

Z'MANIM - DAY

ALOS HASHACHAR Dawn or daybreak. This is the time when some sunlight starts to be visible on the horizon. Under Torah law, any mitzvah that must be performed by day (shofar, lulav, megillah, etc.) can be performed at alos hashachar; rabbinically, the performance of these mitzvos is generally delayed until sunrise. Communal fasts begin at alos hashachar (excluding Yom Kippur and Tisha b'Av, which begin at sunset of the preceding nights).

MISHEYAKIR "When one can recognize." Specifically, this is when it is light enough for a person to recognize a casual acquaintance (as opposed to a close friend) from a distance of four cubits (about 6 feet). This is the earliest time for one to put on tallis and tefillin, and to recite Shema.

HANEITZ HACHAMA Sunrise. This is when the top of the sun (as opposed to just its light) becomes visible at sea level. This is the earliest time to recite Shemoneh Esrei (barring extenuating circumstances that may permit one to recite it earlier) and to perform mitzvos in which one is obligated by day (shofar, lulav, etc.). [Many people mistakenly refer to this time as "neitz." The word is "haneitz"; the "ha" is part of the word, not the prefix meaning "the."]

SOF Z'MAN KRIYAS SHEMA "The latest time to recite Shema." This is three halachic hours into the day, which is the time when people of luxury would arise. (See note on "Shaos Z'manios" for the explanation of a "halachic hour.") While this is the latest time one may fulfill the Biblical requirement to recite Shema, one who did not do so should nevertheless recite Shema until chatzos.

SOF Z'MAN TEFILLAH "The latest time to recite Shemoneh Esrei." This is four halachic hours into the day. As with Shema, if one did not recite Shemoneh Esrei by this time, he should still do so until chatzos. On Passover eve, this is the latest time one may eat chometz.

SOF Z'MAN BIUR CHOMETZ "The latest time to remove chometz." This is five halachic hours into the day.

On the eve of Passover, all of one's chometz must have been sold or destroyed by this time. After this, one may no longer derive benefit from chometz.

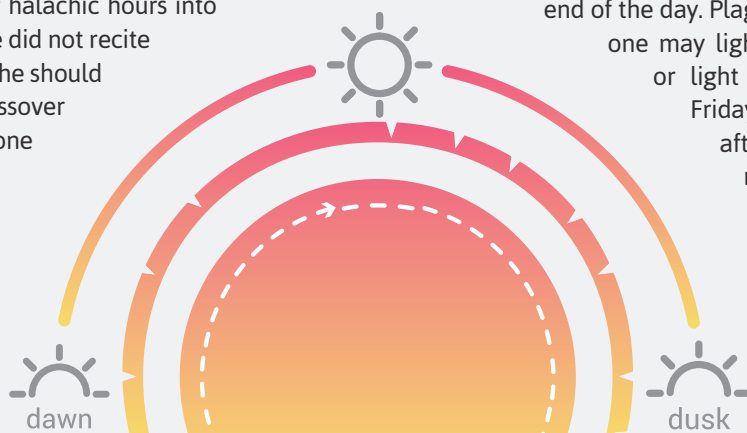
CHATZOS Noon or midday. Technically, this is chatzos hayom, "halachic noon," the midpoint of the day. There is also a chatzos halailah, halachic midnight. This is halfway between sunrise and sunset (or between daybreak and nightfall) and it need not coincide with 12:00 noon. Chatzos is the latest time one may recite the morning prayer service. One should make Kiddush and eat before this time on Shabbos and yom tov (excluding Rosh Hashana). On Tisha b'Av, one may sit on a chair after chatzos. The restrictions of the Nine Days last until chatzos on the day after Tisha b'Av.

MINCHA GEDOLAH "Greater mincha" or "large mincha." This is one half-hour after chatzos. This is the earliest time at which one may recite mincha, the afternoon prayer service. On Yom Kippur, when the service is very long, one should make sure to begin musaf before mincha gedolah in order to avoid a conflict with the obligation to recite mincha.

TEN HOURS On erev Shabbos and erev yom tov, one should not start a meal at the beginning of the tenth halachic hour into the day (i.e., three hours before sunset).

MINCHA KETANA "Lesser mincha" or "small mincha." This is two and a half halachic hours before sunset. According to some authorities, it is preferable to recite the mincha prayer after the time of mincha ketana.

PLAG HAMINCHA Or simply plag mincha, "half of mincha." This is the midpoint between mincha ketana and sunset, which is one and a quarter halachic hours before the end of the day. Plag hamincha is the earliest time one may light candles and start Shabbos, or light candles for Chanukah on a Friday (since one may not do so after nightfall). If one recited mincha before the time of plag hamincha, then maariv (the evening prayer service) may be recited as early as plag hamincha. (One must make sure to repeat the Shema after nightfall.)



Z'MANIM - NIGHT



dawn



dusk

HADLAKAS NEIROS (LICHT BENTCHEN)

"Candle-lighting time." On Fridays, Shabbos candles must be lit somewhat before sundown. In the United States, 18 minutes before sunset is the prevalent practice; in Jerusalem, 40 minutes before sunset is common.

SHKIYAS HACHAMA Or simply shkiyah, sunset. This is when the sun is no longer visible above the horizon. This is the end of the day in Jewish law. For example, if the day was Tuesday, 12 Sivan, at shkiyah it would become Wednesday, 13 Sivan, even though the secular day would remain Tuesday until midnight. (Technically, shkiyah is the start of a period of doubt between days – see "Bein HaShmashos.") All mitzvos that are to be performed by day should be completed by shkiyah. Mincha should be recited prior to shkiyah, though if one did not do so, he may still recite mincha after shkiyah. Maariv may be recited.

BEIN HASHMASHOS Twilight. This is the time between sunset and nightfall. It's a doubt as to whether this period is to be considered day or night so mitzvos that must be performed by day must be completed by bein hashmashos, while mitzvos that must be performed at night may not be performed until after nightfall. Because bein hashmashos is a period of doubt, one must observe the stringencies of both days during this time period. For this reason, Shabbos begins before bein hashmashos on Friday and ends after bein hashmashos on Saturday. For similar reasons, a baby born during this time will be circumcised on the ninth day.

TZEIS HAKOCHAVIM

"When the stars come out," i.e., nightfall. This is when three medium-sized stars can be seen with the naked eye. At this time, one may perform mitzvos that must be performed at night, including reciting Shema, counting the Omer, lighting

Chanukah candles, starting the Seder, etc. Fast days end at this time (except for Yom Kippur – see Motzoei Shabbos). It is preferable that Maariv, the evening prayer service, be recited after tzeis hakochovim.

MOTZOEI SHABBOS The conclusion of Shabbos. There is a mitzvah to add additional time onto Shabbos and yom tov. These days are ended when a cluster of three small stars can be seen and there is no more red in the western night sky. One common practice in the U.S. is to end Shabbos and yom tov 42 minutes after sunset; other common practices include 50 minutes and 72 minutes after sunset. (There are numerous other practices; consult your own rabbi for guidance in this area.)

CHATZOS HALAILAH Midnight. The midpoint between sunset and sunrise. All mitzvos that must be performed at night (such as reciting the Shema) may technically be performed the entire night but the Sages of the Talmud instituted that people should perform them by midnight in order to avoid falling asleep and neglecting them. On Pesach, the afikomen should be eaten before chatzos. Some people arise at this time to recite Tikkun Chatzos, a series of prayers lamenting the destruction of the Temple.