

## The Spiritual and Practical Benefits of Starting Tomorrow Tonight

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**SUMMARY:** A defining feature of the Jewish calendar is the day starting at sunset. Starting tomorrow tonight is also a defining feature of living a proactive, productive life.

**GOALS:**

- We will explore practical tools to elevate our productivity and feel prepared for each day.
- We will engage with ancient Jewish text and learn how to make it applicable to our modern lives.
- We will learn in chavruta and connect with fellow learners.

**AUDIENCE:** The session is for anyone with discretionary time in their day and needs to prioritize their tasks and time. No more than 20 people, ideally an even number for chavruta learning.

**TIMING:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:**

Source sheet 1 per chavruta,  
flip chart with terms/glossary: Talmud, Gemara, Rashi, Rambam, Chavruta on one page and Havruta instructions on another:

1. Read the text
2. Stop and share initial thoughts or reactions
3. Re-read the text and start asking questions based on the theme of day starting at night.

What is the surface meaning?

Phrases that are unclear?

Is information or narrative missing?

What is left unsaid/

4. Ask broader questions

- Does the text jibe or not with your own beliefs or ideas?
- What is difficult or challenging about the text?
- What if anything surprised you about the text?
- What if anything might you do differently or how might you think differently about something after learning this text?

Flipchart markers

Highlighters 1 per chavruta

Pens

Index cards

**SET-UP:** Somewhere quiet, where pairs can sit comfortably and have conversations.

### SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:10 – *Introduction and Definitions of Terms/Who's Who*
- 00:10-00:20 – *Chavruta Time with Text*

- 00:20-00:30 – Pairs share their learning
- 00:30-00:45 – Call to Action, participate in Mini-Spa/ “Bedtime Shema”

## SESSION OUTLINE

**00:00-00:10** – Facilitator welcomes everyone to the session and points out the curious nature of the Jewish calendar starting at night, the idea that our holidays (although not all fast days) have an *Erev*. Facilitator defines terms or asks others to contribute to words on flipchart. Then ask someone to read the first source from Genesis on the source sheet that is the basis for this 24-hour cycle.

**00:10-00:20** – Facilitator breaks group into pairs or asks them to pair themselves and assigns one source from the sheet per chavruta. Ask pairs to spend the next 10 minutes looking at the provided text and use the Chavruta guidelines from the flipchart, specifically looking for information or context related to when the day starts and ends.

**00:20-00:30:00** – Session leader asks pairs to share key takeaways about the nature of the Jewish Day.

**00:30-00:45**-Session leader facilitates a conversation about the text study using the Chavruta prompts on the flipchart and the examples of bedtime Shema then asks:

“Why do you think the rabbis chose to adopt the evening before day cycle for our calendar despite the abundance of text proof that the day starts in the morning?”

Other Examples: Temple service, Talmudic opinions that Abraham established Shaharit, Isaac Mincha, and Jacob Maariv. There are two paradigms for the order of the day and the day to night would fit our lifestyles.

**A message about priorities, your day starts when you come home to family, when we eat a festive meal, when we welcome shabbat, not when we gulp down our breakfast.** Apply this concept to end your day by preparing to bring it in the next day. Bedtime Shema can be discussed here. The end of the day is a liminal/ threshold moment like other life-cycle events that note we are entering into a place as well as physical daily moments, waking up, seeing a mezuzah etc.

Close out with a call to action for each person to write themselves a request for tomorrow (mini-spa, mini-bedtime Shema, threshold moment)

## BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

Use this to introduce your campers and staff to the practice of text study, and of learning in Chavruta. In addition, this can be used to introduce a bedtime ritual in the cabin or an end-of-day ritual for day camps. It can also be used in staff training to help staff establish a ritual of looking at tomorrow’s calendar and being prepared for the day before they lay down exhausted at night.