

~PAPYRUS (134)

(pa-py'rus) [Hebrew, *go'me*]

.. Use As Writing Material

- A large aquatic plant belonging to the sedge family. It has a tapering three-sided stem, or stock, that grows in shallow water to a height of 2 to 6 meters (6.5 to 20 feet) and terminates in a bush, or plume, of fine grasslike panicles. The **papyrus** plant was used in the manufacture of various items, including a writing material.
- **Papyrus**, *Cyperus papyrus*, thrives in shallow, stagnant waters or marshes and along the banks of slow-moving rivers, such as the lower Nile, where it once flourished, but is now nearly extinct. Bildad asked Job;
- Will a **papyrus** plant grow tall without a swampy place? Will a reed grow big without water? (**Job 8:11**)
- And the heat-parched ground will have become as a reedy pool, and the thirsty ground as springs of water. In the abiding place of jackals, a resting-place for them, there will be green grass with reeds and **papyrus** plants. (**Isaiah 35:7**)
- The plants stems are buoyant, and to prevent the death of the infant Moses, his mother placed him in an ark of **papyrus** coated with bitumen and pitch and set him adrift on the Nile River.
- When she was no longer able to conceal him, she then took for him an ark of **papyrus** and coated it with bitumen and pitch and put the child in it and put it among the reeds by the bank of the river Nile. (**Exodus 2:3**)
- Large vessels for traveling long distances were also made from **papyrus**.
- It is the one sending forth envoys by means of the sea, and by means of vessels of **papyrus** upon the surface of the waters, saying; Go, you swift messengers, to a nation drawn out and scoured, to a people fear-inspiring everywhere, a nation of tensile strength and of treading down, whose land the rivers have washed away. (**Isaiah 18:2**)

- These may have been made of bundles of **papyrus** stems lashed together. They had narrow ends, but the beams were broad enough to support standing passengers. In 1970 C.E, Thor Heyerdahl and a group of associates traveled across thousands of miles of the Atlantic in such a craft.

•• Use As Writing Material

- When the Egyptians prepared **papyrus** for writing material, they followed a rather simple process. In gathering the stems, they prized the thick pithy part that grew under the surface of the water because it yielded the broadest and whitest raw material.

- The outer rinds were peeled off, and the remaining pithy cores were cut into convenient lengths of 40 to 45 centimeters (16 to 18 inches). Next, the cellular pith was sliced into broad, but very thin, strips. The strips were then laid out vertically on a smooth surface and allowed to overlap slightly.

- After a thin coat of paste was applied, another layer of **papyrus** strips was placed horizontally over the vertical ones. Mallets were used to beat the layers until they were bonded into a unified sheet. Then after being dried in the sun, the sheets were trimmed to the desired size.

- Finally, they were smoothed and polished with pumice, shells, or ivory. This process produced a fairly durable, supple, near-white writing material that was available in many sizes and degrees of quality.

- The side having the horizontal strips was usually chosen for writing, although at times the reverse side was used to finish a writing. The joints of the strips served to guide the writers hand as he wrote with a reed pen and a writing fluid made from gum, soot, and water.

- These **papyrus** sheets could be pasted along the edges and joined to make a scroll, normally consisting of about 20 sheets. Or they might be folded into leaves to form the booklike codex that became popular among the early Christians.

- The average scroll measured some 4 to 6 meters (14 to 20 feet) in length, though one has been preserved that is 40.5 meters (133 feet) long. The Greek word *bi'blos* originally applied to the soft pith of the papyrus plant but was later used with reference to a book.

- The book of the history of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. (**Matthew 1:1**)
- But concerning the dead, that they are raised up, did you not read in the book of Moses, in the account about the thornbush, how God said to him, I am the God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob? (**Mark 12:26**)
- The diminutive *bi-bli'on* has the plural *bi-bli'a*, literally meaning **little books**, and from this the word, **Bible** is derived. **Int**
- When you come, bring the cloak I left at Troas with Carpus, and the scrolls, especially the parchments. (**2 Timothy 4:13**)
- A Phoenician city was called Byblos after it became an important center for the **papyrus** industry.
- **Papyrus** rolls were used widely until the beginning of the **Second Century C.E.**, when they began to be superseded by the **papyrus** codex. Later, in the **Fourth Century**, the popularity of **papyrus** waned, and it was replaced extensively by a more durable writing material called vellum.
- **Papyrus** had one major disadvantage as a writing material in that it was not very durable. It deteriorated in a damp environment and, when stored under arid conditions, became very brittle.
- Until the **18th Century C.E.**, the assumption was that all ancient **papyrus** manuscripts had perished. However, in the late **19th Century C.E.**, a number of valuable Biblical **papyri** were brought to light.
- Discoveries have been made chiefly in Egypt and the region around the Dead Sea, places that afford the ideal dry climate so necessary for the preservation of **papyri**.
- Some of the Scriptural **papyri** found at these locations date back as far as the **Second** or **First Century B.C.E.**
- Many of these **papyrus** manuscript discoveries are designated by the term, **papyrus** or **papyri**, such as the **Nash Papyrus** of the first or **Second Century B.C.E.**, the **Papyrus Rylands iii. 458**, **Second Century B.C.E.**, and the **Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 1**, of the **Third Century C.E.**

