When does the new Jewish day begin?

The counting of the days of *'omer* connects the Holiday of Pesach, the commemoration of our physical freedom, with Shabu'ot, the day we received the Tora. Without getting out of Egypt, it would not have been possible for us to receive the Tora. And without receiving our Tora we would have taken with us Egypt's gods, mores and values. Only once we were free from Pharaoh we were at liberty to choose to be under God's commandment, and accepted to become His chosen people .

The days of the Omer are counted at night. Because for us Jews, the new day starts at night.

Now, at what precise moment the new day starts, and at what time the previous day ends is a complicated technical Halakhic matter.

Very briefly: there are two possible astronomic indicators for the new day

1. Sunset, when the sun disappears from sight
2. Nightfall, which is marked by the visibility of the stars in the sky.

All Rabbis agree that before sunset it is still considered day # 1. And most Rabbis agree that after three medium stars are visible it is considered day #2. Now, the time in between sunset and the appearance of the three stars is known as the *twilight zone* or in Hebrew, *ben hashemashot*. This time-period fluctuates between 15 min (13 ½ to be precise) to 30 minutes or more, depending on many variables, such as geographic location, year's season, etc.

Regarding Shabbat, for example, we take the strictest stand by receiving Shabbat always before sunset and ending Shabbat

after three medium stars are visible.

In most Sephardic communities the starting time to count the ‘omer is 15 minutes after sunset.

In exceptional circumstances Rabbis would authorize to count with Berakha earlier, but never before sunset.

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