

Additional proof of the wide use of writing came to light with the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi in 1902. This celebrated collection of laws contains the following provision. If a man ~~finds~~ finds some property which has been stolen from him in the possession of another man, and can prove that it is his, the other man is subject to death as a thief, unless he can prove that he has ^{been} purchased it legally. He may do this by producing witnesses who will swear to the fact, or by presenting a tablet ^{declaring} ~~proving~~ the purchase, and witnessed by the seals of several ~~witnesses~~ persons. ~~It is easy to see what a great importance this gave to the use of writing, since possession of a written statement of even a comparatively small transaction might ~~make~~ ^{mean} the difference between life and death.~~

Although far less ~~remains~~ ^{has} of the writing of ancient Palestine ~~has~~ ^{survived the ravages of time,} it is now established that ~~writing~~ it was very common there.

An interesting evidence of this is found in Judges 8:14, where it says that ~~Gideon~~ ^{when} Gideon caught a young man from the hostile ~~town~~ ^{city} of Succoth, ~~he~~ "enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men". Under the word "described" the Revised Version places a footnote, "Or, wrote down". As a matter of fact the Hebrew word used is the common word for "write", and is so translated 193 times in the English Bible. Aside from this verse it is never rendered "described" except in Joshua 18 where it refers to the work of the men who went through the land and designated the portions into which it was to be divided among the tribes. Clearly "wrote down" would fit well there also. It is hard to think of any reason for its being rendered thus in Judges 8:14 except a feeling on the part of the translators that it was impossible that writing should have been so common in the days of Gideon that a young man caught at random could be expected to write ~~the facts about~~ ^{the information} of his town.