

The following is the text of the Lachish Ostraca, from *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, James Pritchard, ed., Princeton University Press, 1969, pp. 321-322:

#### The Lachish Ostraca

These ostraca were discovered in the ruins of the latest Israelite occupation at Tell ed-Duweir in southern Palestine, which unquestionably represents biblical Lachish. The first 18 were found by the late J. L. Starkey in 1935; three more (making 21 in all) were added during a supplementary campaign [meaning an archaeological campaign] in 1938. Most of the ostraca were letters, while others were lists of names, etc., but only a third of the documents are preserved well enough to be reasonably intelligible throughout. Nearly all of the ostraca come from the latest occupation level of the Israelite gate-tower, and they are generally placed immediately before the beginning of the Chaldean siege of Lachish, perhaps in the autumn of 589 (or 588) B.C. Since they form the only known corpus of documents in classical Hebrew prose, they have unusual philological significance, quite aside from the light which they shed on the time of Jeremiah.

The texts were published by Harry Torczyner of the Hebrew University in *The Lachish Letters* (Lachish I), (London, 1938), and *Te'udot Lakhish* (Jerusalem, 1940). There is a large scattered bibliography, for which see Torczyner's second publication, pp. viii-x, and *BASOR*, 82, p. 18. Among the more useful items will be found Albright, *BASOR*, 61, pp. 10-16; 70, pp. 11-17; 73, pp. 16-21; 82, pp. 18-24; H. L. Ginsberg, *BASOR*, 71, pp. 24-26; 80, pp. 10-13; Roland de Vaux, *RB*, 1939, pp. 181-206; S. Birnbaum, *PEQ*, 1939, pp. 20-28, 91-110; Winton Thomas, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 40, pp. 1-15. For a *mise-au-point* of interpretation and bibliography see D. Diringer, in Olga Tufnell, *Lachish III-The Iron Age* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 331-339.

#### *Lachish Ostrakon II*

To my lord Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of peace this very day, this very day! Who is thy servant (but) a dog that my lord hath remembered his servant? May Yahweh afflict those who re[port] an (evil) rumor about which thou art not informed!

#### *Lachish Ostrakon III*

Thy servant Hoshaiiah hath sent to inform my lord Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of peace! And now thou hast sent a letter, but my lord did not enlighten thy servant concerning the letter which thou didst send to thy servant yesterday evening, though the heart of thy servant hath been sick since thou didst write to thy servant. And as for what my lord said, "Dost thou not understand? - call a scribe!", as Yahweh liveth no one hath ever undertaken to call a scribe for me; and as for any scribe who might have come to me, truly I did not call him nor would I give anything at all for him! [Would not pay him. - *WRF*]

And it hath been reported to thy servant, saying, "The commander of the host, Coniah son of Elnathan, hath come down in order to go into Egypt; and unto Hodaviah son of Ahijah and his men hath he sent to obtain ... from him."

And as for the letter of Tobiah, servant of the king, which came to Shallum son of Jaddua through the prophet, saying, "Beware!", thy servant hath sent it to my lord.

[This seems to refer to certain events recorded in Jeremiah chapter 36. Several of these names are also found in Jeremiah at this very time. In Jeremiah chapter 22 there is a grandson of Josiah king of Judah, the son of Jehoiakim, named Coniah, and also a son of Josiah named Shallum. There is another Shallum, whose wife was a prophetess, mentioned at 2 Chronicles 34:22, who also may be the Shallum of Jeremiah 32:7. - *WRF*]

#### *Lachish Ostrakon IV*

May Yahweh cause my lord to hear this very day tidings of good! And now according to everything that my lord hath written, so hath thy servant done;

I have written on the door according to all that my lord hath written to me. And with respect to what my lord hath written about the matter of *Beth-haraphid*, there is no one there.

And as for Semachiah, Shemaiah hath taken him and hath brought him up to the city. And as for thy servant, I am not sending *anyone* thither [today(?), but I will send] tomorrow morning.

And let (my lord) know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah.

*Lachish Ostrakon V*

May Yahweh cause my lord to hear [tidings of peace] and good [this very day, this very day!] Who is thy servant (but) a dog that thou hast sent to thy servant the [letters ... Now] thy servant hath returned the letters to my lord. May Yahweh cause thee to see [ ... ]. How can thy servant benefit or injure the king?

*Lachish Ostrakon VI*

To my lord Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to see this season in good health! Who is thy servant (but) a dog that my lord hath sent the [let]ter of the king and the letters of the prince[s, say]ing, "Pray, read them!" And behold the words of the pr[inces] are not good, (but) to weaken our hands [and to sla]cken the hands of the *m[en] who are informed about them* [... And now] my lord, wilt thou not write to them, saying, "Why do ye thus [even] in Jerusalem? Behold unto the king and unto [*his house*] are ye doing this thing!" [And,] as Yahweh thy God liveth, truly since thy servant read the letters there hath been no [*peace*] for [thy ser]vant ....

*Lachish Ostrakon VIII*

May Yahweh cause my lord to hear tidings of good this very day! [ ... ]. *The Lord hath humbled me* before thee. *Nedabiah* hath fled to the mountains [ ... ]. Truly I lie not-let my lord *send* thither!

*Lachish Ostrakon IX*

May Yahweh cause my lord to hear [tidings] of peace! [ ... ] let him send [ ... ] *fifteen* [ ... ]. Return word to thy servant through *Shelemiah* (telling us) what we shall do tomorrow!

*Lachish Ostrakon XIII*

... they did not wish to do (any) work ... and Semachiah ....