

HISTORY OF THE LEGACY LETTER

Legacy Letters are not new. The Old Testament described them over 3000 years ago (Genesis Ch. 49) and references to this tradition are also found in the New Testament (John Ch. 15 - 19).

In Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the Israelites to be a holy people and teach their children. The early rabbis urged men to transmit the tradition's ethical teachings which they communicated orally to their sons. Later they were written as letters: Legacy Letters (or the archaic expression, Ethical Wills).

In Medieval 18th century, the letters contained directions of fathers to their children or aged teachers to their disciples. Written in personal style the letters were intended for the private use of children and relatives, and not designed for publication. One critic at the time said that these letters were often "intellectually poor, but of a high moral level."

A Legacy Letter is not considered a legal document as compared to "living will" and your "last will and testament " It is usually written by people at turning points and transitions in their lives. It is usually shared with family and community while the writer is still alive. It becomes a most cherished and meaningful gift a person can leave his or her family.

Then as now, the bottom line is: A Legacy Letter is putting your values and your life on paper.