

# WHEN DOES THE SABBATH BEGIN?

by Avram Yehoshua

[THE SEED OF ABRAHAM](#)

When the Sabbath actually begins is of great importance because God commands us to keep the Sabbath day holy, so it's necessary to know when it begins and ends. This will also reveal when any day of the week begins and ends because the end of one day obviously marks the beginning of the next biblical day. Keeping the Sabbath holy means that we must not be working, nor buying or selling when the Sabbath begins, and we cannot be doing those things until the Sabbath ends. It also means that we're to use the day to learn to trust our God and to walk with Him and reflect on His Creation and Redemption.<sup>1</sup> This also applies to the seven annual Sabbath days found within the seven Feasts of Israel (Lev. 23:1-44).

The two most common positions for when the Sabbath or any biblical day begins are sunset and darkness. Traditional Judaism teaches that the Sabbath begins at sunset,<sup>2</sup> but that it ends at darkness, when one can see at least two or three major stars in the sky on Saturday night.<sup>3</sup> If the Sabbath ends at darkness, the other days should end at darkness as well, not sunset. The biblical day ends at darkness and the next day obviously begins at the time. This understanding is not based only on rabbinic thought for when the biblical Sabbath ends, but Scripture as well.

Creation Week sets the biblical standard or pattern for when a day ends, and therefore, when the next day begins. Before the light of the first day there was obviously only darkness—there was no light nor twilight.<sup>4</sup> This is seen in Genesis 1:2, 4-5:

<sup>2</sup>“The Earth was without form and void,<sup>5</sup> and *darkness* was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over *the face of the waters*. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, ‘Let there be light!,’ and there was light,<sup>4</sup> and God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the *darkness*. <sup>5</sup>God called the light day, and the *darkness* He called *night*. So, the *evening* (i.e. *darkness*) and the morning were the first day.” (Genesis 1:2-5)

Verse two speaks of darkness being upon the deep and the Spirit of God hovering over the waters. In Hebraic thought or parallelism *the waters* are equated with, of just another way of saying ‘*the deep*.’<sup>6</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> See [The Sabbath and Yeshua](#) to understand why the Sabbath is God's perfect picture of Messiah Yeshua.

<sup>2</sup> The number 18 symbolizes life because in Hebrew the number 18 is written with the letters *het* and *yod*, חַי (chai/hai), similar to how English can write the number 1 as one. The two Hebrew letters spell the word for life. That's why Orthodox Jews light their Sabbath candles 18 minutes before sunset on Friday for the incoming Sabbath. Not that sunset is the line of demarcation when ‘Friday’ ends and the Sabbath begins; darkness is that line. Jewish tradition has made a *fence* around the commandment in Ex. 35:1-3, not to light a fire on the Sabbath, so that no one inadvertently goes past sunset and into darkness and sins by lighting a fire on the Sabbath.

<sup>3</sup> This applies for the annual holy days as well (see Leviticus 23:54).

<sup>4</sup> Twilight is “the period of the evening when twilight takes place, between daylight and darkness.”

<sup>5</sup> In stating that the Earth was without form and void, Scripture is saying that nothing had been created yet. An Earth that is ‘without *form* and *void*’ is something that obviously doesn't exist. Try to imagine an Earth (or anything physical) without form—it's not there; it doesn't exist. Verse one (‘In the Beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth’) is the chapter heading for what follows. It's not that there was a world that existed before the creation of this Heaven and this Earth. Some think there were other worlds or universes before this one, or that the Earth had people on it that God destroyed, and then He created Adam, but they project their imagination into verses one and two, not understanding what God is saying.

<sup>6</sup> These *waters* are not created waters, for nothing of Creation has been created yet. These waters (and the deep) represent the dwelling place of God the Father. This is seen from the account of Day Two, where God separates the upper *waters* (where He dwells), from the lower waters (of Creation), with the *firmament* separating the two

means that the waters weren't blue, but dark or black. In other words, there was no light at that time.

God spoke and light came (v. 3). God divided the light from the darkness (v. 4). Obviously, there was no twilight period or time from sunset to darkness that *preceded* the initial light on Day One of Creation.

In verse five God calls the light day and the darkness night, and says that the *evening* and the morning were the first day. The term *evening* here, obviously means darkness, not twilight, just as someone might say, 'It's 10 PM in the evening.' The word *darkness* is equated with *night* ('God divided the light from the darkness'), and being in the same passage as *evening* and the first day means that *darkness*, not sunset nor twilight, preceded the first biblical day or light, and the rest of the days of Creation followed suit. Even though the sun wasn't created until Day Four, this pattern of '*evening* (darkness) and day (light)' continues for the first six days of Creation (Gen. 1:8, 13-14, 16, 18-19, 23, 31; the pattern isn't mentioned for the seventh day; Gen. 1:31-2:1-3), but obviously was the same.

*Evening* in Genesis speaks of darkness. Those who think that sunset marks the end of a day and therefore the beginning of the next day cannot prove this from Creation Week. There is no sunset nor twilight mentioned in the Creation account.

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* specifically speaks of the Hebrew עֶרֶב *erev* (evening) in the Genesis account equating darkness.<sup>7</sup> *Erev* has various meanings in Scripture, depending on the context, with darkness and twilight being two of them.

Alfred Edersheim was the distinguished 19th century Jewish-Christian authority on Messiah Yeshua, the Temple in Jerusalem, Jewish culture, Talmud and Pharisaic teachings in relation to the teachings of Yeshua. He wrote that it was,

“noteworthy that in Gen. 1 we always read, ‘And the evening and the morning were the first day,’ or the second, or third day, etc. Hence, the Jews calculate the day *from evening to evening*, that is, *from the first appearance of the stars in the evening* to the first appearance of stars (the) next evening and not, as we do, from midnight to midnight.”<sup>8</sup>

Stars do not come out at sunset, for the light of the sun is still too bright for them to be seen. In Edersheim's day (the late 1800s) the traditional Jewish community marked the end of one day at darkness, as it had for millennia before that, with 'the appearance of the stars in the evening' (i.e. darkness). The only day that 'begins' at sunset is the traditional Jewish Sabbath, with Jewish candle lighting 18 minutes before sunset.<sup>9</sup>

Many Christians have taken this Jewish tradition at face value and don't realize that the biblical day does not begin at sunset. The Rabbis themselves reveal that their Sabbath is 25 hours long (vs. a traditional day, which is only 24 hours). They've made it longer than any other day so the Jew can walk in its splendor longer. By starting 18 minutes before sunset, and twilight being approximately 45 minutes after sunset, the Jewish community begins their Sabbath an hour (63 minutes) earlier than the day actually begins.

This pattern in Creation, of first darkness and then light, also reveals a theological reality. First there is darkness (sin) and then there is Light (redemption). Every man after Adam is born into the darkness of sin, but Yeshua came to redeem Man from the Darkness and bring him into His marvelous Light.<sup>10</sup>

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(Gen. 1:6-8f.). For more on *waters* picturing the Father ask for the PDF *Yahveh and the Waters of Creation*.

<sup>7</sup> R. L. Harris, editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Accordance Bible Software), n.p. “עֶרֶב (*erev*) evening, night. This supports *erev* in Genesis One as being *darkness*.”

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History: Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), p. 12, note 2.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 1, note 2 for why the number 18 is used.

<sup>10</sup> The Light of the First Day of Creation is that of Messiah Yeshua *coming forth* from the midst of the Godhead as the uniquely *begotten* Son of God. Yeshua is at one and the same time both the Light of God and the Word of

Creation Week offers the pattern for when the biblical day begins. It reveals that the line of demarcation between a day occurs at darkness, not sunset. The understanding for when the Passover lamb was sacrificed confirms the Creation account, as well as the rabbinical understanding, which is supported by Ederheim's comment on how the Jewish people determined the end of the Sabbath day (with the appearance of the stars). If the Sabbath ends in darkness, it must also begin in darkness on Friday night.

## The Sacrifice of the Passover Lamb

The ancient commandment of *when* the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed and *when* it was to be eaten confirms that the biblical day ends at darkness and the next day begins at that time. The Passover lamb was sacrificed on 14 *Aviv*<sup>11</sup> 'at twilight' (literally, between the evenings).<sup>12</sup> It was not to 'remain overnight until morning,' meaning that whatever was left of the Passover lamb after it had been eaten at the Passover meal had to be burned up in the morning. This symbolically speaks of the *one time* sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua. The Passover meal was eaten on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 *Aviv*, at night:

<sup>14</sup>“Now Yahveh spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, <sup>2</sup>“This month shall be your beginning of months.<sup>13</sup> It shall be the first month of the year to you. <sup>3</sup>Speak to all the Congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the 10th (day) of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. <sup>6</sup>Now you shall keep it until the 14th day of the same month (i.e. 14 *Aviv*). Then the whole assembly of the Congregation of Israel shall sacrifice it at *twilight*. <sup>8</sup>Then they shall eat the flesh *on that night* (15 *Aviv*), roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.” (Exodus 12:1-3, 6, 8)

“You shall let *none of it remain until morning*, and what remains of it until morning you must burn with fire.” (Exodus 12:10)

If the biblical day begins at sunset, and God commands the lamb to be sacrificed at twilight (between sun-

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Day One (e.g. 1st Peter 2:9; John 1:1-9; 8:12, 42; 16:27-28, 30; 17:8; Rev. 19:13, etc.). For an article on Yeshua being the Light and Word from eternity past, and how He is one with God the Father, see [Yeshua—God the Son](#).

<sup>11</sup> 14 *Aviv* is day 14 of the first biblical month, which today in Judaism is known as the month of *Nisan*. The name change to *Nisan* came about during, and because of, the Babylonian captivity. *Nisannu* is the first Babylonian month. For an article on the biblical names of the four ancient Hebrew months, and the current names of the Jewish months and their Babylonian counterparts, ask for the PDF, *Hebrew Months*.

<sup>12</sup> The Hebrew phrase בֵּין הָעֶרְבַּיִם *bain ha'arbyim* (literally, 'between the evenings'), is translated as twilight, the time beginning at sunset and ending at darkness, as these Hebrew lexicons bring out:

1. *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* states that *between the evenings* is “the time between sunset and nightfall; the evening twilight.” Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, authors; M. Richardson, translator, *The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Boston, MA USA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 878.
2. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* has, “The Passover (sacrifice) began on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month (see Ex. 12:6, 18). Sometimes, as in Ex. 12:6, the Hebrew reads, ‘between the two evenings,’ likely ‘twilight,’ the time interval between sunset and darkness in which there is a state of illumination.” R. L. Harris, editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, associate editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 694.
3. The *Hebrew and English Lexicon* says the “phrase בֵּין הָעֶרְבַּיִם (*bain ha'arbyim*) *between the two evenings*, i.e. prob. between sunset and dark.” Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, translator and E. Rodiger, editor, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Abridged; Accordance Bible Software), n.p.

<sup>13</sup> The name of the first month of the biblical year is *Aviv* (English: Abib; Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Dt. 16:1).

set and darkness), the lamb would have to be sacrificed at the *beginning* of 14 Aviv (English: *Abib*) because the only twilight for day 14 would be at its beginning, right after day 13 ends at sunset.

The problem with this scenario is that the lamb is sacrificed more than 24 hours before it's to be eaten on 15 Aviv, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and it would also mean that the lamb would have to be totally burned up in the morning of 14 Aviv, for the commandment states that any of it left over in the morning was to be entirely burned up; nothing of it remaining. How then, could any of the lamb be eaten the following night when 15 Aviv came around? Therefore, it's biblically impossible for sunset to end the day. The lamb being sacrificed at twilight on day 14 means that twilight must be at the end of day 14, not at its beginning:

“No leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, *nor shall any of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.*” (Dt. 16:4)

“On the 14th day of the first month is the Passover (sacrifice) of Yahveh. And on the 15th day of this month is the Feast (of Unleavened Bread; when the Passover lamb is eaten). Unleavened bread must be eaten for seven days.” (Numbers 28:16-17)

If darkness after twilight *ends* the biblical day it means that twilight is at the end of each biblical day. This allows for the lamb to be sacrificed at the end of 14 Aviv in its twilight, and eaten a few hours later in the night of 15 Aviv, the first ‘day’ of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when the Passover meal occurs. Lamb is one of the three biblical foods of the Passover meal (Ex. 12:8; the other two being unleavened bread and bitter herbs). No unleavened bread, though, is commanded to be eaten on the day when the lamb is sacrificed (14 Aviv), and so the Passover lamb obviously wasn’t eaten then, either (if it had been sacrificed at the beginning of 14 Aviv).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on 15 Aviv, in darkness after the end of twilight for 14 Aviv. The Passover lamb is eaten on 15 Aviv with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Any of the lamb that is left at morning, which is the morning of 15 Aviv, still the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (an annual Sabbath), is then burned in the fire. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is seven days long and begins with the Passover meal being eaten in the night of 15 Aviv:

“On the 14th day of the first month *at twilight* is Yahveh’s Passover (the *sacrifice* of the lamb), and on the 15th day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to Yahveh. Seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the *first day* (15 Aviv) you must have a *holy convocation*. You must do no *customary work* on it.” (Lev. 23:5-7)

“On the 1st day (of the Feast of Unleavened Bread; 15 Aviv) there shall be a *holy convocation*, and on the 7th day there shall be a holy convocation for you. *No manner of work* shall be done on them, but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you.” (Exodus 12:16)

The Lord’s commandment, not to do any ‘customary work’ (NKJV) on 15 Aviv reveals it’s an annual holy Sabbath day,<sup>14</sup> which can fall on any day of the week (unlike the weekly 7th day Sabbath, which always falls on the 7th day of the week; ‘Friday night at dark to Saturday night at dark’). 15 Aviv is the first annual Sabbath of the Feasts of Israel, which Feasts span from spring to autumn (and contain seven annual Sabbaths).

The Passover meal is eaten on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15 Aviv), in the darkness of night (the ceremony beginning about 7 PM). This is seen from God telling Israel to be prepared to leave Egypt the *night* they ate the First Passover (15 Aviv) because He was going to go through Egypt *that night* and slay Egypt’s firstborn sons and firstborn animals. Israel would leave in the early morning hours of 15

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<sup>14</sup> See Ex. 20:8-11; 31:17; Lev. 23:7-8, 21, 25, 35-36; Num. 28:18, 25-26; 29:1, 12, 35; Dt. 5:12-15. ‘Customary work’ (NKJV); ‘regular work’ (NIV); ‘daily work’ (HCSB); ‘ordinary work’ (ESVB); ‘servile work’ (KJVS).

*Aviv*, in *darkness* (Dt. 16:1), most likely just before dawn, having eaten the Passover the night before:

“And thus you must eat it (the Passover meal), with a belt on your waist, sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. *You must eat it in haste. It is Yahveh’s Passover.* ‘For I will *pass over* the land of Egypt *on that night* (15 *Aviv*, when the Passover meal was eaten) and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment! I am Yahveh!’...So you must observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *for on this same day* (15 *Aviv*) I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, you must observe *this day* (15 *Aviv*) throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.” (Exodus 12:10-12, 17; see also Exodus 12:37-38; Lev. 23:4-6)

“And it came to pass at *midnight* (15 *Aviv*) that Yahveh struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the *night*, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron by *night* and said, ‘Rise! Go out from among my people, both you and the Sons of Israel! Go! Serve Yahveh as you have said! Take your flocks and your herds and be gone! *And bless me also!*’ And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, ‘We shall all be dead!’” (Exodus 12:29-33)

“They (the Sons of Israel) departed from Rameses in the first month, on the **15th** day of the first month (*Aviv*)—on the day after the Passover,<sup>15</sup> the Sons of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.” (Numbers 33:3)

Israel left Egypt in the early morning hours of 15 *Aviv*,<sup>16</sup> having sacrificed the Passover lamb on 14 *Aviv*, at the end of the day, at twilight, and eaten the lamb a few hours later that night, on 15 *Aviv*. God killed all the firstborn of Egypt at midnight on 15 *Aviv*. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, while it was still dark (perhaps 2 AM), and Israel began leaving Egypt while it was still dark, perhaps just as the rays of dawn were beginning to appear, on 15 *Aviv*. Israel walked out of the darkness of Egyptian slavery into freedom and the Light of the God of Israel, not on the day when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, but on the day when the Passover lamb was eaten.<sup>17</sup>

The time *when* the Passover lamb was sacrificed and *when* it was eaten clearly reveal that darkness is God’s time-marker that determines the end of one biblical day and the beginning of the next. *Between the (two) evenings* is the time between sunset and darkness (i.e. twilight). The sacrifice of the Passover lamb comes at the *end* of 14 *Aviv*, in twilight, not at the beginning of 14 *Aviv*. If twilight is at the beginning of each day then the Sons of Israel would have had to wait more than 24 hours to eat the Passover lamb on 15 *Aviv*, having sacrificed it at the beginning of 14 *Aviv*. With God stating that none of the lamb was to remain into the morning, it’s not possible that sunset ends a biblical day and begins another. Darkness is God’s line of demarcation.<sup>18</sup> It ends one day and begins the next. Twilight is the last part of each biblical day—the next day beginning in darkness. This understanding is also seen for The Day of Atonement.

<sup>15</sup> Passover refers to the Passover lamb being sacrificed on 14 *Aviv*; ‘on the day after the Passover’ (sacrifice of the lamb).

<sup>16</sup> Ex. Ex. 12:6, 14-17, 22-24, 29-37, 40-42; Lev. 23:4-7, 17; Num 28:16-17; 33:3.

<sup>17</sup> The concept is that Israel was leaving the darkness of slavery and entering into the Light of God’s freedom. That’s why this day (15 *Aviv*) is celebrated and is an annual Sabbath (Ex. 12:17, 25-27, 30-42), not 14 *Aviv* when the lamb is sacrificed, because 15 *Aviv* is when Yeshua, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed and *we left the darkness of this world and entered into His Light*. See [Passover and the Apostle John](#) for why John 13 is the Passover meal, and not a memorial meal eaten the night before the Passover meal, and also, why Yeshua didn’t die ‘when the lambs were being sacrificed’ on 14 *Aviv*, but on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15 *Aviv*), when God brought Israel out of Egypt, in darkness. It’s not without symbolic significance that from 12 PM to 3 PM there was *darkness* over the land when Yeshua was crucified and died (Mt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44).

# The Day of Atonement Begins in Darkness

A third biblical perspective that reveals when the biblical day begins is the Day of Atonement. It's observed on the 10th day of the 7th biblical month. God speaks of it beginning in the evening of the ninth, which has to mean the end of the ninth day, when the ninth day turns dark and gives way to the 10th day because the Day is only observed on day 10, not day nine. It continues for a full day until the end of the 10th, at evening (darkness), which begins the 11th day:

“...the 10th day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you—you must afflict your souls and offer a sacrifice made by fire to Yahveh. You must do no work on this day for it is the Day of Atonement—to make atonement for you before Yahveh your God. Any person who is not afflicted in soul on this day shall be cut off from his people. Any person who does any work on this day I will destroy from among his people. You must do no manner of work. This shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest and you shall afflict your souls—on the 9th day of the month at *evening*, from *evening to evening*, you must celebrate your Sabbath. (Leviticus 23:27-32)

From *evening to evening* speaks of darkness to darkness, as we saw in the Creation account, because the Day of Atonement occurs on day ten. It's not part of the ninth day. It begins at darkness at the end of the ninth day. If sunset ended the biblical day then the evening of the ninth day would be at the beginning of the ninth, and one would have to wait 24 hours to observe the Day of Atonement.<sup>19</sup>

Baruch Levine and Nahum Sarna write that darkness is what Scripture means when it speaks of the sun going down:

“‘As soon as the sun sets’ Hebrew *u-va’ ha-shemesh* (וּבָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ) is circumstantial: ‘the sun having entered.’ The ‘entering’ of the sun reflects the ancient cosmology, wherein the sun enters its house of the night and passes through to the East; from there it ‘goes forth’ at dawn. This is expressed in Ecclesiastes 1:5: ‘The sun rises, and the sun sets—And glides back to where it rises.’ The time of the entrance of the sun is usually understood as *the time when darkness falls*.”<sup>20</sup>

## Josephus and the Sabbath

Josephus (37-100 AD) was a Jewish scholar and historian who was born in Jerusalem seven years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. Josephus was also a priest, one of the descendants of Aaron, and he grew up during the time when the Temple in Jerusalem still stood. He would write of Jewish ways and Temple practices. He spoke of the Sabbath day beginning at darkness, with a priest blowing a silver trumpet (Num. 10:1-10) during the twilight of Friday to announce the approaching Sabbath:

“one of the priests...gave a signal *beforehand*, with a trumpet, at the beginning of every

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<sup>18</sup> As important as the sacrifice of the Passover lamb is, the day it's sacrificed on, 14 *Aviv*, is not an annual Sabbath. The next day, 15 *Aviv*, when the Passover meal is eaten *and* when the Sons of Israel left the *darkness* of Egypt, is the first annual Sabbath of the year (i.e. the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread). This explains why 15 *Aviv* is the day when Yeshua was crucified, for in His crucifixion all His followers left the Kingdom of Darkness.

<sup>19</sup> Nehemiah speaks of closing the gates of Jerusalem as it approached darkness on Friday night: “So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath...” (Nehemiah 13:19 NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> Baruch A. Levine, Nahum M. Sarna, General Editor, *Leviticus*, The Jewish Publication Society's Torah Commentary; Accordance electronic ed. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 148.

seventh day, *in the evening twilight*, as also at the evening (darkness) when the day was *finished*, as giving notice to the people when they were to leave off work, and when they were to go to work again."<sup>21</sup>

Josephus presents both the beginning and end of the Sabbath as happening at darkness, not sunset, as the priest blew the trumpet at twilight (on Friday night) to let the Jewish people know the Sabbath was approaching. As the Sabbath ended at dark on Saturday night, the priest again blew the trumpet to let the people know the Sabbath was over.

Noted 12th century rabbi, Aben Ezra, agrees with the Caraites and Samaritans in taking the first evening to be the time when the sun sinks below the horizon, and the second the time of total darkness."<sup>22</sup>

## How to Determine Darkness

If we lived in the days of Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob we would be able to clearly see when twilight gives way to darkness. For those living in or near a city it's much harder because of all the electric lights that come on during twilight, but we can be fairly sure of when the Sabbath begins and ends, from either of these two points:

1. Look to the west (where the sun sets) to determine when twilight gives way to darkness. A good rule of thumb is to wait 45 minutes after sunset and you'll note that it's completely dark. You might want to practice going outside towards the end of twilight and staying there until you realize that it's dark on the western horizon (no rays or light of the sun on the horizon). This way you'll be able to determine how long from sunset to darkness it would be for the Sabbath on Friday and Saturday nights. From sunset to darkness it's about 45 minutes.
2. Every Jewish calendar notes when each Sabbath officially ends, according to the Rabbis. This information can also be found on the Internet. The time is nowhere near when their Sabbath candle lighting time is listed the day before, on Friday night, but the Saturday night time reveals when they believe a day actually ends (at dark). Their time every Saturday night is a fairly good gauge to go by for when the Sabbath on Friday night (the night before), actually begins because from one night to another it's a little less than a minute difference for the sun to set. For example, if the Jewish calendar for your area says that the Sabbath ends on Saturday night at 7:01 PM, you can be certain that the Sabbath began no earlier than 7:00 PM on Friday night. Again, a general rule of thumb is that the Sabbath is over about 45 minutes after sunset. Check it out to make sure for your area, and adjust it if you need to.

The weekly Sabbath begins on Friday night when the rays of the sun cannot be seen on the western horizon and ends the same way the following night, a minute later. If you light Sabbath lights for Friday night you'll want to light them before dark because of the commandment of not to light a fire on God's 7th day Sabbath (Ex. 35:1-3),<sup>23</sup> for He is holy Fire.<sup>24</sup> You might want to light them 15-30 minutes after sunset.

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<sup>21</sup> Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, book 4, chapter 9, p. 583.

<sup>22</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), p. 327.

<sup>23</sup> In the blessing for lighting the lights we don't go by what the Rabbis say, that God *commands* us to light the *Sabbath* lights, because God doesn't command us to do that. We can use the format of the traditional blessing, but change it to this: 'Blessed are You, Yahveh our God, eternal King, who has given us the commandments and who has commanded us *to keep the Sabbath day holy*.' Then pray and thank the Lord for the Sabbath day, and as people come to mind, ask him to bless them. Then go out and blow the shofar as loud as you can to let the neighbors know that it's the Sabbath, and shout, 'Shabat Shalom!' Some may eventually respond back with 'Shabat Shalom!' Then sing and praise the Lord Yeshua, and thank Him for Creation and Redemption, the very themes of the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11; Dt. 5:12-15).

Blessed are You, Yahveh our God, King of the Universe, who has made us holy by His commandments and com-

# Conclusion

Even though traditional Judaism lights their Sabbath candles 18 minutes before sunset, it teaches that the Sabbath isn't over until one can see two or three major stars in the sky. This means the Sabbath ends at darkness, not at sunset, with the next day (the first day of the week; i.e. 'Sunday') beginning at darkness on Saturday night, not sunset. The Sabbath, then, actually begins on Friday night at dark, not at sunset.

Creation Week scripturally sets the pattern for the day beginning in darkness, and therefore, ending at darkness. This was especially evident for Day One, which obviously began in darkness, with the Light coming to make it 'day.'

Edersheim confirmed that the biblical days begin and end at darkness when he wrote that Judaism, in his day, calculated the end and beginning of days from the time the first (major) stars appeared, not sunset.

The day beginning in darkness was also confirmed by *when* the Passover lamb was sacrificed, at the end of 14 *Aviv*, *between the evenings* of 14 *Aviv*, and *when* it was eaten a few hours later, in the darkness of 15 *Aviv*. If sunset ended a day, twilight (between the evenings) would be at the beginning of each day, and consequently, the lamb would have been slain more than 24 hours before it was to be eaten. With God expressly prohibiting the lamb from remaining past the next morning, the idea that sunset ends a day proves untenable and unbiblical.

The Day of Atonement further supports darkness as the line of demarcation for each biblical day. God speaks of beginning the Day of Atonement at the end of the ninth, *in the evening of the ninth* (i.e. when the ninth ended at darkness), for the keeping of the Day is the 10th day of the month, not any part of the ninth. Sunset cannot be when the day ends because the evening of the ninth would then be at the beginning of the ninth day, and one would have to wait a full 24 hours to observe the Day of Atonement on the tenth.

Josephus further confirms that darkness is the time marker for when a day ends and another begins by writing of a priests in the Temple blasting a silver trumpet during Friday's twilight to announce that the Sabbath was approaching. If sunset began the Sabbath the priest would have been too late, for obviously, it was past sunset when the priest blew the trumpet to announce the *approaching* Sabbath.

The Creation account, the time of the Passover sacrifice and the time when it was eaten, as well as when the Day of Atonement began, as well as Baruch Levine, Alfred Edersheim and Josephus, reveal the biblical day begins at darkness, not sunset.<sup>25</sup>

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manded us to keep the Sabbath... Yeshua, we love You.

Baruch Atah Yahveh, Elohaynu Melech HaOlam, Asher Kid'dashanu B'Mitz'votav, Vitzi'vanu Lishmor, Et HaShabat... Yeshua, Anachnu O'havim O'ti'cha.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לשמור את השבת... ישוע אנהנו אוהבים אותך

<sup>24</sup> See Exodus 19:16f.; Leviticus 9:23–10:6; Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29.

<sup>25</sup> See also Herb Solinsky's article, [The Start of a Biblical Day of the Month and the Sabbath](#).

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