

## ~LETTERS (296)

[Hebrew, *se'pher*, Greek, *gram'ma*]

- The writing and sending of official, business, and personal letters was a widely used means of communication in ancient times.
- And it came about in the morning that David proceeded to write a letter to Joab and send it by the hand of Uriah. (2 Samuel 11:14)
- Then the king of Syria said; Get going! Come, and let me send a **letter** to the king of Israel. So he proceeded to go and take in his hand ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of garments. (2 Kings 5:5)
- And he came bringing the letter to the king of Israel, saying; And now at the same time that this **letter** comes to you, here I do send to you Naaman my servant, that you may recover him from his leprosy. (2 Kings 5:6)
- And it came about that as soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he immediately ripped his garments apart and said, Am I God, to put to death and to preserve alive? For this person is sending to me to recover a man from his leprosy, for just take note, please, you men, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me. (2 Kings 5:7)
- Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. Therefore Jehu wrote **letters** and sent them to Samaria to the princes of Jezreel, the older men and the caretakers of Ahab, saying; (2 Kings 10:1)
- Now, then, at the very time that this **letter** comes to you there are with you the sons of your lord, and there are with you the war chariots and the horses and a fortified city and the armor. (2 Kings 10:2)
- And Hezekiah proceeded to send to all Israel and Judah, and even **letters** he wrote to Ephraim and Manasseh, to come to the house of Yehowah in Jerusalem to hold the Passover to Yehowah the God of Israel. (2 Chronicles 30:1)
- Also, in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and

- the rest of his colleagues wrote to Artaxerxes the king of Persia, and the writing of the **letter** was written in Aramaic characters and translated into the Aramaic language. (**Ezra 4:7**)
- Then Hezekiah took the **letters** out of the hand of the messengers and read them, after which Hezekiah went up to the house of Yehowah and spread it out before Yehowah. (**Isaiah 37:14**)
  - And these are the words of the **letter** that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the older men of the exiled people and to the priests and to the prophets and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. (**Jeremiah 29:1**)
  - But Saul, still breathing threat and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the High Priest (**Acts of Apostles 9:1**)
  - And asked him for **letters** to the synagogues in Damascus, in order, that he might bring bound to Jerusalem any whom he found who belonged to The Way, both men and women. (**Acts of Apostles 9:2**)
  - They said to him; Neither have we received **letters** concerning you from Judea, nor has anyone of the brothers that has arrived reported or spoken anything wicked about you. (**Acts of Apostles 28:21**)
  - Not to be quickly shaken from your reason nor to be excited either through an inspired expression or through a verbal message or through a **letter** as though from us, to the effect that the day of Yehowah is here. (**2 Thessalonians 2:2**)
  - Now I exhort you, brothers, to bear with this word of encouragement, for I have, indeed, composed a **letter** to you in few words. (**Hebrews 13:22**)
  - The **Hebrew** word *se'pher* refers to anything that is written and has the various meanings, book, **letter**, **writing**, **certificate**, **deed**, **written document**. The **Greek** word *gram'ma* can denote a **letter of the alphabet** or a **written document**.
  - Moreover, if the code which administers death and which was engraved in **letters** in stones came about in a glory, so that the sons of Israel could not gaze intently at the face of Moses

because of the glory of his face, a glory that was to be done away with. (2 Corinthians 3:7)

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- The **Greek** term *e-pi-sto-le'* is used only with regard to a written message.
- In my letter I wrote you to quit mixing in company with fornicators. (1 Corinthians 5:9)
- Confidential **letters** were usually sealed.
- Accordingly she wrote **letters** in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the older men and the nobles that were in his city dwelling with Naboth. (1 Kings 21:8)
- Sanballat's disrespectful action in sending an open letter to Nehemiah may have been intended to cause the false charges set forth therein to become public knowledge.
- Finally Sanballat sent his attendant to me with the same word a fifth time, with an open **letter** in his hand. (Nehemiah 6:5)
- In addition to papyrus, materials employed for **letter** writing in ancient times included ostraca, small pieces of broken pottery or earthenware, and clay tablets.
- Thousands of clay tablets have been found in Babylonia and other regions. Washed and cleaned, smooth clay was made into a tablet and, while still wet, it was imprinted by means of a stylus forming wedge-shaped, cuneiform, characters.
- These tablets were often enclosed in clay envelopes. In the case of contracts, the text was sometimes repeated on the envelope. The envelopes were sealed and then baked in a kiln or dried in the sun to make them hard and durable.

**See Also ARCHAEOLOGY**

- **Letter** writing was often done by professional scribes. As in the Persian court, such scribes were usually on hand to take down official government correspondence.
- Accordingly the secretaries of the king were called at that time in the third month, that is, the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day of it, and writing went on according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews and to the satraps and the governor's and the princes of the jurisdictional districts that were from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven jurisdictional districts, to each jurisdictional district in its own style of writing and to each people in its own tongue, and to the Jews in their own style of writing and in their own tongue. (**Esther 8:9**)
- Rehum the chief government official and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king, as follows. (**Ezra 4:8**)
- Scribes were also to be found in the marketplaces near city gates, where they could be engaged by the populace to write **letters** and to record business transactions.
- **Letters** were sometimes delivered by messengers.
- Then Hezekiah took the **letters** out of the hand of the messengers and read them, after which Hezekiah went up to the house of Yehowah and spread it out before Yehowah. (**2 Kings 19:14**)
- **Runners.**
- Accordingly the runners with the **letters** from the hand of the king and of his princes went throughout all Israel and Judah, even according to the commandment of the king, saying; You sons of Israel, return to Yehowah the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, that he may return to the escaped ones that are left of you out of the palm of the kings of Assyria. (**2 Chronicles 30:6**)
- **Or couriers.**
- And there was a sending of the **letters** by means of couriers to all the kings jurisdictional districts, to annihilate, to kill and to destroy all the Jews, young man as well as old man, little ones and women, on one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, and to plunder the spoil of them.

**(Esther 3:13)**

- The couriers themselves, riding post horses used in the royal service, went forth, being urged forward and being moved with speed by the king's word, and the Law itself was given out in Shushan the castle. **(Esther 8:14)**
- Postal service itself seems to have been restricted to official correspondence down to Roman times. So average persons had to rely on traveling acquaintances or merchants to deliver their **letters**.
- Anciently, **letters** of recommendation were also used. However, the apostle Paul did not need such **letters** to or from the Christians at Corinth to prove that he was a minister.
- He had helped them to become Christians and therefore could say; You yourselves are our **letter**, inscribed on our hearts and known and being read by all mankind.
- Are we starting again to recommend ourselves? Or do we, perhaps, like some men, need **letters** of recommendation to you or from you? **(2 Corinthians 3:1)**
- You yourselves are our **letter**, inscribed on our hearts and known and being read by all mankind. **(2 Corinthians 3:2)**
- For you are shown to be a letter of Christ written by us as ministers, inscribed not with ink but with spirit of a living God, not on stone tablets, but on fleshly tablets, on hearts. **(2 Corinthians 3:3)**
- In the **First Century C.E.**, **letters** from Paul, James, Peter, John, Jude, and the older men in Jerusalem contributed to the growth and the preservation of the unity and cleanness of the Christian congregation.
- Then the apostles and the older men together with the whole congregation favored sending chosen men from among them to Antioch along with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brothers. **(Acts of Apostles 15:22)**
- And by their hand they wrote. The apostles and the older men, brothers, to those brothers in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who

are from the nations, greetings! ([Acts of Apostles 15:23](#))

- Since we have heard that some from among us have caused you trouble with speeches, trying to subvert your souls, although we did not give them any instructions. ([Acts of Apostles 15:24](#))
- We have come to a unanimous accord and have favored choosing men to send to you together with our loved ones, Barnabas and Paul. ([Acts of Apostles 15:25](#))
- Men that have delivered up their souls for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ([Acts of Apostles 15:26](#))
- We are therefore dispatching Judas and Silas, that they also may report the same things by word. ([Acts of Apostles 15:27](#))
- For the Holy Spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you, except these necessary things. ([Acts of Apostles 15:28](#))
- To keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication. If you carefully keep yourselves from these things, you will prosper. Good health to you! ([Acts of Apostles 15:29](#))
- Accordingly, when these men were let go, they went down to Antioch, and they gathered the multitude together and handed them the letter. ([Acts of Apostles 15:30](#))
- After reading it, they rejoiced over the encouragement. ([Acts of Apostles 15:31](#))
- Now as they traveled on through the cities they would deliver to those there for observance the decrees that had been decided upon by the apostles and older men who were in Jerusalem. ([Acts of Apostles 16:4](#))
- Therefore, indeed, the congregations continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number from day to day. ([Acts of Apostles 16:5](#))
- Hence even if I saddened you by my letter, I do not regret it. Even if I did at first regret it, I see that that letter saddened you, though but for a little while. ([2 Corinthians 7:8](#))

- **Now I rejoice, not because you were just saddened, but because you were saddened into repenting, for you were saddened in a godly way, that you might suffer no damage in anything due to us. (2 Corinthians 7:9)**
- **For even if I should boast a bit too much about the authority that the Lord gave us to build you up and not to tear you down, I would not be put to shame. (2 Corinthians 10:8)**
- **That I may not seem to want to terrify you by my **letters**. (2 Corinthians 10:9)**
- **For, say they; His **letters** are weighty and forceful, but his presence in person is weak and his speech contemptible. (2 Corinthians 10:10)**
- **Let such a man take this into account, that what we are in our word by **letters** when absent, such we shall also be in action when present. (2 Corinthians 10:11)**