

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
Glossary 1 per chavruta
Chavruta guidelines 1 per chavruta
Highlighters 1 per chavruta
Pens
Index cards

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?

SET-UP: Someplace 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 – Introduction and Definitions of Terms/Who's Who

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 – Chavruta Time with Text

Facilitator breaks the group into pairs or asks them to pair themselves and assigns one source (#1-7) 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 – Pairs share their learning

Session leader asks pairs to share key takeaways about the nature of the Jewish Day.

00:30-00:45 – Call to Action, participate in Mini-Spa/"Bedtime Shema"

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.

Studying in Hevruta

"Two scholars sharpen one another."
Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 23a

Hevruta is an ancient method to study Jewish text that developed alongside the Talmud-- the books that contain the Oral Law (Mishnah), and the rabbinic discussion, commentary and interpretation that were compiled from the 6th century onward.

Hevruta is based on a model that nobody has a complete understanding of an idea; we depend on discussion with others to help us get to our truth.

Hevruta Technique:

1. Sit face to face with a partner
2. Take turns reading the text out loud. In Hevruta, thinking takes place "out loud" and questions as important as answers. It is important to listen to your partner and respond to their thoughts and ideas.
3. Your questions and discussion should help you better understand the meaning of the text.
4. Questions to discuss can include:
 - What is the text trying to say?
 - Why do think this important?
 - What jumps out at you?
 - What troubles you about the text?
 - What do you find interesting?
 - Is there something missing in the text?
 - How is story used to get the main idea across?
 - What does this text mean for us today?
 - Are there any other ideas or questions you want to discuss?

(Adapted from The Curriculum Initiative, Hevruta Study Method)



Jewish Text Study Glossary for Wind Down Your Day Cornerstone 2025

Term	Definition	Pronunciation
Gemara	The bulk of the text of the Talmud and it is the sum of all the various commentaries on the Mishnah. Sometimes the word “Talmud” refers to the Gemara alone, though it usually refers to the combination of the Mishnah and the Gemara.	ge-MAH-rah
Havruta	Refers to a partner with whom one studies Talmud.	khav-ROO-tah
Massechet	This word means tractate. The Babylonian Talmud is composed of 63 massechets.	mah-SEH-khet
Mishnah/mishnah	A third-century compilation of rabbinic law. It is the core of the Talmud, which is a collection of commentaries on the Mishnah. The word “mishnah” (small “m”) refers to a single teaching in the Mishnah.	MISH-nah
Rashbam R.Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam)	A French Tosafist and Torah commentator. His Torah commentary is concise, and hews strictly to the concept of the "peshat" or plain-sense meaning of the text, sometimes at the expense of received rabbinic traditions.	Rash-bahm
Talmud	The Talmud is a commentary on the Mishnah, a third century compendium of Jewish law. It's mostly composed of the quoted traditions of hundreds of rabbis from the first to fifth centuries, organized into topical discussions that frequently proceed associatively, rather than systematically. It's written in Aramaic, but quotes many Hebrew text and the two languages are intertwined throughout. When it quotes the Bible, it often does so partially, assuming the reader can complete a biblical verse from memory. In short, the Talmud is text written by insiders, for insiders. Breaking in means getting straight on the Talmud's basic vocabulary. These are common words associated with the Talmud that you should know:	Taal-mud
Tanna/Tanaaim	The Tannaim were teachers who flourished in the Land of Israel in the first two centuries CE and whose views appear in the Mishnah	TAH-nah
Tosefta	A collection of Tannaitic teachings (from first-third-century rabbis) that follows the same structure as the Mishnah. The teachings that appear in the Tosefta are called <i>beraitas</i> .	toe-SEF-tah

Wind Down Your Day Cornerstone 2025

Source Sheet by Diana Bloom

1. 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.

2. Rashbam on Genesis 1:5:3

(3) “And it was evening, and it was morning” – It is not written here, “And it was night, and it was day”, but rather, “and it was evening, and it was morning” – the first day became evening and the sun set, and it became morning, the morning following the night, for the dawn broke” – behold, one day was completed from the six that Hashem spoke of in the Ten Commandments, and afterwards began the second day: “G-d said, ‘let there be a firmament’”. The text does not come to state that the evening and the morning are part of a single day, for it only needs to explain how there were six days – that the morning broke and the night was finished: behold, one days was completed and another day began.

בראשית א':ה'

(ה) וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים | לְאוֹר יוֹם
וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב
וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: (פ)

רשב"ם על בראשית א':ה':ג'

(ג) ויהי ערב ויהי בקר - אין כתיב כאן ויהי לילה ויהי יום, אלא ויהי ערב, שהעריב יום ראשון ושיקע האור, ויהי בוקר, בוקרו של לילה, שעלה עמוד השחר, הרי הושלם יום א' מן השישה ימים שאמר הקב"ה בעשרת הדברות, ואח"כ התחיל יום שני, ויאמר אלהים יהי רקיע. ולא בא הכתוב לומר שהערב והבקר יום אחד הם, כי לא הוצרכנו לפרש אלא היאך היו ששה ימים, שהבקיר יום ונגמרה הלילה, הרי נגמר יום אחד והתחיל יום שני.

3. Genesis 19:33-34

(33) That night they made their father drink wine, and the older one went in and lay with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she rose. (34) The next day the older one said to the younger, "See, I lay with Father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go and lie with him, that we may maintain life through our father."

בראשית י"ט:ג-ל"ד

(לג) וַתִּשְׁקְיֵן אֶת־אָבִיהֶן יַיִן בְּלֵילָה הַהוּא וַתָּבֹא הַבְּכִירָה וַתִּשְׁכַּב אֶת־אָבִיהָ וְלֹא־יָדַע בְּשֹׁכְבָהּ וּבְקוּמָהּ: (לד) וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֹת וַתֹּאמֶר הַבְּכִירָה אֶל־הַצְּעִירָה הֲיִן־שֹׁכְבְּתִי אִמְשׁ אֶת־אָבִי נִשְׁקְנוּ יַיִן גַּם־הַלַּיְלָה וּבֹאִי שֹׁכְבִי עִמּוֹ וְנַחֲיָה מֵאֲבִינוּ זָרַע:

4. Numbers 28:3-4

(3) Say to them: These are the offerings by fire that you are to present to the LORD: As a regular burnt offering every day, two yearling lambs without blemish. (4) You shall offer one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight.

במדבר כ"ח:ג-ד'

(ג) וְאָמַרְתָּ לָהֶם זֶה הָאֲשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרִיבוּ לַיהוָה כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם שְׁנַיִם לַיּוֹם עֹלָה תְּמִיד: (ד) אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר וְאֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם:

5. Leviticus 23:5-6

(5) In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, (6) and on the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days.

ויקרא כ"ג:ה-ו'

(ה) בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ בֵּין הָעֶרְבָיִם פֶּסַח לַיהוָה: (ו) וּבַחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג הַמַּצּוֹת לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מַצּוֹת תֹּאכְלוּ:

6. Leviticus 23:26-32

(26) יהוה spoke to Moses, saying:
(27) Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring an offering by fire to (28) יהוה; you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before your God (29) יהוה. Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout that day shall be cut off from kin; (30) and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among the people. (31) Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. (32) It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.

ויקרא כ"ג:כ"ו-ל"ב

(כו) וידבר יהוה אל־משה
לאמר: (כז) אך בעשור לחדש
השביעי הזה יום הכפרים הוא
מקרא־קדש יהיה לכם ועניתם
את־נפשותיכם והקרבתם אשה
ליהוה: (כח) וכל־מלאכה לא
תעשו בעצם היום הזה כי יום
כפרים הוא לכפר עליכם לפני
יהוה אלהיכם: (כט) כי
כל־הנפש אשר לא־תענה בעצם
היום הזה ונכרתה מעמיה: (ל)
וכל־הנפש אשר תעשה
כל־מלאכה בעצם היום הזה
והאבדתי את־הנפש ההוא
מקרב עמה: (לא) כל־מלאכה
לא תעשו חקת עולם לדורתכם
בכל משבתיכם: (לב) שבת
שבתון הוא לכם ועניתם
את־נפשותיכם בתשעה לחדש
בערב מערב עד־ערב תשבתו
שבתכם: {פ}

7. Berakhot 26a:17

On the topic of one who forgot to pray and seeks to compensate for the prayer that he missed, a **dilemma was raised before them** in the study hall: **One who erred and did not recite the afternoon prayer, what is the ruling? May he recite in the evening prayer two Amida prayers?** The Gemara articulates the sides of the dilemma: **If you say that one who erred and did not pray the evening prayer prays in the morning prayer two Amida prayers, perhaps that is because** the evening and the morning are both part of **one day, as it is written: “And there was evening and there was morning, one day”** (Genesis 1:5); the evening and the following morning constitute a single unit. **But here, in the case under discussion, perhaps prayer is in place of sacrifice.** Since in the case of sacrifice we say, **since its day passed, his sacrifice is invalid** and there is no way to compensate for the missed opportunity, the same should be true for prayer. **Or, perhaps, since prayer is supplication, any time that one wishes, he may continue to pray?**

ברכות כ"ו א:י"ז

איבעיא להו: טעה ולא התפלל מנחה, מהו שיתפלל ערבית שתים? אם תמצא לומר, טעה ולא התפלל ערבית מתפלל שחרית שתים, משום דחד יומא הוא, דכתיב: "ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד", אבל הכא תפלה במקום קרבן היא, וכיון דעבר יומו בטל קרבנו. או דילמא כיון דצלותא רחמי היא, כל אימת דבעי מצלי ואזיל.

8. Berakhot 60b:3

The Gemara proceeds to cite additional blessings recited as part of one's daily routine. **One who enters to sleep on his bed recites *Shema* in his bed from *Shema Yisrael* to *VeHaya Im Shamo'a*. Then he recites:**

Blessed...Who makes the bands of sleep fall upon my eyes and slumber upon my eyelids, and illuminates the pupil of the eye. May it be Your will, O Lord my God, that You make me lie down in peace and give me my portion in Your Torah, accustom me to mitzvot and do not accustom me to transgression, lead me not into error, nor into iniquity, nor into temptation nor into disgrace.

May the good inclination have dominion over me and may the evil inclination not have dominion over me.

Save me from an evil mishap and evil diseases.

Let neither bad dreams nor troubling thoughts disturb me.

May my bed be flawless before You, that my progeny should not be flawed.

Enlighten my eyes in the morning lest I sleep the sleep of death, never to awaken.

Blessed are You, O Lord, Who gives light to the whole world in His glory.

ברכות ס' ב:ג'

הַנִּכְנָס לִישׁוֹן עַל מִטָּתוֹ, אוֹמֵר
מִ"שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל" עַד "וְהָיָה אִם
שָׁמוּעַ", וְאוֹמֵר: "בְּרוּךְ... הַמְּפִיל
חֲבָלֵי שֵׁינָה עַל עֵינַי וְתַנּוּמָה עַל
עַפְעָפִי, וּמְאִיר לְאִישׁוֹן בֵּת עֵינַי.
יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵי,
שֶׁתְּשַׁכְּבֵנִי לְשָׁלוֹם, וְתֵן חֶלְקִי
בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, וְתַרְגִּילֵנִי לַיְדֵי מְצוּהָ,
וְאֵל תַּרְגִּילֵנִי לַיְדֵי עֲבִירָה, וְאֵל
תְּבִיאֵנִי לַיְדֵי חֶטָּא, וְלֹא לַיְדֵי עוֹן,
וְלֹא לַיְדֵי נִסְיוֹן, וְלֹא לַיְדֵי בְזִיוֹן.
וְיִשְׁלוּט בִּי יֵצֶר טוֹב, וְאֵל יִשְׁלוּט
בִּי יֵצֶר הָרַע. וְתַצִּילֵנִי מִפְּגַע רָע,
וּמִחֻלָּאִים רָעִים. וְאֵל יְבַהֲלוּנִי
חֲלוּמוֹת רָעִים וְהִרְהוּרִים רָעִים.
וְתֵהָא מִטָּתִי שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ.
וְהָאֵר עֵינַי פֶּן אִישׁוֹן הַמּוֹת. בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה ה' הַמְּאִיר לְעוֹלָם כּוֹלוֹ
בְּכַבּוֹדוֹ".

**9. Siddur Ashkenaz, Weekday,
Maariv, Blessings of the Shema,
Second Blessing after Shema**

Lay us down, Adonai our God, in peace, and raise us up again, our ruler, to [new] life. And guide us with Your good counsel. Save us for Your name's sake.

Shield us from every enemy, plague, sword, famine, and sorrow. Remove the adversary from before and behind us. Shelter us in the shadow of Your wings,

Guard our going out and our coming in, and grant us life and peace, now and always.

Blessed are You, Adonai, who guards the people of Israel forever.

**סידור אשכנז, ימי חול, מעריב,
ברכות קריאת שמע, השכיבנו**

(א) הַשְּׁכִיבֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְשָׁלוֹם,
וְהַעֲמִידֵנוּ מְלַכְנוּ לְחַיִּים. וּפְרוֹשׁ
עָלֵינוּ סִכַּת שְׁלוֹמְךָ. וְתַקַּנֵּנוּ
בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. וְהוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ
לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ. וְהַגֵּן בְּעַדְנוּ: וְהִסֵּר
מֵעָלֵינוּ אוֹיֵב דָּבָר וְחָרֵב וְרָעַב
וְיָגוֹן. וְהִסֵּר שֹׁטֵן מִלְּפָנֵינוּ
וּמֵאַחֲרֵינוּ. וּבְצֵל כְּנָפֶיךָ
תִּסְתִּירֵנוּ. כִּי אֵל שׁוֹמְרֵנוּ
וּמְצִילֵנוּ אַתָּה. כִּי אֵל מְלֶךְ חַנוּן
וְרַחוּם אַתָּה: וְשָׁמֹר צְאִתָּנוּ
וּבּוֹאֵנוּ לְחַיִּים וּלְשָׁלוֹם מֵעַתָּה
וְעַד עוֹלָם: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' שׁוֹמֵר
עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַד:

"Never go to sleep without a request to your subconscious."--Thomas Edison

"For tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today"- African Proverb