

Lachish Ostraca. The Lachish Letters Translation – (Transcription)

*These ostraca were discovered in the ruins of the latest Israelite occupation at Tell ed-Duweir in southern Palestine, which unquestionably represents the biblical Lachish. 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 BC.

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 report an evil rumor about which thou art not informed!

Lachish Ostrakon III

Thy servant Hoshaiah hath sent me 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!

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.

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 Sennachiah, 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 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 letter of the king and the letters of the princes saying, “Pray, read them!” And behold the words of the princes are not good, (but) to weaken our hands and to slacken the hands of the men who are informed about 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 servant...

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

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!

Source: The Ancient Near East – An Anthology of Texts and Pictures
by James Pritchard - 1958 Princeton University Press