

US Lunch and Learn Parashas Bereshis: The Beginnings of Time

Source Sheet by Vicki Belovski

More info >

Units of Time

Genesis 1:5

(5) God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

בראשית א':ה'

(ה) וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים | לְאוֹר יוֹם וְלחַשְׁמַיִם
קֶרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם
אֶחָד: (פ)

Ibn Ezra: "And He called" – The *hey* of *layla* is added, and it [i.e., the word] is accented on the penultimate syllable, and it is always masculine. "Evening" [*erev* - close in meaning to darkness, and it's called thus since forms are mixed together [*nitarvu* i.e., indistinct]. "Morning" [*boker*] – the opposite of evening, for a person is able to check [*l'vaker*, i.e., to distinguish] between forms. The meaning of "one day" is referring to the rotation of the sphere... And after it has said that the light is called day, it isn't possible that the evening should be called day, rather its explanation is "it was evening and also morning of Day One", for if it was [referring to] the evening and morning of one day, what would be the meaning of "a second day?"

Ramban: "And God called the light, day" - It is saying that time was created and He made the measure of day and the measure of night. And the matter of God's calling is, that since man called the names [of things], it needed to say - about these that were made before he existed - that God called them names, and this is the opinion of Rabbi Avraham (Ibn Ezra). And that which is correct is that the matter of calling with these things here is their separation through their boundaries, after they took on forms; and they [also] said so (Bereshit Rabbah 3:6), "day will be your area, and night will be your area."

"And it was evening and it was morning, one day" - [This means that] it was evening and it was morning of one day. And the beginning of the night was called *erev* (evening) since the forms get mixed up (*yitarvu*) in it; and the beginning of the day, *boker* since a man can distinguish (*yivaker*) between them; thus explained Rabbi Avraham. And by way of the simple meaning, it is not possible to say, "the first day," since the second one has not yet been made. As 'the first' is before the second in counting or in worth [only] when they both exist, but a "one" does not indicate a second. And there are those that explain (Guide

for the Perplexed 2:30), that this is a hint to the movement of the [sun] over the entire face of the earth in twenty four hours; as in their every moment, it is morning in different places and evening in places opposite them; and if so, it is hinting to that which will be in the firmament after the placing of the luminaries in the firmament of the skies.

Sforno: וירא אלוקים את האור כי טוב This describes the reason why God created the light, not that He "saw" something new which He had not been aware of previously. It was because it was "good," that God had created the light.

the days (prior to the fourth day when the sun was placed in orbit) during which use was made of the "original light," periods of light and darkness alternated due to causes other than the revolving of the planet around its own axis, i.e. due to the direct expression of God's desire. He ensured that periods of light alternated with periods of darkness.

Genesis 1:14-19

(14) God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; (15) and they serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth." And it was so. (16) God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. (17) And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, (18) to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. (19) And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

בראשית א': י"ד-י"ט

(יד) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ
הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה
וְהָיוּ לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנָיִם:
(טו) וְהָיוּ לְמְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר
עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְיִהְיֶה-כֵן: (טז) וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים
אֶת-הַשֶּׁמֶיךָ הַגָּדֹל וְאֶת-הַמְּאֹרֹת
הַגָּדֹל לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-הַמְּאֹרֹת הַקְּטָן
לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים: (יז) וַיִּתֵּן
אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר
עַל-הָאָרֶץ: (יח) וְלַמַּשָּׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה
וְלַהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֵּרָא
אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב: (יט) וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב
וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי: (פ)

Rashi: AND FOR SET TIMES (FESTIVALS) — This is written with a view to the future when Israel would receive command regarding the festivals which would be calculated from the time of the lunar conjunction (Genesis Rabbah 6:1).

AND FOR DAYS — The sun functions half a day and the moon the other half — together a full day.

AND FOR YEARS — At the end of three hundred and sixty five days [another version: 365¼] they complete their course through the twelve signs of the Zodiac that attend them, and that is one year [another version: and this makes 365¼ days]; they then begin to revolve a second time in a circle similar to their first cycle.

Ramban: "And for set times" - "The planting and the harvest and the coldness and the heat and the summer and the winter" (Genesis 8:22).

Shabbos

Eviatar Zerubavel, The Seven Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week:

Days, months, and years were given to us by nature, but we invented the week for ourselves. There is nothing inevitable about a seven-day cycle, or about any other kind of week; it represents an arbitrary rhythm imposed on our activities, unrelated to anything in the natural order. But where the week exists—and there have been many cultures where it doesn't—it is so deeply embedded in our experience that we hardly ever question its rightness, or think of it as an artificial convention; for most of us it is a matter of 'second nature.'

Ibid:

...the establishment of a seven-day week based on the regular observance of the Sabbath is a distinctively Jewish contribution to civilisation.

Genesis 2:1-3

(1) The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. (2) On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. (3) And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done.

בראשית ב' א'-ג'

(א) וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָם: (ב) וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכָל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: (ג) וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְכָל־מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת: (פ)

Rashi: ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY GOD FINISHED — R. Simeon says: A human being (literally, flesh and blood) who cannot know exactly his times and moments (who cannot accurately determine the point of time that marks the division between one period and that which follows it) must needs add from the week-day and observe it as the holy day (the Sabbath), but the Holy One, blessed be He, who knows His times and moments, began it (the seventh day) to a very hair's breadth (with extreme exactness) and it therefore appeared as though He had completed His work on that very day (Genesis Rabbah 10:9).

Two different spatial approaches to Shabbos

Maharal Gevuros Hashem, Chapter 3:

The number six represents wholeness... only that which has three dimensions is complete... since a cube contains four directions and above and below, it represents a whole structure.

ועוד מצד שישראל הם אומה יחידה,
ראוי לישראל זה המספר, שהמספר הזה
הוא מספר שלם

Gevuros Hashem 70:2

ונחשב העולם הגשמי מורכב מאלו שש פאות והאמצעי הם שבעה דברים

And the material world is considered to be composed of six corners, and the middle - seven things

Rambam, Mishneh Torah Shabbos 29:4

The essential time to make *Kiddush* is in the evening. If you did not make *Kiddush* in the evening whether accidentally or on purpose, you make *Kiddush* at any point in the day time. **Similarly, if you did not make *Havdalah* at night you may make *Havdalah* the next day or at any point before the end of Tuesday.** However, *Havdalah* with a candle is only made when *Havdalah* is made on a Saturday night.

Kiryat Sefer commentary on Mishneh Torah

עיקר קידוש בלילה דכתיב לקדשו דמשמע משעה שמתקדש היום. אם לא קדש בלילה בין בשוגג בין במזיד מקדש והולך כל היום כולו דזכור את יום השבת כתיב מכל מקום צריך אתה לזכרו. ואם לא הבדיל בלילה מבדיל למחר ומבדיל והולך עד סוף יום שלשה שהוא תחלת יום ד' דשלשה ימים נחשבים אחר השבת ושלשה ימים האחרים קודם השבת מדאורייתא דהא לענין גיטין סמכינן אהא כדאיתא פרק ערבי פסחים.

Months

Exodus 12:2

(2) This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you.

Rashi on Exodus 12:2:1

(1) החדש הזה — He showed him the moon in the first stage of its renewal, and He said to him, “The time when the moon renews itself thus, shall be unto you the beginning of the month”. (The translation therefore is: “This stage of renewal (חדש) shall be the moment of beginning the months”; cf. Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 12:2:2). But no Scriptural verse can lose its literal meaning, and He really spoke this in reference to the month Nisan: this month shall be the beginning in the order of counting the months, so that Iyar shall be called the second, Sivan the third.

שמות י"ב:ב'

(ב) הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשִׁוֹן
הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה:

רש"י על שמות י"ב:ב':א'

(א) הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה. הִרְאָהוּ לְבָנָה בְּחֻדוֹשָׁהּ
וְאָמַר לוֹ כְּשֶׁהִירָם מִתְחַדָּשׁ יִהְיֶה לָּךְ רֵאשִׁית
חֹדֶשׁ (מְכִילֵתָא). וְאִין מִקְרָא יוֹצֵא מִיַּדִּי
כְּשׁוֹטוֹ, עַל חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן אָמַר לוֹ, זֶה יִהְיֶה
רֵאשִׁית לְסֻדֵּר מִנְיַן הַחֳדָשִׁים, שְׂיִהֵא אִיָּר
קְרוּי שְׁנִי, סִינּוֹן שְׁלִישִׁי:

The difference between Shabbos and Yomtov

Leviticus 23:2-4

(2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: These are My fixed times, the fixed times of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions. (3) On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a sabbath of the LORD throughout your settlements. (4) These are the set times of the LORD, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time:

ויקרא כ"ג:ב'-ד'

(ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי
קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי: (ג) שְׁשֶׁת יָמִים
תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת
שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ כָּל־מְלָאכָה לֹא
תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבָּת הוּא לַיהוָה בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם:
(ד) אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ
אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם:

Sforno on Leviticus 23:3:1

(1) שבת היא לה' He, the creator of light and darkness assigns these days in all your dwellings, wherever on earth. The reason this is spelled out is that we might have thought that just as days and nights are not constant, being longer in the summer than in the winter respectively, so that the hours of the first Sabbath in history might serve as the model for all future Sabbaths, and Jews over the world ought to observe the 24 hours which Jews in the land of Israel observe as their Sabbath. The Torah, by writing בכל במושבותיכם, indicates that the commencement and conclusion of the Sabbath depends on the local times of day and night, not on a central location. [as opposed to the determination of the monthly time when the new moon, i.e. the new month begins, which is related to its astronomical constellation in the sky over Jerusalem, which serves as the "dateline" for the Jewish people.Ed.]

Shabbat 69b

Rav Huna said: One who was walking along the way or in the desert, and he does not know when Shabbat occurs, he counts six days from the day that he realized that he lost track of Shabbat **and then observes one day** as Shabbat.

Hiyya bar Rav says: He first observes one day as Shabbat and then **he counts six weekdays**. The Gemara explains:

With regard to what do they disagree? One Sage, Rav Huna, **held: It is like the creation of the world**, weekdays followed by Shabbat. **And one Sage, Hiyya bar Rav, held: It is like Adam, the first man**, who was created on the sixth day. He observed Shabbat followed by the six days of the week. The Gemara **raises an objection** to the opinion of Hiyya bar Rav from a *baraita*: If a person **was walking along the way and does not know when Shabbat occurs, he observes one day for every six**.

ספורנו על ויקרא כ"ג:ג:א'

(א) **שבת היא לה'** הוא היוצר אור ובורא חשך קובע אותם בכל מושבותיכם. אף על פי שתשתנה תחלת היום והלילה כפי השתנות האורך בגלילות מתחלפות ועם זה היתה השבת הראשונה משוערת כפי איזה אורך מיוחד בהכרח מכל מקום תהיה תחלת השבת וסופה בכל אחד מהגלילות ליושביו כפי התחלת היום והלילה בגליל ההוא:

שבת ס"ט ב

אמר רב הונא: הָיָה מְהֵלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ אוּ בְמִדְבָּר וְאִינוּ יוֹדְעֵי אִמְתֵּי שַׁבָּת, מוֹנֶה שְׁשֵׁה יָמִים וּמְשַׁמֵּר יוֹם אֶחָד. חֲזִיא בֵּר רַב אֹמֵר: מְשַׁמֵּר יוֹם אֶחָד, וּמוֹנֶה שְׁשֵׁה יָמִים. בְּמֵאֵי קָמִיפְלְגִי — מֶרְסָבֵר כְּבָרִיתוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, וּמֶרְסָבֵר כְּאֶדָם הָרֵאשׁוֹן. מִיִּתְיָבִי: הָיָה מְהֵלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ וְאִינוּ יוֹדְעֵי אִמְתֵּי שַׁבָּת מְשַׁמֵּר יוֹם אֶחָד לְשֵׁשֶׁה. מֵאֵי לָאוּ, מוֹנֶה שְׁשֵׁה יָמִים וּמְשַׁמֵּר יוֹם אֶחָד?! לָאוּ, מְשַׁמֵּר יוֹם אֶחָד וּמוֹנֶה שְׁשֵׁה יָמִים.

What, does this not mean that he counts six and then observes one day in accordance with the opinion of Rav Huna? The Gemara rejects this: **No**, it could also mean that **he observes one day and then counts six**.

Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 344:1

(1) The Law of Someone Who Is Wandering in the Desert on Shabbat, 2 Seifim: 1. One who is wandering in the desert and does not when is Shabbat, counts seven days from the day he realized he did not know, and sanctifies the seventh day with Kiddush and Havdalah. If one has sustenance, one is forbidden from doing any work whatsoever until he uses what he has, and thereafter one should do work each day, even on the day he sanctifies, to achieve minimal sustenance. One is permitted to walk every day, even on the day he sanctifies.

אורה חיים שמ"ד:א'

(א) דין ההולך במדבר בשבת ובו ב'

סעיפים:

ההולך במדבר ואינו יודע מתי הוא שבת מונה שבעה ימים מיום שנתן אל לבו שכחתו ומקדש השביעי בקידוש והבדלה ואם יש לו ממה להתפרנס אסור לו לעשות מלאכה כלל עד שיכלה מה שיש לו ואז יעשה מלאכה בכל יום אפילו ביום שמקדש בו כדי פרנסתו מצומצמת ומותר לילך בו בכל יום אפילו ביום שמקדש בו:

Interesting sheet by Philip Baigel on When is Shabbos:
<https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/238852?lang=bi>

Differences between Shabbos and Yomtov reflected in Liturgy

Siddur Ashkenaz, Shabbat, Maariv, Amidah, Holiness of the Day 3

...

סידור אשכנז, שבת, מעריב, עמידה, קדושת היום ג'

(ג) אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ. רְצֵה בְּמִנְחָתֵנוּ. קְדֹשְׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ. שְׂפָעֵנוּ מִטוֹבֶךָ וְשִׂמְחָנוּ בִּישׁוּעָתֶךָ. וְטַהֵר לִבֵּנוּ לְעִבְדֶּךָ בְּאַמֶּת. וְהִנְחֵלֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרַצוֹן שֶׁבֶת קְדֹשָׁךְ. וְיִגְוַחַז בָּהּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַדְּשֵׁי שְׁמֶךָ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'. מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת:

Siddur Ashkenaz, Festivals, Shalosh
Regalim, Amida for Maariv, Shacharit,
Mincha, Sanctity of the Day 24

...

סידור אשכנז, חגים, תפילות לשלוש
רגלים, עמידה לערבית, שחרית,
מנחה, קדושת היום כ"ד
(כד) בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מְקַדֵּשׁ לַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיטָה
יְשׂרָאֵל וְהַזְמַנִּים:

Kiddush for yomtov morning:

Leviticus 23:4

(4) These are the set times of the LORD,
the sacred occasions, which you shall
celebrate each at its appointed time:

וַיִּקְרָא כ"ג:ד'
(ד) אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה מְקַרְאֵי קֹדֶשׁ
אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם:

Leviticus 23:44

(44) So Moses declared to the Israelites
the set times of the LORD.

וַיִּקְרָא כ"ג:מ"ד
(מד) וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִצְוֵי יְהוָה אֶל־בְּנֵי
יְשׂרָאֵל: (פ)



Made with the Sefaria Source Sheet Builder
www.sefaria.org/sheets