

# A Preliminary Survey of Letters in the Judaeian Desert Documents\*

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Oral messages and letters in general were the commonest means of communication in the ancient world.<sup>1</sup> Letters written on papyrus were found in Egypt, Nessana, the Judaeian Desert, Masada, Provincia Arabia, Syria, Dura Europos and Mesopotamia.<sup>2</sup> Ostraca, too, were employed for writing letters. (See e.g.

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<sup>1</sup> For a survey of Greek letters in the 1<sup>st</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE see LUISELLI 2008, 677-719. Letters primarily sustained direct contacts among relatives, acquaintances and friends. They created a kind of feeling between addressers and addressees as though they were conversing face to face with one another, overcoming geographical distances. See BAGNALL & CRIBIORE 2006, 12-13; LUISELLI 2008, 701-702. Letters continued to be a major means of communication after the Arabic conquest of Egypt (639 CE). See GROB 2010, xiv-xv.

<sup>2</sup> Egyptian extant testimony regarding letters show that they can be traced in the course of hundreds of years BCE and CE. These have been published as parts of documentary papyrological editions. Special collections have been published, too. Some examples follow: NALDINI 1968, 1998; TIBILETTI

**nos. 12-14** on the list of letters *infra*). Letters, written on palm leaves and on pieces of wood, were found in Yemen and in Roman Britain, and on cloth, leather and parchment in Iran.<sup>3</sup> In the western provinces of the Roman Empire there is testimony of letters written on papyrus (or on other materials), but the letters themselves were mostly lost.<sup>4</sup> Letters were undoubtedly in daily use as a common means of communication throughout these vast regions too.<sup>5</sup>

The sources discussed in this article originated mainly in Judaea, around the shores of the Dead Sea and Masada.<sup>6</sup> In many cases the addressers and the addressees were illiterates, while literates inscribed and read out for them the letters they sent or received.<sup>7</sup> Letters of this kind were occupied mainly with the circumstances of daily life.

This article will concentrate on letters (private including instructions and messages, business letters, letters of recommendation/introduction) written on papyri and other materials<sup>8</sup> and exchanged among inhabitants of Judaea around the shores of the Dead Sea and Masada during the first two centuries CE.<sup>9</sup> A preliminary survey of the letters will be performed touching also upon

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1979; COTTON 1981 (letters in Latin); BAGNALL & CRIBIORE 2006 (women's letters); GROB 2010 (letters in Arabic). A recent detailed bibliography is available in LUISELLI 2008, 720-34. No letters have so far been found among the Herculaneum papyri, most of which are literary-philosophical. Except for two very fragmentary texts showing some features of letters most of the Petra papyri (published or in the deciphering process) have the nature of other documentary manuscripts, (electronic message from A. Arjava, The Finnish Cultural Foundation, Helsinki, to whom I hereby extend my deep thanks.)

<sup>3</sup> See GROB & KAPLONY 2008, 672 and LUISELLI 2008, 776.

<sup>4</sup> The Vindolanda Tablets are an exception in this respect. See BOWMAN & THOMAS 1983-2003. These are the Latin wooden tablets from Vindolanda, Roman Britain. For the manufacturing and marketing of papyri see LEWIS 1974, 115-134 and 1989, 40-41. Egypt was the only exporter of writing material (papyri) in antiquity. See *op. cit.* (1974) 101. Private letters were saved from destruction by a variety of causes, for which see BAGNALL & CRIBIORE 2006, 22-23; LUISELLI 2008, 712-14.

<sup>5</sup> Letters from these regions survived mostly in literary sources. Among others they are attested in the writings of Cicero (*ad Atticum* and *ad Familiares*); Pliny the Younger (*Epistulae*); Plutarch (e.g. *Alexandros*); Suetonius (e.g. *Divus Iulius*). Well known letters, written by St. Paul, St. Peter and others are recorded in the New Testament.

<sup>6</sup> Henceforward in this article the phrase "the Judaeen Desert letters" will refer to those of Masada as well.

<sup>7</sup> See Hanson 1991, 159-68 for the level of illiteracy in Egypt. For Judaea see GREENFIELD 1993; GOODMAN 1994, 99-108. Literacy as a feature of Jewish life was integrated early in the history of the Jews, as the phrase "the People of the Book" (in the *Koran*, e.g. chap. 3.63-66) might indicate. See also SCHOLEM 1989, particularly 153-56.

<sup>8</sup> Out of the 42 letters discussed in this article 36 were written on papyrus, three on ostraca, two on hide and one on wood. See *infra*.

<sup>9</sup> The essays collected by GROB & KAPLONY 2008 demonstrate the wide geographical range of the use of letters in the Near East and the large variety of languages employed. The editors failed, however, to refer to letters which originated from the Judaeen Desert (penned in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin) with their special characteristics, as the following discussion will show. For a survey of these letters see COTTON, COCKLE & MILLAR 1995, 224-35 and the following list.

the structures, phraseology and the needs and motives for writing in these documents.

## THE JUDAEAN DESERT LETTERS

### KEY OF PARAMETERS

*P.Mur* – *P.Murabba'ât*; *Mas.* – *Masada*; **Pl.** – plate - photo; **C** – number of text in the list of COTTON, COCKLE & MILLAR 1995; **M** – material; **St.** – state of preservation; **Meas.** – measurements, in this article width is followed by height; **For.** – format: indicates physical feature; **Pal.** - paleography; **Type** – type of letter; **L** – language; **Pro.** – provenance; Bar-Kokhba's letters (**nos. 27-42** on the list) were found in the Cave of Letters, Naḥal Ḥever (see footnote 13 infra); **D** – date, all dates are CE; *war* under this parameter refers to the Bar Kokhba war (132-36 CE); **Cor.** corresponding figures/parties; **A** – address; **G** – greetings; **Text** – subject and contents; **Sal.** – salutations; **Wit.** – witnesses; **Sig.** – Signature; **Add.** – address (whereabouts).

- Where it is not certain that the manuscript listed is a letter, the data will be printed in a smaller font.
- Plus or minus indicate that the item in question is either present or missing in the manuscript surveyed. A parameter will be marked with a plus even if the data regarding it is only partial.
- In order to form consistency in transcribing proper names the present author printed one set of names. Where this is at discrepancy with the version given by the editor of a certain text, the editor's version will be provided in brackets.<sup>10</sup>
- Two titles of the leader of the Jews in the Bar-Kokhba War are employed: 'Bar-Kokhba' and 'Shim'on son of Kosibah'.
- Information regarding one or more parameters that appeared in parts of a papyrus that have been lost is indicated by L (Lost).
- Unless otherwise stated, the texts were inscribed by one hand.

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<sup>10</sup> The data in these texts is based on the following editions: *P.Mur*.II & the accompanying vol. of plates; *Masada* I; *P.Masada* II; *P.Hever*; *DJD* XXXVIII; *P.Yadin* II & the accompanying vol. of plates.

- Average number of letters in a line will be indicated only in complete documents.
- For an overview of some of the parameters in each document see table on p. 152 infra.

**1** *P. Mur. II 42*; **Pl.** – *P. Mur. II ii, xlv*; **C** – 312; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – the papyrus sheet suffered some damage at the top and left sides, otherwise the text is nearly complete; **Meas.** – 15.4x21 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; three horizontal folds and two vertical; average number of letters in a line (except for the signatures) is 29; the bottom margin is far larger than the rest; verso blank; **Pal.** – the untrained hand produced a cursive text leaning leftwards from the top down with uneven spacing between the lines; the few ink stains do not hinder a fluent reading of the manuscript; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – business letter; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – the papyrus was found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; the addressers resided in Bet-Mašiko (Hebrew בית מִשְׁכּוֹ); **D** – war; **Cor.** From the administrators of Bet-Mašiko, Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) and ‘El‘azar, to Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) son of Galgula, chief of the camp; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – The issue of not returning a cow legally purchased cannot be resolved on account of the war raging in the area; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – three witnesses; **Sig.** – three signatories; **Add.** – (-).

**2** *P. Mur. II 43*; **Pl.** – *P. Mur. II ii, xlvi*; **C** – 313; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – The papyrus was torn at the bottom; remnants of another document are visible; text nearly complete; **Meas.** – 11.5x8.8 cm; **For.** – originally the text might have been nearly square; at least two vertical folds and one horizontal; top and right margin survived, bottom small parts, left not at all; average number of letters in a line is 18; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is semi-formal producing a fine text with letters varying in size (0.2-1 cm) and uneven interlinear spacing; the writing runs against the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – the papyrus was found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Kaphar ha-Baruk, a village in the southern area of Judaea, see *P. Mur. II 43*, pp. 159-160; **D** – end of war (?); **Cor.** – Shim‘on (Šim‘on) son of Kosibah (Kosiba‘) to Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) son of Galgula and others; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – the son of Kosibah warns Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) and others not to harm the Galileans, otherwise he would punish them severely; **Sal.** – (-); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – the signature of Shim‘on son of Kosibah has partly survived; **Add.** – (-).

**3** *P. Mur. II 44*; **Pl.** – *P. Mur. II ii, xlvi*; **C** – 314; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – the papyrus was neatly cut on all four sides; but for two small lacunas which damaged

a few letters, the text is nearly complete; **Meas.** – 9.7x12 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; no folds traced; no margin at left, the rest are very narrow; average number of letters in a line is 18; verso blank; **Pal.** – the practiced hand produced a semi-formal script with large letters and uneven interlinear spacing; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – the papyrus was found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) son of Galgula, see **no. 2** supra; **D** – end of war (?); **Cor.** – Shim‘on (Šim‘on) son of Kosibah (Kosiba‘) to Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) son of Galgula; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim‘on (Šim‘on) instructs Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) to collect corn for him and send it after the Sabbath, which is to be observed; **Sal.** – (-); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**4** *P.Mur. II 45*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlvi*; **C** – 330; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – the highly fragmentary papyrus was torn on all four sides with several holes and ink stains all over; the extant lines at right survived intact; **Meas.** – 9.1x9.5 cm; **For.** – rectangular text, height seems to have been longer than width; some margin survived at right, the rest lost; three horizontal folds and one vertical are visible; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is semi-formal producing large letters with uneven interlinear spacing; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – the papyrus was found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; Mezaḏ Ḥasidim (1.6), a fortress not identified as yet, could have provided a clue to the provenance of this letter; (see *P.Mur. II 45.6*, p. 163; not in REEG 1989; **D** – end of war; **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – report on the food reserves at the fortress and the war casualties (?); **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** (L).

**5** *P.Mur. II 46*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlvi*; **C** – 330; **M** – papyrus; **St.** papyrus complete on top, right and bottom; left side cut abruptly; four tiny fragments in addition; the main fragment suffered cuts and breaks all over; **Meas.** – of main fragment 7x11.6 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; margins survive except on the left; at least four vertical folds and one horizontal are traceable; verso blank; **Pal.** – this semi-formal almost literary hand produced an elegant script; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – letter of recommendation; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** the papyrus was found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; its addresser, Yehonathan (Yonatan) son of (?), resided in Ein Gedi; **D** – end of war; **Cor.** – Yehonathan (Yonatan) son of (?) to Yoseh son of (?); **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Yehonathan (Yonatan) writes to Yoseh recommending that Euphronius(?), the undertaker, son of ‘Eli‘azer, be provided

with several articles needed by him to perform his tasks; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-)  
**Sig.** – contrary to the semi-formal hand of text the script of the signature is  
cursive; **Add.** – (-).

**6** *P.Mur. II 47*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlviii*; **C** – 330; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – two  
fragments survived of this papyrus sheet; only at right the beginnings of sev-  
eral lines are intact; the rest is highly fragmentary; **Meas.** – of both fragments  
combined 6.7x8.5 cm; **For.** – right margin survived; three vertical folds are  
visible; verso blank; **Pal.** – the semi-formal almost literary hand produced fine  
letters with nearly even interlinear spacing; the writing runs against the fib-  
ers; **Type** private letter?; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – the papyrus was found in a cave  
in Wadi Murabba‘at; Tekoa‘ (1.6), a village south of Bethlehem (see YADIN  
1971, p.125; ESHEL & AMIT 1998, map on p. 15) might provide a clue to the  
provenance of this letter; Tekoa‘ is also recorded in *P.Yadin II 55.3, no. 33*  
and 61.1, **no.39** infra; **D** – war; **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – The letter may  
have dealt with olives, or the production of oil. See *P.Mur. II 47*, p. 167; **Sal.**  
– (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**7** *P.Mur. II 48*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlviii*; **C** – 330; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – only  
two small fragments survived; **Meas.** – of both fragments combined 5.5x9 cm;  
**For.** – top and bottom margins partly survived; verso blank; **Pal.** – fine cursive  
script probably produced by a professional hand with almost no ligatures;  
the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter(?), apparently part of  
the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – the  
fragments were found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; the letter was probably  
written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to its addressee; **D** –  
war; **Cor** – from Shim‘on (Šim‘on?) to the son of Yohanne‘; **A** – (+); **G** – (+);  
**Text** – the letter probably dealt with events relating to the war; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.**  
– (-); **Sig.** – there is an indication that the letter was signed, though no name  
survived; **Add.** (-).

**8** *P.Mur. II 49*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlviii*; **C** – 331; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – two  
tiny fragments; **Meas.** – 6.2x0.8 (frag. 1) and 6x5.6 cm; **For.** – verso blank;  
**Pal.** – the hand is semi-formal; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – a let-  
ter(?); **L** – Hebrew (?); **Pro.** – (?); the fragments were found in a cave in Wadi  
Murabba‘at; **D** – (L); **Cor.** (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – (?); **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.**  
– (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**9** *P.Mur. II 50*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlviii*; **C** – 331; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – four tiny  
fragments with very little script; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is cursive

with no ligatures; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – a letter(?); **L** – Hebrew(?); **Pro.** – (?); the fragments were found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; **D** – (L); **Cor.** – (L); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – (?); **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**10** *P.Mur. II 51*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlvi*; **C** – 331; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – two tiny fragments with some script; **Meas.** – of the larger fragment (no. 2): 3.2x1.4 cm; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is semi-formal; the writing runs against the fibers; **Type** – a letter(?); **L** – Hebrew(?); **Pro.** – the fragments were found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; Galgala (frag. 1.1) as a place name might allude to the provenance of the letter. See *P.Mur. II 51*, p.169; **D** – (L); **Cor.** – as a proper name Galgala might refer to one of correspondents of this letter; **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – (?); **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**11** *P.Mur. II 52*: **Pl.** – *P.Mur. II ii, xlvi*; **C** – 331; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – six tiny fragments with very little script; **Meas.** – of the largest fragment (1): 3.3x1.4 cm; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is semi-formal; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – a private letter(?); **L** – Hebrew?; **Pro.** – the fragments were found in a cave in Wadi Murabba‘at; Kaphar ha-Baruk(?) in **no. 2** was addressed to Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) son of Galgala in that same village; see **Cor.** infra; **D** – (?); **Cor.** – if the reading of frag. 1 is correct the letter might have been written to Yeshua‘ (Yešua‘) son of Galgala (editor’s conjecture) as in *P.Mur. II 43.2 (no. 2)*. See *P.Mur. II 52*, p. 169; **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – frag. 2 might indicate that Galileans, one or more, were involved in this letter; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**12** *Mas. I 554*: **Pl.** – 45; **C** – 235; **M** – ostrakon; **St.** – text incomplete; **Meas.** – 6.5x8.5 cm; **Pal.** – hand: semi-cursive with few ligatures, interlinear space – 0.5 to 0.7 cm; **Type** – business letter; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – 67-73/4; **Cor.** – from the son of Ma‘uzi to (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – The son of Ma‘uzi begs the borrower to return a loan he lent him; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**13** *Mas. I 555*: **Pl.** – 45 ; **C** – 236; **M** – ostrakon; **St.** – broken on all four sides; **Meas.** – 5x5.8 cm; **Pal.** – Text written in charcoal and faintly visible with uneven size of letters; **Type** – private letter(?); **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – 67-73/4; **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – A quantity of wheat is to be delivered to someone, perhaps Reuben. Barley might have been referred to as well; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**14** *Mas. I 556*; **Pl.** – 45; **C** – 237; **M** – ostracon; **St.** – this letter was inscribed on a big amphora, which was broken to pieces; thirteen shards of clay combined to provide the text, which is incomplete as yet; **Meas.** – 18.5x14.6 cm; **Pal.** – the hand shows uneven size of letters, between 0.5 to 1.2 cm, and interlinear space of about 1-1.2 cm; **Type** – private letter; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – 67-73/4; **Cor.** – One of the correspondents is a man named Yehōhanan; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – The letter might have dealt with the transport and delivery of myrrh and fruit; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**15** *P.Mas. II 724*; **Pl.** – 4; **C** – 260; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – one large fragment survived; **Meas.** – 14.4x8.3 cm; **For.** – top, right and left margins survived; one vertical fold is traceable; verso carries an address; **Pal.** – the fragment is light brown; the hand is elegant and apparently professional with large letters and wide spaces between the lines (about 1.5 cm); the address on the verso (a different hand) is written in elongated thin letters; the text in both recto and verso runs along the fibers; **Type** – a fragment of a letter of recommendation; **L** – Latin with one word written in Greek characters on the verso; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – before February – March 73(?); for a discussion of dates with relevance to the siege and fall of Masada see *P.Masada II*, pp. 21-23: ‘Excursus on the Date of the Fall of Masada’; **Cor.** – Titulenus Vindex to Iulius Lupus; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Titulenus Vindex introduces Ven...atus, his *familiaris*, to (Tiberius) Iulius Lupus, Prefect of Egypt; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (+).

**16** *P.Mas. II 726*; **Pl.** – 5; **C** – 262; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – highly fragmentary; **Meas.** – 10x2 cm; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is cursive with medium-sized letters, few ligatures and uneven interlinear spaces (1-0.5 cm); text runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter?; **L** – Latin; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – shortly before spring of 73 or of 74; for the date see *P.Mas. II*, introduction to the Latin papyri; **Cor.** – The rank of both addresser and addressee seem to be higher than that of a centurion; **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – The letter might have dealt with some imminent danger(?) and the forwarding of a centurion and reinforcement(?); **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**17** *P.Mas. II 728*; **Pl.** – 5; **C** – 263; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – three tiny fragments; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – three tiny fragments of a light colored papyrus; the hand, seemingly untrained, produced large letters; **Type** – letter; **L** – Latin; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – shortly before spring of 73 or of 74; **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – the letter might have been forwarded to a certain Sulpicius; see

**Add** infra; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – the reconstructed name in this one line text might allude to the address of the letter; see *P.Masada* II p. 73.

**18** *P.Mas. II 728a*: **Pl.** – 5; **C** – 263; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – two tiny fragments, only one bearing some script; **Meas.** – of the inscribed fragment 4x1.5 cm; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – text written along the fibers in thick black ink; **Type** – letter; **L** – Latin; **Pro.** Masada; **D** – shortly before spring of 73 or of 74; **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – (?); **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**19** *P.Mas. II 741*: **Pl.** – 8; **C** – 242; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – one large fragment in addition to three tiny ones, only two of which bear remnants of writing; **Meas.** – of the large fragment 12x9 cm; **For.** – top margin and parts of left and right survived; two vertical folds are detectable; verso blank; **Pal.** – the writing is neat, round and upright resembling a professional hand; some letters are ornamented; the initial characters of the names (l. 1) are larger than the rest; the interlinear space is even; text written along the fibers; **Type** – private letter; **L** – Greek; **Pro.** – Masada; Abaskantos might have sent the letter to Yehudah (Judah) from Ein Gedi, see *P.Mas.* II p. 87; **D** – before spring of 73 or of 74; for the date see *ibid.* p. 86; **Cor.** – Abaskantos to Yehudah (Judah); *P.Mas.* II 741 is probably the earliest Jewish documentary papyrus from Palestine (see *ibid.* p. 86); **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Abaskantos sends Mnemon to Yehudah (Judah) probably to deliver some provisions including lettuce; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**20** *P.Mas. II 745*: **Pl.** – 9; **C** – 245; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – one badly damaged fragment; **Meas.** – 4.5x5.8 cm; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – a light colored fragment bearing remains of five lines running along the fibers; the hand is cursive; **Type** – private letter; this may be inferred from the salutation and the wider space between the last line and the rest of the text; **L** – Greek; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – before spring of 73 or of 74; **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – end of a letter with a salutation; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**21** *P.Mas. II 746*: **Pl.** – 9; **C** – 246; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – nine mostly tiny fragments; **Meas.** – frag. a: 3.2x2.1 cm; frag. d: 3.1x3.1 cm; the rest are tinier; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is cursive; the interlinear spaces are more or less even; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter (?), as the salutation and wider space between the lines in frag. i might indicate; **L** – Greek; **Pro.** – Masada; **D** – before spring of 73 or of 74; **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – highly fragmentary text with a salutation; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**22** *P.Hever 30*: **Pl.** – XX; **C** – 311; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – the right side of the papyrus is more or less complete, the left (including a part of the text) was highly damaged; **Meas.** – 10x12.5 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; only parts of the left margin were lost, the rest survived; the verso carries an address; **Pal.** – the hand is non-calligraphic, except for the signature at 1.8, which is semi-cursive (different hand); the script on the verso is cursive; the writing (on both sides) runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – the provenance of this letter is uncertain; it belongs to the Wadi Seiyâl papyri, but actually might have been found in Naḥal Hever; see *P.Hever* p. 3; **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim‘on son of Mataniah to Shim‘on son of Kosibah; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – the addresser reports to Shim‘on son of Kosibah an incident, perhaps a calamity which took the lives of a group of people. The reporter and others, however, survived; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (+); **Add.** – (+); the other name on the verso (‘El,,) might have referred to the letter carrier.

**23** *P.Hever 342*: **Pl.** – LIV; **M** – hide; **St.** – one small fragment; **Meas.** – 4.8x6.2 cm; **For.** – verso blank; **Pal.** – four lines of the text survived written in a Jewish cursive hand; the average height of letters is about 0.4 cm; inter-linear spacing is 0.7-0.9 cm; **Type** – letter (?); **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – (?); **D** – 1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE; **Cor.** – Three names are recorded in the extant text: Yehudah, ‘El‘azar and probably ‘Elishua‘; if the reading of the last name is correct, it will be its first appearance in non-literary documents from the Judaean Desert. **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – (?); **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**24** *P.Hever 343*: **Pl.** – LV; **M** – hide; **St.** – one relatively large fragment together with another two, tiny ones (frag. a+b), were found together; the tiny fragments are probably parts of a different document; **Meas.** – 7.2x9 cm; frag. a and b combined 5.1x2.1 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; right and bottom margins of the recto survived; left of the recto and top of the verso only partly remained; **Pal.** – the fragmentary text of the larger fragment, written on both recto and verso, bears the remains of 15 lines; the hand is early Nabatean with many letters resembling the Jewish semi-cursive script of the late Hasmonaean period; average height of the letters is 0.5; so is the interlinear space; the script on the verso is perpendicular to the text on the recto; **Type** – private letter; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – the provenance of the main fragment is unknown; **D** – 1<sup>st</sup> century CE (?); **Cor.** – do the names Shim‘on (1.13) and Šdlhy (? , 1.14) allude to the addressees?; **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – the two names inscribed on the verso, Shim‘on and Šdlhy, were probably involved in the incidents described in the original letter. The narrator’s brother

is expected to deliver his house to the addressee/s. On the verso an evil deed committed is reported; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**25** *DJD XXXVIII 11 (Jericho)*: **Pl.** – XV; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – three fragments joined together augmented by five much smaller ones render this papyrus highly fragmentary; **Meas.** – the three larger pieces combined: 9.3x8.1 cm; frags. a-c: 1.1x2.2, 1.1x2.8, 1.2x2.6 cm respectively; the rest are tinier; **For.** – top margin is intact, left partly survived, the rest did not; three vertical folds and one horizontal are traceable; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is mostly Jewish cursive with many ligatures among the letters; the interlinear space is 1.2-1.5 cm; the joined fragments bear six lines, the tinier ones a line each at least; the writing runs against the fibers; **Type** – business or private letter; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – this document was found together with other fragments of papyri at a terrace below the lower entrance of the Abi'or Cave, west of Jericho; **D** – (L); **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – this manuscript might have been a letter reporting several property transaction, which included selling and exchanging of stores, parts of a house, 'half its opening' and roof, and a courtyard. **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**26** *Papyrus Har Yishai 2* (See COHEN 2006): **Pl.** – 2; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – a highly fragmentary papyrus with 21 fragments; **Meas.** – 8.5x8cm; fragments: a: 3.1x2.9; f+g: 4x2 cm; h: 1.9x1.5 cm; j+k+l: 1.5x3.2; the rest are either tinier or do not bear any reconstructible text; **For.** - no margin survived; verso blank; **Pal.** – the fragmentary sheet is dark brown with stains covering large sections of its lower part; the hand is second century, nice with very few ligatures; it runs against the fibers; **Type** – probably a private letter; **L** – Greek; **Pro.** – found in a cave at Har Yishai in the vicinity of Ein Gedi; **D** – 90-130; **Cor.** – three persons are mentioned here: 'El'azar (Eleazar), the son of Hanania and Yehudah (Ioudas); all three of them might have been the correspondents in this letter; **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – The addresser forwards to the addressee/s and others some information regarding something to be acquired probably at Ein Gedi; **Sal.** (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**27** *P.Yadin II 49 (5/6Hev no. 49)*: **Pl.** – 83; **C** – 326; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – the papyrus sheet suffered much damage on its left side, of which four narrow fragments survived; the right column is nearly complete, the left is very fragmentary; **Meas.** – 18x9.5; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; top and right margins are intact; at bottom the text touches the very edge, left margin was lost; average number of letters in the right column is 24; verso blank; **Pal.** – a practiced hand produced this well written cursive script

with large letters and few ligatures; text runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba, probably brought to the Cave of Letters by Yehonathan’s wife (see YADIN 1971, 134-5); **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi; **D** – 134(?); **Cor.** – Shim’on son of Kosibah (Kosiba’) to Mesabala’, Yehonathan son of Ba’yan and the men of Ein Gedi; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim’on reproaches his addressees for their indifference towards their brothers’ needs. He demands that they unload a shipload of fruit and handle it carefully; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** (L); **Add.** – (L).

**28** *P.Yadin II 50 (5/6Hev no. 50)*: **Pl.** 83; **C** – 322; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – complete with minor damage at the left side; **Meas.** – 7.2x12.5 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; all four margins survived; three horizontal and three vertical folds are traceable; average number of words in a line is 16; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand is cursive with special features appertaining to “Jewish” script; most of the letters lean forward, except for the *resh* which leans backward; almost no ligatures; the text runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi, where Bar-Kokhba’s agents were positioned; **D** – 134(?); **Cor.** – Shim’on son of Kosibah (Kosiba’) to Mesabala’ (Mesabalah) son of Shim’on and Yehonathan son of Ba’yan; **A** – (+); **G** – (-); **Text** – Shim’on son of Kosibah (Kosiba’) instructs his addressees to deliver to him a certain El’azar and to take care of the fruit, the trees and other matters, urging his agents to punish anyone who tries to resist them; **Sal.** – (-); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – Shim’on son of Yehudah issued the letter in Bar Kokhba’s name; **Add.** – (-).

**29** *P.Yadin II 51 (5/6Hev no. 51)*: **Pl.** – 84; **C** – 319; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – highly fragmentary; **Meas.** – 19.3x26.2 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; top left and bottom margins survived, right only partly; verso blank; **Pal.** – a practiced hand produced this text written in a cursive script with “Jewish” features; the letters are large, well-spaced and with no ligatures; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi; **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim’on (son of Kosibah) to Yehonathan son of Ba’yan and the rest of the people of Ein Gedi; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim’on’s instructions to Yehonathan and the rest of the people of Ein Gedi regarding the utensils, children and the fruit or the iron that probably belonged to the gentiles. **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**30** *P.Yadin II 52 (5/6Hev. no. 52)*: **Pl.** – 90; **C** – 317; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – right side of the main text nearly complete, left highly fragmentary; in addition there are two fragments bearing some script; **Meas.** – of main text 9.5x25.3 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; all four margins survived; four vertical and three horizontal fold are detectable; for verso see **Add. infra**; **Pal.** – the hand is second century cursive with many ligatures; text runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Greek; **Pro.** – probably written somewhere between Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and Ein Gedi; **D** – September or early October 135; **Cor.** – Soumaios to Yehonathan son of Ba’yan (Yonathes son of Beianos) and to Mesabala’ (Masabala); **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Soumaios urges his addressees to hurry sending him palm branches and citrons for the festival of Tabernacles (Sukkot). He apologizes for writing in Greek on account of their (his) inability to write in Hebrew; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (+); **Add.** – faint remnants of one or both names of the addressees survived on the verso.

**31** *P.Yadin II 53 (5/6Hev no. 53)*: **Pl.** – 85; **C** – 318; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – complete on all its sides except for the lower, which is full of cuts and breaks; the left part suffered more damage than the right; **Meas.** – 12x8 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; top, right, and bottom margins survived, at left the text touches the very edge; average number of letters in a line is 20; verso blank; **Pal.** – a practiced hand produced this well written “Jewish” cursive script with no ligatures; the text runs against the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi, where Yehonathan was positioned; **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim’on son of Kosibah to Yehonathan son of Ba’yan; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim’on orders Yehonathan to perform whatever a person named Elisha’ asks him to do; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**32** *P.Yadin II 54 (5/6 Hev. no. 54)*: **Pl.** – 86; **C** – 315; **M** – wood; **St.** – a sheet of wood broken into four pieces on account of being folded first vertically in the middle and then horizontally; following the restoration the text is complete; **Meas.** – 17.5x7.5; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; all four margins survived; the wood tablet was almost neatly cut into four pieces; average number of letters in a line is 20; verso blank; **Pal.** – the cursive hand produced a text in two columns with letters of varying sizes and uneven spaces between the lines; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **Pro.** – probably written

in Bar-Kokhba's camp (at Herodion) and sent to Ein Gedi, where Yehonathan and Mesabala' were positioned; **D** – war; **Cor.** Shim'on son of Kosibah to Yehonathan and to Mesabala' (Mesabalah); **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim'on instructs his addressees to seize some stolen wheat and place several people under guard warning them that if they disobey his orders, they will be punished; **Sal.** – (-); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – the letter is signed by Shemue'l son of 'Ammi in Bar-Kokhba's name; **Add.** – (-).

**33** *P.Yadin II 55 (5/6 Hev. no. 55)*: **Pl.** – 87; **C** – 328; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – while the text is nearly complete, the papyrus is full of breaks and lacunas; **Meas.** – 10.8x24.3; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; all four margins survived; three vertical and one horizontal folds are visible; average number of letters in a line is 17; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand produced a “Jewish” cursive script with most of the letters leaning forward; several letters in Greek are visible above the Aramaic text, probably part of a different document; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba's camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi, where Yehonathan and Mesabala' were positioned; **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim'on son of Kosibah to Yehonathan and to Mesabala'; **A** – (+); **G** – (-); **Text** – Shim'on son of Kosibah orders his addressees to dispatch to him any person from Tekoa' together with other people and warns that punishment will be exacted from them if they do not comply; **Sal.** – (-); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**34** *P.Yadin II 56 (5/6 Hev. no. 56)*: **Pl.** – 88; **C** – 325; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – nearly complete; **Meas.** – 9.5x21.5 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with height longer than width; all four margins survived; two vertical folds and three horizontal are visible; average number of letters in a line is 21; verso blank; **Pal.** – the practiced hand produced a fine “Jewish” cursive script with very few ligatures; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba's camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi, where Yehonathan, Mesabala' (Mesabalah) and the son of Ḥayyata', Bar-Kokhba's agents, were positioned; **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim'on son of Kosibah to Yehonathan son of Ba'yan, Mesabala' (Mesabalah) and to the son of Ḥayyata'; **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim'on instructs his agents at Ein Gedi to deliver to him some goods including salt, the youth and another person. The Romans are referred to as well; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**35** *P.Yadin II 57 (5/6 Hev. no. 57)*: **Pl.** – 89; **C** – 329; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – nearly complete; **Meas.** – 22x6.6 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; all four margins survived; three horizontal folds and four vertical are traceable; average number of letters in a line is 44; verso blank; **Pal.** – this practiced hand produced a “Jewish” cursive script with almost no ligatures; the writing runs against the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Qiryat ‘Arabayyah, identified with H. al-‘Arub located north-west of Tekoa’ on the main route between Beth-Ther and Ein Gedi; see YADIN 1961, 49, REEG 1989, 88 and Yardeni in *P.Yadin II*, pp. 322-323; **D** – war; **Cor.**; – Shim‘on to Yehudah son of Menasheh; **A** – (+); **G** – (-); **Text** – Shim‘on instructs Yehudah to dispatch the two donkeys he had sent him together with two men to Yehonathan and Mesabala’ (Mesabalah) so that palm branches, citrons, myrtle branches and willows be packed and delivered for the large population present at the camp; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**36** *P.Yadin II 58 (5/6 Hev. no. 58)*: **Pl.** – 89; **C** – 324; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – fragmentary papyrus with breaks and holes all over; text fairly reconstructed; **Meas.** – 12x7.1 cm; **For** – rectangular text with width longer than height; nearly all four margins survived; two horizontal and three vertical folds are visible; average number of letters in a line is 18; verso blank; **Pal.** – the unprofessional hand produced a “Jewish” cursive script with large spaces between the letters and the lines and no ligatures; the writing runs against the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi (?); **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim‘on to Yehonathan (Yonathan) and Mesabala’ (Mesabalah); **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim‘on instructs Yehonathan and Mesabala’ (Mesabalah), his agents, to deliver to his camp (at Herodion?) four loads of salt; **Sal.** – to Bar-Kokhba’s agents at Ein Gedi(?) and to the men of Qiryat ‘Arabayyah; **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**37** *P.Yadin II 59 (5/6 Hev. no. 59)*: **Pl.** – 85; **C** – 320; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – the papyrus is fragmentary with holes and breaks in many places; the ink faded almost entirely in large parts of the papyrus; **Meas.** – 14x8 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; all four margins survived; two horizontal and three vertical folds are visible; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand produced a fluent second century cursive; text runs along the fibers with ligatures here

and there; a large space between lines 6 and 7 is visible; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Greek; **Pro.** – this letter like others in the group of texts discussed here may have been written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi where Yehonathan (Yonathes), Bar-Kokhba’s agent, was positioned; **D** – autumn 135(?); **Cor.** – Annanos (or Aelianos, see *P.Yadin* II, p. 364) to Yehonathan (Yonathes); **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Annanos (or Aelianos) reminds Yehonathan (Yonathes) of the message of Shim’on son of Kosibah (Simon son of Kosiba) regarding the needs of their brothers; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**38** *P.Yadin* II 60 (5/6 *Hev.* no. 60): **Pl.** – 91; **C** – 323; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – highly fragmentary; **Meas.** – 7.2x5.9 cm; **For.** – except for the bottom margin all the other three were lost; two vertical folds are traceable; verso blank; **Pal.** – “Jewish” cursive script written carelessly; letters varying in size and no ligatures; the writing runs against the fibers; **Type** – private (?) letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Hebrew; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi; **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim’on to Yehonathan and (?); **A** – (+); **G** – (L); **Text** – Shim’on might have forwarded some instructions to his agent Yehonathan; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**39** *P.Yadin* II 61 (5/6 *Hev.* no. 61): **Pl.** – 91; **C** – 321; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – the papyrus sheet suffered severe damage, and is highly fragmentary as a result; **Meas.** – 11.2x13.5; **For.** – top and left margins and maybe a part of the bottom survived; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand produced a “Jewish” cursive script with large spaces between the letters and the lines and no ligatures; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Hebrew or Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Tekoa’ (see **no. 6** supra); **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim’on son of Kosibah ([Kosiba’]) to the people of Tekoa’; **A** – (+); **G** – (?); **Text** – Shim’on writes to the people of Tekoa’ demanding the payment of a certain debt; **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**40** *P.Yadin* II 62 (5/6 *Hev.* no. 62): **Pl.** – 91; **C** – 327; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – severely damaged and highly fragmentary as a result; **Meas.** – 9.2x10 cm; **For.** – two possible vertical folds; verso blank; **Pal.** – the hand produced a “Jewish” cursive script with large spaces between the letters and no ligatures; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – letter(?), part of the administrative correspond-

ence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic(?); **Pro.** – (?); **D** – (L); **Cor.** – (?); **A** – (L); **G** – (L); **Text** – (?); **Sal.** – (L); **Wit.** – (L); **Sig.** – (L); **Add.** – (L).

**41** *P.Yadin II 63 5/6 Hev. no. 63*): **Pl.** – 92; **C** – 316; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – damaged along the lines of the folds; most of the text survived though stains of ink cover parts of it; **Meas.** – 13.8x16.5 cm; **For.** – rectangular text with width longer than height; all four margins survived; three vertical and likewise horizontal folds are visible; average number of letters in a line is 28; verso blank; **Pal.** – the practiced hand produced a carelessly written “Jewish” cursive script with large spaces between the letters and the lines; the writing runs along the fibers; **Type** – private letter, part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba; see **no. 27** supra; **L** – Aramaic; **Pro.** – probably written in Bar-Kokhba’s camp (at Herodion?) and sent to Ein Gedi(?), if the name Mesabala’ (Mesabalah) is correctly reconstructed; **D** – war; **Cor.** – Shim’on son of Kosibah (Kosiba ) to Yehonathan(?) and to Mesabala’? (Mesabalah?); **A** – (+); **G** – (+); **Text** – Shim’on demands that a debt, requested in a previous letter, delivered by Shim’on son of Yishma’el, be paid to him; **Sal.** – (+); **Wit.** – (-); **Sig.** – (-); **Add.** – (-).

**42** *P.Yadin II 64*: **Pl.** – **91**; **M** – papyrus; **St.** – highly fragmentary; **Meas.** 8.7x12 cm; **L.** – probably Greek; **Pro.** – Ein Gedi(?). Information regarding the rest of the parameters is either highly doubtful or missing. No edition is provided for *P.Yadin II 64*, only a plate. The text is too fragmentary. See *P.Yadin II*, p. 349 and plate no. 91 in the accompanying volume of plates. The manuscript was probably part of the administrative correspondence of Bar-Kokhba (see **no. 27** supra) which might suggest a similar provenance, addresser/s and addressee/s as in many of the letters in this group.

## PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Letters from the Judaean Desert were written in several languages. Extant are 42 letters:

Hebrew – 17 (nos. **1-11, 22, 25, 27, 29, 38, 39**);

Aramaic – 14 (nos. **12-14, 23, 24, 28, 31-36, 40**);

Greek – 7 (nos. **19-21, 26, 30, 37, 42**);

Latin – 4 (nos. **15-18**).

The chronological span of the letters from the Judaean Desert is not wide, as they were dated into a relatively short period, starting in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE

(the earliest approximately datable documents, are dated to 67-73/4 CE), and up to the end of the Bar-Kokhba War (132-36 CE). Within this period, very short time frames yield evidence: this is in particular the case with the Greek and Latin documentation from Masada, all dating to 67-74 CE, and the letters composed or preserved, in connection with the Bar-Kokhba War.

In addition, some are very fragmentary and partly or entirely illegible. In fact, in some cases the identification of a text as a letter, considered by the editors, is highly conjectural, depending more on the archival context of the preservation of the document than on its context. Recognizing this is crucial for assessing the text for which a survey of this group of documents can be conducted. A further analysis of the structure of the documents will take into consideration the broader context of the various epistolographical traditions evident in different cultural settings, periods and regions, in the Roman East. For now we will restrict ourselves to the following preliminary account of the components of the Judaean Desert letters.<sup>11</sup>

**Address and greetings:** The address and greetings (i.e. ‘A to B, greetings’) are very brief in the Judaean Desert letters. At times merely the address is inked with no greeting to accompany it. See e.g. *P.Yadin* II 55.1-2 – **no. 33** on the above list; no greetings, just address; *P.Yadin* II 56.1-2 – **no. 34**; very short address and greetings: שמעון בר כוסבה ליהונתן בר בעין/ולמסבלה ובר חיטה אחי שלם. (Shim‘on son of Kosibah to Yehonathan son of Ba ʿyan, and to Mesabala’ (Mesabalah), and the son of Hayyata’: my brothers, Peace).

**The body of the letter:** This is the main part of the letter. See e.g. *P.Yadin* II 59. (**no. 37**). The text contains an account of past activities, and instructions of future ones. Common subject matter and occurrences of daily life, buying/selling property, debt collection and the like are related. That the subject matter depends on the relations between the author and the addressee is self-evident.

**The closing unit:** Where they are indicated in the Judaean Desert epistles, the salutations are limited to a word or two. See *P.Hever* 30, שלם (greetings, a very brief salutation); *P.Yadin* II 53: הוה/הוי שלם (fare thee well) (**nos. 22 and 31** respectively). See Summary of Parameters *infra* where the main components of the closing unit in each of the surveyed letters are shown.

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<sup>11</sup> As regards structure Judaean Desert letters contain the same components as Egyptian letters do, although these components are somewhat differently composed here. For the structure of the Egyptian letter see *ASP 44 (P.Berl.Cohen)* pp. 102-105 and the bibliography cited *ad loc.*

**Dates and signature:** Most Judaeian Desert letters are undated. In most cases in the above survey the dating is circumstantial, as it is apparent that the letters in question were forwarded in the course of the Bar-Kokhba War. In only eight out of forty-two are the letters signed by the addresser or his representative. See Summary of Parameters *infra*.

**Addresses and delivery:** Only two letters contain notes of delivery.<sup>12</sup> They are: *P.Mas.* II 724 and *P.Hever* 30, nos. **15** and **22** respectively.<sup>13</sup> Since some of the letter carriers were acquainted with the addressees, the practice of adding addresses or notes of delivery was rendered somewhat redundant at times.<sup>14</sup>

**Needs and motives for writing:** Letters written with the purpose of saluting the addressees or asking about their well-being are absent from Judaeian Desert letters. Furthermore, extant Judaeian Desert papyri do not include letters exchanged among family members and acquaintances, which renders the whole picture of private correspondence from Judaea rather incomplete as yet.<sup>15</sup> Two observations might be offered:

1. The paucity of the group of letters from the Judaeian Desert and the short period into which they were dated do not allow for a large variety of manuscripts. That might explain the absence of some kinds of letters, like epistles of salutations and women's letters of all sorts.
2. Twenty two of the extant letters from the Judaeian Desert were written during the Bar-Kokhba War. Daily matters at the time were more pressing, and some of them were urgently in need of answers. Consequently the texts

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<sup>12</sup> In Egyptian letters the addresses are frequently inscribed on the back side of the manuscripts.

<sup>13</sup> Bar-Kokhba's letters forwarded to Jehonathan, son of Ba'yan, to Mesabala' and others were safeguarded into a leather sack and brought to the Cave of Letters by Jehonathan's wife. This is Yadin's conjecture, (1971) 134. The backs of most of these letters are blank. No addresses were indicated, since the writer was the Premier over Israel (see e.g. *P.Yadin* 54.1, no. **32**), and most of his addressees were his well-known lieutenants.

<sup>14</sup> See *P.Yadin* II 63.5-6, no. **41**, where Shim'on son of Kosibah indicates that a letter of his was delivered by a third person.

<sup>15</sup> Egyptian papyri are plentiful in this respect. Egyptian family members preserved family and other acquaintances' correspondence. See LUISELLI 2008, 680-81. In many letters the writers complain about the long time which had elapsed since they had heard from their loved ones. During that period they were living in a state of anxiety waiting to receive any information about them. See KOSKENNIEMI 1956, 64-67. One of many such situations related in Egyptian letters is that of Sempronius, who was probably dwelling in Alexandria. He wrote a letter to Saturnila, his mother, who lived with his brother, Maximus, in a different Egyptian nome. The letter expresses the son's enormous concerns about his mother's health. He complains that she never answered his many letters and messages. As a result he is beyond himself with fears regarding her well-being. See *Sel.Pap.* I 121 (2<sup>nd</sup> century CE).

are brief and laconic.<sup>16</sup> In many cases the letters have the nature of instructions forwarded by the Premier, Bar Kokhba (e.g. *P.Yadin* 55, **no. 34**). Under such circumstances emotions and words of endearment were naturally out of place. Most of the letters dealt with the necessities of war, leaving aside personal or family matters. Frequently there are neither greetings nor salutation.<sup>17</sup> Still, here and there flashes of affection or respect are detected as can be discerned from the following four letters. In *P.Masada* II 741 (CE 73/74, **no. 19**) the word “brother” can be spotted. In *P.Yadin* II 59.7 (**no. 37**), a letter forwarded on Bar-Kokhba’s instructions, ἀδελφός (“brother”) might express amiability, but also allude to “brothers in arms”.<sup>18</sup> Further instances are *P.Yadin* II 56.2 (**no. 34**) once more recording the epithet “brothers”, and *DJD* XXVII 30.3 (**no. 22**) where the text may be interpreted as an expression of affection and respect (see p. 103 ad loc.).

**Women’s letters** are entirely absent from the papyri found in the Judaean Desert. Extant testimony does not reveal such activity regarding women in Judaea.<sup>19</sup> Yet women were involved in business, law suits, inheritance and other issues which required the writing of documents including letters.<sup>20</sup> Women must have corresponded with one another. In case they were illiterate, someone might have done the actual reading and/or writing for them. Thus the lack of letters involving women among the Judaean Desert documents seems to be a matter of chance.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *P.Yadin* 57-59 (**nos. 35-37** respectively) are very short, 4-5 lines each. Longer are *P.Yadin* 54 (17 ll.) and 52 (21 ll.) the longest among the Bar Kokhba letters, (**nos. 32** and **30** respectively). The rest come in between. BAGNALL & CRIBIORE 2006, 14 agree that such short manuscripts written under special circumstances may be regarded as private letters.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. *P.Yadin* II 57 (**no. 35**). The usual greeting at the beginning is absent, but appears at the end of the letter.

<sup>18</sup> For this appellation signifying not only blood relations see the discussion of ἀδελφός in ASP 44 (*P.Berl.Cohen*) p. 157. The current colloquial use in Israel of the phrases “brother” and “sister” (Hebrew: אח, אחות) addressed to acquaintances, and at times to total strangers might express a similar meaning.

<sup>19</sup> In Egypt correspondence among males and females was a common fact of life. Isis’ letter to her mother Thermouthion (*BGU* VII 1680, 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) may serve as an example here. BAGNALL & CRIBIORE 2006 collected over two hundred women’s letters from Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine Egypt. The Roman period was the most voluminous of the three. See *ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> See *P.Yadin* I passim for the activity and involvement of Babatha, Shelamzion and Julia Crispina. See also the archive of Salome Komaïse daughter of Levi in *DJD* XXVII p. 158 ff.

<sup>21</sup> By contrast BAGNALL & CRIBIORE 2006, 14, on the basis of extant data, state that in the Roman period: “women have become more at ease with the epistolary medium”. This only intensifies the perception of loss at not discovering women’s letters among the Judaean Desert papyri. There are, however, two Byzantine letters written by Jewish women: one was reedited by M. Mishor in *Leshonenu* 63 (2001) 53-59 (Hebrew); the other, from Sara to her sons, is soon to be published by Tal Ilan, Freie Universität Berlin.

Finally it ought to be remarked that excavations of new papyri or of writings on other materials, (a possible flow destined not to cease in the foreseeable future), might shed additional light on this issue. Future discoveries might enrich the inventory of the Judaeian Desert letters inscribed on papyri and hopefully on other materials as well.

## A SUMMARY OF PARAMETERS

The following table provides the reader with a quick overview regarding the existence of several of the parameters outlined above in the Judaeian Desert letters. The titles of the parameters are the same as in the list above.

No.	Pro.	Cor.	A	G	Text	Sal.	Wit.	Sig.	Add.
1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
2	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-
3	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
4	+	?	?	?	+	L	L	L	L
5	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
6	+	?	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
7	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
8	+	?	L	L	?	L	L	L	L
9	+	L	L	L	?	L	L	L	L
10	+	+	L	L	?	L	L	L	L
11	+	+	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
12	+	+	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
13	+	?	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
14	+	+	+	+	+	L	L	L	L
15	+	+	+	+	+	L	L	L	+
16	+	+	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
17	+	?	L	L	+	L	L	L	+
18	+	?	L	L	?	+	L	L	L
19	+	+	+	+	+	L	L	L	L
20	+	?	L	L	+	+	L	L	L
21	+	?	L	L	+	+	L	L	L
22	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
23	?	+	L	L	?	L	L	L	L
24	+	+	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
25	+	?	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
26	+	+	L	L	+	L	L	L	L
27	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	L	L
28	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-
29	+	+	+	+	+	L	L	L	L
30	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
31	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
32	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-
33	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
34	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
35	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-
36	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
37	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	L	-
38	+	+	+	L	?	L	L	L	L
39	+	+	+	L	+	L	L	L	L
40	?	?	L	L	?	L	L	L	L
41	+	+	+	?	+	+	-	-	-
42	?	L	L	L	?	L	L	L	L

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