

The Jewish Nations recording of time.

The following notes describe how the Jewish nation has recorded time in the Bible and the way they recognized different parts of the day.

The times of the day

Dividing the day into periods of hours is first mentioned in Daniel 3:6.

"And whoso falleth not down and worshipped shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

Daniel. 3:15.

"Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Daniel 4:19.

"Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour,"

Daniel 5:5.

"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote."

The Jews took this idea from the Chaldean's.

They decided that a day was twelve hours long, John 11:9,

Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

This would be from sunrise to sunset. As the times of sunrise and sunset will change during the year, the "hour" therefore has to be variable in length.

In the Bible the word "day" can be of no definite length, see:- Genesis 2:4

"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens."

Isaiah 22:5.

"For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord GOD of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains."

Hebrews 3:8.

"Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:"

For example, in Job it is used for a birthday,

Job 3:1-4.

"After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it."

Isaiah 2:12.

It can also refer to a future day, it is referring to the day of final judgment.

"For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:"

Acts 17:31.

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

2 Timothy. 1:18

"The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."

The Jewish nation considered that each day started at sunset of one day and ended on the sunset of the next day. Leviticus 23:32.

"It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath."

Originally the Jews divided each day into three parts, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." Psalm 55:17.

"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."

The Jewish nation also has used a division of the day based upon the temperature at the time.

(1.) "The heat of the day"

1 Samuel 11:11.

"And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together."

Genesis 18:1.

"And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day"

2 Samuel 4:5.

"And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.'

Matthew 20:12.

"Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day."

Nehemiah 7:3.

"And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house.'

(2.) "The cool of the day", which was just before sunset.

Genesis 3:8.

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.'

Before the Captivity the Jews had divided the night into three watches.

(1.) From sunset to midnight.

Lamentations 2:19.

"Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street."

(2.) From midnight till the cock-crow.

Judges 7:19.

"So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands."

(3.) From the Cock-crowing till sunrise,

Exodus 14:24.

" And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,"

In the New Testament the division of the Greeks and Romans into four watches was adopted Mark 13:35.

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:"

A day's journey

Travel was on foot, camel or horseback, it was considered that a person would most likely be able to travel for six to eight hours each day, this could mean about 18 to 25 miles on foot, depending on the surroundings.

What ever method we use for the measurement of time the Bible always puts the point that God is not affected or limited by time, He is the king of all ages. 1 Tim 1:17;

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. "

2 Peter 3:8.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."