

# Z'MANIM – DAY

**ALOT 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 alot hashachar; rabbinically, the performance of these mitzvot is generally delayed until sunrise. Communal fasts begin at alot 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 tallit 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 mitzvot 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 KRIYAT 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 "Shaot Z'maniot" 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 chatzot.

**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 chatzot. On Passover eve, this is the latest time one may eat chametz.

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

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

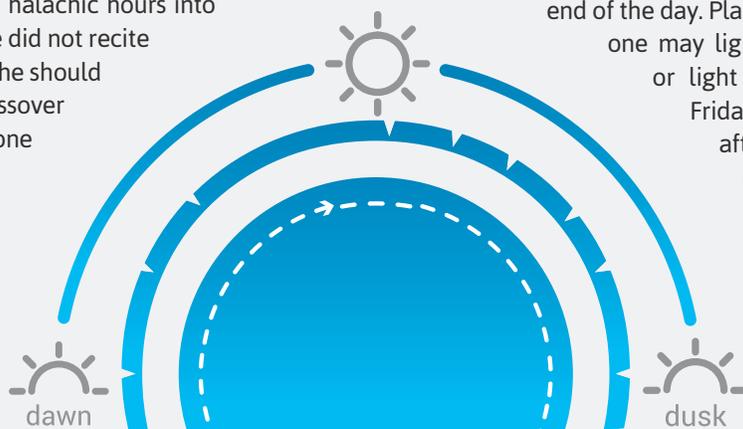
**CHATZOT** Noon or midday. Technically, this is chatzot hayom, "halachic noon," the midpoint of the day. There is also a chatzot halailah, halachic midnight. This is halfway between sunrise and sunset (or between daybreak and nightfall) and it need not coincide with 12:00 noon. Chatzot is the latest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

**MINCHA GEDOLAH** "Greater mincha" or "large mincha." This is one half-hour after chatzot. 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 Shabbat 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 Shabbat, 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

## HADLAKAT NEIROT

“Candle-lighting time.” On Fridays, Shabbat 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.

**SHKIYAT 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 HaShmashot.”) All mitzvot 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 HASHMASHOT** 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 mitzvot that must be performed by day must be completed by bein hashmashot, while mitzvot that must be performed at night may not be performed until after nightfall. Because bein hashmashot is a period of doubt, one must observe the stringencies of both days during this time period. For this reason, Shabbat begins before bein hashmashot on Friday and ends after bein hashmashot on Saturday. For similar reasons, a baby born during this time will be circumcised on the ninth day.

## TZEIT 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 mitzvot 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 Shabbat). It is preferable that Maariv, the evening prayer service, be recited after tzeit hakochovim.

**MOTZOEI SHABBAT** The conclusion of Shabbat. There is a mitzvah to add additional time onto Shabbat 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 Shabbat 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.)

**CHATZOT HALAILAH** Midnight. The midpoint between sunset and sunrise. All mitzvot 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 chatzot. Some people arise at this time to recite Tikkun Chatzot, a series of prayers lamenting the destruction of the Temple.



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RABBI JACK ABRAMOWITZ, EDITOR

(according to the Vilna Gaon). These hours are longer in the summer and shorter in the winter. We have translated shaot z'maniot as “halachic hours” but people also call them “seasonal hours” or “proportional hours.”

**SHAOT Z'MANIOT** Z'manim use special hours called shaot z'maniot.

These are calculated by dividing the daylight hours into 12 parts – either from daybreak to nightfall (according to the Magen Avraham) or from sunrise to sunset