

necessarily sharply defined that the terms "morning" and "evening," as also "dawn" (e.g. Judg 19:2Sf.) and "twilight" (e.g. 1 Sam 30:17), refer. For a more precise line of demarcation between one day and the next the time of sunrise or sunset could be taken, and we have seen probable examples of such usage in Mark 16:2 and Mark 1:32, respectively. Or the determination could be made in terms of the intensity of the light or the completeness of the darkness. For example, it was held by the Jewish rabbis that Deut 6:4-7 required the recitation of the Shema in the evening and in the morning, and in the Talmud there is found an extended discussion of exactly what times are thereby intended. The recital could begin in the morning, it was declared, as soon as one could distinguish between blue and white (or between blue and green, as another rabbi taught), and it must be finished before sunrise.¹⁰ As for the evening, Neh 4:21 was cited, where work went on "till the stars came out," and from that analogy it was shown that the appearance of the stars was the sign that the day had ended and the recital could begin." Thus, in the morning it was either the dawning light or the following sunrise, and in the evening it was either the sunset or the ensuing nightfall, when the stars became visible, that provided the line of demarcation.¹²

15. Parts of the day were described at an early time in terms of the customary occupation then performed as, for example, the "time for animals to be gathered together" (Gen 29:7), or "the time when women go out to draw water" (Gen 24:11). The nighttime was divided into watches. Lam 2:19 speaks of "the beginning of the watches," Judg 7:19 mentions "the middle watch," and Exod 14:24 and I Sam 11:11 refer to "the morning watch." The rabbis debated whether there were three watches or four. In the New Testament, as in Roman and Egyptian practice, we find four watches of the night: evening, midnight, cockcrow, and morning (Matt 14:25; Mark 13:35).¹⁴ The daytime had recognizable periods such as "the heat of the day" (Gen 18:1) and "the cool of the day" (Gen 3:8), and was also divided broadly into morning, noon, and evening (Psa 55:17). A division of the daytime into three parts, and of the nighttime into three parts, is mentioned in *Jub.* 49:10,12.¹⁵

16. The word "hour" שעה (*sha'ah*), occurs several times in Daniel (3:6, etc.) in Aramaic, and is common in later Hebrew. In Daniel it still denotes simply a short period of time and the phrase "the same hour" (ASV) may properly be translated "immediately" (RSV). In Greek the corresponding word is ὥρα, and it too is used for an inexactly defined period of time, as for example in John 5:35, where πρὸς ὥραν is translated "for a while."

¹⁰*Berakot* 1:2; Danby 2.

¹¹*Berakot* 2b; Epstein, *BT* 3.

¹²As the line between one day and the next, nightfall was later defined more precisely as the moment when three stars of the second magnitude became visible. Friedländer, *JE* 3: 501.

¹³*Berakot* 3a-b; Epstein, *BT* 5-8.

¹⁴R. de Vaux, *RB* 73 (1966): 146-147, review of FHBC.

¹⁵*APOT* 2:80.

17. In Mesopotamia the entire day was divided into twelve periods of what we would call two hours each.¹⁶ Herodotus (2.109) refers to these "twelve divisions (μέρεα) of the day," and observes that the Greeks learned of them from the Babylonians. Among the Greeks themselves the day and the night were each divided into twelve hours.¹⁷ These hours naturally varied in length depending upon the time of year and were known as ὥραι καιρικαί. For scientific purposes, an hour of standard length was used, the entire day (νυχθημέρον) being divided into twenty-four periods of equal length. The astronomer Hipparchus (c. 150 B.C.) speaks of these "equinoctial hours" (ὥραι ἰσημεριναί),¹⁸ as he calls them, and Ptolemy¹⁹ also distinguishes between ordinary and equinoctial hours. In order to measure the hours, there were available for the time when the sun was shining the sun-clock (πόλος) and the sundial (γνώμων), which are mentioned by Herodotus in the passage cited just above with the statement that they came from Babylonia. The same principle of measurement by the shadow of the sun was, of course, also known in Egypt, where the obelisks were evidently used for astronomical measurements.²⁰ For the measurement of time during the darkness as well as the light, there was the water clock (κλεψύδρα), which is mentioned by Aristotle²¹ and others.

18. The division of the day into twelve hours appears in John 11:9 where it is asked, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Likewise in Matt 20:1–12 the householder goes to hire laborers early in the morning, and again at the third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours, and the last ones have only one hour of work before the end of the day. As we saw above (§11), Pliny tells us that the common people everywhere reckoned the day from dawn to dark, so the twelve hours were presumably counted within that period. If an average daytime lasting from six a.m. to six p.m. was taken as the basis, then the third hour was what we would call nine o'clock in the morning, and so on. In the 'Talmud' there is a discussion in connection with the testimony of witnesses of the extent of reasonable error in a man's estimate of what the hour is, and it is noted that "in the sixth hour the sun stands in the meridian."

19. In the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, we saw (§13) that the day must have been reckoned from the preceding midnight, according to what Pliny (§11) tells us was official Roman usage. In this "modern" reckoning of the day from midnight, the first twelve hours would extend from midnight to midday, and another twelve hours would cover the time from midday to the next midnight. When various hourly notations are considered in the Gospel according to John, it is found that they do in fact work out well in terms of the Roman reckoning. For example, in John 1:39 a reckoning from the morning would make

¹⁶Georges Contenau, *Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria* (London: E. Arnold, 1954), 11.

¹⁷Gow, *Companion*, 79.

¹⁸Hipparchus 2.4.5, ed. C. Manitius (Leipzig: Teubner, 1894), 184.

¹⁹*Tetrabiblos* 76, tr. F. E. Robbins (LCL, 1948), 165–167.

²⁰Russell, Dugan, and Stewart, *Astronomy* 1:78.

²¹*Athenian Constitution* 67.2, tr. H. Rackham (LCL, 1952), 187; cf. Sontheimer, PW, Zweite Reihe 4.2, cols. 2017–2018.

²²*Pesakhim* 11b–12b; Epstein, *BT* 51–56.