was still the same day and that the dead must be buried on the same day as the law states.

In like manner Christ's body was to be removed from the stake before the Sabbath began,

Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away (Jn. 19:31).

We will now look at other verses that demonstrate the correct beginning of the day is at dark,

You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, And gladness of heart as when one marches to *the sound of the flute*, To go to the mountain of the LORD (YHVH), to the Rock of Israel (Isa. 30:29; *Ed. note in parenthesis*).

This scripture shows that God's festivals and holy days begin at night, or dark.

In the book of Mark we have an example of those who were sick and demon possessed being brought to Jesus in the evening after the sun had set,

When evening came, after the sun had set, they *began* bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there (Mk.1:32-35).

Luke records in the book of Acts the correct method for starting the day. He begins by referring to the arrival of the night of the fourteenth,

But when the fourteenth **night** came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors *began* to surmise that they were approaching some land (Ac. 27:27; *emphasis added*).

In the next scripture Luke shows that the morning which followed the night mentioned in verse 27 is still referred to as the fourteenth day. This proves that the day begins at dark,

Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing (Ac. 27:33).

Although the Hebrew term *'ereb* can have different uses, its meaning relative to the start of the day, as demonstrated by its use associated with God's Holy Days, refers to darkness or night.

The Israelites during the time of Nehemiah determined the beginning of a new day at the time of dark when multiple stars (minimum two) appeared in the night sky,

So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared (Neh. 4:21).

End Evening Nautical Twilight, or EENT is known as the astronomical identification of evening or dark and **can easily be calculated for most geographical locations**.

As it has been determined, dark (the evening) precedes light (the day; cf. Gen. 1:5). Therefore, each day begins and ends at dark and not at sunset.

There are a number of difficulties with beginning and ending the day at sunset. There can be different topography in the same time zone whereby determining sunset can vary significantly. Therefore a day must begin at dark and not sunset. Determining the start of the day by the stars is completely accurate and topographic features do not affect its determination (Neh. 4:21).

This understanding is very important to those seeking to obey our Father's will because those who don't know when a day begins cannot correctly keep the fast during the day of Atonement and other appointed times commanded to be kept. The result is considered lawlessness (1Jn.3:4; Mt. 7:21-23), and God teaches there are consequences that follow,

If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people (Lev. 23:29).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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