

Measuring Time

After the Great Flood, when all the earth was covered with water, God made a promise to Noah: “While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.”

Have you ever wondered how the calendar was worked out; how the seasons come and go; how the farmer knows when to plant his food crops; why there are 24 hours in one day; how clocks came to be invented?

All of these questions can be answered through this promise of God to Noah. It is God who has planned the seasons, the hot weather, the cold weather, day-time and night-time. It is also God who planned the times for seeds to be planted for food crops, and the growing and harvesting times.

When Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt, they built the tabernacle which was a portable tent. They constructed it at God’s direction and carried it with them through the wilderness for 40 years.

Among the articles used in the tabernacle was a large brass altar which the Lord told Moses was to be used for *continual* sacrifice. The Levites, (who were the priests), carried out the sacrifice of a bull, a ram, a goat, a dove or pigeon. The sacrifice had to be burnt completely and needed to burn slowly and gradually so that the burning would last from one sacrifice to the next.

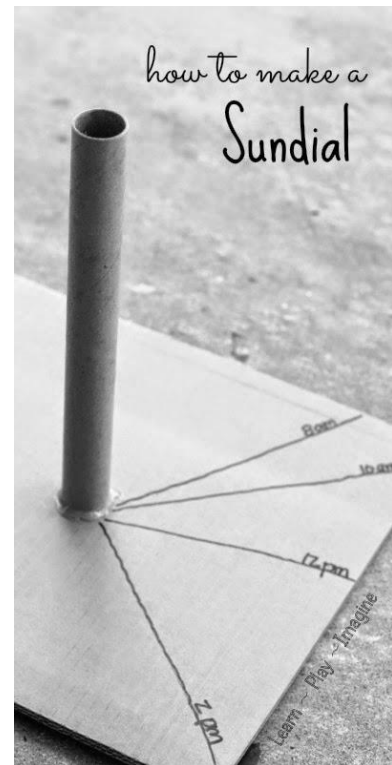
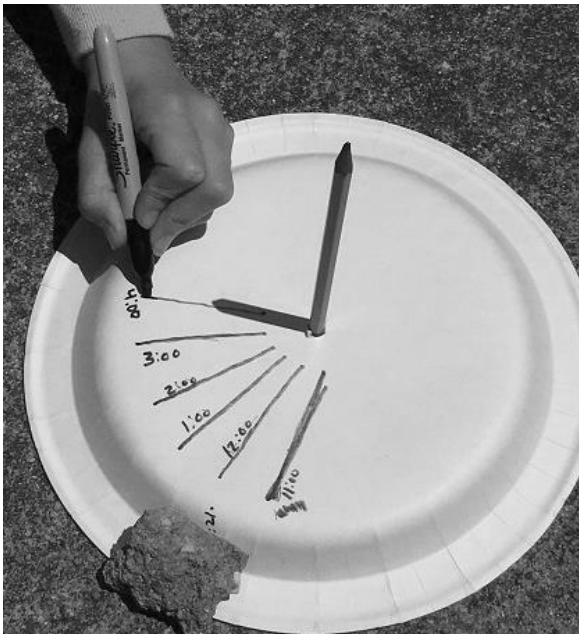
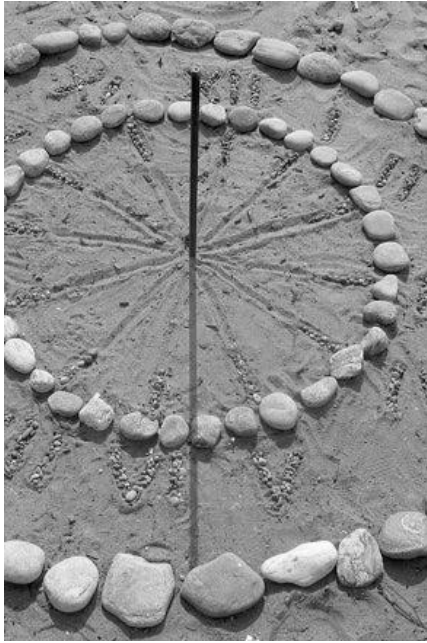
The people judged the time by the sun, and at first these sacrifices were made at about nine o’clock in the morning, twelve o’clock midday and three o’clock in the afternoon. These times were known as “the third hour”, “the sixth hour” and “the ninth hour”. These three times were especially important for the Jews.

There were twelve hours in a day and the counting of hours began at sunrise and ended at sunset. They measured the hours by the sun’s shadow which fell across a marked stick. This is called a sundial.

The first people to make sundials were the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

There were different forms of sundials, a common one being a stone pillar set up in an open space with smaller stones around it in a circle, so that wherever the sun was in the sky, the shadow fell somewhere in the circle.

You can try to make your own sundial.



Questions:

1. When did seasons first begin?
2. Why was it important for the Old Testament Israelites to be able to judge the time of day?
3. Who were the Levites and what did they do?
4. Why was 9 o'clock called "the third hour"?
5. What is a sundial and how does it work?