

## ~BRICK (163)

[Hebrew, *leve-nah'* ]

- Generally, a **building block made of hardened mud or clay**. From earliest times brick Hebrew, *leve-nah'* has been widely used in Bible lands.
- The builders of ancient Babel found no stone in the vicinity of the site they chose for their city and, therefore, utilized bricks instead of stone, and bitumen served as mortar for them. Apparently the bricks were **kiln dried, that is, hardened with a burning process**.
- And they began to say each one to the other; Come on! Let us make **bricks** and bake them with a **burning process**. So **brick** served as stone for them, but bitumen served as mortar for them. (**Genesis 11:3**)
- In ancient Egypt, the enslaved Israelites labored at **brick making**. Their lot was made more difficult by having to gather the straw themselves and still produce the same number of **bricks**.
- You must not gather straw to give to the people to make **bricks** as formerly. Let them themselves go and gather straw for themselves. (**Exodus 5:7**)
- Moreover, the required amount of **bricks** that they were making formerly, you will further impose upon them. You must not make any reduction for them, because they are relaxing. That is why they are crying out, saying; We want to go, we want to sacrifice to our God! (**Exodus 5:8**)
- Let the service be heavy upon the men and let them work at it, and let them not pay attention to false words. (**Exodus 5:9**)
- So those who drove the people to work and their officers went out and said to the people; Here is what Pharaoh has said; I am giving you no more straw. (**Exodus 5:10**)
- You yourselves go, get straw for yourselves wherever you may find it, because there is to be no reducing of your services one bit. (**Exodus 5:11**)

- **Consequently the people scattered about over all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. (Exodus 5:12)**
- **And those who drove them to work kept urging them, saying, Finish your works, each one his work, day for day, just as when straw was available. (Exodus 5:13)**
- **Later on the officers of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, these saying; Why is it you did not finish your prescribed task in making bricks as formerly, both yesterday and today? (Exodus 5:14)**
- **Consequently the officers of the sons of Israel went in and began to cry out to Pharaoh, saying; Why do you deal this way with your servants? (Exodus 5:15)**
- **There is no straw given to your servants and yet they are saying to us, Make bricks! And here your servants are beaten, whereas your own people are at fault. (Exodus 5:16)**
- **But he said; You are relaxing, you are relaxing! That is why you are saying; We want to go, we want to sacrifice to Yehowah. (Exodus 5:17)**
- **And now go, serve! Though no straw will be given to you, yet you are to give the fixed amount of bricks. (Exodus 5:18)**
- **Then the officers of the sons of Israel saw themselves in an evil plight at the saying; You must not deduct from your bricks one bit of anyone's daily rate. (Exodus 5:19)**
- **In the Promised Land, the Israelites continued using bricks in construction work, although it appears that stone was preferred.**
- **Bricks are what have fallen, but with hewn stone we shall build. Sycamore trees are what have been cut down, but with cedars we shall make replacement. (Isaiah 9:10)**
- **While abundant in the hills of Palestine, in some sections little good-quality building stone is available. Hence in the lowlands, at cities such as Jericho and Ezion-geber, brick was used not only for the city walls but also for dwellings.**

- In modern times in parts of Syria and Palestine, houses have been built partly of hewed stone with the remainder of **sun-dried brick**, the **hewed stone** being used for the walls most exposed to winter storms.
- In the manufacture of **bricks**, after foreign substances were removed from the mud or clay, it was generally mixed with finely chopped straw or other vegetable matter. This is borne out by a statement in the Anastasi Papyri, from ancient Egypt, that reads: **There was no one to mould bricks, and there was no straw in the neighborhood.** [*Life in Ancient Egypt*, by A. Erman, 1894, p. 117]
- Although **bricks** made without straw have been found in Egypt, this was evidently an exception and provides no valid basis for concluding that the Israelites resorted to making **bricks** without straw when forced to obtain it themselves. Experiments conducted in recent years indicate that adding straw to clay makes it easier to work and **triples the strength of the bricks** produced therefrom.
- The mixture of mud or clay and straw was moistened with water, trampled underfoot, and then molded by hand or pressed into a four-sided wooden **brick mold**, Hebrew, *mal-ben'*.
- Water for a siege draw out for yourself. Strengthen your fortified places. Get into the mire, and trample down in the clay, grab hold of the **brick mold**. (**Nahum 3:14**)
- The sides of the **molds** were probably dusted with dry earth so that the molds could be slipped off easily. Often, while the **brick** was still wet, it was stamped with the mark of the reigning monarch. The **bricks** were then left to **dry in the sun or were kiln dried**.
- In Babylonia **bricks** were commonly kiln dried, and such **bricks** were generally used for city walls and the walls and floors of palaces. Sometimes **sun-dried bricks** were used in the interiors of buildings or laid with **burned bricks** in alternate layers several feet thick.
- In Egypt, Assyria, and Palestine, sun-drying appears to have predominated. **Kiln-processed bricks** are **superior in quality** to those **dried in the sun**. The latter tend to disintegrate when subjected to floods and shrivel under the intense heat of the summer sun. In certain cases, however, **sun-dried bricks** have proved to be very substantial, such as those at Ezion-geber, which have remained for centuries.

## See Also KILN

- The extensive use of **sun-dried brick** explains why the sites of certain ancient cities have remained undiscovered for centuries. Mounds of earth much like the surrounding soil were formed by the crumbled **bricks** of former cities. In Palestine and Syria such mounds frequently contain the ruins of several cities.
- **Bricks** varied considerably in size and shape. In Egypt the rectangular shape was common, and wedge-shaped **bricks** were used in the construction of arches.
- Egyptian bricks were approximately 36 to 51 centimeters (14 to 20 inches) in length, 15 to 23 centimeters (6 to 9 inches) in width, and 10 to 18 centimeters (4 to 7 inches) in thickness.
- In Babylonia, square, oblong, triangular, and wedge-shaped **bricks** have been found. However, **brick** of later periods, as that from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, was generally **square-shaped**, measuring about 30 centimeters (12 inches) across.
- Israel's making sacrificial smoke upon the **bricks** in Isaiah's time may have reference to the pavement of the place for offering sacrifice or to the roof tiles.
- The people made up of those offending me right to my face constantly, sacrificing in the gardens and making sacrificial smoke upon the **bricks**. (**Isaiah 65:3**)