pattern of 30 days in a month and 12 months in a year. This 360-day "agricultural year" was followed by a waiting period of 5 days for the heliacal rising of a star. The calendar year was thus 365 days in length. No provision was made for "leap year."

Only a single observation of the heavens had to be made during the entire year to keep the calendar in order, a single sighting toward the east. First the beauty of dawn, then the sudden appearance of the brilliant star, Sirius, in the southeast, following by the "first flash" of the rising sun at the solstice pointed in the northwest.

A new year had begun. Each succeeding morning Sirius would rise four minutes earlier, easily observed before the rising of the sun. It was an event that every schoolboy might witness and testify to.

Four-month Seasons

In Egypt the four-month harvest season had officially terminated 5 days earlier. Now the flood of the Nile would inundate the lowlands for a four-month flood season beginning the agricultural year. Planting season followed immediately to insure harvest time prior to the next flood of the Nile. Egypt had a year of three seasons, each 120 days in length. This same 12-month, 30-days-in-a-month principle was employed in the Tigris-Euphrates valley but with a different twist. Six years of 360 days were followed by an intercalary month of 30 days, giving a 365 day average. A four-season (rather than three) year suited the agricultural economy, and the flood time of their river was at the spring equinox rather than the solstice.

The Egyptian Model in Central America

The Mayas of Central America also had their basic 360-day calendar, but with 18 months each containing 20 days; then an additional 5-day period at the end to