

Defining Days, Months and Years

William J.D. Shaw updated: May 31, 2020

The following study uses scripture from the Old Testament taken from the Septuagint since it is as far as we know the oldest and most accurate Bible, the one that translations into other languages took place. It is the Bible that Yeshua quoted from and is the Bible the early calling out, Ekklesia, or congregations now called churches studied from. New Testament scripture uses KJV.

1. Creation of the Earth and Heavens

In order to start we go to Genesis and God's act of creation of the world.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.

Gen 1:2 But the earth was unsightly and unfurnished, and darkness was over the deep, and the Spirit of God moved over the water.

Gen 1:3 And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.

Gen 1:4 And God saw the light that it was good, and God divided between the light and the darkness.

Gen 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night, and there was evening and there was morning, **the first day**.

The verse Gen 1:5 is somewhat problematic for us to understand what it is telling us. Normal understanding is that during the first day God created the heaven and earth and then created light and differentiated it from darkness. A different understanding is that God finished the creation of the beginning actions before the morning of the first day. To resolve this we need to go to the creation that occurs on the sixth day.

Gen 1:24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind, quadrupeds and reptiles and wild beasts of the earth according to their kind, and it was so.

Gen 1:25 And God made the wild beasts of the earth according to their kind, and cattle according to their kind, and all the reptiles of the earth according to their kind, and God saw that they were good.

Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make man according to our image and likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the flying creatures of heaven, and over the cattle and all the earth, and over all the reptiles that creep on the earth.

Gen 1:27 And God made man, according to the image of God he made him, male and female he made them.

Gen 1:28 And God blessed them, saying, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the seas and flying creatures of heaven, and all the cattle and

all the earth, and all the reptiles that creep on the earth.

Gen 1:29 And God said, Behold I have given to you every seed-bearing herb sowing seed which is upon all the earth, and every tree which has in itself the fruit of seed that is sown, to you it shall be for food.

Gen 1:30 And to all the wild beasts of the earth, and to all the flying creatures of heaven, and to every reptile creeping on the earth, which has in itself the breath of life, even every green plant for food; and it was so.

Gen 1:31 And God saw all the things that he had made, and, behold, they were very good. And there was evening and there was morning, **the sixth day**.

Gen 2:1 And the heavens and the earth were finished, and the whole world of them.

Gen 2:2 And God **finished on the sixth day his works** which he made, and he ceased on the seventh day from all his works which he made.

Gen 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it he ceased from all his works which God began to do.

What we see is that many creative activities occur on the sixth day, being all the beasts of the earth as well as man. Compare Gen 1:5 with the scripture of Gen 1:31, it is the same wording and the same that is used at the completion of each previous days inbetween. Going further Gen 2:1 – 3 tells us God finished His creative works on the sixth day. Then He ceased on the seventh day from His works. Note the separation in the wording by the use of a comma for the completion of each day. Other Bibles of note, where a dash is used to emphasize a complete day is first shown below from Young's Literal Translation. Other Bibles in addition to Young's Literal Translation that use this same technique of emphasizing a completion of a full day with a dash are the Darby Bible, God's Word Bible, Message Bible, and the Tree of Life Bible.

Gen 1:5 and God calleth to the light 'Day,' and to the darkness He hath called 'Night;' and there is an evening, and there is a morning—**day one**. (YLT)

Many Bibles follow the way it is given for **separation with a comma** according to the Septuagint. However as shown below, the King James version does not which makes it harder to understand what scripture is telling us. It seems to indicate that evening and morning are the first day or a completion of a day occurring in the morning.

Gen 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (KJV)

Note that there is no scripture that tells us God created only in the daytime. Rather it is logical to believe that God created from evening to evening, being taken as a full or complete day. Our general understanding is that the above is normally taken that a full day covers the period from the start of the night to the end of the daylight. Further scripture as follows in this study will continue to be examined on this concept.

2. The New Moon and the Sun

In order to count the night portion the moon and stars are used and for the daylight portion the sun is used. These differentiate the night from the day as given to us from scripture below.

Gen 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, to divide between day and night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years.

Gen 1:15 And let them be for light in the firmament of the heaven, so as to shine upon the earth, and it was so.

Gen 1:16 And God made the two great lights, the greater light for regulating the day and the lesser light for regulating the night, the stars also.

Gen 1:17 And God placed them in the firmament of the heaven, so as to shine upon the earth,

Gen 1:18 and to regulate day and night, and to divide between the light and the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

First we find that God placed the moon, stars and sun in order to define nights and days for mankind as well as animals. It clearly allows us to count days. They also allow us to recognize seasons and years. In particular the sun in its azimuth varies from summer to winter. Our seasons are spring, summer, fall and winter according to temperature and sun azimuth and the new moons.

Next is identification of the beginning of a month. It is set by the new moon according to the scriptures below.

Exo 40:1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Exo 40:2 On the first day of the first month, at the new moon, thou shalt set up the tabernacle of witness,

Exo 40:16 And Moses did all things whatsoever the Lord commanded him, so did he.

Exo 40:17 And it came to pass in the first month, in the second year after their going forth out of Egypt, at the new moon, that the tabernacle was set up.

The new moon identifies the beginning or first day of each month. A year will make up twelve new moons and coincide with the seasons. The new moons are further identified for us as the beginning of months in the following scriptures with David and King Saul.

1Sa 20:18 And Jonathan said, To-morrow is the new moon, and thou wilt be enquired for, because thy seat will be observed as vacant.

1Sa 20:24 So David hides himself in the field, and the new month arrives, and the king comes to the table to eat.

1Sa 20:25 And he sat upon his seat as in former times, even on his seat by the wall, and he went before Jonathan; and Abenner sat on one side of Saul, and the place of David was empty.

1Sa 20:26 And Saul said nothing on that day, for he said, It seems to have fallen out that he is not clean, because he has not purified himself.

1Sa 20:27 And it came to pass on the morrow, on the second day of the month, that the place of David was empty; and Saul said to Jonathan his son, Why has not the son of Jessae attended both yesterday and today at the table?

The first day of the new year is established for us by God as being the first of Nisan by the following scripture.

Exo 12:1 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

Exo 12:2 This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it is the first to you among the months of the year.

Exo 12:3 Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month let them take each man a lamb according to the houses of their families, every man a lamb for his household.

This was an adjustment of the beginning of months from that which were followed previously. God changed the beginning of the year to commemorate the formation of the Nation of Israel and the freedom from bondage in Egypt. These are now God's chosen people and they came into being as a free Nation of serving Him at this specific time. Therefore according to God's calendar the beginning of Nisan is the start of our new year which usually falls somewhere in March. It is our reference point for each year in counting so that we can establish the times of the Holy Days of God.

3. Time Duration of a Day

The number of hours in a day are defined for us by Yeshua. The KJV will be used for the New Testament scriptures.

Joh 11:9 Jesus answered, **Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.**

Joh 11:10 **But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.**

Therefore by logic there are 12 hours in the night and 12 hours in the daylight, giving us roughly 24hours in a complete day. Going back to creation in Genesis, the "day" is defined by the night portion plus the daylight portion, in total being 24 hours.

4. Use of the term Day

Generally most of the time that the word day is used throughout the Bible it refers to the daylight portion of the day. However there are times that it refers to the 24 hour period of both night and day. One must read carefully in order to identify how it is being used. The following are scriptures that refer to a 24 hour time period of night and day.

Exo 24:16 And the glory of God came down upon the mount Sina, and the cloud covered it six days; and the Lord called Moses on the seventh day out of the midst of the cloud.

Exo 31:16 And the children of Israel shall keep the sabbaths, to observe them throughout their generations.

Exo 31:17 It is a perpetual covenant with me and the children of Israel, it is a perpetual sign with me; for in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day he ceased, and rested.

Num 3:13 For every first-born is mine; in the day in which I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to myself every first-born in Israel: both of man and beast, they shall be mine: I am the Lord.

Num 8:17 For every first-born among the children of Israel is mine, whether of man or beast: in the day in which I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified them to myself.

Take special note of Exo 31:17 where it was six days that creation occurred over. The above all refer to a day as either 24hours or even just the night time portion as the day that God smote the first born in Egypt, the horror of the effect of the death of the first born in the night was felt especially at the starting of the daylight as people awoke.

A few specific verses from the New Testament are given to us by Yeshua. First the sign given to the Pharasies was Yeshua rising from the dead after three days and nights which was according to the time Jonah was inside the large fish.

Mat 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, **An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:**

Mat 12:40 **For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

However Yeshua later referred the time as three days. This shows the association of the word day is often used to mean both night and day or 24 hours.

Mar 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and *of* the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Joh 2:18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**

Therefore we must be careful in the context used when referring to the word day, whether it is a 12 hour daylight period or a 24 hour complete day that includes the night as well as the daylight portions.

5. The time definition of the Night and Day

We are given information from God as to the start and finish of the daylight portion of a day as well as the start and finish of the night. The following are scriptures that address this.

Exo 17:12 But the hands of Moses were heavy, and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it; and Aaron and Or supported his hands one on this side and the other on that, and the hands of Moses were supported till the going down of the sun.

Exo 22:26 And if thou take thy neighbour's garment for a pledge, thou shalt restore it to him before sunset.

Lev 22:6 whatsoever soul shall touch them shall be unclean until evening; he shall not eat of the holy things, unless he bathe his body in water,

Lev 22:7 and the sun go down, and then he shall be clean; and then shall he eat of all the holy things, for they are his bread.

Deu 16:6 But in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, to have his name called there, thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even at the setting of the sun, at the time when thou camest out of Egypt.

Deu 23:10 If there should be in thee a man who is not clean by reason of his issue by night, then he shall go forth out of the camp, and he shall not enter into the camp.

Deu 23:11 And it shall come to pass toward evening he shall wash his body with water, and when the sun has gone down, he shall go into the camp.

Deu 24:14 And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge.

Deu 24:15 Thou shalt surely restore his pledge at sunset, and he shall sleep in his garment, and he shall bless thee; and it shall be mercy to thee before the Lord thy God.

Jos 8:29 And he hanged the king of Gai on a gallows; and he remained on the tree till evening: and when the sun went down, Joshua gave charge, and they took down his body from the tree, and cast it into a pit, and they set over him a heap of stones until this day.

Jdg 14:18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What *is* sweeter than honey? and what *is* stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.

***Psa 50:1** A Psalm for Asaph. The God of gods, the Lord, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

Psa 104:19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knows his going down.

Psa 104:20 Thou didst make darkness, and it was night; in it all the wild beasts of the forest will be abroad:

Psa 104:21 even young lions roaring for prey, and to seek meat for themselves from God.

Psa 104:22 The sun arises, and they shall be gathered together, and shall lie down in their dens.

Psa 104:23 Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labour till evening.

Psa 113:2 Let the name of the Lord be blessed, from this present time and for ever.

***Psa 113:3** From the rising of the sun to his setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

Psa 113:4 The Lord is high above all the nations; his glory is above the heavens.

Ecc 1:5 And the sun arises, and the sun goes down and draws toward its place;

In the above scriptures the sun setting is tied to the establishment of the end of the day and the start of the night as well the sun rising is tied to the start of the day and the end of the night. These are the markers given to us by God to define the start and end of the daylight as well as the start and end of the night.

6. Context of the time duration of the Sabbath

Some will treat the Sabbath as the daylight portion of the seventh day, others will treat the Sabbath as starting in the night and going forward to the end of the daylight portion. From Genesis God's use of the term day covers the period from the start of the night right through to the end of the day, or from sunset to sunset. One annual Sabbath that clearly defines the time period is given in the following scripture. It describes the day of atonement.

Lev 16:29 And this shall be a perpetual statute for you; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall **humble your souls**, and shall do no work, the native and the stranger who abides among you.

Lev 16:30 For in this day he shall make an **atonement** for you, to cleanse you from all your sins before the Lord, and ye shall be purged.

Lev 16:31 This shall be to you a most holy **sabbath**, a rest, and ye shall humble your souls; it is a perpetual ordinance.

This first set of scriptures above are setting forth instructions for the day of atonement which is not completely clear in being descriptive of what is expected. However consider the second group of instructions that follow.

Lev 23:27 Also on the tenth day of this seventh month is a day of atonement: it shall be a holy convocation to you; and ye shall humble your souls, and offer a whole-burnt-offering to the Lord.

Lev 23:28 Ye shall do no work on this self-same day: for this is a day of atonement for you, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God.

Lev 23:29 Every soul that shall not be humbled in that day, shall be cut off from among its people.

Lev 23:30 And every soul which shall do work on that day, that soul shall be destroyed from among its people.

Lev 23:31 Ye shall do no manner of work: it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your habitations.

Lev 23:32 It shall be a holy sabbath to you; and ye shall humble your souls, from the ninth day of the month: **from evening to evening** ye shall keep your sabbaths.

This second group of verses in Leviticus more clearly define the time duration. This is given to us as a result of the act of fasting (humbling your soul) in order to make it clear as to when the fast starts and ends. The time period is 24 hours spanning the time from sunset through to the following sunset. This defines a Sabbath day.

In conclusion our ability to think and use logic with taking all of the above sections in this study tells us that any Sabbath, whether a weekly or an annual Sabbath is a 24 hour period. It starts with the beginning of the night as defined by sunset through to the end of the daylight as define by the following sunset.

**