

Contemporary English Version

Old Testament
(Genesis s.d. Job)

Genesis

1 ¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²The earth was barren, with no form of life; it was under a roaring ocean covered with darkness. But the Spirit of God was moving over the water.

³God said, I command light to shine! And light started shining.

⁴God looked at the light and saw that it was good. He separated light from darkness

⁵and named the light Day and the darkness Night. Evening came and then morning that was the first day.

⁶God said, I command a dome to separate the water above it from the water below it.

⁷And that's what happened. God made the dome

⁸and named it Sky. Evening came and then morning that was the second day.

⁹God said, I command the water under the sky to come together in one place,

so there will be dry ground. And that's what happened.

¹⁰God named the dry ground Land, and he named the water Sea. God looked at what he had done and saw that it was good.

¹¹God said, I command the earth to produce all kinds of plants, including fruit trees and grain. And that's what happened.

¹²The earth produced all kinds of vegetation. God looked at what he had done, and it was good.

¹³Evening came and then morning that was the third day.

¹⁴God said, I command lights to appear in the sky and to separate day from night and to show the time for seasons, special days, and years.

¹⁵I command them to shine on the earth. And that's what happened.

¹⁶God made two powerful lights, the brighter one to rule the day and the other to rule the night. He also made the stars.

¹⁷Then God put these lights in the sky to shine on the earth,

¹⁸to rule day and night, and to separate light from darkness. God looked at what he had done, and it was good.

¹⁹Evening came and then morning that was the fourth day.

²⁰God said, I command the sea to be full of living creatures, and I command birds to fly above the earth.

²¹So God made the giant sea monsters and all the living creatures that swim in the sea. He also made every kind of bird. God looked at what he had done, and it was good.

²²Then he gave the living creatures his blessing he told the sea creatures to live everywhere in the sea and the birds to live everywhere on earth.

²³Evening came and then morning that was the fifth day.

²⁴God said, I command the earth to give life to all kinds of tame animals, wild animals, and reptiles. And that's what happened.

²⁵God made every one of them. Then he looked at what he had done, and it was good.

²⁶God said, Now we will make humans, and they will be like us. We will let them

rule the fish, the birds, and all other living creatures.

²⁷ So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women.

²⁸ God gave them his blessing and said: Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.

²⁹ I have provided all kinds of fruit and grain for you to eat.

³⁰ And I have given the green plants as food for everything else that breathes. These will be food for animals, both wild and tame, and for birds.

³¹ God looked at what he had done. All of it was very good! Evening came and then morning that was the sixth day.

2¹ So the heavens and the earth and everything else were created.

² By the seventh day God had finished his work, and so he rested.

³ God blessed the seventh day and made it special because on that day he rested from his work.

⁴ That's how God created the heavens and the earth. When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth,

⁵no grass or plants were growing anywhere. God had not yet sent any rain, and there was no one to work the land.

⁶But streams came up from the ground and watered the earth.

⁷The LORD God took a handful of soil and made a man. God breathed life into the man, and the man started breathing.

⁸The LORD made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there.

⁹The LORD God placed all kinds of beautiful trees and fruit trees in the garden. Two other trees were in the middle of the garden. One of the trees gave life the other gave the power to know the difference between right and wrong.

¹⁰From Eden a river flowed out to water the garden, then it divided into four rivers.

¹¹The first one is the River Pishon that flows through the land of Havilah,

¹²where pure gold, rare perfumes, and precious stones are found.

¹³The second is the River Gihon that winds through Ethiopia.

¹⁴The River Tigris that flows east of Assyria is the third, and the fourth is the River Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to look after it.

¹⁶But the LORD told him, You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden,

¹⁷except the one that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die before the day is over!

¹⁸The LORD God said, It isn't good for the man to live alone. I need to make a suitable partner for him.

¹⁹So the LORD took some soil and made animals and birds. He brought them to the man to see what names he would give each of them. Then the man named the tame animals and the birds and the wild animals. That's how they got their names. None of these was the right kind of partner for the man.

²⁰(2:19)

²¹So the LORD God made him fall into a deep sleep, and he took out one of the

man's ribs. Then after closing the man's side,

²² the LORD made a woman out of the rib. The LORD God brought her to the man,

²³ and the man exclaimed, Here is someone like me! She is part of my body, my own flesh and bones. She came from me, a man. So I will name her Woman!

²⁴ That's why a man will leave his own father and mother. He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person.

²⁵ Although the man and his wife were both naked, they were not ashamed.

3¹ The snake was more cunning than any of the other wild animals that the LORD God had made. One day it came to the woman and asked, Did God tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?

² The woman answered, God said we could eat fruit from any tree in the garden,

³ except the one in the middle. He told us not to eat fruit from that tree or even to touch it. If we do, we will die.

⁴ No, you won't! the snake replied.

⁵God understands what will happen on the day you eat fruit from that tree. You will see what you have done, and you will know the difference between right and wrong, just as God does.

⁶The woman stared at the fruit. It looked beautiful and tasty. She wanted the wisdom that it would give her, and she ate some of the fruit. Her husband was there with her, so she gave some to him, and he ate it too.

⁷Straight away they saw what they had done, and they realized they were naked. Then they sewed fig leaves together to make something to cover themselves.

⁸Late in the afternoon a breeze began to blow, and the man and woman heard the LORD God walking in the garden. They were frightened and hid behind some trees.

⁹The LORD called out to the man and asked, Where are you?

¹⁰The man answered, I was naked, and when I heard you walking through the garden, I was frightened and hid!

¹¹How did you know you were naked? God asked. Did you eat any fruit from that tree in the middle of the garden?

¹²It was the woman you put here with me, the man said. She gave me some of the fruit, and I ate it.

¹³The LORD God then asked the woman, What have you done? The snake tricked me, she answered. And I ate some of that fruit.

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the snake: Because of what you have done, you will be the only animal to suffer this curse for as long as you live, you will crawl on your stomach and eat dust.

¹⁵You and this woman will hate each other; your descendants and hers will always be enemies. One of hers will strike you on the head, and you will strike him on the heel.

¹⁶Then the LORD said to the woman, You will suffer terribly when you give birth. But you will still desire your husband, and he will rule over you.

¹⁷The LORD said to the man, You listened to your wife and ate fruit from that tree. And so, the ground will be under a curse because of what you did. As long as you live, you will have to struggle to grow enough food.

¹⁸Your food will be plants, but the ground will produce thorns and thistles.

¹⁹You will have to sweat to earn a living; you were made out of soil, and you will once again turn into soil.

²⁰The man Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all who live.

²¹Then the LORD God made clothes out of animal skins for the man and his wife.

²²The LORD said, These people now know the difference between right and wrong, just as we do. But they must not be allowed to eat fruit from the tree that lets them live for ever.

²³So the LORD God sent them out of the Garden of Eden, where they would have to work the ground from which the man had been made.

²⁴Then God put winged creatures at the entrance to the garden and a flaming, flashing sword to guard the way to the life-giving tree.

4¹Adam and Eve had a son. Then Eve said, I'll name him Cain because I got him with the help of the LORD.

² Later she had another son and named him Abel. Abel became a sheep farmer, but Cain farmed the land.

³ One day, Cain gave part of his harvest to the LORD,

⁴ and Abel also gave an offering to the LORD. He killed the firstborn lamb from one of his sheep and gave the LORD the best parts of it. The LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering,

⁵ but not with Cain and his offering. This made Cain so angry that he could not hide his feelings.

⁶ The LORD said to Cain: What's wrong with you? Why do you have such an angry look on your face?

⁷ If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling. But you did the wrong thing, and now sin is waiting to attack you like a lion. Sin wants to destroy you, but don't let it!

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, Let's go for a walk. And when they were out in a field, Cain killed him.

⁹ Afterwards the LORD asked Cain, Where is Abel? How should I know? he answered. Am I supposed to look after my brother?

¹⁰Then the LORD said: Why have you done this terrible thing? You killed your own brother, and his blood flowed on to the ground. Now his blood is calling out for me to punish you.

¹¹And so, I'll put you under a curse. Because you killed Abel and made his blood run out on the ground, you will never be able to farm the land again.

¹²If you try to farm the land, it won't produce anything for you. From now on, you'll be without a home, and you'll spend the rest of your life wandering from place to place.

¹³This punishment is too hard! Cain said.

¹⁴You're making me leave my home and live far from you. I will have to wander about without a home, and anyone could kill me.

¹⁵No! the LORD answered. Anyone who kills you will be punished seven times worse than I am punishing you. So the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn everyone not to kill him.

¹⁶But Cain had to go far from the LORD and live in the Land of Wandering, which is east of Eden.

¹⁷ Later, Cain and his wife had a son named Enoch. At the time Cain was building a town, and so he named it Enoch after his son.

¹⁸ Then Enoch had a son named Irad, who had a son named Mehujael, who had a son named Methushael, who had a son named Lamech.

¹⁹ Lamech married Adah, then Zillah.

²⁰ Lamech and Adah had two sons, Jabal and Jubal. Their son Jabal was the first to live in tents and raise sheep and goats. Jubal was the first to play harps and flutes.

²¹ (4: 20)

²² Lamech and Zillah had a son named Tubal Cain who made tools out of bronze and iron. They also had a daughter, whose name was Naamah.

²³ One day, Lamech said to his two wives, A young man wounded me, and I killed him.

²⁴ Anyone who tries to get even with me will be punished ten times more than anyone who tries to get even with Cain.

²⁵ Adam and his wife had another son. They named him Seth, because they said, God has given us a son to take

the place of Abel, who was killed by his brother Cain.

²⁶ Later, Seth had a son and named him Enosh. About this time people started worshipping the LORD.

5¹ God created men and women to be like himself. He gave them his blessing and called them human beings. This is a list of the descendants of Adam, the first man:

² (5: 1)

³ When Adam was one hundred and thirty, he had a son who was just like him, and he named him Seth. Adam had more children

⁴ (5: 3)

⁵ and died at the age of nine hundred and thirty.

⁶ When Seth was one hundred and five, he had a son named Enosh.

⁷ Seth had more children

⁸ and died at the age of nine hundred and twelve.

⁹ When Enosh was ninety, he had a son named Kenan.

¹⁰ Enosh had more children

¹¹ and died at the age of nine hundred and five.

¹²When Kenan was seventy, he had a son named Mahalalel.

¹³Kenan had more children

¹⁴and died at the age of nine hundred and ten.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was sixty-five, he had a son named Jared.

¹⁶Mahalalel had more children

¹⁷and died at the age of eight hundred and ninety-five.

¹⁸When Jared was one hundred and sixty-two, he had a son named Enoch.

¹⁹Jared had more children

²⁰and died at the age of nine hundred and sixty-two.

²¹When Enoch was sixty-five, he had a son named Methuselah,

²²and during the next three hundred years he had more children. Enoch truly loved God,

²³and God took him away at the age of three hundred and sixty-five.

²⁴(5: 23)

²⁵When Methuselah was one hundred and eighty-seven, he had a son named Lamech.

²⁶Methuselah had more children

²⁷ and died at the age of nine hundred and sixty-nine.

²⁸ When Lamech was one hundred and eighty-two, he had a son.

²⁹ Lamech said, I'll name him Noah because he will give us comfort, as we struggle hard to make a living on this land that the LORD has put under a curse.

³⁰ Lamech had more children

³¹ and died at the age of seven hundred and seventy-seven.

³² After Noah was five hundred years old, he had three sons and named them Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6¹ More and more people were born, until finally they spread all over the earth. Some of their daughters were so beautiful that supernatural beings came down and married the ones they wanted.

² (6: 1)

³ Then the LORD said, I won't let my life-giving breath remain in anyone for ever. No one will live for more than one hundred and twenty years.

⁴ The children of the supernatural beings who had married these women became famous heroes and warriors.

They were called Nephilim and lived on the earth at that time and even later.

⁵The LORD saw how bad the people on earth were and that everything they thought and planned was evil.

⁶He was very sorry that he had made them,

⁷and he said, I'll destroy every living creature on earth! I'll wipe out people, animals, birds, and reptiles. I'm sorry I ever made them.

⁸But the LORD was pleased with Noah,

⁹and this is the story about him. Noah was the only person who lived right and obeyed God.

¹⁰He had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹God knew that everyone was terribly cruel and violent.

¹²(6:11)

¹³So he told Noah: Cruelty and violence have spread everywhere. Now I'm going to destroy the whole earth and all its people.

¹⁴Get some good timber and build a boat. Put rooms in it and cover it with tar inside and out.

¹⁵ Make it one hundred and thirty-three metres long, twenty-two metres wide, and thirteen metres high.

¹⁶ Build a roof on the boat and leave a space of about forty-four centimetres between the roof and the sides. Make the boat three storeys high and put a door on one side.

¹⁷ I'm going to send a flood that will destroy everything that breathes! Nothing will be left alive.

¹⁸ But I solemnly promise that you, your wife, your sons, and your daughters-in-law will be kept safe in the boat.

¹⁹ Bring into the boat with you a male and a female of every kind of animal and bird, as well as a male and a female of every reptile. I don't want them to be destroyed.

²⁰ (6:19)

²¹ Store up enough food both for yourself and for them.

²² Noah did everything the LORD told him to do.

7¹ The LORD told Noah: Take your whole family with you into the boat,

because you are the only one on this earth who pleases me.

²Take seven pairs of every kind of animal that can be used for sacrifice and one pair of all others.

³Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird with you. Do this so there will always be animals and birds on the earth.

⁴Seven days from now I will send rain that will last for forty days and nights, and I will destroy all other living creatures I have made.

⁵Noah was six hundred years old when he went into the boat to escape the flood, and he did everything the LORD had told him to do. His wife, his sons, and his daughters-in-law all went inside with him.

⁶(7: 5)

⁷(7: 5)

⁸He obeyed God and took a male and a female of each kind of animal and bird into the boat with him.

⁹(7: 8)

¹⁰Seven days later a flood began to cover the earth.

¹¹Noah was six hundred years old when the water under the earth started gushing out everywhere. The sky opened like windows, and rain poured down for forty days and nights. All this began on the seventeenth day of the second month of the year.

¹²(7: 11)

¹³On that day Noah and his wife went into the boat with their three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives.

¹⁴They took along every kind of animal, tame and wild, including the birds.

¹⁵Noah took a male and a female of every living creature with him,

¹⁶just as God had told him to do. And when they were all in the boat, God closed the door.

¹⁷For forty days the rain poured down without stopping. And the water became deeper and deeper, until the boat started floating high above the ground.

¹⁸(7: 17)

¹⁹Finally, the mighty flood was so deep that even the highest mountain peaks were about seven metres below the surface of the water.

²⁰ (7: 19)

²¹ Not a bird, animal, reptile, or human was left alive anywhere on earth.

²² The LORD destroyed everything that breathed. Nothing was left alive except Noah and the others in the boat.

²³ (7: 22)

²⁴ A hundred and fifty days later, the water started going down.

8¹ God did not forget about Noah and the animals with him in the boat. So God made a wind blow, and the water started going down.

² God stopped up the places where the water had been gushing out from under the earth. He also closed up the sky, and the rain stopped.

³ For one hundred and fifty days the water slowly went down.

⁴ Then on the seventeenth day of the seventh month of the year, the boat came to rest somewhere in the Ararat mountains.

⁵ The water kept going down, and the mountain tops could be seen on the first day of the tenth month.

⁶ Forty days later Noah opened a window to send out a raven, but it kept

flying around until the water had dried up.

⁷ (8: 6)

⁸ Noah wanted to find out if the water had gone down, and he sent out a dove.

⁹ Deep water was still everywhere, and the dove could not find a place to land. So it flew back to the boat. Noah held out his hand and helped it back in.

¹⁰ Seven days later Noah sent the dove out again.

¹¹ It returned in the evening, holding in its beak a green leaf from an olive tree. Noah knew that the water was finally going down.

¹² He waited seven more days before sending the dove out again, and this time it did not return.

¹³ Noah was now six hundred and one years old. And by the first day of that year, almost all the water had gone away. Noah made an opening in the roof of the boat and saw that the ground was getting dry.

¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was completely dry.

¹⁵ God said to Noah,

¹⁶You, your wife, your sons, and your daughters-in-law may now leave the boat.

¹⁷Let out the birds, animals, and reptiles, so they can mate and live all over the earth.

¹⁸After Noah and his family had gone out of the boat,

¹⁹the living creatures left in groups of their own kind.

²⁰Noah built an altar where he could offer sacrifices to the LORD. Then he offered on the altar one of each kind of animal and bird that could be used for a sacrifice.

²¹The smell of the burning offering pleased God, and he said: Never again will I punish the earth for the sinful things its people do. All of them have evil thoughts from the time they are young, but I will never destroy everything that breathes, as I did this time.

²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat; winter and summer, day and night.

9¹God said to Noah and his sons: I am giving you my blessing. Have

a lot of children and grandchildren, so people will live everywhere on this earth.

²All animals, birds, reptiles, and fish will be afraid of you. I have placed them under your control,

³and I have given them to you for food. From now on, you may eat them, as well as the green plants that you have always eaten.

⁴But life is in the blood, and you must not eat any meat that still has blood in it.

⁵I created humans to be like me, and I will punish any animal or person that takes a human life. If an animal kills someone, that animal must die. And if a person takes the life of another, that person must be put to death.

⁶(9: 5)

⁷I want you and your descendants to have many children, so people will live everywhere on earth.

⁸Again, God said to Noah and his sons:

⁹I am going to make a solemn promise to you and to everyone who will live after you.

¹⁰This includes the birds and the animals that came out of the boat.

¹¹ I promise every living creature that the earth and those living on it will never again be destroyed by a flood.

¹² The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will remind you that I will keep this promise for ever.

¹³ (9: 12)

¹⁴ When I send clouds over the earth, and a rainbow appears in the sky,

¹⁵ I will remember my promise to you and to all other living creatures. Never again will I let flood waters destroy all life.

¹⁶ When I see the rainbow in the sky, I will always remember the promise that I have made to every living creature.

¹⁷ The rainbow will be the sign of that solemn promise.

¹⁸ Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, came out of the boat. Ham later had a son named Canaan.

¹⁹ All people on earth are descendants of Noah's three sons.

²⁰ Noah farmed the land and was the first to plant a vineyard.

²¹ One day he got drunk and was lying naked in his tent.

²²Ham entered the tent and saw him naked, then went back outside and told his brothers.

²³Shem and Japheth put a robe over their shoulders and walked backwards into the tent. Without looking at their father, they placed it over his body.

²⁴When Noah woke up and learnt what his youngest son Ham had done,

²⁵he said, I now put a curse on Canaan! He will be the lowest slave of his brothers.

²⁶I ask the LORD my God to bless Shem and make Canaan his slave.

²⁷I pray that the LORD will give Japheth more and more land and let him take over the territory of Shem. May Canaan be his slave.

²⁸Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood

²⁹and died at the age of nine hundred and fifty.

10¹After the flood Shem, Ham, and Japheth had many descendants.

²Japheth's descendants had their own languages, tribes, and land. They were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. Gomer was the

ancestor of Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. Javan was the ancestor of Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim, who settled along the coast.

³ (10: 2)

⁴ (10: 2)

⁵ (10: 2)

⁶ Ham's descendants had their own languages, tribes, and land. They were Ethiopia, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. Cush was the ancestor of Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. Raamah was the ancestor of Sheba and Dedan. Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, a mighty warrior whose strength came from the LORD. Nimrod is the reason for the saying, You hunt like Nimrod with the strength of the LORD! Nimrod first ruled in Babylon, Erech, and Accad, all of which were in Babylonia. From there Nimrod went to Assyria and built the great city of Nineveh. He also built Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, as well as Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah. Egypt was the ancestor of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, the ancestor of the Philistines. Canaan's

sons were Sidon and Heth. He was also the ancestor of the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Later the Canaanites spread from the territory of Sidon and went as far as Gaza in the direction of Gerar. They also went as far as Lasha in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim.

⁷ (10: 6)

⁸ (10: 6)

⁹ (10: 6)

¹⁰ (10: 6)

¹¹ (10: 6)

¹² (10: 6)

¹³ (10: 6)

¹⁴ (10: 6)

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²⁰ (10: 6)

²¹ Shem's descendants had their own languages, tribes, and land. He was the elder brother of Japheth and the ancestor of the tribes of Eber. Shem

was the ancestor of Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. Aram was the ancestor of Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. Arpachshad was the father of Shelah and the grandfather of Eber, whose first son was named Peleg, because it was during his time that tribes divided up the earth. Eber's second son was Joktan. Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. Their land reached from Mesha in the direction of Sephar, the hill country in the east.

²² (10: 21)

²³ (10: 21)

²⁴ (10: 21)

²⁵ (10: 21)

²⁶ (10: 21)

²⁷ (10: 21)

²⁸ (10: 21)

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³⁰ (10: 21)

³¹ (10: 21)

³² This completes the list of Noah's descendants. After the flood their descendants became nations and spread all over the world.

11 ¹ At first everyone spoke the same language,

² but after some of them moved from the east and settled in Babylonia,

³ they said: Let's build a city with a tower that reaches to the sky! We'll use hard bricks and tar instead of stone and mortar. We'll become famous, and we won't be scattered all over the world.

⁴ (11: 3)

⁵ But when the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower,

⁶ he said: These people are working together because they all speak the same language. This is just the beginning. Soon they will be able to do anything they want.

⁷ Come on! Let's go down and confuse them by making them speak different languages then they won't be able to understand each other.

⁸ So the people had to stop building the city, because the LORD confused their language and scattered them all over the earth. That's how the city of Babel got its name.

⁹ (11: 8)

¹⁰Two years after the flood, when Shem was one hundred, he had a son named Arpachshad. He had more children and died at the age of six hundred. This is a list of his descendants:

¹¹(11:10)

¹²When Arpachshad was thirty-five, he had a son named Shelah.

¹³Arpachshad had more children and died at the age of four hundred and thirty-eight.

¹⁴When Shelah was thirty, he had a son named Eber.

¹⁵Shelah had more children and died at the age of four hundred and thirty-three.

¹⁶When Eber was thirty-four, he had a son named Peleg.

¹⁷Eber had more children and died at the age of four hundred and sixty-four.

¹⁸When Peleg was thirty, he had a son named Reu.

¹⁹Peleg had more children and died at the age of two hundred and thirty-nine.

²⁰When Reu was thirty-two he had a son named Serug.

²¹Reu had more children and died at the age of two hundred and thirty-nine.

²²When Serug was thirty, he had a son named Nahor.

²³Serug had more children and died at the age of two hundred and thirty.

²⁴When Nahor was twenty-nine, he had a son named Terah.

²⁵Nahor had more children and died at the age of one hundred and forty-eight.

²⁶After Terah was seventy years old, he had three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran, who became the father of Lot. Terah's sons were born in the city of Ur in Chaldea, and Haran died there before the death of his father. The following is the story of Terah's descendants.

²⁷(11: 26)

²⁸(11: 26)

²⁹Abram married Sarai, but she was not able to have any children. And Nahor married Milcah, who was the daughter of Haran and the sister of Iscah.

³⁰(11: 29)

³¹Terah decided to move from Ur to the land of Canaan. He took along Abram and Sarai and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran. But when they came to the city of Haran, they decided to settle there instead.

³² Terah lived to be two hundred and five years old and died in Haran.

12¹ The LORD said to Abram: Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.

² I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others.

³ I will bless anyone who blesses you, but I will put a curse on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you.

⁴ Abram was seventy-five years old when the LORD told him to leave the city of Haran. He obeyed and left with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions and slaves they had got while in Haran. When they came to the land of Canaan,

⁵ (12: 4)

⁶ Abram went as far as the sacred tree of Moreh in a place called Shechem. The Canaanites were still living in the land at that time,

⁷ but the LORD appeared to Abram and promised, I will give this land to your

family for ever. Abram then built an altar there for the LORD.

⁸Abram travelled to the hill country east of Bethel and camped between Bethel and Ai, where he built another altar and worshipped the LORD.

⁹Later, Abram started out towards the Southern Desert.

¹⁰The crops failed, and there was no food anywhere in the land. So Abram and his wife Sarai went to live in Egypt for a while. But just before they got there, he said, Sarai, you are really beautiful!

¹¹ (12: 10)

¹²When the Egyptians see how lovely you are, they will murder me because I am your husband. But they won't kill you.

¹³Please save my life by saying that you are my sister.

¹⁴As soon as Abram and Sarai arrived in Egypt, the Egyptians noticed how beautiful she was.

¹⁵The king's officials told him about her, and she was taken to his house.

¹⁶The king was good to Abram because of Sarai, and Abram was given sheep, cattle, donkeys, slaves, and camels.

¹⁷ Because of Sarai, the LORD struck the king and everyone in his palace with terrible diseases.

¹⁸ Finally, the king sent for Abram and said to him, What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me Sarai was your wife?

¹⁹ Why did you make me believe she was your sister? Now I've married her. Take her and go! She's your wife.

²⁰ So the king told his men to let Abram and Sarai take their possessions and leave.

13 ¹ Abram and Sarai took everything they owned and went to the Southern Desert. Lot went with them.

² Abram was very rich. He owned many cattle, sheep, and goats, and had a lot of silver and gold.

³ Abram moved from place to place in the Southern Desert. And finally, he went north and set up his tents between Bethel and Ai,

⁴ where he had earlier camped and built an altar. There he worshipped the LORD.

⁵ Lot, who was travelling with him, also had sheep, goats, and cattle, as well as his own family and slaves.

⁶At this time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the same area, and so there wasn't enough pasture land left for Abram and Lot with all their animals. Besides this, the men who took care of Abram's animals and the ones who took care of Lot's animals started quarrelling.

⁷(13: 6)

⁸Abram said to Lot, We are close relatives. We shouldn't argue, and our men shouldn't be fighting one another.

⁹There is plenty of land for you to choose from. Let's separate. If you go north, I'll go south; if you go south, I'll go north.

¹⁰This happened before the LORD had destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. And when Lot looked around, he saw there was plenty of water in the Jordan Valley. All the way to Zoar the valley was as green as the garden of the LORD or the land of Egypt.

¹¹So Lot chose the whole Jordan Valley for himself, and as he started towards the east, he and Abram separated.

¹²Abram stayed in the land of Canaan. But Lot settled near the cities of the

valley and put up his tents not far from Sodom,

¹³where the people were evil and sinned terribly against the LORD.

¹⁴After Abram and Lot had gone their separate ways, the LORD said to Abram: Look around to the north, south, east, and west.

¹⁵I will give you and your family all the land you can see. It will be theirs for ever!

¹⁶I will give you more descendants than there are specks of dust on the earth, and some day it will be easier to count the specks of dust than to count your descendants.

¹⁷Now walk back and forth across the land, because I am giving it to you.

¹⁸Abram took down his tents and went to live near the sacred trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar in honour of the LORD.

14¹About this time, King Amraphel of Babylonia, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim

²attacked King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of

Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, also known as the city of Zoar.

³King Chedorlaomer and his allies had ruled these last five kings for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year the kings rebelled and came together in Siddim Valley, which is now covered by the southern part of the Dead Sea.

⁴(14: 3)

⁵A year later King Chedorlaomer and his allies attacked and defeated the Rephaites in Ashteroth-Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, and the Emities in Shaveh-Kiriathaim.

⁶They also defeated the Horites in the hill country of Edom, as far as El-Paran, near the desert.

⁷They went back to the city of Enmishpat, better known as Kadesh. Then they captured all the land that belonged to the Amalekites, and they defeated the Amorites who were living in Hazazon-Tamar.

⁸At Siddim Valley, the armies of the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela fought the armies of King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal

of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar. The valley⁹ (14: 8)

¹⁰was full of tar pits, and when the troops from Sodom and Gomorrah started running away, some of them fell into the pits. Others escaped to the hill country.

¹¹Their enemies took everything of value from Sodom and Gomorrah, including their food supplies.

¹²They also captured Abram's nephew Lot, who lived in Sodom. They took him and his possessions and then left.

¹³At this time Abram the Hebrew was living near the oaks that belonged to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his brothers Eshcol and Aner were Abram's friends. Someone who had escaped from the battle told Abram

¹⁴that his nephew Lot had been taken away. Three hundred and eighteen of Abram's servants were fighting men, so he took them and followed the enemy as far north as the city of Dan.

¹⁵That night, Abram divided up his troops, attacked from all sides, and won a great victory. But some of the enemy

escaped to the town of Hobah north of Damascus,

¹⁶and Abram went after them. He brought back his nephew Lot, together with Lot's possessions and the women and everyone else who had been captured.

¹⁷Abram returned after he had defeated King Chedorlaomer and the other kings. Then the king of Sodom went to meet Abram in Shaveh Valley, which is also known as King's Valley.

¹⁸King Melchizedek of Salem was a priest of God Most High. He brought out some bread and wine

¹⁹and said to Abram: I bless you in the name of God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰All praise belongs to God Most High for helping you defeat your enemies. Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, All I want are my people. You can keep everything else.

²²Abram answered: The LORD God Most High made the heavens and the earth. And I have promised him

²³ that I won't keep anything of yours, not even a sandal strap or a piece of thread. Then you can never say that you are the one who made me rich.

²⁴ Let my share be the food that my men have eaten. But Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre went with me, so give them their share of what we brought back.

15¹ Later the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision, Abram, don't be afraid! I will protect you and reward you greatly.

² But Abram answered, LORD All-Powerful, you have given me everything I could ask for, except children. And when I die, Eliezer of Damascus will get all I own.

³ You have not given me any children, and this servant of mine will inherit everything.

⁴ The LORD replied, No, he won't! You will have a son of your own, and everything you have will be his.

⁵ Then the LORD took Abram outside and said, Look at the sky and see if you can count the stars. That's how many descendants you will have.

⁶Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD was pleased with him.

⁷The LORD said to Abram, I brought you here from Ur in Chaldea, and I gave you this land.

⁸Abram asked, LORD God, how can I know the land will be mine?

⁹Then the LORD told him, Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a dove, and a young pigeon.

¹⁰Abram obeyed the LORD. Then he cut the animals in half and laid the two halves of each animal opposite each other on the ground. But he did not cut the doves and pigeons in half.

¹¹And when birds came down to eat the animals, Abram chased them away.

¹²As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and everything became dark and frightening.

¹³Then the LORD said: Abram, you will live to an old age and die in peace. But I solemnly promise that your descendants will live as foreigners in a land that doesn't belong to them. They will be forced into slavery and abused for four hundred years. But I will terribly punish

the nation that enslaves them, and they will leave with many possessions.

¹⁴ (15: 13)

¹⁵ (15: 13)

¹⁶ Four generations later, your descendants will return here and take this land, because only then will the people who live here be so sinful that they deserve to be punished.

¹⁷ Some time after sunset, when it was very dark, a smoking cooking pot and a flaming fire went between the two halves of each animal.

¹⁸ At that time the LORD made an agreement with Abram and told him: I will give your descendants the land east of the River Shihor on the border of Egypt as far as the River Euphrates.

¹⁹ They will possess the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,

²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaites,

²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

16 ¹ Abram's wife Sarai had not been able to have any children. But she owned a young Egyptian slave woman named Hagar,

²and Sarai said to Abram, The LORD has not given me any children. Sleep with my slave, and if she has a child, it will be mine. Abram agreed,

³and Sarai gave him Hagar to be his wife. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan for ten years.

⁴Later, when Hagar knew she was going to have a baby, she became proud and was hateful to Sarai.

⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, It's all your fault! I gave you my slave woman, but she has been hateful to me ever since she found out she was pregnant. You have done me wrong, and you will have to answer to the LORD for this.

⁶Abram said, All right! She's your slave, and you can do whatever you want with her. But Sarai began treating Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

⁷Hagar stopped to rest at a spring in the desert on the road to Shur. While she was there, the angel of the LORD came to her

⁸and asked, Hagar, where have you come from, and where are you going? She answered, I'm running away from Sarai, my owner.

⁹The angel said, Go back to Sarai and be her slave.

¹⁰I will give you a son, who will be called Ishmael, because I have heard your cry for help. And later I will give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them all.

¹¹ (16: 10)

¹²But your son will live far from his relatives; he will be like a wild donkey, fighting everyone, and everyone fighting him.

¹³Hagar thought, Have I really seen God and lived to tell about it? So from then on she called him, The God who Sees Me.

¹⁴That's why people call the well between Kadesh and Bered, The Well of the Living One who Sees Me.

¹⁵Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar gave birth to their son, and he named him Ishmael.

¹⁶ (16: 15)

17 ¹Abram was ninety-nine years old when the LORD appeared to him again and said, I am God All-Powerful. If you obey me and always do right,

²I will keep my solemn promise to you and give you more descendants than can be counted.

³Abram bowed with his face to the ground, and God said:

⁴I promise that you will be the father of many nations. That's why I now change your name from Abram to Abraham.

⁵(17: 4)

⁶I will give you a lot of descendants, and in the future they will become great nations. Some of them will even be kings.

⁷I will always keep the promise I have made to you and your descendants, because I am your God and their God.

⁸I will give you and them the land in which you are now a foreigner. I will give the whole land of Canaan to your family for ever, and I will be their God.

⁹Abraham, you and all future members of your family must promise to obey me.

¹⁰As the sign that you are keeping this promise, you must circumcise every man and boy in your family.

¹¹(17: 10)

¹²From now on, your family must circumcise every baby boy when he is

eight days old. You must even circumcise any man or boy you have as a slave, both those born in your homes and those you buy from foreigners. This will be a sign that my promise to you will last for ever.

¹³(17:12)

¹⁴Any man who isn't circumcised hasn't kept his promise to me and cannot be one of my people.

¹⁵Abraham, your wife's name will now be Sarah instead of Sarai.

¹⁶I will bless her, and you will have a son by her. She will become the mother of nations, and some of her descendants will even be kings.

¹⁷Abraham bowed with his face to the ground and thought, I am almost a hundred years old. How can I become a father? And Sarah is ninety. How can she have a child? So he started laughing.

¹⁸Then he asked God, Why not let Ishmael inherit what you have promised me?

¹⁹But God answered: No! You and Sarah will have a son. His name will be Isaac, and I will make an everlasting promise to him and his descendants.

²⁰I have heard what you asked me to do for Ishmael, and so I will also bless him with many descendants. He will be the father of twelve princes, and I will make his family a great nation.

²¹But your son Isaac will be born about this time next year, and the promise I am making to you and your family will be for him and his descendants for ever.

²²God finished speaking to Abraham and then left.

²³On that same day Abraham obeyed God by circumcising Ishmael. Abraham was also circumcised, and so were all other men and boys in his household, including his servants and slaves. He was ninety-nine years old at the time, and his son Ishmael was thirteen.

²⁴(17: 23)

²⁵(17: 23)

²⁶(17: 23)

²⁷(17: 23)

18¹One hot summer afternoon Abraham was sitting by the entrance to his tent near the sacred trees of Mamre, when the LORD appeared to him.

²Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. He quickly ran to meet them, bowed with his face to the ground,

³and said, Please come to my home where I can serve you.

⁴I'll have some water brought, so you can wash your feet, then you can rest under the tree.

⁵Let me get you some food to give you strength before you leave. I would be honoured to serve you. Thank you very much, they answered. We accept your offer.

⁶Abraham quickly went to his tent and said to Sarah, Hurry! Get a large sack of flour and make some bread.

⁷After saying this, he rushed off to his herd of cattle and picked out one of the best calves, which his servant quickly prepared.

⁸He then served his guests some yoghurt and milk together with the meat. While they were eating, he stood near them under the trees,

⁹and they asked, Where is your wife Sarah? She is there in the tent, Abraham answered.

¹⁰One of the guests was the LORD, and he said, I'll come back about this time next year, and when I do, Sarah will already have a son. Sarah was behind Abraham, listening at the entrance to the tent.

¹¹Abraham and Sarah were very old, and Sarah was well past the age for having children.

¹²So she laughed and said to herself, Now that I am worn out and my husband is old, will I really know such happiness?

¹³The LORD asked Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh? Does she doubt that she can have a child in her old age?

¹⁴I am the LORD! There is nothing too difficult for me. I'll come back next year at the time I promised, and Sarah will already have a son.

¹⁵Sarah was so frightened that she lied and said, I didn't laugh. Yes, you did! he answered.

¹⁶When the three men got ready to leave, they looked down towards Sodom, and Abraham walked part of the way with them.

¹⁷The LORD said to himself, I should tell Abraham what I am going to do,

¹⁸since his family will become a great and powerful nation that will be a blessing to all other nations on earth.

¹⁹I have chosen him to teach his family to obey me for ever and to do what is right and fair. Then I will give Abraham many descendants, just as I promised.

²⁰The LORD said, Abraham, I have heard that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are doing all kinds of evil things.

²¹Now I am going down to see for myself if those people really are that bad. If they aren't, I want to know about it.

²²The men turned and started towards Sodom. But the LORD stayed with Abraham,

²³who asked, LORD, when you destroy the evil people, are you also going to destroy those who are good?

²⁴Wouldn't you spare the city if there are only fifty good people in it?

²⁵You surely wouldn't let them be killed when you destroy the evil ones. You are the judge of all the earth, and you do what is right.

²⁶The LORD replied, If I find fifty good people in Sodom, I will save the city to keep them from being killed.

²⁷Abraham answered, I am nothing more than the dust of the earth. Please forgive me, LORD, for daring to speak to you like this.

²⁸But suppose there are only forty-five good people in Sodom. Would you still wipe out the whole city? If I find forty-five good people, the LORD replied, I won't destroy the city.

²⁹Suppose there are just forty good people? Abraham asked. Even for them, the LORD replied, I won't destroy the city.

³⁰Abraham said, Please don't be angry, LORD, if I ask you what you will do if there are only thirty good people in the city. If I find thirty, the LORD replied, I still won't destroy it.

³¹Then Abraham said, I don't have any right to ask you, LORD, but what would you do if you find only twenty? Because of them, I won't destroy the city, was the LORD's answer.

³²Finally, Abraham said, Please don't get angry, LORD, if I speak just once

more. Suppose you find only ten good people there. For the sake of ten good people, the LORD told him, I still won't destroy the city.

³³After speaking with Abraham, the LORD left, and Abraham went back home.

19¹ That evening the two angels arrived in Sodom, while Lot was sitting near the city gate. When Lot saw them, he got up, bowed down low,
²and said, Gentlemen, I am your servant. Please come to my home. You can wash your feet, spend the night, and be on your way in the morning. They told him, No, we'll spend the night in the city square.

³But Lot kept insisting, until they finally agreed and went home with him. He baked some bread, cooked a meal, and they ate.

⁴Before Lot and his guests could go to bed, every man in Sodom, young and old, came and stood outside his house

⁵and started shouting, Where are your visitors? Send them out, so we can have sex with them!

⁶ Lot went outside and shut the door behind him.

⁷ Then he said, Friends, please don't do such a terrible thing!

⁸ I have two daughters who have never been married. I'll bring them out, and you can do what you want with them. But don't harm these men. They are guests in my home.

⁹ Don't get in our way, the crowd answered. You're an outsider. What right do you have to order us around? We'll do worse things to you than we're going to do to them. The crowd kept arguing with Lot. Finally, they rushed towards the door to break it down.

¹⁰ But the two angels in the house reached out and pulled Lot safely inside.

¹¹ Then they struck everyone in the crowd blind, and none of them could even find the door.

¹² The two angels said to Lot, The LORD has heard many terrible things about the people of Sodom, and he has sent us here to destroy the city. Take your family and leave. Take every relative you have in the city, as well as the men your daughters are going to marry.

¹³(19: 12)

¹⁴Lot went to the men who were engaged to his daughters and said, Hurry and get out of here! The LORD is going to destroy this city. But they thought he was joking, and they laughed at him.

¹⁵Early the next morning the two angels tried to make Lot hurry and leave. They said, Take your wife and your two daughters and get out of here as fast as you can! If you don't, every one of you will be killed when the LORD destroys the city.

¹⁶At first, Lot just stood there. But the LORD wanted to save him. So the angels took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand and led them out of the city.

¹⁷When they were outside, one of the angels said, Run for your lives! Don't even look back. And don't stop in the valley. Run to the hills, where you will be safe.

¹⁸Lot answered, You have done us a great favour, sir. You have saved our lives, but please don't make us go to the hills. That's too far away. The city will be

destroyed before we can get there, and we will be killed when it happens.

¹⁹ (19:18)

²⁰ There's a town near here. It's only a small place, but my family and I will be safe, if you let us go there.

²¹ All right, go there, he answered. I won't destroy that town.

²² Hurry! Run! I can't do anything until you are safely there. The town was later called Zoar because Lot had said it was small.

²³ The sun was coming up as Lot reached the town of Zoar,

²⁴ and the LORD sent burning sulphur down like rain on Sodom and Gomorrah.

²⁵ He destroyed those cities and everyone who lived in them, as well as their land and the trees and grass that grew there.

²⁶ On the way, Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a block of salt.

²⁷ That same morning Abraham got up and went to the place where he had stood and spoken with the LORD.

²⁸ He looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah and saw smoke rising from

all over the land it was like a flaming furnace.

²⁹When God destroyed the cities of the valley where Lot lived, he remembered his promise to Abraham and saved Lot from the terrible destruction.

³⁰Lot was afraid to stay on in Zoar. So he took his two daughters and moved to a cave in the hill country.

³¹One day his elder daughter said to her sister, Our father is old, and there are no men anywhere for us to marry.

³²Let's get our father drunk! Then we can sleep with him and have children.

³³That night they got their father drunk, and the elder daughter got in bed with him, but he was too drunk even to know she was there.

³⁴The next day the elder daughter said to her sister, I slept with my father last night. We'll get him drunk again tonight, so you can go to bed with him, and we can each have a child.

³⁵That night they got their father drunk, and this time the younger sister slept with him. But once again he was too drunk even to know she was there.

³⁶That's how Lot's two daughters had their children.

³⁷The elder daughter named her son Moab, and he is the ancestor of the Moabites.

³⁸The younger daughter named her son Benammi, and he is the ancestor of the Ammonites.

20¹ Abraham moved to the Southern Desert, where he settled between Kadesh and Shur. Later he went to Gerar, and while there

²he told everyone that his wife Sarah was his sister. So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.

³But God came to Abimelech in a dream and said, You have taken a married woman, and for this you will die!

⁴Abimelech said to the Lord, Don't kill me! I haven't slept with Sarah. Didn't they say they were brother and sister? I am completely innocent.

⁵(20: 4)

⁶God spoke to Abimelech in another dream and said: I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sleeping with Sarah and doing anything wrong.

⁷ Her husband is a prophet. Let her go back to him, and his prayers will save you from death. But if you don't return her, you and all your people will die.

⁸ Early the next morning Abimelech sent for his officials, and when he told them what had happened, they were frightened.

⁹ Abimelech then called in Abraham and said: Look what you've done to us! What have I ever done to you? Why did you make me and my nation guilty of such a terrible sin?

¹⁰ What were you thinking when you did this?

¹¹ Abraham answered: I did it because I didn't think any of you respected God, and I was sure that someone would kill me to get my wife.

¹² Besides, she is my half sister. We have the same father, but different mothers.

¹³ When God made us leave my father's home and start wandering, I told her, If you really love me, you will tell everyone that I am your brother.

¹⁴Abimelech gave Abraham some sheep, cattle, and slaves. He sent Sarah back

¹⁵and told Abraham that he could settle anywhere in his country.

¹⁶Then he said to Sarah, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver as proof to everyone that you have done nothing wrong.

¹⁷Meanwhile, God had kept Abimelech's wife and slaves from having children. But Abraham prayed, and God let them start having children again.

¹⁸(20: 17)

21 ¹The LORD was good to Sarah and kept his promise.

²Although Abraham was very old, Sarah had a son exactly at the time God had said.

³Abraham named his son Isaac,

⁴and when the boy was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, just as the LORD had commanded.

⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born,

⁶and Sarah said, God has made me laugh. Now everyone will laugh with me.

⁷ Who would have dared to tell Abraham that some day I would have a child? But in his old age, I have given him a son.

⁸ The time came when Sarah no longer had to nurse Isaac, and on that day Abraham gave a big feast.

⁹ One day, Sarah noticed Hagar's son Ishmael playing, and she said to Abraham, Get rid of that Egyptian slave woman and her son! I don't want him to inherit anything. It should all go to my son.

¹⁰ (21: 9)

¹¹ Abraham was worried about Ishmael.

¹² But God said, Abraham, don't worry about your slave woman and the boy. Just do what Sarah tells you. Isaac will inherit your family name,

¹³ but the son of the slave woman is also your son, and I will make his descendants into a great nation.

¹⁴ Early the next morning Abraham gave Hagar an animal skin full of water and some bread. Then he put the boy on her shoulder and sent them away. They wandered around in the desert near Beersheba,

¹⁵and after they had run out of water, Hagar put her son under a bush.

¹⁶Then she sat down a long way off, because she could not bear to watch him die. And she cried bitterly.

¹⁷When God heard the boy crying, the angel of God called out to Hagar from heaven and said, Hagar, why are you worried? Don't be afraid. I have heard your son crying.

¹⁸Help him up and hold his hand, because I will make him the father of a great nation.

¹⁹Then God let her see a well. So she went to the well and filled the skin with water, then gave some to her son.

²⁰God blessed Ishmael, and as the boy grew older, he became an expert with his bow and arrows. He lived in the Paran Desert, and his mother chose an Egyptian woman for him to marry.

²¹ (21: 20)

²²About this time Abimelech and his army commander Phicol said to Abraham, God blesses everything you do!

²³Now I want you to promise in the name of God that you will always be

loyal to me and my descendants, just as I have always been loyal to you in this land where you have lived as a foreigner.

²⁴ And so, Abraham promised.

²⁵ One day, Abraham told Abimelech, Some of your servants have taken over one of my wells.

²⁶ This is the first I've heard about it, Abimelech replied. Why haven't you said something before? I don't have any idea who did it.

²⁷ Abraham gave Abimelech some sheep and cattle, and then the two men made a peace treaty.

²⁸ Abraham separated seven female lambs from his flock of sheep,

²⁹ and Abimelech asked, Why have you done this?

³⁰ Abraham told him, I want you to accept these seven lambs as proof that I dug this well.

³¹ So they called the place Beersheba, because they made a treaty there.

³² When the treaty was completed, Abimelech and his army commander Phicol went back to the land of the Philistines.

³³ Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and worshipped the eternal LORD God.

³⁴ Then Abraham lived a long time as a foreigner in the land of the Philistines.

22 ¹ Some years later God decided to test Abraham, so he spoke to him. Abraham answered, Here I am, LORD.

² The LORD said, Go and get Isaac, your only son, the one you dearly love! Take him to the land of Moriah, and I will show you a mountain where you must sacrifice him to me on the fires of an altar.

³ So Abraham got up early the next morning and chopped wood for the fire. He put a saddle on his donkey and left with Isaac and two servants for the place where God had told him to go.

⁴ Three days later Abraham looked into the distance and saw the place.

⁵ He told his servants, Stay here with the donkey, while my son and I go over there to worship. We will come back.

⁶ Abraham put the wood on Isaac's shoulder, but he carried the hot coals and the knife. As the two of them walked along,

⁷ Isaac said, Father, we have the coals and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice? My son, Abraham answered, God will provide the lamb. The two of them walked on, and

⁸ (22: 7)

⁹ when they reached the place that God had told him about, Abraham built an altar and placed the wood on it. Next, he tied up his son and put him on the wood.

¹⁰ He then took the knife and got ready to kill his son.

¹¹ But the LORD's angel shouted from heaven, Abraham! Abraham! Here I am! he answered.

¹² Don't hurt the boy or harm him in any way! the angel said. Now I know that you truly obey God, because you were willing to offer him your only son.

¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in the bushes. So he took the ram and sacrificed it in place of his son.

¹⁴ Abraham named that place The LORD will Provide. And even now people say, On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.

¹⁵The LORD's angel called out from heaven a second time:

¹⁶You were willing to offer the LORD your only son, and so he makes you this solemn promise,

¹⁷I will bless you and give you such a large family, that some day your descendants will be more numerous than the stars in the sky or the grains of sand along the beach. They will defeat their enemies and take over the cities where their enemies live.

¹⁸You have obeyed me, and so you and your descendants will be a blessing to all nations on earth.

¹⁹Abraham and Isaac went back to the servants who had come with him, and they returned to Abraham's home in Beersheba.

²⁰Abraham's brother Nahor had married Milcah, and Abraham was later told that they had eight sons. Uz was their firstborn; Buz was next, and then there was Kemuel who became the father of Aram; their other five sons were: Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel, who became the father of Rebekah.

²¹ (22: 20)

²² (22: 20)

²³ (22: 20)

²⁴ Nahor also had another wife. Her name was Reumah, and she had four sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

23 ¹ When Sarah was one hundred and twenty-seven years old, she died in Kiriath-Arba, better known as Hebron, in the land of Canaan. After Abraham had mourned for her,

² (23: 1)

³ he went to the Hittites and said,

⁴ I live as a foreigner in your land, and I don't own any property where I can bury my wife. Please let me buy a piece of land.

⁵ Sir, they answered, you are an important man. Choose the best place to bury your wife. None of us would refuse you a resting place for your dead.

⁶ (23: 5)

⁷ Abraham bowed down

⁸ and replied, If you are willing to let me bury my wife here, please ask Zohar's son Ephron

⁹ to sell me Machpelah Cave at the end of his field. I'll pay what it's worth, and all of you can be witnesses.

¹⁰ Ephron was sitting there near the city gate, when Abraham made this request, and he answered,

¹¹ Sir, the whole field, including the cave, is yours. With my own people as witnesses, I freely give it to you as a burial place for your dead.

¹² Once again, Abraham bowed down

¹³ and said to Ephron, In front of these witnesses, I offer you the full price, so I can bury my wife. Please accept my offer.

¹⁴ But sir, the man replied, the property is worth only four hundred pieces of silver. Why should we haggle over such a small amount? Take the land. It's yours.

¹⁵ (23: 14)

¹⁶ Abraham accepted Ephron's offer and paid him the four hundred pieces of silver in front of everyone at the city gate. That's how Abraham got Ephron's property east of Hebron, which included the field with all its trees, as well as Machpelah Cave at the end of the field.

¹⁷ (23: 16)

¹⁸(23:16)

¹⁹So Abraham buried his wife Sarah in Machpelah Cave that was in the field

²⁰he had bought from the Hittites.

24¹ Abraham was now a very old man. The LORD had made him rich, and he was successful in everything he did.

²One day, Abraham called in his most trusted servant and said to him, Solemnly promise me

³in the name of the LORD, who rules heaven and earth, that you won't choose a wife for my son Isaac from the people here in the land of Canaan.

⁴Instead, go back to the land where I was born and find a wife for him from among my relatives.

⁵But the servant asked, What if the young woman I choose refuses to leave home and come here with me? Should I send Isaac there to look for a wife?

⁶No! Abraham answered. Don't ever do that, no matter what.

⁷The LORD who rules heaven brought me here from the land where I was born and promised that he would give this land to my descendants for ever. When

you go back there, the LORD will send his angel ahead of you to help you find a wife for my son.

⁸If the woman refuses to come along, you don't have to keep this promise. But don't ever take my son back there.

⁹So the servant gave Abraham his word that he would do everything he had been told to do.

¹⁰Soon after that, the servant loaded ten of Abraham's camels with valuable gifts. Then he set out for the city in northern Syria, where Abraham's brother Nahor lived.

¹¹When he got there, he let the camels rest near the well outside the city. It was late afternoon, the time when the women came out for water.

¹²The servant prayed: You, LORD, are the God my master Abraham worships. Please keep your promise to him and let me find a wife for Isaac today.

¹³The young women of the city will soon come to this well for water,

¹⁴and I'll ask one of them for a drink. If she gives me a drink and then offers to get some water for my camels, I'll know she is the one you have chosen

and that you have kept your promise to my master.

¹⁵ While he was still praying, a beautiful unmarried young woman came by with a water jar on her shoulder. She was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife Milcah. Rebekah walked past Abraham's servant, then went over to the well, and filled her water jar. When she started back,

¹⁶ (24: 15)

¹⁷ Abraham's servant ran to her and said, Please let me have a drink of water.

¹⁸ I'll be glad to, she answered. Then she quickly took the jar from her shoulder and held it while he drank.

¹⁹ After he had finished, she said, Now I'll give your camels all the water they want. She quickly poured out water for them, and she kept going back for more, until his camels had drunk all they wanted.

²⁰ (24: 19)

²¹ Abraham's servant did not say a word, but he watched everything Rebekah did, because he wanted to

know for certain if this was the woman the LORD had chosen.

²²The servant had brought along an expensive gold ring and two large gold bracelets. When Rebekah had finished bringing the water, he gave her the ring for her nose and the bracelets for her arms.

²³Then he said, Please tell me who your father is. Does he have room in his house for me and my men to spend the night?

²⁴She answered, My father is Bethuel, the son of Nahor and Milcah.

²⁵We have a place where you and your men can stay, and we also have enough straw and feed for your camels.

²⁶Then the servant bowed his head and prayed,

²⁷I thank you, LORD God of my master Abraham! You have led me to his relatives and kept your promise to him.

²⁸Rebekah ran straight home and told her family everything.

²⁹Her brother Laban heard her tell what the servant had said, and he saw the ring and the bracelets she was wearing. So Laban ran out to Abraham's servant,

who was standing by his camels at the well.

³⁰ (24: 29)

³¹ Then Laban said, The LORD has brought you safely here. Come home with me. There's no need for you to keep on standing outside. I have a room ready for you in our house, and there's also a place for your camels.

³² Abraham's servant went home with Laban, where Laban's servants unloaded his camels and gave them straw and feed. Then they brought water into the house, so Abraham's servant and his men could wash their feet.

³³ After that, they brought in food. But the servant said, Before I eat, I must tell you why I have come. Go ahead and tell us, Laban answered.

³⁴ The servant explained: I am Abraham's servant.

³⁵ The LORD has been good to my master and has made him very rich. He has given him many sheep, goats, cattle, camels, and donkeys, as well as a lot of silver and gold, and many slaves.

³⁶ Sarah, my master's wife, didn't have any children until she was very old. Then

she had a son, and my master has given him everything.

³⁷ I solemnly promised my master that I would do what he said. And he told me, Don't choose a wife for my son from the women in this land of Canaan.

³⁸ Instead, go back to the land where I was born and find a wife for my son from among my relatives.

³⁹ I asked my master, What if the young woman refuses to come with me?

⁴⁰ My master answered, I have always obeyed the LORD, and he will send his angel to help you find my son a wife from among my own relatives.

⁴¹ But if they refuse to let her come back with you, then you are freed from your promise.

⁴² When I came to the well today, I silently prayed, You, LORD, are the God my master Abraham worships, so please lead me to a wife for his son

⁴³ while I am here at the well. When a young woman comes out to get water, I'll ask her to give me a drink.

⁴⁴ If she gives me a drink and offers to get some water for my camels, I'll know she is the one you have chosen.

⁴⁵ Even before I had finished praying, Rebekah came by with a water jar on her shoulder. When she had filled the jar, I asked her for a drink.

⁴⁶ She quickly lowered the jar from her shoulder and said, Have a drink. Then I'll get water for your camels. So I drank, and after that she got some water for my camels.

⁴⁷ I asked her who her father was, and she answered, My father is Bethuel the son of Nahor and Milcah. Straight away I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms.

⁴⁸ Then I bowed my head and gave thanks to the God my master Abraham worships. The LORD had led me straight to my master's relatives, and I had found a wife for his son.

⁴⁹ Now please tell me if you are willing to do the right thing for my master. Will you treat him fairly, or do I have to look for another young woman?

⁵⁰ Laban and Bethuel answered, The LORD has done this. We have no choice in the matter.

⁵¹ Take Rebekah with you; she can marry your master's son, just as the LORD has said.

⁵² Abraham's servant bowed down and thanked the LORD.

⁵³ Then he gave clothing, as well as silver and gold jewellery, to Rebekah. He also gave expensive gifts to her brother and her mother.

⁵⁴ Abraham's servant and the men with him ate and drank, then spent the night there. The next morning they got up, and the servant told Rebekah's mother and brother, I would like to go back to my master now.

⁵⁵ Let Rebekah stay with us for a week or ten days, they answered. Then she may go.

⁵⁶ But he said, Don't make me stay any longer. The LORD has already helped me find a wife for my master's son. Now let us return.

⁵⁷ They answered, Let's ask Rebekah what she wants to do.

⁵⁸ They called her and asked, Are you willing to leave with this man at once? Yes, she answered.

⁵⁹ So they agreed to let Rebekah and an old family servant woman leave immediately with Abraham's servant and his men.

⁶⁰ They gave Rebekah their blessing and said, We pray that God will give you many children and grandchildren and that he will help them defeat their enemies.

⁶¹ Afterwards, Rebekah and the young women who were to travel with her prepared to leave. Then they got on camels and left with Abraham's servant and his men.

⁶² At that time Isaac was living in the southern part of Canaan near a place called The Well of the Living One who Sees Me.

⁶³ One evening he was walking out in the fields, when suddenly he saw a group of people approaching on camels. So he started towards them. Rebekah saw him coming; she got down from her camel, and asked, Who is that man? He is my master Isaac, the servant answered. Then Rebekah covered her face with her veil.

⁶⁴ (24: 63)

⁶⁵ (24: 63)

⁶⁶ The servant told Isaac everything that had happened.

⁶⁷ Isaac took Rebekah into the tent where his mother had lived before she died, and Rebekah became his wife. He loved her and was comforted over the loss of his mother.

25 ¹ Abraham married Keturah, ² and they had six sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

³ Later, Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan, and when Dedan grew up, he had three sons: Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

⁴ Midian also had five sons: Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah.

⁵ While Abraham was still alive, he gave gifts to the sons of Hagar and Keturah. He also sent their sons to live in the east far from his son Isaac, and when Abraham died, he left everything to Isaac.

⁶ (25: 5)

⁷ Abraham died at the ripe old age of one hundred and seventy-five.

⁸ (25: 7)

⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him east of Hebron in Machpelah Cave that was part of the field Abraham had bought from Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. Abraham was buried there beside his wife Sarah.

¹⁰(25: 9)

¹¹God blessed Isaac after this, and Isaac moved to a place called The Well of the Living One who Sees Me.

¹²Ishmael was the son of Abraham and Hagar, the slave woman of Sarah.

¹³Ishmael had twelve sons, in this order: Nebaioth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,

¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa,

¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

¹⁶Each of Ishmael's sons was a tribal chief, and a village was named after each of them.

¹⁷Ishmael had settled in the land east of his brothers, and his sons settled everywhere from Havilah to Shur, east of Egypt on the way to Asshur. Ishmael was one hundred and thirty-seven when he died.

¹⁸(25: 17)

¹⁹Isaac was the son of Abraham,

²⁰and he was forty years old when he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel. She was also the sister of Laban, the Aramean from northern Syria. Almost twenty years later,

²¹Rebekah still had no children. So Isaac asked the LORD to let her have a child, and the LORD answered his prayer.

²²Before Rebekah gave birth, she knew she was going to have twins, because she could feel them inside her, fighting each other. She thought, Why is this happening to me? Finally, she asked the LORD why her twins were fighting,

²³and he told her: Your two sons will become two separate nations. The younger of the two will be stronger, and the elder son will be his servant.

²⁴When Rebekah gave birth,

²⁵the first baby was covered with red hair, so he was named Esau.

²⁶The second baby grabbed his brother's heel, so they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

²⁷As Jacob and Esau grew older, Esau liked the outdoors and became a good

hunter, while Jacob settled down and became a shepherd.

²⁸Esau would take the meat of wild animals to his father Isaac, and so Isaac loved him more, but Jacob was his mother's favourite son.

²⁹One day, Jacob was cooking some stew, when Esau came home hungry

³⁰and said, I'm starving to death! Give me some of that red stew at once! That's how Esau got the name Edom.

³¹Jacob replied, Sell me your rights as the firstborn son.

³²I'm about to die, Esau answered. What good will those rights do me?

³³But Jacob said, Promise me your birthrights, here and now! And that's what Esau did.

³⁴Jacob then gave Esau some bread and some of the bean stew, and when Esau had finished eating and drinking, he just got up and left, showing how little he thought of his rights as the firstborn.

26 ¹Once during Abraham's lifetime, the fields had not produced enough grain, and now the same thing happened. So Isaac went to King

Abimelech of the Philistines in the land of Gerar,

²because the LORD had appeared to Isaac and said: Isaac, stay away from Egypt! I will show you where I want you to go.

³You will live there as a foreigner, but I will be with you and bless you. I will keep my promise to your father Abraham by giving this land to you and your descendants.

⁴I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all this land. They will be a blessing to every nation on earth,

⁵because Abraham did everything I told him to do.

⁶Isaac moved to Gerar

⁷with his beautiful wife Rebekah. He was afraid that someone might kill him to get her, and so he told everyone that Rebekah was his sister.

⁸After Isaac had been there a long time, King Abimelech looked out of a window and saw Isaac hugging and kissing Rebekah.

⁹Abimelech called him in and said, Rebekah must be your wife! Why did you

say she is your sister? Because I thought someone would kill me, Isaac answered.

¹⁰Don't you know what you've done? Abimelech exclaimed. If someone had slept with her, you would have made our whole nation guilty!

¹¹Then Abimelech warned his people that anyone who even touched Isaac or Rebekah would be put to death.

¹²Isaac planted grain and had a good harvest that same year. The LORD blessed him,

¹³and Isaac was so successful that he became very rich.

¹⁴In fact, the Philistines were jealous of the large number of sheep, goats, and slaves that Isaac owned,

¹⁵and they stopped up the wells that Abraham's servants had dug before his death.

¹⁶Finally, Abimelech said, Isaac, I want you to leave our country. You have become too powerful to stay here.

¹⁷Isaac left and settled in Gerar Valley,

¹⁸where he cleaned out those wells that the Philistines had stopped up. Isaac also gave each of the wells the same name that Abraham had given to them.

¹⁹While his servants were digging in the valley, they found a spring-fed well.

²⁰But the shepherds of Gerar Valley quarrelled with Isaac's shepherds and claimed the water belonged to them. So the well was named Quarrel, because they had quarrelled with Isaac.

²¹Isaac's servants dug another well, and the shepherds also quarrelled about it. So that well was named Jealous.

²²Finally, they dug one more well. There was no quarrelling this time, and the well was named Lots of Room, because the LORD had given them room and would make them very successful.

²³Isaac went on to Beersheba,

²⁴where the LORD appeared to him that night and told him, Don't be afraid! I am the God who was worshipped by your father Abraham, my servant. I will be with you and bless you, and because of Abraham I will give you many descendants.

²⁵Isaac built an altar there and worshipped the LORD. Then he set up camp, and his servants started digging a well.

²⁶ Meanwhile, Abimelech had left Gerar and was taking his adviser Ahuzzath and his army commander Phicol to see Isaac.

²⁷ When they arrived, Isaac asked, Why are you here? Didn't you send me away because you hated me?

²⁸ They answered, We now know for certain that the LORD is with you, and we have decided there needs to be a peace treaty between you and us. So let's make a solemn agreement

²⁹ not to harm each other. Remember, we have never hurt you, and when we sent you away, we let you go in peace. The LORD has truly blessed you.

³⁰ Isaac gave a big feast for them, and everyone ate and drank.

³¹ Early the next morning Isaac and the others made a solemn agreement, then he let them go in peace.

³² Later that same day Isaac's servants came and said, We've struck water!

³³ So Isaac named the well Shibah, and the town is still called Beersheba.

³⁴ When Esau was forty, he married Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

³⁵ But these two women brought a lot of grief to his parents Isaac and Rebekah.

27 ¹ After Isaac had become old and almost blind, he called in his firstborn son Esau, who asked him, Father, what can I do for you?

² Isaac replied, I am old and might die at any time.

³ So take your bow and arrows, then go out in the fields, and kill a wild animal.

⁴ Cook some of that tasty food that I love so much and bring it to me. I want to eat it once more and give you my blessing before I die.

⁵ Rebekah had been listening, and as soon as Esau left to go hunting,

⁶ she said to Jacob, I heard your father tell Esau

⁷ to kill a wild animal and cook some tasty food for your father before he dies. Your father said this because he wants to bless your brother with the LORD as his witness.

⁸ Now, my son, listen carefully to what I want you to do.

⁹ Go and kill two of your best young goats and bring them to me. I'll cook

the tasty food that your father loves so much.

¹⁰Then you can take it to him, so he can eat it and give you his blessing before he dies.

¹¹My brother Esau is a hairy man, Jacob reminded her. And I am not.

¹²If my father touches me and realizes I am trying to trick him, he will put a curse on me instead of giving me a blessing.

¹³Rebekah insisted, Let his curse fall on me! Just do what I say and bring me the meat.

¹⁴So Jacob brought the meat to his mother, and she cooked the tasty food that his father liked.

¹⁵Then she took Esau's best clothes and put them on Jacob.

¹⁶She also covered the smooth part of his hands and neck with goatskins

¹⁷and gave him some bread and the tasty food she had cooked.

¹⁸Jacob went to his father and said, Father, here I am. Which one of my sons are you? his father asked.

¹⁹Jacob replied, I am Esau, your firstborn, and I have done what you told

me. Please sit up and eat the meat I have brought. Then you can give me your blessing.

²⁰ Isaac asked, My son, how did you find an animal so quickly? The LORD your God was kind to me, Jacob answered.

²¹ My son, Isaac said, come closer, where I can touch you and find out if you really are Esau.

²² Jacob went closer. His father touched him and said, You sound like Jacob, but your hands feel hairy like Esau's.

²³ And so Isaac blessed Jacob, thinking he was Esau.

²⁴ Isaac asked, Are you really my son Esau? Yes, I am, Jacob answered.

²⁵ So Isaac told him, Serve me the wild meat, and I can give you my blessing. Jacob gave him some meat, and he ate it. He also gave him some wine, and he drank it.

²⁶ Then Isaac said, Son, come over here and kiss me.

²⁷ While Jacob was kissing him, Isaac caught the smell of his clothes and said: The smell of my son is like a field the LORD has blessed.

²⁸ God will bless you, my son, with dew from heaven and with fertile fields, rich with grain and grapes.

²⁹ Nations will be your servants and bow down to you. You will rule over your brothers, and they will kneel at your feet. Anyone who curses you will be cursed; anyone who blesses you will be blessed.

³⁰ Straight after Isaac had given Jacob his blessing and Jacob had gone, Esau came back from hunting.

³¹ He cooked the tasty food, brought it to his father, and said, Father, please sit up and eat the meat I have brought you, so you can give me your blessing.

³² Who are you? Isaac asked. I am Esau, your firstborn son.

³³ Isaac started trembling and said, Then who brought me some wild meat just before you came in? I ate it and gave him a blessing that cannot be taken back.

³⁴ Esau cried loudly and begged, Father, give me a blessing too!

³⁵ Isaac answered, Your brother tricked me and stole your blessing.

³⁶ Esau replied, My brother deserves the name Jacob, because he has already cheated me twice. The first time he cheated me out of my rights as the firstborn son, and now he has cheated me out of my blessing. Then Esau asked his father, Don't you still have any blessing left for me?

³⁷ My son, Isaac answered, I have made Jacob the ruler over you and your brothers, and all of you will be his servants. I have also promised him all the grain and grapes that he needs. There's nothing left that I can do for you.

³⁸ Father, Esau asked, don't you have more than one blessing? You can surely give me a blessing too! Then Esau started crying again.

³⁹ So his father said: Your home will be far from that fertile land, where dew comes down from the heavens.

⁴⁰ You will live by the power of your sword and be your brother's slave. But when you decide to be free, you will break loose.

⁴¹ Esau hated his brother Jacob because he had stolen the blessing that was supposed to be his. So he said to himself,

Just as soon as my father dies, I'll kill Jacob.

⁴²When Rebekah found out what Esau planned to do, she sent for Jacob and told him, Son, your brother Esau is just waiting for the time when he can kill you.

⁴³Now listen carefully and do what I say. Go to the home of my brother Laban in Haran

⁴⁴and stay with him for a while. When Esau stops being angry

⁴⁵and forgets what you have done to him, I'll send for you to come home. Why should I lose both of my sons on the same day?

⁴⁶Rebekah later told Isaac, Those Hittite wives of Esau are making my life miserable! If Jacob marries a Hittite woman, I'd be better off dead.

28¹ Isaac called in Jacob, then gave him a blessing, and said: Don't marry any of those Canaanite women.

²Go at once to your mother's father Bethuel in northern Syria and choose a wife from one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.

³I pray that God All-Powerful will bless you with many descendants and let you become a great nation.

⁴May he bless you with the land he gave Abraham, so that you will take over this land where we now live as foreigners.

⁵Isaac then sent Jacob to stay with Rebekah's brother Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

⁶Esau found out that his father Isaac had blessed Jacob and had warned him not to marry any of the Canaanite women. He also learnt that Jacob had been sent to find a wife in northern Syria

⁷and that he had obeyed his father and mother.

⁸Esau already had several wives, but he realized at last how much his father hated the Canaanite women.

⁹So he married Ishmael's daughter Mahalath, who was the sister of Nebaioth and the granddaughter of Abraham.

¹⁰Jacob left the town of Beersheba and started out for Haran.

¹¹At sunset he stopped for the night and went to sleep, resting his head on a large rock.

¹²In a dream he saw a ladder that reached from earth to heaven, and God's angels were going up and down on it.

¹³The LORD was standing beside the ladder and said: I am the LORD God who was worshipped by Abraham and Isaac. I will give to you and your family the land on which you are now sleeping.

¹⁴Your descendants will spread over the earth in all directions and will become as numerous as the specks of dust. Your family will be a blessing to all people.

¹⁵Wherever you go, I will watch over you, then later I will bring you back to this land. I won't leave you. I will do all I have promised.

¹⁶Jacob woke up suddenly and thought, The LORD is in this place, and I didn't even know it.

¹⁷Then Jacob became frightened and said, This is a fearsome place! It must be the house of God and the ladder to heaven.

¹⁸When Jacob got up early the next morning, he took the rock that he had used for a pillow and stood it up for a place of worship. Then he poured olive oil on the rock to dedicate it to God,

¹⁹and he named the place Bethel. Before that it had been named Luz.

²⁰Jacob solemnly promised God, If you go with me and watch over me as I travel, and if you give me food and clothes

²¹and bring me safely home again, you will be my God.

²²This rock will be your house, and I will give back to you a tenth of everything you give me.

29¹As Jacob continued on his way to the east,

²he looked out in a field and saw a well where shepherds took their sheep for water. Three flocks of sheep were lying around the well, which was covered with a large rock.

³Shepherds would roll the rock away when all their sheep had gathered there. Then after the sheep had been watered, the shepherds would roll the rock back over the mouth of the well.

⁴Jacob asked the shepherds, Where are you from? We're from Haran, they answered.

⁵Then he asked, Do you know Nahor's grandson Laban? Yes we do, they replied.

⁶How is he? Jacob asked. He's fine, they answered. And here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep.

⁷Jacob told them, Look, the sun is still high up in the sky, and it's too early to bring in the rest of the flocks. Water your sheep and take them back to the pasture.

⁸But they replied, We can't do that until they all get here, and the rock has been rolled away from the well.

⁹While Jacob was still talking with the men, his cousin Rachel came up with her father's sheep.

¹⁰When Jacob saw her and his uncle's sheep, he rolled the rock away and watered the sheep.

¹¹He then kissed Rachel and started crying because he was so happy.

¹²He told her that he was the son of her aunt Rebekah, and she ran and told her father about him.

¹³As soon as Laban heard the news, he ran out to meet Jacob. He hugged and kissed him and brought him to his home, where Jacob told him everything that had happened.

¹⁴ Laban said, You are my nephew, and you are like one of my own family. After Jacob had been there for a month,

¹⁵ Laban said to him, You shouldn't have to work without pay, just because you are a relative of mine. What do you want me to give you?

¹⁶ Laban had two daughters. Leah was older than Rachel, but her eyes didn't sparkle, while Rachel was beautiful and had a good figure.

¹⁷ (29: 16)

¹⁸ Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he answered, If you will let me marry Rachel, I'll work seven years for you.

¹⁹ Laban replied, It's better for me to let you marry Rachel than for someone else to have her. So stay and work for me.

²⁰ Jacob worked seven years for Laban, but the time seemed like only a few days, because he loved Rachel so much.

²¹ Jacob said to Laban, The time is up, and I want to marry Rachel now!

²² So Laban gave a big feast and invited all their neighbours.

²³ But that evening he brought Leah to Jacob, who married her and spent the night with her.

²⁴ Laban also gave Zilpah to Leah as her servant woman.

²⁵ The next morning Jacob found out that he had married Leah, and he asked Laban, Why did you do this to me? Didn't I work to get Rachel? Why did you trick me?

²⁶ Laban replied, In our country the elder daughter must get married first.

²⁷ After you spend this week with Leah, you may also marry Rachel. But you will have to work for me another seven years.

²⁸ At the end of the week of celebration, Laban let Jacob marry Rachel, and he gave her his servant woman Bilhah. Jacob loved Rachel more than he did Leah, but he had to work another seven years for Laban.

²⁹ (29: 28)

³⁰ (29: 28)

³¹ The LORD knew that Jacob loved Rachel more than he did Leah, and so he gave children to Leah, but not to Rachel.

³² Leah gave birth to a son and named him Reuben, because she said, The LORD has taken away my sorrow. Now

my husband will love me more than he does Rachel.

³³She had a second son and named him Simeon, because she said, The LORD has heard that my husband doesn't love me.

³⁴When Leah's third son was born, she said, Now my husband will hold me close. So this son was named Levi.

³⁵She had one more son and named him Judah, because she said, I'll praise the LORD!

30¹Rachel was very jealous of Leah for having children, and she said to Jacob, I'll die if you don't give me some children!

²But Jacob became upset with Rachel and answered, Don't blame me! I'm not God.

³Here, take my servant Bilhah, Rachel told him. Have children by her, and I'll let them be born on my knees to show that they are mine.

⁴Then Rachel let Jacob marry Bilhah,
⁵and they had a son.

⁶Rachel named him Dan, because she said, God has answered my prayers. He has judged me and given me a son.

⁷ When Bilhah and Jacob had a second son,

⁸ Rachel said, I've struggled hard with my sister, and I've won! So she named the boy Naphtali.

⁹ When Leah realized she could not have any more children, she let Jacob marry her servant Zilpah,

¹⁰ and they had a son.

¹¹ I'm really lucky, Leah said, and she named the boy Gad.

¹² When they had another son,

¹³ Leah exclaimed, I'm happy now, and all the women will say how happy I am. So she named him Asher.

¹⁴ During the time of the wheat harvest, Reuben found some love flowers and took them to his mother Leah. Rachel asked Leah for some of them,

¹⁵ but Leah said, It's bad enough that you stole my husband! Now you want my son's love flowers too. All right, Rachel answered. Let me have the flowers, and you can sleep with Jacob tonight.

¹⁶ That evening when Jacob came in from the fields, Leah told him, You're sleeping with me tonight. I hired you

with my son's love flowers. They slept together that night,

¹⁷ and God answered Leah's prayers by giving her a fifth son.

¹⁸ Leah shouted, God has rewarded me for letting Jacob marry my servant, and she named the boy Issachar.

¹⁹ When Leah had another son,

²⁰ she exclaimed, God has given me a wonderful gift, and my husband will praise me for giving him six sons. So she named the boy Zebulun.

²¹ Later, Leah had a daughter and named her Dinah.

²² Finally, God remembered Rachel he answered her prayer by giving her a son. God has taken away my disgrace, she said.

²³ (30: 22)

²⁴ I'll name the boy Joseph, and I'll pray that the LORD will give me another son.

²⁵ After Joseph was born, Jacob said to Laban, Release me from our agreement and let me return to my own country.

²⁶ You know how hard I've worked for you, so let me take my wives and children and leave.

²⁷ But Laban told him, If you really are my friend, stay on, and I'll pay whatever you ask. I'm sure the LORD has blessed me because of you.

²⁸ (30: 27)

²⁹ Jacob answered: You've seen how hard I've worked for you, and you know how your flocks and herds have grown under my care.

³⁰ You didn't have much before I came, but the LORD has blessed everything I have ever done for you. Now it's time for me to start looking after my own family.

³¹ How much do you want me to pay you? Laban asked. Then Jacob told him: I don't want you to pay me anything. Just do one thing, and I'll take care of your sheep and goats.

³² Let me go through your flocks and herds and take the sheep and goats that are either spotted or speckled and the black lambs. That's all you need to give me.

³³ In the future you can easily find out if I've been honest. Just look and see if my animals are either spotted or speckled, or if the lambs are black. If they aren't, they've been stolen from you.

³⁴ I agree to that, was Laban's response.

³⁵ Before the end of the day, Laban had separated his spotted and speckled animals and the black lambs from the others and had put his sons in charge of them.

³⁶ Then Laban made Jacob keep the rest of the sheep and goats at a distance of three days' journey.

³⁷ Jacob cut branches from some poplar trees and from some almond and evergreen trees. He peeled off part of the bark and made the branches look spotted and speckled.

³⁸ Then he put the branches where the sheep and goats would see them while they were drinking from the water trough. The goats mated there

³⁹ in front of the branches, and their young were spotted and speckled.

⁴⁰ Some of the sheep that Jacob was keeping for Laban were already spotted. And when the others were ready to mate, he made sure that they faced in the direction of the spotted and black ones. In this way, Jacob built up a flock of sheep for himself and did not put them with the other sheep.

⁴¹ When the stronger sheep were mating near the drinking place, Jacob made sure that the spotted branches were there.

⁴² But he would not put out the branches when the weaker animals were mating. So Jacob got all the healthy animals, and Laban got what was left.

⁴³ Jacob soon became rich and successful. He owned many sheep, goats, camels, and donkeys, as well as a lot of slaves.

31 ¹ Jacob heard that Laban's sons were complaining, Jacob is now a rich man, and he got everything he owns from our father.

² Jacob also noticed that Laban was not as friendly as he had been before.

³ One day the LORD said, Jacob, go back to your relatives in the land of your ancestors, and I will bless you.

⁴ Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field where he kept his sheep,

⁵ and he told them: Your father isn't as friendly with me as he used to be, but the God my ancestors worshipped has been on my side.

⁶You know that I have worked hard for your father

⁷and that he keeps cheating me by changing my wages time after time. But God has protected me.

⁸When your father said the speckled sheep would be my wages, all of them were speckled. And when he said the spotted ones would be mine, all of them were spotted.

⁹That's how God has taken sheep and goats from your father and given them to me.

¹⁰Once, when the flocks were mating, I dreamed that all the rams were either spotted or speckled.

¹¹Then God's angel called me by name. I answered,

¹²and he said, Notice that all the rams are either spotted or speckled. I know everything Laban is doing to you,

¹³and I am the God you worshipped at Bethel, when you poured olive oil on a rock and made a promise to me. Leave here straight away and return to the land where you were born.

¹⁴ Rachel and Leah said to Jacob: There's nothing left for us to inherit from our father.

¹⁵ He treats us like foreigners and has even cheated us out of the bride price that should have been ours.

¹⁶ Now do whatever God tells you to do. Even the property God took from our father and gave to you really belongs to us and our children.

¹⁷ Then Jacob, his wives, and his children got on camels and left

¹⁸ for the home of his father Isaac in Canaan. Jacob took all the flocks, herds, and other property that he had got in northern Syria.

¹⁹ Before Rachel left, she stole the household idols while Laban was out shearing his sheep.

²⁰ Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean by not saying that he intended to leave.

²¹ When Jacob crossed the River Euphrates and headed for the hill country of Gilead, he took with him everything he owned.

²² Three days later Laban found out that Jacob had gone.

²³ So he took some of his relatives along and chased after Jacob for seven days, before catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead.

²⁴ But God appeared to Laban in a dream that night and warned, Don't say a word to Jacob. Don't make a threat or a promise.

²⁵ Jacob had set up camp in the hill country of Gilead, when Laban and his relatives came and set up camp in another part of the hill country. Laban went to Jacob

²⁶ and said: Look what you've done! You've tricked me and run off with my daughters like a kidnapper.

²⁷ Why did you sneak away without telling me? I would have given you a going-away party with singing and with music on tambourines and harps.

²⁸ You didn't even give me a chance to kiss my own grandchildren and daughters goodbye. That was really foolish.

²⁹ I could easily hurt you, but the God your father worshipped has warned me not to make any threats or promises.

³⁰I can understand why you were eager to return to your father, but why did you have to steal my idols?

³¹Jacob answered, I left secretly because I was afraid you would take your daughters from me by force.

³²If you find that any one of us has taken your idols, I'll have that person killed. Let your relatives be witnesses. Show me what belongs to you, and you can take it back. Jacob did not realize that Rachel had stolen the household idols.

³³Laban searched the tents of Jacob, Leah, and the two servant women, but did not find the idols. Then he started for Rachel's tent.

³⁴She had already hidden them in the cushion she used as a saddle and was sitting on it. Laban searched everywhere and did not find them.

³⁵Rachel said, Father, please don't be angry with me for not getting up; I am having my period. Laban kept on searching, but still did not find the idols.

³⁶Jacob became very angry and said to Laban: What have I done wrong? Have I

committed some crime? Is that why you hunted me down?

³⁷ After searching through everything I have, did you find anything of yours? If so, put it here, where your relatives and mine can see it. Then we can decide what to do.

³⁸ In all the twenty years that I've worked for you, not one of your sheep or goats has had a miscarriage, and I've never eaten even one of your rams.

³⁹ If a wild animal killed one of your sheep or goats, I paid for it myself. In fact, you demanded the full price, whether the animal was killed during the day or at night.

⁴⁰ I sweated every day, and I couldn't sleep at night because of the cold.

⁴¹ I had to work fourteen of these twenty long years to earn your two daughters and another six years to buy your sheep and goats. During that time you kept changing my wages.

⁴² If the fearsome God worshipped by Abraham and my father Isaac had not been on my side, you would have sent me away without a thing. But God saw my hard work, and he knew the trouble I

was in, so he helped me. Then last night he told you how wrong you were.

⁴³ Laban said to Jacob, Leah and Rachel are my daughters, and their children belong to me. All these sheep you are taking are really mine too. In fact, everything you have belongs to me. But there is nothing I can do to keep my daughters and their children.

⁴⁴ So I am ready to make an agreement with you, and we will pile up some large rocks here to remind us of the agreement.

⁴⁵ After Jacob had set up a large rock,
⁴⁶ he told his men to get some more rocks and pile them up next to it. Then Jacob and Laban ate a meal together beside the rocks.

⁴⁷ Laban named the pile of rocks Jegar Sahadutha. But Jacob named it Galeed.

⁴⁸ Laban said to Jacob, This pile of rocks will remind us of our agreement. That's why the place was named Galeed.

⁴⁹ Laban also said, This pile of rocks means that the LORD will watch us both while we are apart from each other. So the place was also named Mizpah.

⁵⁰Then Laban said: If you ill-treat my daughters or marry other women, I may not know about it, but remember, God is watching us!

⁵¹Both this pile of rocks and this large rock have been set up between us as a reminder. I must never go beyond them to attack you, and you must never go beyond them to attack me.

⁵²(31:51)

⁵³My father Nahor, your grandfather Abraham, and their ancestors all worshipped the same God, and he will make sure that we each keep the agreement. Then Jacob made a promise in the name of the fearsome God his father Isaac had worshipped.

⁵⁴Jacob killed an animal and offered it as a sacrifice there on the mountain, and he invited his men to eat with him. After the meal they spent the night on the mountain.

⁵⁵Early the next morning, Laban kissed his daughters and his grandchildren goodbye, then he left to go back home.

32¹As Jacob was on his way back home, some of God's angels came and met him.

²When Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's camp. So he named the place Mahanaim.

³Jacob sent messengers on ahead to Esau, who lived in the land of Seir, also known as Edom.

⁴Jacob told them to say to Esau, Master, I am your servant! I have lived with Laban all this time,

⁵and now I own cattle, donkeys, and sheep, as well as many slaves. Master, I am sending these messengers in the hope that you will be kind to me.

⁶When the messengers returned, they told Jacob, We went to your brother Esau, and now he is heading this way with four hundred men.

⁷Jacob was so frightened that he divided his people, sheep, cattle, and camels into two groups.

⁸He thought, If Esau attacks one group, perhaps the other can escape.

⁹Then Jacob prayed: You, LORD, are the God who was worshipped by my grandfather Abraham and by my father Isaac. You told me to return home to my family, and you promised to be with me and make me successful.

¹⁰I don't deserve all the good things you have done for me, your servant. When I first crossed the Jordan, I had only my walking stick, but now I have two large groups of people and animals.

¹¹Please rescue me from my brother. I am afraid he will come and attack not only me, but my wives and children as well.

¹²But you have promised that I would be a success and that some day it will be as hard to count my descendants as it is to count the stars in the sky.

¹³After Jacob had spent the night there, he chose some animals as gifts for Esau:

¹⁴two hundred female goats and twenty males, two hundred female sheep and twenty males, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten males.

¹⁵(32: 14)

¹⁶Jacob put servants in charge of each herd and told them, Go ahead of me and keep a space between each herd.

¹⁷Then he said to the servant in charge of the first herd, When Esau meets you, he will ask whose servant you are. He

will want to know where you are going and who owns those animals in front of you.

¹⁸So tell him, They belong to your servant Jacob, who is coming this way. He is sending them as a gift to his master Esau.

¹⁹Jacob also told the men in charge of the second and third herds and those who followed to say the same thing when they met Esau.

²⁰And Jacob told them to be sure to say that he was just behind them. Jacob hoped the gifts would make Esau friendly, so Esau would be glad to see him when they met.

²¹Jacob's men took the gifts on ahead of him, but he spent the night in camp.

²²Jacob got up in the middle of the night and took his wives, his eleven children, and everything he owned across to the other side of the River Jabbok for safety.

²³(32: 22)

²⁴Afterwards, Jacob went back and spent the rest of the night alone. A man came and fought with Jacob until just before daybreak.

²⁵When the man saw that he could not win, he struck Jacob on the hip and threw it out of joint.

²⁶They kept on wrestling until the man said, Let go of me! It's almost daylight. You can't go until you bless me, Jacob replied.

²⁷Then the man asked, What is your name? Jacob, he answered.

²⁸The man said, Your name will no longer be Jacob. You have wrestled with God and with men, and you have won. That's why your name will be Israel.

²⁹Jacob said, Now tell me your name. Don't you know who I am? he asked. And he blessed Jacob.

³⁰Jacob said, I have seen God face to face, and I am still alive. So he named the place Peniel.

³¹The sun was coming up as Jacob was leaving Peniel. He was limping because he had been struck on the hip,

³²and the muscle on his hip joint had been injured. That's why even today the people of Israel don't eat the hip muscle of any animal.

33¹ Later that day Jacob met Esau coming with his four hundred

men. So Jacob made his children walk with their mothers.

²The two servant women, Zilpah and Bilhah, together with their children went first, followed by Leah and her children, then by Rachel and Joseph.

³Jacob himself walked in front of them all, bowing to the ground seven times as he came near his brother.

⁴But Esau ran towards Jacob and hugged and kissed him. Then the two brothers started crying.

⁵When Esau noticed the women and children he asked, Whose children are these? Jacob answered, These are the ones the LORD has been kind enough to give to me, your servant.

⁶Then the two servant women and their children came and bowed down to Esau.

⁷Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down; finally, Joseph and Rachel also came and bowed down.

⁸Esau asked Jacob, What did you mean by these herds I met along the road? Master, Jacob answered, I sent them so that you would be friendly to me.

⁹But, brother, I already have plenty, Esau replied. Keep them for yourself.

¹⁰No! Jacob said. Please accept these gifts as a sign of your friendship for me. When you welcomed me and I saw your face, it was like seeing the face of God.

¹¹Please accept these gifts I brought to you. God has been good to me, and I have everything I need. Jacob kept insisting until Esau accepted the gifts.

¹²Let's get ready to travel, Esau said. I'll go along with you.

¹³But Jacob answered, Master, you know travelling is hard on children, and I have to look after the sheep and goats that are nursing their young. If my animals travel too much in one day, they will all die.

¹⁴Why don't you go on ahead and let me travel along slowly with the children, the herds, and the flocks. We can meet again in the country of Edom.

¹⁵Esau replied, Let me leave some of my men with you. You don't have to do that, Jacob answered. I am happy, simply knowing that you are friendly to me.

¹⁶So Esau left for Edom.

¹⁷But Jacob went to Succoth, where he built a house for himself and set up

shelters for his animals. That's why the place is called Succoth.

¹⁸After leaving northern Syria, Jacob arrived safely at Shechem in Canaan and set up camp outside the city.

¹⁹The land where he camped was owned by the descendants of Hamor, the father of Shechem. So Jacob paid them one hundred pieces of silver for the property,

²⁰then he set up his tents and built an altar there to honour the God of Israel.

34¹Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the women who lived there.

²She was seen by Hamor's son Shechem, the leader of the Hivites, and he grabbed her and raped her.

³But Shechem was attracted to Dinah, so he told her how much he loved her.

⁴He even asked his father to get her for his wife.

⁵Meanwhile, Jacob heard what had happened. But his sons were out in the fields with the cattle, so he did not do anything at the time.

⁶Hamor arrived at Jacob's home

⁷ just as Jacob's sons were coming in from work. When they learnt that their sister had been raped, they became furiously angry. Nothing is more disgraceful than rape, and it should not be tolerated in Israel.

⁸ Hamor said to Jacob and his sons: My son Shechem really loves Dinah. Please let him marry her.

⁹ Why don't you start letting your families marry into our families and ours marry into yours?

¹⁰ You can share this land with us. Move freely about until you find the property you want; then buy it and settle down here.

¹¹ Shechem added, Do this favour for me, and I'll give whatever you want.

¹² Ask anything, no matter how expensive. I'll do anything, just let me marry Dinah.

¹³ Jacob's sons wanted to get even with Shechem and his father because of what had happened to their sister.

¹⁴ So they tricked them by saying: You're not circumcised! It would be a disgrace for us to let you marry Dinah now.

¹⁵ But we will let you marry her, if you and the other men in your tribe get circumcised.

¹⁶ Then your families can marry into ours, and ours can marry into yours, and we can live together like one nation.

¹⁷ But if you don't agree to get circumcised, we'll take Dinah and leave this place.

¹⁸ Hamor and Shechem liked what was said.

¹⁹ Shechem was the most respected person in his family, and he was so in love with Dinah that he hurried off to get everything done.

²⁰ The two men met with the other leaders of their city and told them:

²¹ These people really are friendly. Why not let them move freely about until they find the property they want? There's enough land here for them and for us. Then our families can marry into theirs, and theirs can marry into ours.

²² We have to do only one thing before they will agree to stay here and become one nation with us. Our men will have to be circumcised like their men.

²³ Just think! We'll get their property, as well as their flocks and herds. All we have to do is to agree, and they will live here with us.

²⁴ Every grown man followed this advice and got circumcised.

²⁵ Three days later the men who had been circumcised were still weak from pain. So Simeon and Levi, two of Dinah's brothers, attacked with their swords and killed every man in town,

²⁶ including Hamor and Shechem. Then they took Dinah and left.

²⁷ Jacob's other sons came and took everything they wanted. All this was done because of the horrible thing that had happened to their sister.

²⁸ They took sheep, goats, donkeys, and everything else that was in the town or the fields.

²⁹ After taking everything of value from the houses, they dragged away the wives and children of their victims.

³⁰ Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Look what you've done! Now I'm in real trouble with the Canaanites and Perizzites who live around here. There

aren't many of us, and if they attack, they'll kill everyone in my household.

³¹ They answered, Was it right to let our own sister be treated that way?

35 ¹ God told Jacob, Return to Bethel, where I appeared to you when you were running from your brother Esau. Make your home there and build an altar for me.

² Jacob said to his family and to everyone else who was travelling with him: Get rid of your foreign gods! Then make yourselves acceptable to worship God and put on clean clothes.

³ Afterwards, we'll go to Bethel. I will build an altar there for God, who answered my prayers when I was in trouble and who has always been at my side.

⁴ So everyone gave Jacob their idols and their earrings, and he buried them under the oak tree near Shechem.

⁵ While Jacob and his family were travelling through Canaan, God terrified the people in the towns so much that no one dared bother them.

⁶ Finally, they reached Bethel, also known as Luz.

⁷ Jacob built an altar there and called it God of Bethel, because that was the place where God had appeared to him when he was running from Esau.

⁸ While they were there, Rebekah's personal servant Deborah died. They buried her under an oak tree and called it Weeping Oak.

⁹ After Jacob came back to the land of Canaan, God appeared to him again. This time he gave Jacob a new name and blessed him by saying: I am God All-Powerful, and from now on your name will be Israel instead of Jacob. You will have many children. Your descendants will become nations, and some of the men in your family will even be kings.

¹⁰ (35: 9)

¹¹ (35: 9)

¹² I will give you the land that I promised Abraham and Isaac, and it will belong to your family for ever.

¹³ After God had gone,

¹⁴ Jacob set up a large rock, so that he would remember what had happened there. Then he poured wine and olive oil on the rock to show that it was dedicated to God,

¹⁵ and he named the place Bethel.

¹⁶ Jacob and his family had left Bethel and were still a long way from Ephrath, when the time came for Rachel's baby to be born.

¹⁷ She was having a rough time, but the woman who was helping her said, Don't worry! It's a boy.

¹⁸ Rachel was at the point of death, and just before dying, she said, I'll name him Benoni. But Jacob called him Benjamin.

¹⁹ Rachel was buried beside the road to Ephrath, which is also called Bethlehem.

²⁰ Jacob set up a tombstone over her grave, and it is still there.

²¹ Jacob, also known as Israel, travelled to the south of Eder Tower, where he set up camp.

²² During their time there, Jacob's eldest son Reuben slept with Bilhah, who was one of Jacob's other wives. And Jacob found out about it.

²³ Jacob had twelve sons while living in northern Syria. His firstborn Reuben was the son of Leah, who later gave birth to Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Leah's servant Zilpah had two sons: Gad and Asher. Jacob and his

wife Rachel had Joseph and Benjamin. Rachel's servant woman Bilhah had two more sons: Dan and Naphtali.

²⁴ (35: 23)

²⁵ (35: 23)

²⁶ (35: 23)

²⁷ Jacob went to his father Isaac at Hebron, also called Mamre or Kiriath-Arba, where Isaac's father Abraham had lived as a foreigner.

²⁸ Isaac died at the ripe old age of one hundred and eighty, then his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

²⁹ (35: 28)

36 ¹ Esau, also known as Edom, had many descendants.

² He married three Canaanite women: the first was Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; the second was Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

³ the third was Basemath, who was Ishmael's daughter and Nebaioth's sister.

⁴ Esau and his three wives had five sons while in Canaan. Adah's son was Eliphaz; Basemath's son was Reuel; Oholibamah's three sons were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

⁵ (36: 4)

⁶ Esau took his children and wives, his relatives and servants, his animals and possessions he had got while in Canaan, and moved far from Jacob.

⁷ He did this because the land was too crowded and could not support him and his brother with their flocks and herds.

⁸ That's why Esau made his home in the hill country of Seir.

⁹ Esau lived in the hill country of Seir and was the ancestor of the Edomites. Esau had three wives: Adah, Basemath, and Oholibamah. Here is a list of his descendants: Esau and Adah had a son named Eliphaz, whose sons were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. Timna was the other wife of Esau's son Eliphaz, and she had a son named Amalek. Esau and Basemath had a son named Reuel, whose sons were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. Esau and Oholibamah had three sons: Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁰ (36: 9)

¹¹ (36: 9)

¹² (36: 9)

¹³ (36: 9)

¹⁴ (36: 9)

¹⁵ Esau and Adah's eldest son was Eliphaz, and the clans that descended from him were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,

¹⁶ Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. These and Esau's other descendants lived in the land of Edom.

¹⁷ The clans that descended from Esau and Basemath's son Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

¹⁸ The clans that descended from Esau and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁹ All of these clans descended from Esau, who was known as Edom.

²⁰ Seir was from the Horite tribe that had lived in Edom before the time of Esau. The clans that had descended from him were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,

²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

²² Lotan's sons were Hori and Heman; his sister was Timna.

²³ Shobal's sons were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

²⁴ Zibeon's sons were Aiah and Anah the same Anah who found an oasis in the

desert while taking the donkeys of his father out to pasture.

²⁵Anah's children were Dishon and Oholibamah.

²⁶Dishon's sons were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

²⁷Ezer's sons were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸Dishan's sons were Uz and Aran.

²⁹The clans of the Horites were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,

³⁰Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan, and they lived in the land of Seir.

³¹Before there were kings in Israel, the following kings ruled Edom one after another: Bela son of Beor from Dinhabah; Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah; Husham from the land of Teman; Hadad son of Bedad from Avith (Bedad had defeated the Midianites in Moab); Samlah from Masrekah; Shaul from the city of Rehoboth on the River Euphrates; Baalhanan son of Achbor; Hadar from the city of Pau (his wife Mehetabel was the daughter of Matred and the granddaughter of Mezahab).

³² (36: 31)

³³ (36: 31)

³⁴ (36: 31)

³⁵ (36: 31)

³⁶ (36: 31)

³⁷ (36: 31)

³⁸ (36: 31)

³⁹ (36: 31)

⁴⁰ The clans that descended from Esau took their names from their families and the places where they lived. They are Timna, Alvah, Jetheth,

⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,

⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,

⁴³ Magdiel, and Iram. These clans descended from Esau, who was known as Edom, the father of the Edomites. They took their names from the places where they settled.

37 ¹ Jacob lived in the land of Canaan, where his father Isaac had lived,

² and this is the story of his family. When Jacob's son Joseph was seventeen years old, he took care of the sheep with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. But he was always telling his father all sorts of bad things about his brothers.

³ Jacob loved Joseph more than he did any of his other sons, because Joseph was born after Jacob was very old. Jacob had given Joseph a fine coat

⁴ to show that he was his favourite son, and so Joseph's brothers hated him and would not be friendly to him.

⁵ One day, Joseph told his brothers what he had dreamed, and they hated him even more.

⁶ Joseph said, Let me tell you about my dream.

⁷ We were out in the field, tying up bundles of wheat. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles gathered around and bowed down to it.

⁸ His brothers asked, Do you really think you are going to be king and rule over us? Now they hated Joseph more than ever because of what he had said about his dream.

⁹ Joseph later had another dream, and he told his brothers, Listen to what else I dreamed. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me.

¹⁰ When he told his father about this dream, his father became angry and said, What's that supposed to mean? Are

your mother and I and your brothers all going to come and bow down in front of you?

¹¹ Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept wondering about the dream.

¹² One day when Joseph's brothers had taken the sheep to a pasture near Shechem,

¹³ his father Jacob said to him, I want you to go to your brothers. They are with the sheep near Shechem. Yes, sir, Joseph answered.

¹⁴ His father said, Go and find out how your brothers and the sheep are doing. Then come back and let me know. So he sent him from Hebron Valley. Joseph was near Shechem

¹⁵ and wandering through the fields, when a man asked, What are you looking for?

¹⁶ Joseph answered, I'm looking for my brothers who are watching the sheep. Can you tell me where they are?

¹⁷ They're not here any more, the man replied. I overheard them say they were going to Dothan. Joseph left and found his brothers in Dothan.

¹⁸But before he got there, they saw him coming and made plans to kill him.

¹⁹They said to one another, Look, here comes the hero of those dreams!

²⁰Let's kill him and throw him into a pit and say that some wild animal ate him. Then we'll see what happens to those dreams.

²¹Reuben heard this and tried to protect Joseph from them. Let's not kill him, he said.

²²Don't murder him or even harm him. Just throw him into a dry well out here in the desert. Reuben planned to rescue Joseph later and take him back to his father.

²³When Joseph came to his brothers, they pulled off his fine coat

²⁴and threw him into a dry well.

²⁵As Joseph's brothers sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with all kinds of spices that they were taking to Egypt.

²⁶So Judah said, What will we gain if we kill our brother and hide his body?

²⁷ Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not harm him. After all, he is our brother. And the others agreed.

²⁸ When the Midianite merchants came by, Joseph's brothers took him out of the well, and for twenty pieces of silver they sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt.

²⁹ When Reuben returned to the well and did not find Joseph there, he tore his clothes in sorrow.

³⁰ Then he went back to his brothers and said, The boy is gone! What am I going to do?

³¹ Joseph's brothers killed a goat and dipped Joseph's fine coat in its blood.

³² After this, they took the coat to their father and said, We found this! Look at it carefully and see if it belongs to your son.

³³ Jacob knew it was Joseph's coat and said, It's my son's coat! Joseph has been torn to pieces and eaten by some wild animal.

³⁴ Jacob mourned for Joseph a long time, and to show his sorrow he tore his clothes and wore sackcloth.

³⁵All Jacob's children came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. No, he said, I will go to my grave, mourning for my son. So Jacob kept on grieving.

³⁶Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold Joseph in Egypt to a man named Potiphar, who was the king's official in charge of the palace guard.

38¹About that time Judah left his brothers in the hill country and went to live near his friend Hirah in the town of Adullam.

²While there he met the daughter of Shua, a Canaanite man. Judah married her,

³and they had three sons. He named the first one Er;

⁴she named the next one Onan.

⁵The third one was born when Judah was in Chezib, and she named him Shelah.

⁶Later, Judah chose Tamar as a wife for Er, his eldest son.

⁷But Er was very evil, and the LORD took his life.

⁸So Judah told Onan, It's your duty to marry Tamar and have a child for your brother.

⁹Onan knew the child would not be his, and when he had sex with Tamar, he made sure that she would not get pregnant.

¹⁰The LORD wasn't pleased with Onan and took his life too.

¹¹Judah did not want the same thing to happen to his son Shelah, and he told Tamar, Go home to your father and live there as a widow until my son Shelah is grown up. So Tamar went to live with her father.

¹²Some years later Judah's wife died, and he mourned for her. He then went with his friend Hirah to the town of Timnah, where his sheep were being sheared.

¹³Tamar found out that her father-in-law Judah was going to Timnah to shear his sheep.

¹⁴She also realized that Shelah was now a grown man, but she had not been allowed to marry him. So she decided to dress in something other than her widow's clothes and to cover her face with a veil. After this, she sat outside the town of Enaim on the road to Timnah.

¹⁵When Judah came along, he did not recognize her because of the veil. He thought she was a prostitute

¹⁶and asked her to sleep with him. She asked, What will you give me if I do?

¹⁷One of my young goats, he answered. What will you give me to keep until you send the goat? she asked.

¹⁸What do you want? he asked in return. The ring on that cord around your neck, was her reply. I also want the special walking stick you have with you. He gave them to her, they slept together, and she became pregnant.

¹⁹After returning home, Tamar took off the veil and dressed in her widow's clothes again.

²⁰Judah sent his friend Hirah to take a goat to the woman, so he could get back the ring and walking stick, but she wasn't there.

²¹Hirah asked the people of Enaim, Where is the prostitute who sat along the road outside your town? There's never been one here, they answered.

²²Hirah went back and told Judah, I couldn't find the woman, and the people

of Enaim said no prostitute had ever been there.

²³If you couldn't find her, we'll just let her keep the things I gave her, Judah answered. And we'd better forget about the goat, or else we'll look like fools.

²⁴About three months later someone told Judah, Your daughter-in-law Tamar has behaved like a prostitute, and now she's pregnant! Drag her out of town and burn her to death! Judah shouted.

²⁵As Tamar was being dragged off, she sent someone to tell her father-in-law, The man who gave me this ring, this cord, and this walking stick is the one who got me pregnant.

²⁶Those are mine! Judah admitted. She's a better person than I am, because I broke my promise to let her marry my son Shelah. After this, Judah never slept with her again.

²⁷Tamar later gave birth to twins. But before either of them was born, one of them stuck a hand out of her womb. The woman who was helping tied a red thread around the baby's hand and explained, This one came out first.

²⁸(38: 27)

²⁹ Straight away his hand went back in, and the other child was born first. The woman then said, What an opening you've made for yourself! So they named the baby Perez.

³⁰ When the brother with the red thread came out, they named him Zerah.

39 ¹ The Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, the king's official in charge of the palace guard.

² So Joseph lived in the home of Potiphar, his Egyptian owner. Soon Potiphar realized that the LORD was helping Joseph to be successful in whatever he did.

³ (39: 2)

⁴ Potiphar liked Joseph and made him his personal assistant, putting him in charge of his house and all his property.

⁵ Because of Joseph, the LORD began to bless Potiphar's family and fields.

⁶ Potiphar left everything up to Joseph, and with Joseph there, the only decision he had to make was what he wanted to eat. Joseph was well-built and handsome,

⁷ and Potiphar's wife soon noticed him. She asked him to make love to her,
⁸ but he refused and said, My master isn't worried about anything in his house, because he has placed me in charge of everything he owns.

⁹ No one in my master's house is more important than I am. The only thing he hasn't given me is you, and that's because you are his wife. I won't sin against God by doing such a terrible thing as this.

¹⁰ She kept begging Joseph day after day, but he refused to do what she wanted or even to go near her.

¹¹ One day, Joseph went to Potiphar's house to do his work, and none of the other servants were there.

¹² Potiphar's wife grabbed hold of his coat and said, Make love to me! Joseph ran out of the house, leaving her hanging on to his coat.

¹³ When this happened,

¹⁴ she called in her servants and said, Look! This Hebrew has come just to make fools of us. He tried to rape me, but I screamed for help.

¹⁵ And when he heard me scream, he ran out of the house, leaving his coat with me.

¹⁶ Potiphar's wife kept Joseph's coat until her husband came home.

¹⁷ Then she said, That Hebrew slave of yours tried to rape me!

¹⁸ But when I screamed for help, he left his coat and ran out of the house.

¹⁹ Potiphar became very angry

²⁰ and threw Joseph in the same prison where the king's prisoners were kept.

While Joseph was in prison,

²¹ the LORD helped him and was good to him. He even made the jailer like Joseph so much that

²² he put him in charge of the other prisoners and of everything that was done in the jail.

²³ The jailer did not worry about anything, because the LORD was with Joseph and made him successful in all that he did.

40¹ While Joseph was in prison, both the king's personal servant and his chief cook made the king angry. So he had them thrown into the same prison with Joseph.

² (40: 1)

³ (40: 1)

⁴ They spent a long time in prison, and Potiphar, the official in charge of the palace guard, made Joseph their servant.

⁵ One night each of the two men had a dream, but their dreams had different meanings.

⁶ The next morning, when Joseph went to see the men, he could tell they were upset,

⁷ and he asked, Why are you so worried today?

⁸ We each had a dream last night, they answered, and there is no one to tell us what they mean. Joseph replied, Doesn't God know the meaning of dreams? Now tell me what you dreamed.

⁹ The king's personal servant told Joseph, In my dream I saw a vine

¹⁰ with three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its grapes became ripe.

¹¹ I held the king's cup and squeezed the grapes into it, then I gave the cup to the king.

¹² Joseph said: This is the meaning of your dream. The three branches stand for three days,

¹³ and in three days the king will pardon you. He will make you his personal servant again, and you will serve him his wine, just as you used to do.

¹⁴ But when these good things happen, please don't forget to tell the king about me, so I can get out of this place.

¹⁵ I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and here in Egypt I haven't done anything to deserve being thrown in jail.

¹⁶ When the chief cook saw that Joseph had given a good meaning to the dream, he told Joseph, I also had a dream. In it I was carrying three breadbaskets stacked on top of my head.

¹⁷ The top basket was full of all kinds of baked things for the king, but birds were eating them.

¹⁸ Joseph said: This is the meaning of your dream. The three baskets are three days,

¹⁹ and in three days the king will cut off your head. He will hang your body on a pole, and birds will come and peck at it.

²⁰Three days later, while the king was celebrating his birthday with a dinner for his officials, he sent for his personal servant and the chief cook.

²¹He put the personal servant back in his old job

²²and had the cook put to death. Everything happened just as Joseph had said it would,

²³but the king's personal servant completely forgot about Joseph.

41 ¹Two years later the king of Egypt dreamed he was standing beside the River Nile.

²Suddenly, seven fat, healthy cows came up from the river and started eating grass along the bank.

³Then seven ugly, skinny cows came up out of the river and

⁴ate the fat, healthy cows. When this happened, the king woke up.

⁵The king went back to sleep and had another dream. This time seven full heads of grain were growing on a single stalk.

⁶Later, seven other heads of grain appeared, but they were thin and scorched by the east wind.

⁷The thin heads of grain swallowed the seven full heads. Again the king woke up, and it had only been a dream.

⁸The next morning the king was upset. So he called in his magicians and wise men and told them what he had dreamed. None of them could tell him what the dreams meant.

⁹The king's personal servant said: Now I remember what I was supposed to do.

¹⁰When you were angry with me and your chief cook, you threw us both in jail in the house of the captain of the guard.

¹¹One night we both had dreams, and each dream had a different meaning.

¹²A young Hebrew, who was a servant of the captain of the guard, was there with us at the time. When we told him our dreams, he explained what each of them meant,

¹³and everything happened just as he said it would. I got my job back, and the cook was put to death.

¹⁴The king sent for Joseph, who was quickly brought out of jail. He shaved, changed his clothes, and went to the king.

¹⁵The king said to him, I had a dream, yet no one can explain what it means. I am told that you can interpret dreams.

¹⁶Your Majesty, Joseph answered, I can't do it myself, but God can give a good meaning to your dreams.

¹⁷The king told Joseph: I dreamed I was standing on the bank of the River Nile.

¹⁸I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river, and they began feeding on the grass.

¹⁹Next, seven skinny, bony cows came up out of the river. I have never seen such terrible looking cows anywhere in Egypt.

²⁰The skinny cows ate the fat ones.

²¹But you couldn't tell it, because these skinny cows were just as skinny as they were before. Straight away, I woke up.

²²I also dreamed that I saw seven heads of grain growing on one stalk. The heads were full and ripe.

²³Then seven other heads of grain came up. They were thin and scorched by a wind from the desert.

²⁴These heads of grain swallowed the full ones. I told my dreams to the

magicians, but none of them could tell me the meaning of the dreams.

²⁵ Joseph replied: Your Majesty, both of your dreams mean the same thing, and in them God has shown what he is going to do.

²⁶ The seven good cows stand for seven years, and so do the seven good heads of grain.

²⁷ The seven skinny, ugly cows that came up later also stand for seven years, as do the seven bad heads of grain that were scorched by the east wind. The dreams mean there will be seven years when there won't be enough grain.

²⁸ It is just as I said God has shown what he intends to do.

²⁹ For seven years Egypt will have more than enough grain,

³⁰ but that will be followed by seven years when there won't be enough. The good years of plenty will be forgotten, and everywhere in Egypt people will be starving.

³¹ The famine will be so bad that no one will remember that once there had been plenty.

³² God has given you two dreams to let you know that he has definitely decided to do this and that he will do it soon.

³³ Your Majesty, you should find someone who is wise and will know what to do, so that you can put him in charge of all Egypt.

³⁴ Then appoint some other officials to collect one-fifth of every crop harvested in Egypt during the seven years when there is plenty.

³⁵ Give them the power to collect the grain during those good years and to store it in your cities.

³⁶ It can be stored until it is needed during the seven years when there won't be enough grain in Egypt. This will keep the country from being destroyed because of the lack of food.

³⁷ The king and his officials liked this plan.

³⁸ So the king said to them, No one could possibly handle this better than Joseph, since the Spirit of God is with him.

³⁹ The king told Joseph, God is the one who has shown you these things. No one

else is as wise as you are or knows as much as you do.

⁴⁰I'm putting you in charge of my palace, and everybody will have to obey you. No one will be over you except me.

⁴¹You are now governor of all Egypt!

⁴²Then the king took off his royal ring and put it on Joseph's finger. He gave him fine clothes to wear and placed a gold chain around his neck.

⁴³He also let him ride in the chariot next to his own, and people shouted, Make way for Joseph! So Joseph was governor of Egypt.

⁴⁴The king told Joseph, Although I'm king, no one in Egypt is to do anything without your permission.

⁴⁵He gave Joseph the Egyptian name Zaphenath Paneah. And he let him marry Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, a priest in the city of Heliopolis. Joseph travelled all over Egypt.

⁴⁶Joseph was thirty when the king made him governor, and he went everywhere for the king.

⁴⁷For seven years there were big harvests of grain.

⁴⁸ Joseph collected and stored up the extra grain in the cities of Egypt near the fields where it was harvested.

⁴⁹ In fact, there was so much grain that they stopped keeping record, because it was like counting the grains of sand along the beach.

⁵⁰ Joseph and his wife had two sons before the famine began.

⁵¹ Their first son was named Manasseh, which means, God has let me forget all my troubles and my family back home.

⁵² His second son was named Ephraim, which means God has made me a success in the land where I suffered.

⁵³ Egypt's seven years of plenty came to an end,

⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was not enough food in other countries, but all over Egypt there was plenty.

⁵⁵ When the famine finally struck Egypt, the people asked the king for food, but he said, Go to Joseph and do what he tells you to do.

⁵⁶ The famine became bad everywhere in Egypt, so Joseph opened the

storehouses and sold the grain to the Egyptians.

⁵⁷ People from all over the world came to Egypt, because the famine was severe in their countries.

42¹ When Jacob found out there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, Why are you just sitting here, staring at one another?

² I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Now go down and buy some, so we won't starve to death.

³ Ten of Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy grain.

⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph's younger brother Benjamin with them; he was afraid that something might happen to him.

⁵ So Jacob's sons joined others from Canaan who were going to Egypt because of the terrible famine.

⁶ Since Joseph was governor of Egypt and in charge of selling grain, his brothers came to him and bowed with their faces to the ground.

⁷ They did not recognize Joseph, but straight away he knew who they were, though he pretended not to know.

Instead, he spoke harshly and asked, Where do you come from? From the land of Canaan, they answered. We've come here to buy grain.

⁸(42:7)

⁹Joseph remembered what he had dreamed about them and said, You're spies! You've come here to find out where our country is weak.

¹⁰No sir, they replied. We're your servants, and we have only come to buy grain.

¹¹We're honest men, and we come from the same familywe're not spies.

¹²That isn't so! Joseph insisted. You've come here to find out where our country is weak.

¹³But they explained, Sir, we come from a family of twelve brothers. The youngest is still with our father in Canaan, and one of our brothers is dead.

¹⁴Joseph replied: It's just like I said. You're spies,

¹⁵and I'm going to find out who you really are. I swear by the life of the king that you won't leave this place until your youngest brother comes here.

¹⁶Choose one of you to go after your brother, while the rest of you stay here in jail. That will show whether you are telling the truth. But if you are lying, I swear by the life of the king that you are spies!

¹⁷Joseph kept them all under guard for three days,

¹⁸before saying to them: Since I respect God, I'll give you a chance to save your lives.

¹⁹If you are honest men, one of you must stay here in jail, and the rest of you can take the grain back to your starving families.

²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother to me. Then I'll know that you are telling the truth, and you won't be put to death. Joseph's brothers agreed

²¹and said to one another, We're being punished because of Joseph. We saw the trouble he was in, but we refused to help him when he begged us. That's why these terrible things are happening.

²²Reuben spoke up, Didn't I tell you not to harm the boy? But you wouldn't listen, and now we have to pay the price for killing him.

²³They did not know that Joseph could understand them, since he was speaking through an interpreter.

²⁴Joseph turned away from them and cried, but soon he turned back and spoke to them again. Then he had Simeon tied up and taken away while they watched.

²⁵Joseph gave orders for his brothers' grain sacks to be filled with grain and for their money to be put in their sacks. He also gave orders for them to be given food for their journey home. After this was done,

²⁶they each loaded the grain on their donkeys and left.

²⁷When they stopped for the night, one of them opened his sack to get some grain for his donkey, and straight away he saw his money bag.

²⁸Here's my money! he told his brothers. Right here in my sack. They were trembling with fear as they stared at one another and asked themselves, What has God done to us?

²⁹When they returned to the land of Canaan, they told their father Jacob everything that had happened to them:

³⁰The governor of Egypt was rude and treated us like spies.

³¹But we told him, We're honest men, not spies.

³²We come from a family of twelve brothers. The youngest is still with our father in Canaan, and the other is dead.

³³Then the governor of Egypt told us, I'll find out if you really are honest. Leave one of your brothers here with me, while you take the grain to your starving families.

³⁴But bring your youngest brother to me, so I can be certain that you are honest men and not spies. After that, I'll let your other brother go free, and you can stay here and trade.

³⁵When the brothers started emptying their sacks of grain, they found their money bags in them. They were frightened, and so was their father Jacob,

³⁶who said, You have already taken my sons Joseph and Simeon from me. And now you want to take away Benjamin! Everything is against me.

³⁷Reuben spoke up, Father, if I don't bring Benjamin back, you can kill both of

my sons. Trust me with him, and I will bring him back.

³⁸But Jacob said, I won't let my son Benjamin go down to Egypt with the rest of you. His brother is already dead, and he is the only son I have left. I am an old man, and if anything happens to him on the way, I'll die from sorrow, and all of you will be to blame.

43 ¹The famine in Canaan got worse, ²until finally, Jacob's family had eaten all the grain they had bought in Egypt. So Jacob said to his sons, Go back and buy some more grain.

³Judah replied, The governor strictly warned us that we would not be allowed to see him unless we brought our youngest brother with us. If you let us take Benjamin along, we will go and buy grain. But we won't go without him!

⁴(43: 3)

⁵(43: 3)

⁶Jacob asked, Why did you cause me so much trouble by telling the governor you had another brother?

⁷They answered, He asked a lot of questions about us and our family. He wanted to know if you were still alive

and if we had any more brothers. All we could do was answer his questions. How could we know he would tell us to bring along our brother?

⁸Then Judah said to his father, Let Benjamin go with me, and we will leave straight away, so that none of us will starve to death.

⁹I promise to bring him back safely, and if I don't, you can blame me as long as I live.

¹⁰If we had not wasted all this time, we could already have been there and back twice.

¹¹Their father said: If Benjamin must go with you, take the governor a gift of some of the best things from our own country, such as perfume, honey, spices, pistachio nuts, and almonds.

¹²Also take along twice the amount of money for the grain, because there must have been some mistake when the money was put back in your sacks.

¹³Take Benjamin with you and leave right away.

¹⁴When you go in to see the governor, I pray that God All-Powerful will be good to you and that the governor will let

your other brother and Benjamin come back home with you. If I must lose my children, I suppose I must.

¹⁵The brothers took the gifts, twice the amount of money, and Benjamin. Then they hurried off to Egypt. When they stood in front of Joseph,

¹⁶he saw Benjamin and told the servant in charge of his house, Take these men to my house. Slaughter an animal and cook it, so they can eat with me at midday.

¹⁷The servant did as he was told and took the brothers to Joseph's house.

¹⁸But on the way they got worried and started thinking, We are being taken there because of the money that was put back in our sacks last time. He will arrest us, make us his slaves, and take our donkeys.

¹⁹So when they arrived at Joseph's house, they said to the servant in charge,

²⁰Sir, we came to Egypt once before to buy grain.

²¹But when we stopped for the night, we each found in our grain sacks the

exact amount we had paid. We have brought that money back,

²² together with enough money to buy more grain. We don't know who put the money in our sacks.

²³ It's all right, the servant replied. Don't worry. The God you and your father worship must have put the money there, because I received your payment in full. Then he brought Simeon out to them.

²⁴ The servant took them into Joseph's house and gave them water to wash their feet. He also tended their donkeys.

²⁵ The brothers got their gifts ready to give to Joseph at midday, since they had heard they were going to eat there.

²⁶ When Joseph came home, they gave him the gifts they had brought, and they bowed down to him.

²⁷ After Joseph had asked how they were, he said, What about your elderly father? Is he still alive?

²⁸ They answered, Your servant our father is still alive and well. And again they bowed down to Joseph.

²⁹ When Joseph looked around and saw his brother Benjamin, he said, This must

be your youngest brother, the one you told me about. God bless you, my son.

³⁰ Straight away he rushed off to his room and cried because of his love for Benjamin.

³¹ After washing his face and returning, he was able to control himself and said, Serve the meal!

³² Joseph was served at a table by himself, and his brothers were served at another. The Egyptians sat at yet another table, because Egyptians felt it was disgusting to eat with Hebrews.

³³ To the surprise of Joseph's brothers, they were seated in front of him according to their ages, from the eldest to the youngest.

³⁴ They were served food from Joseph's table, and Benjamin was given five times as much as each of the others. So Joseph's brothers drank with him and had a good time.

44¹ Later, Joseph told the servant in charge of his house, Fill the men's grain sacks with as much as they can hold and put their money in the sacks. Also put my silver cup in the sack of the

youngest brother. The servant did as he was told.

²(44:1)

³Early the next morning, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys.

⁴But they had not gone far from the city when Joseph told the servant, Go after those men! When you catch them, say, My master has been good to you. So why have you stolen his silver cup?

⁵Not only does he drink from his cup, but he also uses it to learn about the future. You have done a terrible thing.

⁶When the servant caught up with them, he said exactly what Joseph had told him to say.

⁷But they replied, Sir, why do you say such things? We would never do anything like that!

⁸We even returned the money we found in our grain sacks when we got back to Canaan. So why would we want to steal any silver or gold from your master's house?

⁹If you find that one of us has the cup, then kill him, and the rest of us will become your slaves.

¹⁰Good! the man replied, I'll do what you have said. But only the one who has the cup will become my slave. The rest of you can go free.

¹¹Each of the brothers quickly put his sack on the ground and opened it.

¹²Joseph's servant started searching the sacks, beginning with the one that belonged to the eldest brother. When he came to Benjamin's sack, he found the cup.

¹³This upset the brothers so much that they began tearing their clothes in sorrow. Then they loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

¹⁴When Judah and his brothers got there, Joseph was still at home. So they bowed down to Joseph,

¹⁵who asked them, What have you done? Didn't you know I could find out?

¹⁶Sir, what can we say? Judah replied. How can we prove we are innocent? God has shown that we are guilty. And now all of us are your slaves, especially the one who had the cup.

¹⁷Joseph told them, I would never punish all of you. Only the one who was caught with the cup will become my

slave. The rest of you are free to go home to your father.

¹⁸ Judah went over to Joseph and said: Sir, you have as much power as the king himself, and I am only your slave. Please don't get angry if I speak.

¹⁹ You asked us if our father was still alive and if we had any more brothers.

²⁰ So we told you, Our father is a very old man. In fact, he was already old when Benjamin was born. Benjamin's brother is dead. Now Benjamin is the only one of the two brothers who is still alive, and our father loves him very much.

²¹ You ordered us to bring him here, so you could see him for yourself.

²² We told you that our father would die if Benjamin left him.

²³ But you warned us that we could never see you again, unless our youngest brother came with us.

²⁴ So we returned to our father and reported what you had said.

²⁵ Later our father told us to come back here and buy more grain.

²⁶ But we answered, We can't go back to Egypt without our youngest brother. We

will never be let in to see the governor, unless he is with us.

²⁷ Sir, our father then reminded us that his favourite wife had given birth to two sons.

²⁸ One of them was already missing and had not been seen for a long time. My father thinks the boy was torn to pieces by some wild animal,

²⁹ and he said, I am an old man. If you take Benjamin from me, and something happens to him, I will die of a broken heart.

³⁰ That's why Benjamin must be with us when I go back to my father. He loves him so much

³¹ that he will die if Benjamin doesn't come back with me.

³² I promised my father that I would bring him safely home. If I don't, I told my father he could blame me the rest of my life.

³³ Sir, I am your slave. Please let me stay here in place of Benjamin and let him return home with his brothers.

³⁴ How can I face my father if Benjamin isn't with me? I couldn't bear to see my father in such sorrow.

45 ¹ Since Joseph could no longer control his feelings in front of his servants, he sent them out of the room. When he was alone with his brothers, he told them, I am Joseph.

² Then he cried so loudly that the Egyptians heard him and told about it in the king's palace.

³ Joseph asked his brothers if his father was still alive, but they were too frightened to answer.

⁴ Joseph told them to come closer to him, and when they did, he said: Yes, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt.

⁵ Don't worry or blame yourselves for what you did. God is the one who sent me ahead of you to save lives.

⁶ There has already been a famine for two years, and for five more years no one will plough fields or harvest grain.

⁷ But God sent me on ahead of you to keep your families alive and to save you in this wonderful way.

⁸ After all, you weren't really the ones who sent me here it was God. He made me the highest official in the king's court and placed me over all Egypt.

⁹ Now hurry back and tell my father that his son Joseph says, God has made me ruler of Egypt. Come here as quickly as you can.

¹⁰ You will live near me in the region of Goshen with your children and grandchildren, as well as with your sheep, goats, cattle, and everything else you own.

¹¹ I will take care of you there during the next five years of famine. But if you don't come, you and your family and your animals will starve to death.

¹² All of you, including my brother Benjamin, can tell by what I have said that I really am Joseph.

¹³ Tell my father about my great power here in Egypt and about everything you have seen. Hurry and bring him here.

¹⁴ Joseph and Benjamin hugged each other and started crying.

¹⁵ Joseph was still crying as he kissed each of his other brothers. After this, they started talking with Joseph.

¹⁶ When it was told in the palace that Joseph's brothers had come, the king and his officials were happy.

¹⁷ So the king said to Joseph: Tell your brothers to load their donkeys and return to Canaan.

¹⁸ They must bring their father and their families here. I will give them the best land in Egypt, and they can eat and enjoy everything that grows on it.

¹⁹ Also tell your brothers to take some wagons from Egypt for their wives and children to ride in. And they must be sure to bring their father.

²⁰ They can leave their possessions behind, because they will be given the best of everything in Egypt.

²¹ Jacob's sons agreed to do what the king had said. And Joseph gave them wagons and food for their trip home, just as the king had ordered.

²² Joseph gave some new clothes to each of his brothers, but to Benjamin he gave five new outfits and three hundred pieces of silver.

²³ To his father he sent ten donkeys loaded with the best things in Egypt, and ten other donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other food for the return trip.

²⁴ Then he sent his brothers off and told them, Don't argue on the way home!

²⁵ Joseph's brothers left Egypt, and when they arrived in Canaan,

²⁶ they told their father that Joseph was still alive and was the ruler of Egypt. But their father was so surprised that he could not believe them.

²⁷ Then they told him everything Joseph had said. When he saw the wagons Joseph had sent, he felt much better

²⁸ and said, Now I can believe you! My son Joseph must really be alive, and I will get to see him before I die.

46 ¹ Jacob packed up everything he owned and left for Egypt. On the way he stopped near the town of Beersheba and offered sacrifices to the God his father Isaac had worshipped.

² That night, God spoke to him and said, Jacob! Jacob! Here I am, Jacob answered.

³ God said, I am God, the same God your father worshipped. Don't be afraid to go to Egypt. I will give you so many descendants that one day they will become a nation.

⁴ I will go with you to Egypt, and later I will bring your descendants back here.

Your son Joseph will be at your side when you die.

⁵Jacob and his family set out from Beersheba and headed for Egypt. His sons put him in the wagon that the king had sent for him, and they put their small children and their wives in the other wagons. Jacob's whole family went to Egypt, including his sons, his grandsons, his daughters, and his granddaughters. They took along their animals and everything else they owned.

⁶(46:5)

⁷(46:5)

⁸When Jacob went to Egypt, his children who were born in northern Syria also went along with their families. Jacob and his wife Leah had a total of thirty-three children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, but two of their grandchildren had died in Canaan. Their eldest son Reuben took his sons Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. Their son Simeon took his sons Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, whose mother was a Canaanite. Their son Levi took his sons Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Their son Judah took his sons

Shelah, Perez, and Zerah. Judah's sons Er and Onan had died in Canaan. Judah's son Perez took his sons Hezron and Hamul. Their son Issachar took his sons Tola, Puvah, Jashub, and Shimron. Their son Zebulun took his sons Sered, Elon, and Jahleel. Their daughter Dinah also went.

⁹ (46: 8)

¹⁰ (46: 8)

¹¹ (46: 8)

¹² (46: 8)

¹³ (46: 8)

¹⁴ (46: 8)

¹⁵ (46: 8)

¹⁶ Jacob and Zilpah, the servant woman Laban had given his daughter Leah, had a total of sixteen children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Their son Gad took his sons Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. Their son Asher took his sons Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, who took his sons, Heber and Malchiel. Serah, the daughter of Asher, also went.

¹⁷ (46: 16)

¹⁸ (46: 16)

¹⁹ Jacob and Rachel had fourteen children and grandchildren. Their son Joseph was already in Egypt, where he had married Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, the priest of Heliopolis. Joseph and Asenath had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob and Rachel's son Benjamin took his sons Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

²⁰ (46: 19)

²¹ (46: 19)

²² (46: 19)

²³ Jacob and Bilhah, the servant woman Laban had given his daughter Rachel, had seven children and grandchildren. Their son Dan took his son Hushim. Their son Naphtali took his sons Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁴ (46: 23)

²⁵ (46: 23)

²⁶ Sixty-six members of Jacob's family went to Egypt with him, not counting his daughters-in-law.

²⁷ Jacob's two grandsons who were born there made it a total of seventy members of Jacob's family in Egypt.

²⁸ Jacob had sent his son Judah ahead of him to ask Joseph to meet them in Goshen.

²⁹ So Joseph got in his chariot and went to meet his father. When they met, Joseph hugged his father around the neck and cried for a long time.

³⁰ Jacob said to Joseph, Now that I have seen you and know you are still alive, I am ready to die.

³¹ Then Joseph said to his brothers and to everyone who had come with them: I must go and tell the king that you have arrived from Canaan.

³² I will tell him that you are shepherds and that you have brought your sheep, goats, cattle, and everything else you own.

³³ The king will call you in and ask what you do for a living.

³⁴ When he does, be sure to say, We are shepherds. Our families have always raised sheep. If you tell him this, he will let you settle in the region of Goshen. Joseph wanted them to say this to the king, because the Egyptians did not like to have anything to do with people who raised sheep.

47 ¹ Joseph took five of his brothers to the king and told him, My father and my brothers have come from Canaan. They have brought their sheep, goats, cattle, and everything else they own to the region of Goshen. Then he introduced his brothers to the king,

² (47:1)

³ who asked them, What do you do for a living? Sir, we are shepherds, was their answer. Our families have always raised sheep.

⁴ But in our country all the pastures are dried up, and our sheep have no grass to eat. So we, your servants, have come here. Please let us live in the region of Goshen.

⁵ The king said to Joseph, It's good that your father and brothers have arrived.

⁶ I will let them live anywhere they choose in the land of Egypt, but I suggest that they settle in Goshen, the best part of our land. I would also like your finest shepherds to look after my own sheep and goats.

⁷ Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and introduced him to the king. Jacob gave the king his blessing,

⁸and the king asked him, How old are you?

⁹Jacob answered, I have lived only a hundred and thirty years, and I have had to move from place to place. My parents and my grandparents also had to move from place to place. But they lived much longer, and their life was not as hard as mine.

¹⁰Then Jacob gave the king his blessing once again and left.

¹¹Joseph obeyed the king's orders and gave his father and brothers some of the best land in Egypt near the city of Rameses.

¹²Joseph also provided food for their families.

¹³The famine was bad everywhere in Egypt and Canaan, and the people were suffering terribly.

¹⁴So Joseph sold them the grain that had been stored up, and he put the money in the king's treasury.

¹⁵But when everyone had run out of money, the Egyptians came to Joseph and demanded, Give us more grain! If you don't, we'll soon be dead, because our money's all gone.

¹⁶If you don't have any money, Joseph answered, give me your animals, and I'll let you have some grain.

¹⁷From then on, they brought him their horses and donkeys and their sheep and goats in exchange for grain. Within a year Joseph had collected every animal in Egypt.

¹⁸Then the people came to him and said: Sir, there's no way we can hide the truth from you. We are broke, and we don't have any more animals. We have nothing left except ourselves and our land.

¹⁹Don't let us starve and our land be ruined. If you'll give us grain to eat and seed to plant, we'll sell ourselves and our land to the king. We'll become his slaves.

²⁰The famine became so severe that Joseph finally bought every piece of land in Egypt for the king

²¹and made everyone the king's slaves,
²²except the priests. The king gave the priests a regular food allowance, so they did not have to sell their land.

²³ Then Joseph said to the people, You and your land now belong to the king. I'm giving you seed to plant,

²⁴ but one-fifth of your crops must go to the king. You can keep the rest as seed or as food for your families.

²⁵ Sir, you have saved our lives! they answered. We are glad to be slaves of the king.

²⁶ Then Joseph made a law that one-fifth of the harvest would always belong to the king. Only the priests did not lose their land.

²⁷ The people of Israel made their home in the land of Goshen, where they became prosperous and had large families.

²⁸ Jacob himself lived there for seventeen years, before dying at the age of one hundred and forty-seven.

²⁹ When Jacob knew he did not have long to live, he called in Joseph and said, If you really love me, you must make a solemn promise not to bury me in Egypt.

³⁰ Instead, bury me in the place where my ancestors are buried. I will do what you have asked, Joseph answered.

³¹ Will you give me your word? Jacob asked. Yes, I will, Joseph promised. After this, Jacob bowed down and prayed at the head of his bed.

48¹ Joseph was told that his father Jacob had become very sick. So Joseph went to see him and took along his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

² When Joseph arrived, someone told Jacob, Your son Joseph has come to see you. Jacob sat up in bed, but it took almost all his strength.

³ Jacob told Joseph: God All-Powerful appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, where he gave me his blessing

⁴ and promised, I will give you a large family with many descendants that will grow into a nation. And I am giving you this land that will belong to you and your family for ever.

⁵ Then Jacob went on to say: Joseph, your two sons Ephraim and Manasseh were born in Egypt, but I accept them as my own, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.

⁶ Any children you have later will be considered yours, but their inheritance will come from Ephraim and Manasseh.

⁷ Unfortunately, your mother Rachel died in Canaan after we had left northern Syria and before we reached Bethlehem. And I had to bury her along the way.

⁸ Jacob was very old and almost blind. He did not recognize the two boys, and so he asked Joseph, Who are these boys? Joseph answered, They are my sons. God has given them to me here in Egypt. Bring them to me, Jacob said. I want to give them my blessing. Joseph brought the boys to him, and he hugged and kissed them.

⁹ (48: 8)

¹⁰ (48: 8)

¹¹ Jacob turned to Joseph and told him, For many years I thought you were dead and that I would never see you again. But now God has even let me live to see your children.

¹² Then Joseph made his sons move away from Jacob's knees, and Joseph bowed down in front of him with his face to the ground.

¹³ After Joseph got up, he brought his two sons over to Jacob again. He led his younger son Ephraim to the left side of

Jacob and his elder son Manasseh to the right.

¹⁴But before Jacob gave them his blessing, he crossed his arms, putting his right hand on the head of Ephraim and his left hand on the head of Manasseh.

¹⁵Then he gave Joseph his blessing and said: My grandfather Abraham and my father Isaac worshipped the LORD God. He has been with me all my life,

¹⁶and his angel has kept me safe. Now I pray that he will bless these boys and that my name and the names of Abraham and Isaac will live on because of them. I ask God to give them many children and many descendants as well.

¹⁷Joseph did not like it when he saw his father place his right hand on the head of the younger son. So he tried to move his father's right hand from Ephraim's head and place it on Manasseh.

¹⁸Joseph said, Father, you have made a mistake. This is the elder boy. Put your right hand on him.

¹⁹But his father said, Son, I know what I am doing. It's true that Manasseh's family will some day become a great nation. But Ephraim will be even greater

than Manasseh, because his descendants will become many great nations.

²⁰Jacob told him that in the future the people of Israel would ask God's blessings on one another by saying, I pray for God to bless you as much as he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob put Ephraim's name first to show that he would be greater than Manasseh.

²¹After that, Jacob said, Joseph, you can see that I won't live much longer. But God will be with you and will lead you back to the land he promised our family long ago.

²²Meanwhile, I'm giving you the hillside I captured from the Amorites.

49¹Jacob called his sons together and said: My sons, I am Jacob, your father Israel. Come, gather around, as I tell your future.

²(49: 1)

³Reuben, you are my eldest, born at the peak of my powers; you were an honoured leader.

⁴Uncontrollable as a flood, you slept with my wife and disgraced my bed. And so you no longer deserve the place of honour.

⁵Simeon and Levi, you are brothers, each a gruesome sword.

⁶I never want to take part in your plans or deeds. You slaughtered people in your anger, and you crippled cattle for no reason.

⁷Now I place a curse on you because of your fierce anger. Your descendants will be scattered among the tribes of Israel.

⁸Judah, you will be praised by your brothers; they will bow down to you, as you defeat your enemies.

⁹My son, you are a lion ready to eat your victim! You are terribly fierce; no one will bother you.

¹⁰You will have power and rule until nations obey you and come bringing gifts.

¹¹You will tie your donkey to a choice grapevine and wash your clothes in wine from those grapes.

¹²Your eyes are darker than wine, your teeth whiter than milk.

¹³Zebulun, you will settle along the seashore and provide safe harbours as far north as Sidon.

¹⁴Issachar, you are a strong donkey resting in the meadows.

¹⁵You found them so pleasant that you worked too hard and became a slave.

¹⁶Dan, you are the tribe that will bring justice to Israel.

¹⁷You are a snake that bites the heel of a horse, making its rider fall.

¹⁸Our LORD, I am waiting for you to save us.

¹⁹Gad, you will be attacked, then attack your attackers.

²⁰Asher, you will eat food fine enough for a king.

²¹Naphtali, you are a wild deer with lovely fawns.

²²Joseph, you are a fruitful vine growing near a stream and climbing a wall.

²³Enemies attacked with arrows, refusing to show mercy.

²⁴But you stood your ground, swiftly shooting back with the help of Jacob's God, the All-Powerful One his name is the Shepherd, Israel's mighty rock.

²⁵Your help came from the God your father worshipped, from God All-Powerful. God will bless you with rain and streams from the earth; he will bless you with many descendants.

²⁶ My son, the blessings I give are better than the promise of ancient mountains or eternal hills. Joseph, I pray these blessings will come to you, because you are the leader of your brothers.

²⁷ Benjamin, you are a fierce wolf, destroying your enemies morning and evening.

²⁸ These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is how Jacob gave each of them their proper blessings.

²⁹ Jacob told his sons: Soon I will die, and I want you to bury me in Machpelah Cave. Abraham bought this cave as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, and it is near the town of Mamre in Canaan. Abraham and Sarah are buried there, and so are Isaac and Rebekah. I buried Leah there too.

³⁰ (49: 29)

³¹ (49: 29)

³² Both the cave and the land that goes with it were bought from the Hittites.

³³ When Jacob had finished giving these instructions to his sons, he lay down on his bed and died.

50¹ Joseph started crying, then leaned over to hug and kiss his father.

² Joseph gave orders for Jacob's body to be embalmed,

³ and it took the usual forty days. The Egyptians mourned seventy days for Jacob.

⁴ When the time of mourning was over, Joseph said to the Egyptian leaders, If you consider me your friend, please speak to the king for me.

⁵ Just before my father died, he made me promise to bury him in his burial cave in Canaan. If the king will give me permission to go, I will come back here.

⁶ The king answered, Go to Canaan and keep your promise to your father.

⁷ When Joseph left Goshen with his brothers, his relatives, and his father's relatives to bury Jacob, many of the king's highest officials and even his military chariots and cavalry went along. The Israelites left behind only their children, their cattle, and their sheep and goats.

⁸ (50: 7)

⁹ (50: 7)

¹⁰After crossing the River Jordan and reaching Atad's threshing place, Joseph made everyone mourn and weep seven days for his father.

¹¹The Canaanites saw this and said, The Egyptians are in great sorrow. Then they named the place Egypt in Sorrow.

¹²So Jacob's sons did just as their father had instructed.

¹³They took him to Canaan and buried him in Machpelah Cave, the burial place Abraham had bought from Ephron the Hittite.

¹⁴After the funeral, Joseph, his brothers, and everyone else returned to Egypt.

¹⁵After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers said to each other, What if Joseph still hates us and wants to get even with us for all the cruel things we did to him?

¹⁶So they sent this message to Joseph: Before our father died,

¹⁷he told us, You did some cruel and terrible things to Joseph, but you must ask him to forgive you. Now we ask you to forgive the terrible things we did. After all, we serve the same God that

your father worshipped. When Joseph heard this, he started crying.

¹⁸At once, Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to the ground in front of him and said, We are your slaves.

¹⁹But Joseph told them, Don't be afraid! I have no right to change what God has decided.

²⁰You tried to harm me, but God made it turn out for the best, so that he could save all these people, as he is now doing.

²¹Don't be afraid! I will take care of you and your children. After Joseph said this, his brothers felt much better.

²²Joseph lived in Egypt with his brothers until he died at the age of one hundred and ten.

²³Joseph lived long enough to see Ephraim's children and grandchildren. He also lived to see the children of Manasseh's son Machir, and he welcomed them into his family.

²⁴Before Joseph died, he told his brothers, I won't live much longer. But God will take care of you and lead you out of Egypt to the land he promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

²⁵ Now promise me that you will take my body with you when God leads you to that land.

²⁶ So Joseph died in Egypt at the age of one hundred and ten; his body was embalmed and put in a coffin.

Exodus

1 ¹ When Jacob went to Egypt, his son Joseph was already there. So Jacob took his eleven other sons and their families. They were: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. Altogether, Jacob had seventy children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who went with him.

² (1: 1)

³ (1: 1)

⁴ (1: 1)

⁵ (1: 1)

⁶ After Joseph, his brothers, and everyone else in that generation had died,

⁷ the people of Israel became so numerous that the whole region of Goshen was full of them.

⁸ Many years later a new king came to power. He did not know what Joseph had done for Egypt,

⁹ and he told the Egyptians: There are too many of those Israelites in our

country, and they are becoming more powerful than we are.

¹⁰If we don't outsmart them, their families will keep growing larger. And if our country goes to war, they could easily fight on the side of our enemies and escape from Egypt.

¹¹The Egyptians put slave bosses in charge of the people of Israel and tried to wear them down with hard work. Those bosses forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses, where the king could store his supplies.

¹²But even though the Israelites were ill-treated, their families grew larger, and they took over more land. Because of this, the Egyptians hated them more than before

¹³and made them work so hard

¹⁴that their lives were miserable. The Egyptians were cruel to the people of Israel and forced them to make bricks and to mix mortar and to work in the fields.

¹⁵Finally, the king called in Shiphrah and Puah, the two women who helped the Hebrew mothers when they gave birth.

¹⁶He told them, If a Hebrew woman gives birth to a girl, let the child live. If the baby is a boy, kill him!

¹⁷But the two women were faithful to God and did not kill the boys, even though the king had told them to.

¹⁸The king called them in again and asked, Why are you letting those baby boys live?

¹⁹They answered, Hebrew women have their babies much quicker than Egyptian women. By the time we arrive, their babies are already born.

²⁰God was good to the two women because they truly respected him, and he blessed them with children of their own. The Hebrews kept increasing

²¹ (1: 20)

²²until finally, the king gave a command to everyone in the nation, As soon as a Hebrew boy is born, throw him into the River Nile! But you can let the girls live.

2¹A man from the Levi tribe married a woman from the same tribe,

²and she later had a baby boy. He was a beautiful child, and she kept him inside for three months.

³ But when she could no longer keep him hidden, she made a basket out of reeds and covered it with tar. She put him in the basket and placed it in the tall grass along the edge of the River Nile.

⁴ The baby's elder sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵ About that time one of the king's daughters came down to take a bath in the river, while her servant women walked along the river bank. She saw the basket in the tall grass and sent one of the young women to pull it out of the water.

⁶ When the king's daughter opened the basket, she saw the baby and felt sorry for him because he was crying. She said, This must be one of the Hebrew babies.

⁷ At once the baby's elder sister came up and asked, Do you want me to get a Hebrew woman to take care of the baby for you?

⁸ Yes, the king's daughter answered. So the girl brought the baby's mother,

⁹ and the king's daughter told her, Take care of this child, and I will pay you. The

baby's mother carried him home and took care of him.

¹⁰And when he was old enough, she took him to the king's daughter, who adopted him. She named him Moses because she said, I pulled him out of the water.

¹¹After Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were hard at work, and he saw an Egyptian beating one of them.

¹²Moses looked around to see if anyone was watching, then he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand.

¹³When Moses went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting. So he went to the man who had started the fight and asked, Why are you beating up one of your own people?

¹⁴The man answered, Who put you in charge of us and made you our judge? Are you planning to kill me, just as you killed that Egyptian? This frightened Moses because he was sure that people must have found out what had happened.

¹⁵When the king heard what Moses had done, the king wanted to kill him. But

Moses escaped and went to the land of Midian. One day, Moses was sitting there by a well,

¹⁶when the seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, came up to water their father's sheep and goats.

¹⁷Some shepherds tried to chase them away, but Moses came to their rescue and watered their animals.

¹⁸When Jethro's daughters returned home, their father asked, Why have you come back so early today?

¹⁹They answered, An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds, and he even watered our sheep and goats.

²⁰Where is he? Jethro asked. Why did you leave him out there? Invite him to eat with us.

²¹Moses agreed to stay on with Jethro, who later let his daughter Zipporah marry Moses.

²²And when she had a son, Moses said, I will name him Gershom, since I am a foreigner in this country.

²³After the death of the king of Egypt, the Israelites still complained because they were forced to be slaves. They cried out for help,

²⁴ and God heard their loud cries. He did not forget the promise he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

²⁵ and because he knew what was happening to his people, he felt sorry for them.

3¹ One day, Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and Moses decided to lead them across the desert to Sinai, the holy mountain.

² There an angel of the LORD appeared to him from a burning bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire, but it was not burning up.

³ This is strange! he said to himself. I'll go over and see why the bush isn't burning up.

⁴ When the LORD saw Moses coming near the bush, he called him by name, and Moses answered, Here I am.

⁵ God replied, Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals the ground where you are standing is holy.

⁶ I am the God who was worshipped by your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses was afraid to look at God, and so he hid his face.

⁷The LORD said: I have seen how my people are suffering as slaves in Egypt, and I have heard them beg for my help because of the way they are being ill-treated. I feel sorry for them,

⁸and I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians. I will bring my people out of Egypt into a country where there is good land, rich with milk and honey. I will give them the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.

⁹My people have begged for my help, and I have seen how cruel the Egyptians are to them.

¹⁰Now go to the king! I am sending you to lead my people out of his country.

¹¹But Moses said, Who am I to go to the king and lead your people out of Egypt?

¹²God replied, I will be with you. And you will know that I am the one who sent you, when you worship me on this mountain after you have led my people out of Egypt.

¹³Moses answered, I will tell the people of Israel that the God their ancestors

worshipped has sent me to them. But what should I say, if they ask me your name?

¹⁴God said to Moses: I am the eternal God. So tell them that the LORD, whose name is I Am, has sent you. This is my name for ever, and it is the name that people must use from now on.

¹⁵(3:14)

¹⁶Call together the leaders of Israel and tell them that the God who was worshipped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has appeared to you. Tell them I have seen how terribly they are being treated in Egypt,

¹⁷and I promise to lead them out of their troubles. I will give them a land rich with milk and honey, where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.

¹⁸The leaders of Israel will listen to you. Then you must take them to the king of Egypt and say, The LORD God of the Hebrews has appeared to us. Let us walk three days into the desert, where we can offer a sacrifice to him.

¹⁹But I know that the king of Egypt won't let you go unless something forces him to.

²⁰So I will use my mighty power to perform all kinds of miracles and strike down the Egyptians. Then the king will send you away.

²¹After I punish the Egyptians, they will be so afraid of you that they will give you anything you want. You are my people, and I will let you take many things with you when you leave the land of Egypt.

²²Every Israelite woman will go to her Egyptian neighbours or to any Egyptian woman living in her house. She will ask them for gold and silver jewellery and for their finest clothes. The Egyptians will give them to you, and you will put these fine things on your sons and daughters. You will carry all this away when you leave Egypt.

4¹Moses asked the LORD, Suppose everyone refuses to listen to my message, and no one believes that you really appeared to me?

²The LORD answered, What's that in your hand? A walking stick, Moses replied.

³Throw it down! the LORD commanded. So Moses threw the stick on the ground. It immediately turned into a snake, and Moses jumped back.

⁴Pick it up by the tail! the LORD told him. And when Moses did this, the snake turned back into a walking stick.

⁵Do this, the LORD said, and the Israelites will believe that you have seen me, the God who was worshipped by their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

⁶Next, the LORD commanded Moses, Put your hand inside your shirt. Moses obeyed, and when he took it out, his hand had turned white as snowlike someone with leprosy.

⁷Put your hand back inside your shirt, the LORD told him. Moses did so, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body.

⁸Then the LORD said, If no one believes either of these miracles, take some water from the River Nile and pour it on the ground. The water will immediately turn into blood.

⁹(4: 8)

¹⁰ Moses replied, I have never been a good speaker. I wasn't one before you spoke to me, and I'm not one now. I am slow at speaking, and I can never think of what to say.

¹¹ But the LORD answered, Who makes people able to speak or makes them deaf or unable to speak? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Don't you know that I am the one who does these things?

¹² Now go! When you speak, I will be with you and give you the words to say.

¹³ Moses begged, LORD, please send someone else to do it.

¹⁴ The LORD became irritated with Moses and said: What about your brother Aaron, the Levite? I know he is a good speaker. He is already on his way here to visit you, and he will be happy to see you again.

¹⁵ Aaron will speak to the people for you, and you will be like me, telling Aaron what to say. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will tell each of you what to do.

¹⁶ (4:15)

¹⁷ Now take this walking stick and use it to perform miracles.

¹⁸ Moses went to his father-in-law Jethro and asked, Please let me return to Egypt to see if any of my people are still alive. All right, Jethro replied. I hope all goes well.

¹⁹ But even before this, the LORD had told Moses, Leave the land of Midian and return to Egypt. Everyone who wanted to kill you is dead.

²⁰ So Moses put his wife and sons on donkeys and headed for Egypt, holding the walking stick that had the power of God.

²¹ On the way the LORD said to Moses: When you get to Egypt, go to the king and work the miracles I have shown you. But I will make him so stubborn that he will refuse to let my people go.

²² Then tell him that I have said, Israel is my firstborn son,

²³ and I commanded you to release him, so he could worship me. But you refused, and now I will kill your firstborn son.

²⁴ One night while Moses was in camp, the LORD was about to kill him.

²⁵ But Zipporah circumcised her son with a flint knife. She touched his legs with the skin she had cut off and said, My dear son, this blood will protect you.

²⁶ So the LORD did not harm Moses. Then Zipporah said, Yes, my dear, you are safe because of this circumcision.

²⁷ The LORD sent Aaron to meet Moses in the desert. So Aaron met Moses at Mount Sinai and greeted him with a kiss.

²⁸ Moses told Aaron what God had sent him to say; he also told him about the miracles God had given him the power to perform.

²⁹ Later they brought together the leaders of Israel,

³⁰ and Aaron told them what the LORD had sent Moses to say. Then Moses worked the miracles for the people,

³¹ and everyone believed. They bowed down and worshipped the LORD because they knew that he had seen their suffering and was going to help them.

5¹ Moses and Aaron went to the king of Egypt and told him, The LORD God says, Let my people go into the desert, so they can honour me with a celebration there.

²Who is this LORD and why should I obey him? the king replied. I refuse to let you and your people go!

³They answered, The LORD God of the Hebrews, has appeared to us. Please let us walk three days into the desert where we can offer sacrifices to him. If you don't, he may strike us down with terrible troubles or with war.

⁴The king said, Moses and Aaron, why are you keeping these people from working? Look how many you are keeping from doing their work. Now everyone get back to work!

⁵(5: 4)

⁶That same day the king gave orders to his slave bosses and to the men directly in charge of the Israelite slaves. He told them:

⁷Don't give the slaves any more straw to put in their bricks. Force them to find their own straw wherever they can,

⁸but they must make the same number of bricks as before. They are lazy, or else they would not beg me to let them go and sacrifice to their God.

⁹Make them work so hard that they won't have time to listen to these lies.

¹⁰The slave bosses and the men in charge of the slaves went out and told them, The king says he will not give you any more straw.

¹¹Go and find your own straw wherever you can, but you must still make as many bricks as before.

¹²The slaves went all over Egypt, looking for straw.

¹³But the slave bosses were hard on them and kept saying, Each day you have to make as many bricks as you did when you were given straw.

¹⁴The bosses beat the men in charge of the slaves and said, Why didn't you force the slaves to make as many bricks yesterday and today as they did before?

¹⁵Finally, the men in charge of the slaves went to the king and said, Why are you treating us like this?

¹⁶No one brings us any straw, but we are still ordered to make the same number of bricks. We are beaten with whips, and your own people are to blame.

¹⁷The king replied, You are lazy nothing but lazy! That's why you keep asking me to let you go and sacrifice to your LORD.

¹⁸Get back to work! You won't be given straw, but you must still make the same number of bricks.

¹⁹The men knew they were in deep trouble when they were ordered to make the same number of bricks each day.

²⁰After they left the king, they went to see Moses and Aaron, who had been waiting for them.

²¹Then the men said, We hope the LORD will punish both of you for making the king and his officials hate us. Now they even have an excuse to kill us.

²²Moses left them and prayed, Our LORD, why have you brought so much trouble on your people? Is that why you sent me here?

²³Ever since you told me to speak to the king, he has caused nothing but trouble for these people. And you haven't done a thing to help.

6¹The LORD God told Moses: Soon you will see what I will do to the king. Because of my mighty power, he will let my people go, and he will even chase them out of his country.

²My name is the LORD.

³But when I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I came as God All-Powerful and did not use my name.

⁴I made an agreement and promised them the land of Canaan, where they were living as foreigners.

⁵Now I have seen how the people of Israel are suffering because of the Egyptians, and I will keep my promise.

⁶Here is my message for Israel: I am the LORD! And with my mighty power I will punish the Egyptians and free you from slavery.

⁷I will accept you as my people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I was the one who rescued you from the Egyptians.

⁸I will bring you into the land that I solemnly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and it will be yours. I am the LORD!

⁹When Moses told this to the Israelites, they were too discouraged and ill-treated to believe him.

¹⁰Then the LORD told Moses

¹¹to demand that the king of Egypt let the Israelites leave.

¹²But Moses replied, I'm not a powerful speaker. If the Israelites won't listen to me, why should the king of Egypt?

¹³But the LORD sent Aaron and Moses with a message for the Israelites and for the king; he also ordered Aaron and Moses to free the people from Egypt.

¹⁴The following men were the heads of their ancestral clans: The sons of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

¹⁵The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.

¹⁶Levi lived to be one hundred and thirty-seven; his sons were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁷Gershon's sons were Libni and Shimei.

¹⁸Kohath lived to be one hundred and thirty-three; his sons were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹⁹Merari's sons were Mahli and Mushi. All of the above were from the Levi tribe.

²⁰Amram lived to be one hundred and thirty-seven. He married his father's sister Jochebed, and they had two sons, Aaron and Moses.

²¹ Izhar's sons were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.

²² Uzziel's sons were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

²³ Aaron married Elisheba. She was the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon; they had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

²⁴ Korah's sons were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph.

²⁵ Aaron's son Eleazar married one of Putiel's daughters, and their son was Phinehas. This ends the list of those who were the heads of clans in the Levi tribe.

²⁶ The LORD had commanded Aaron and Moses to lead every family and tribe of Israel out of Egypt,

²⁷ and so they ordered the king of Egypt to set the people of Israel free.

²⁸ When the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,

²⁹ he said, I am the LORD. Tell the king of Egypt everything I say to you.

³⁰ But Moses answered, You know I am a very poor speaker, and the king will never listen to me.

7 ¹ The LORD said: I am going to let your brother Aaron speak for you. He

will tell your message to the king, just as a prophet speaks my message to the people.

²Tell Aaron everything I say to you, and he will order the king to let my people leave his country.

³But I will make the king so stubborn that he won't listen to you. He won't listen even when I do many terrible things to him and his nation. Then I will bring a final punishment on Egypt, and the king will let Israel's families and tribes go.

⁴(7: 3)

⁵When this happens, the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.

⁶Moses and Aaron obeyed the LORD

⁷and spoke to the king. At the time, Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three.

⁸The LORD said, Moses, when the king asks you and Aaron to perform a miracle, command Aaron to throw his walking stick down in front of the king, and it will turn into a snake.

⁹(7: 8)

¹⁰Moses and Aaron went to the king and his officials and did exactly as the

LORD had commanded Aaron throw the stick down, and it turned into a snake.

¹¹ Then the king called in the wise men and the magicians, who used their secret powers to do the same thing

¹² they threw down sticks that turned into snakes. But Aaron's snake swallowed theirs.

¹³ The king behaved just as the LORD had said and stubbornly refused to listen.

¹⁴ The LORD said to Moses: The Egyptian king stubbornly refuses to change his mind and let the people go.

¹⁵ Tomorrow morning take the stick that turned into a snake, then wait beside the River Nile for the king.

¹⁶ Tell him, The LORD God of the Hebrews sent me to order you to release his people, so they can worship him in the desert. But until now, you have paid no attention.

¹⁷ The LORD is going to do something to show you that he really is the LORD. I will strike the Nile with this stick, and the water will turn into blood.

¹⁸The fish will die, the river will stink, and none of you Egyptians will be able to drink the water.

¹⁹Moses, then command Aaron to hold his stick over the water. And when he does, every drop of water in Egypt will turn into blood, including rivers, canals, ponds, and even the water in buckets and jars.

²⁰Moses and Aaron obeyed the LORD. Aaron held out his stick, then struck the Nile, as the king and his officials watched. The river turned into blood,

²¹the fish died, and the water smelt so bad that none of the Egyptians could drink it. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

²²But the Egyptian magicians used their secret powers to do the same thing. The king did just as the LORD had said he stubbornly refused to listen.

²³Then he went back to his palace and never gave it a second thought.

²⁴The Egyptians had to dig holes along the banks of the Nile for drinking water, because water from the river was unfit to drink.

²⁵Seven days after the LORD had struck the Nile,

8¹ he said to Moses: Go to the palace and tell the king of Egypt that I order him to let my people go, so they can worship me.

²If he refuses, I will cover his entire country with frogs.

³Warn the king that the Nile will be full of frogs, and from there they will spread into the royal palace, including the king's bedroom and even his bed. Frogs will enter the homes of his officials and will find their way into ovens and into the bowls of bread dough.

⁴Frogs will be crawling on everyone—the king, his officials, and every citizen of Egypt.

⁵Moses, now command Aaron to hold his stick over the water. Then frogs will come from all rivers, canals, and ponds in Egypt, and they will cover the land.

⁶Aaron obeyed, and suddenly frogs were everywhere in Egypt.

⁷But the magicians used their secret powers to do the same thing.

⁸The king sent for Moses and Aaron and told them, If you ask the LORD to take these frogs away from me and my

people, I will let your people go and offer sacrifices to him.

⁹All right, Moses answered. You choose the time when I am to pray for the frogs to stop bothering you, your officials, and your people, and for them to leave your houses and be found only in the river.

¹⁰Do it tomorrow! the king replied. As you wish, Moses agreed. Then everyone will discover that there is no god like the LORD,

¹¹and frogs will no longer be found anywhere, except in the Nile.

¹²After Moses and Aaron left the palace, Moses begged the LORD to do something about the frogs he had sent as punishment for the king.

¹³The LORD listened to Moses, and frogs died everywhere in houses, yards, and fields.

¹⁴The dead frogs were placed in piles, and the whole country began to stink.

¹⁵But when the king saw that things were now better, he again did just as the LORD had said and stubbornly refused to listen to Moses and Aaron.

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses, Command Aaron to strike the ground with his

walking stick, and everywhere in Egypt the dust will turn into gnats.

¹⁷They obeyed, and when Aaron struck the ground with the stick, gnats started swarming on people and animals. In fact, every speck of dust in Egypt turned into a gnat.

¹⁸When the magicians tried to use their secret powers to do this, they failed, and gnats stayed on people and animals.

¹⁹The magicians told the king, God has done this. But, as the LORD had said, the king was too stubborn to listen.

²⁰The LORD said to Moses: Early tomorrow morning, while the king is on his way to the river, go and say to him, The LORD commands you to let his people go, so they can worship him.

²¹If you don't, he will send swarms of flies to attack you, your officials, and every citizen of your country. Houses will be full of flies, and the ground will crawl with them.

²²The LORD's people in Goshen won't be bothered by flies, but your people in the rest of the country will be tormented by them. That's how you will know that

the LORD is here in Egypt. This miracle will happen tomorrow.

²³ (8: 22)

²⁴ The LORD kept his promise the palace and the homes of the royal officials swarmed with flies, and the rest of the country was infested with them as well.

²⁵ Then the king sent for Moses and Aaron and told them, Go and sacrifice to your God, but stay here in Egypt.

²⁶ That's impossible! Moses replied. Any sacrifices we offer to the LORD our God would disgust the Egyptians, and they would stone us to death.

²⁷ No indeed! The LORD has ordered us to walk three days into the desert before offering sacrifices to him, and that's what we have to do.

²⁸ Then the king told him, I'll let you go into the desert to offer sacrifices, if you don't go very far. But in the meantime, pray for me.

²⁹ Your Majesty, Moses replied, I'll pray for you as soon as I leave, and by tomorrow the flies will stop bothering you, your officials, and the citizens of your country. Only make sure that you're telling the truth this time and that you

really intend to let our people offer sacrifices to the LORD.

³⁰After leaving the palace, Moses prayed,

³¹and the LORD answered his prayer. Not a fly was left to pester the king, his officials, or anyone else in Egypt.

³²But the king turned stubborn again and would not let the people go.

9¹The LORD sent Moses with this message for the king of Egypt: The LORD God of the Hebrews commands you to let his people go, so they can worship him.

²If you keep refusing,

³he will bring a terrible disease on your horses and donkeys, your camels and cattle, and your sheep and goats.

⁴But the LORD will protect the animals that belong to the people of Israel, and none of theirs will die.

⁵Tomorrow is the day the LORD has set to do this.

⁶It happened the next day all the animals belonging to the Egyptians died, but the Israelites did not lose even one.

⁷When the king found out, he was still too stubborn to let the people go.

⁸The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: Take a few handfuls of ashes from a stove and let Moses throw them into the air. Be sure the king is watching.

⁹The ashes will blow across the land of Egypt, causing sores to break out on people and animals.

¹⁰So they took a few handfuls of ashes and went to the king. Moses threw them into the air, and sores immediately broke out on the Egyptians and their animals.

¹¹The magicians were suffering so much from the sores, that they could not even come to Moses.

¹²Everything happened just as the LORD had told Moses. He made the king too stubborn to listen to Moses and Aaron.

¹³The LORD told Moses to get up early the next morning and say to the king: The LORD God of the Hebrews commands you to let his people go, so they can worship him!

¹⁴If you don't, he will send his worst plagues to strike you, your officials, and everyone else in your country. Then you will find out that no one can oppose the LORD.

¹⁵In fact, he could already have sent a terrible disease and wiped you from the face of the earth.

¹⁶But he has kept you alive, just to show you his power and to bring honour to himself everywhere in the world.

¹⁷You are still determined not to let the LORD's people go.

¹⁸All right. At this time tomorrow, he will bring on Egypt the worst hailstorm in its history.

¹⁹You had better give orders for every person and every animal in Egypt to take shelter. If they don't, they will die.

²⁰Some of the king's officials were frightened by what the LORD had said, and they hurried off to make sure their slaves and animals were safe.

²¹But others paid no attention to his threats and left their slaves and animals out in the open.

²²Then the LORD told Moses, Stretch your arm towards the sky, so that hailstones will fall on people, animals, and crops in the land of Egypt.

²³Moses pointed his walking stick towards the sky, and hailstones started falling everywhere. Thunder roared, and

lightning flashed back and forth, striking the ground. This was the worst storm in the history of Egypt.

²⁴ (9: 23)

²⁵ People, animals, and crops were pounded by the hailstones, and bark was stripped from trees.

²⁶ Only Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was safe from the storm.

²⁷ The king sent for Moses and Aaron and told them, Now I have really sinned! My people and I are guilty, and the LORD is right.

²⁸ We can't stand any more of this thunder and hail. Please ask the LORD to make it stop. Your people can go you don't have to stay in Egypt any longer.

²⁹ Moses answered, As soon as I leave the city, I will lift my arms in prayer. When the thunder and hail stop, you will know that the earth belongs to the LORD.

³⁰ But I am certain that neither you nor your officials really fear the LORD God.

³¹ Meanwhile, the flax and barley crops had been destroyed by the storm because they were ready to ripen.

³² But the wheat crops ripen later, and they were not damaged.

³³ After Moses left the royal palace and the city, he lifted his arms in prayer to the LORD, and the thunder, hail, and drenching rain stopped.

³⁴ When the king realized that the storm was over, he disobeyed once more. He and his officials were so stubborn

³⁵ that he refused to let the Israelites go. This was exactly what the LORD had said would happen.

10¹ The LORD said to Moses: Go back to the king. I have made him and his officials stubborn, so that I could work these miracles.

² I did this because I want you to tell your children and your grandchildren about my miracles and about my harsh treatment of the Egyptians. Then all of you will know that I am the LORD.

³ Moses and Aaron went to the king and told him that the LORD God of the Hebrews had said: How long will you stubbornly refuse to obey? Release my people so they can worship me.

⁴ Do this by tomorrow, or I will cover your country with so many locusts

⁵ that you won't be able to see the ground. Most of your crops were ruined by the hailstones, but these locusts will destroy what little is left, including the trees.

⁶ Your palace, the homes of your officials, and all other houses in Egypt will overflow with more locusts than have ever been seen in this country. After Moses left the palace,

⁷ the king's officials asked, Your Majesty, how much longer is this man going to be a troublemaker? Why don't you let the people leave, so they can worship the LORD their God? Don't you know that Egypt is a disaster?

⁸ The king had Moses and Aaron brought back, and he said, All right, you may go and worship the LORD your God. But first tell me who will be going.

⁹ Everyone, young and old, Moses answered. We will even take our sheep, goats, and cattle, because we want to hold a celebration in honour of the LORD.

¹⁰ The king replied, The LORD had better watch over you on the day I let you leave with your families! You're up to no good.

¹¹ Do you want to worship the LORD? All right, take only the men and go. Then Moses and Aaron were chased out of the palace.

¹² The LORD told Moses, Stretch your arm towards Egypt. Swarms of locusts will come and eat everything left by the hail.

¹³ Moses held out his walking stick, and the LORD sent an east wind that blew across Egypt the rest of the day and all that night. By morning, locusts

¹⁴ were swarming everywhere. Never before had there been so many locusts in Egypt, and never again will there be so many.

¹⁵ The ground was black with locusts, and they ate everything left on the trees and in the fields. Nothing green remained in Egypt not a tree or a plant.

¹⁶ At once the king sent for Moses and Aaron. He told them, I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you.

¹⁷ Forgive me one more time and ask the LORD to stop these insects from killing every living plant.

¹⁸ Moses left the palace and prayed.

¹⁹Then the LORD sent a strong west wind that swept the locusts into the Red Sea. Not one locust was left anywhere in Egypt,

²⁰but the LORD made the king so stubborn that he still refused to let the Israelites go.

²¹The LORD said to Moses, Stretch your arm towards the sky, and everything will be covered with darkness thick enough to touch.

²²Moses stretched his arm towards the sky, and Egypt was covered with darkness for three days.

²³During that time, the Egyptians could not see each other or leave their homes, but there was light where the Israelites lived.

²⁴The king sent for Moses and told him, Go and worship the LORD! And take your families with you. Just leave your sheep, goats, and cattle.

²⁵No! Moses replied. You must let us offer sacrifices to the LORD our God,

²⁶and we won't know which animals we will need until we get there. That's why we can't leave even one of them here.

²⁷ This time the LORD made the king so stubborn

²⁸ that he said to Moses, Get out and stay out! If you ever come back, you're dead!

²⁹ Have it your way, Moses answered. You won't see me again.

11 ¹ The LORD said to Moses: I am going to punish the king of Egypt and his people one more time. Then the king will gladly let you leave his land, so that I will stop punishing the Egyptians. He will even chase you out.

² Now go and tell my people to ask their Egyptian neighbours for gold and silver jewellery.

³ So the LORD made the Egyptians greatly respect the Israelites, and everyone, including the king and his officials, considered Moses an important leader.

⁴ Moses went to the king and said: I have come to let you know what the LORD is going to do. About midnight he will go through the land of Egypt,

⁵ and wherever he goes, the firstborn son in every family will die. Your own son will die, and so will the son of the

lowest slave woman. Even the firstborn males of cattle will die.

⁶Everywhere in Egypt there will be loud crying. Nothing like this has ever happened before or will ever happen again.

⁷But there won't be any need for the Israelites to cry. Things will be so quiet that not even a dog will be heard barking. Then you Egyptians will know that the LORD is good to the Israelites, even while he punishes you.

⁸Your leaders will come and bow down, begging me to take my people and leave your country. Then we will leave. Moses was very angry; he turned and left the king.

⁹What the LORD had earlier said to Moses came true. He had said, The king of Egypt won't listen. Then I will perform even more miracles.

¹⁰So the king of Egypt saw Moses and Aaron work miracles, but the LORD made him stubbornly refuse to let the Israelites leave his country.

12¹ Some time later the LORD said to Moses and Aaron:

²This month is to be the first month of the year for you.

³Tell the people of Israel that on the tenth day of this month the head of each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for his family to eat.

⁴If any family is too small to eat the whole animal, they must share it with their next-door neighbours. Choose either a sheep or a goat, but it must be a one-year-old male that has nothing wrong with it. And it must be large enough for everyone to have some of the meat.

⁵(12:4)

⁶Each family must take care of its animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, when the animals are to be killed.

⁷Some of the blood must be put on the two doorposts and above the door of each house where the animals are to be eaten.

⁸That night the animals are to be roasted and eaten, together with bitter herbs and thin bread made without yeast.

⁹Don't eat the meat raw or boiled. The entire animal, including its head, legs, and insides, must be roasted.

¹⁰Eat what you want that night, and the next morning burn whatever is left.

¹¹When you eat the meal, be dressed and ready to travel. Have your sandals on, carry your walking stick in your hand, and eat quickly. This is the Passover Festival in honour of me, your LORD.

¹²That same night I will pass through Egypt and kill the firstborn son in every family and the firstborn male of all animals. I am the LORD, and I will punish the gods of Egypt.

¹³The blood on the houses will show me where you live, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. Then you won't be bothered by the terrible disasters I will bring on Egypt.

¹⁴Remember this day and celebrate it each year as a festival in my honour.

¹⁵For seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. And on the first of these seven days, you must remove all yeast from your homes. If you eat anything made with yeast during this

festival, you will no longer be part of Israel.

¹⁶Meet together for worship on the first and seventh days of the festival. The only work you are allowed to do on either of these two days is that of preparing the bread.

¹⁷Celebrate this Festival of Thin Bread as a way of remembering the day that I brought your families and tribes out of Egypt. And do this each year.

¹⁸Begin on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month by eating bread made without yeast. Then continue this celebration until the evening of the twenty-first day.

¹⁹During these seven days no yeast is allowed in anyone's home, whether they are native Israelites or not. If you are caught eating anything made with yeast, you will no longer be part of Israel.

²⁰Stay away from yeast, no matter where you live. No one is allowed to eat anything made with yeast!

²¹Moses called the leaders of Israel together and said: Each family is to pick out a sheep and kill it for Passover.

²² Make a brush from a few small branches of a hyssop plant and dip the brush in the bowl that has the blood of the animal in it. Then brush some of the blood above the door and on the posts at each side of the door of your house. After this, everyone is to stay inside.

²³ During that night the LORD will go through the country of Egypt and kill the firstborn son in every Egyptian family. He will see where you have put the blood, and he will not come into your house. His angel that brings death will pass over and not kill your firstborn sons.

²⁴ After you have entered the country promised to you by the LORD, you and your children must continue to celebrate Passover each year.

²⁵ (12: 24)

²⁶ Your children will ask you, What are we celebrating?

²⁷ And you will answer, The Passover animal is killed to honour the LORD. We do these things because on that night long ago the LORD passed over the homes of our people in Egypt. He killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, but he saved our children from death. After

Moses finished speaking, the people of Israel knelt down and worshipped the LORD.

²⁸Then they left and did what Moses and Aaron had told them to do.

²⁹At midnight the LORD killed the firstborn son of every Egyptian family, from the son of the king to the son of every prisoner in jail. He also killed the firstborn male of every animal that belonged to the Egyptians.

³⁰That night the king, his officials, and everyone else in Egypt got up and started crying bitterly. In every Egyptian home, someone was dead.

³¹During the night the king sent for Moses and Aaron and told them, Get your people out of my country and leave us alone! Go and worship the LORD, as you have asked.

³²Take your sheep, goats, and cattle, and get out. But ask your God to be kind to me.

³³The Egyptians did everything they could to get the Israelites to leave their country fast. They said, Please hurry and leave. If you don't, we will all be dead.

³⁴ So the Israelites quickly made some bread dough and put it in pans. But they did not mix any yeast in the dough to make it rise. They wrapped cloth around the pans and carried them on their shoulders.

³⁵ The Israelites had already done what Moses had told them to do. They had gone to their Egyptian neighbours and asked for gold and silver and for clothes.

³⁶ The LORD had made the Egyptians friendly towards the people of Israel, and they gave them whatever they asked for. In this way they carried away the wealth of the Egyptians when they left Egypt.

³⁷ The Israelites walked from the city of Rameses to the city of Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand of them, not counting women and children.

³⁸ Many other people went with them as well, and there were also a lot of sheep, goats, and cattle.

³⁹ They left Egypt in such a hurry that they did not have time to prepare any food except the bread dough made without yeast. So they baked it and made thin bread.

⁴⁰The LORD's people left Egypt exactly four hundred and thirty years after they had arrived.

⁴¹ (12: 40)

⁴²On that night the LORD kept watch for them, and on this same night each year Israel will always keep watch in honour of the LORD.

⁴³The LORD gave Moses and Aaron the following instructions for celebrating Passover: No one except Israelites may eat the Passover meal.

⁴⁴Your slaves may eat the meal if they have been circumcised,

⁴⁵but no foreigners who work for you are allowed to have any.

⁴⁶The entire meal must be eaten inside, and no one may leave the house during the celebration. No bones of the Passover lamb may be broken.

⁴⁷And all Israelites must take part in the meal.

⁴⁸If anyone who isn't an Israelite wants to celebrate Passover with you, every man and boy in that family must first be circumcised. Then they may join in the meal, just like native Israelites. No

uncircumcised man or boy may eat the Passover meal!

⁴⁹This law applies both to native Israelites and to those foreigners who live among you.

⁵⁰The Israelites obeyed everything the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron to tell them.

⁵¹And on that same day the LORD brought Israel's families and tribes out of Egypt.

13¹The LORD said to Moses,
²Dedicate to me the firstborn son of every family and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. These belong to me.

³Moses said to the people: Remember this day in the month of Abib. It is the day when the LORD's mighty power rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. Do not eat anything made with yeast.

⁴(13: 3)

⁵The LORD promised your ancestors that he would bring you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites. It is a land rich with milk and honey. Each year during

the month of Abib, celebrate these events in the following way:

⁶for seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast, and on the seventh day you are to celebrate a festival in honour of the LORD.

⁷During those seven days, you must not eat anything made with yeast or even have yeast anywhere near your homes.

⁸Then on the seventh day you must explain to your children that you do this because the LORD brought you out of Egypt.

⁹This celebration will be like wearing a sign on your hand or on your forehead, because then you will pass on to others the teaching of the LORD, whose mighty power brought you out of Egypt.

¹⁰Celebrate this festival each year at the same time.

¹¹The LORD will give you the land of the Canaanites, just as he promised you and your ancestors.

¹²From then on, you must give him every firstborn son from your families and every firstborn male from your animals, because these belong to him.

¹³You can save the life of a firstborn donkey by sacrificing a lamb; if you don't, you must break the donkey's neck. You must save every firstborn son.

¹⁴In the future your children will ask what this ceremony means. Explain it to them by saying, The LORD used his mighty power to rescue us from slavery in Egypt.

¹⁵The king stubbornly refused to set us free, so the LORD killed the firstborn male of every animal and the firstborn son of every Egyptian family. This is why we sacrifice to the LORD every firstborn male of every animal and save every firstborn son.

¹⁶This ceremony will serve the same purpose as a sign on your hand or on your forehead to tell how the LORD's mighty power rescued us from Egypt.

¹⁷After the king had finally let the people go, the LORD did not lead them through Philistine territory, though that was the shortest way. God had said, If they are attacked, they may decide to return to Egypt.

¹⁸So he led them around through the desert and towards the Red Sea. The Israelites left Egypt, prepared for battle.

¹⁹Moses made them take along the bones of Joseph, whose dying words had been, God will come to your rescue, and when he does, be sure to take along my bones.

²⁰The people of Israel left Succoth and camped at Etham at the border of Egypt near the desert.

²¹During the day the LORD went ahead of his people in a thick cloud, and during the night he went ahead of them in a flaming fire. That way the LORD could lead them at all times, whether day or night.

²²(13: 21)

14¹ At Etham the LORD said to Moses:

²Tell the people of Israel to turn back and camp across from Pi-Hahiroth near Baal-Zephon, between Migdol and the Red Sea.

³The king will think they were afraid to cross the desert and that they are wandering around, trying to find another way to leave the country.

⁴ I will make the king stubborn again, and he will try to catch you. Then I will destroy him and his army. People everywhere will praise me for my victory, and the Egyptians will know that I really am the LORD. The Israelites obeyed the LORD and camped where he told them.

⁵ When the king of Egypt heard that the Israelites had finally left, he and his officials changed their minds and said, Look what we have done! We let them get away, and they will no longer be our slaves.

⁶ The king got his war chariot and army ready.

⁷ He commanded his officers in charge of his six hundred best chariots and all his other chariots to start after the Israelites.

⁸ The LORD made the king so stubborn that he went after them, even though the Israelites proudly went on their way.

⁹ But the king's horses and chariots and soldiers caught up with them while they were camping by the Red Sea near Pi-Hahiroth and Baal-Zephon.

¹⁰ When the Israelites saw the king coming with his army, they were

frightened and begged the LORD for help.

¹¹ They also complained to Moses, Wasn't there enough room in Egypt to bury us? Is that why you brought us out here to die in the desert? Why did you bring us out of Egypt anyway?

¹² While we were there, didn't we tell you to leave us alone? We would rather be slaves in Egypt than die in this desert!

¹³ But Moses answered, Don't be afraid! Be brave, and you will see the LORD save you today. These Egyptians will never bother you again.

¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you won't have to do a thing.

¹⁵ The LORD said to Moses, Why do you keep calling out to me for help? Tell the Israelites to move forward.

¹⁶ Then hold your walking stick over the sea. The water will open up and make a road where they can walk through on dry ground.

¹⁷ I will make the Egyptians so stubborn that they will go after you. Then I will be praised because of what happens to the king and his chariots and cavalry.

¹⁸The Egyptians will know for sure that I am the LORD.

¹⁹All this time God's angel had gone ahead of Israel's army, but now he moved behind them. A large cloud had also gone ahead of them,

²⁰but now it moved between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The cloud gave light to the Israelites, but made it dark for the Egyptians, and during the night they could not come any closer.

²¹Moses stretched his arm over the sea, and the LORD sent a strong east wind that blew all night until there was dry land where the water had been. The sea opened up,

²²and the Israelites walked through on dry land with a wall of water on each side.

²³The Egyptian chariots and cavalry went after them.

²⁴But before daylight the LORD looked down at the Egyptian army from the fiery cloud and made them panic.

²⁵Their chariot wheels got stuck, and it was hard for them to move. So the Egyptians said to one another, Let's

leave these people alone! The LORD is on their side and is fighting against us.

²⁶The LORD told Moses, Stretch your arm towards the sea the water will cover the Egyptians and their cavalry and chariots.

²⁷Moses stretched out his arm, and at daybreak the water rushed towards the Egyptians. They tried to run away, but the LORD drowned them in the sea.

²⁸The water came and covered the chariots, the cavalry, and the whole Egyptian army that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them was left alive.

²⁹But the sea had made a wall of water on each side of the Israelites; so they walked through on dry land.

³⁰On that day, when the Israelites saw the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the shore, they knew that the LORD had saved them.

³¹Because of the mighty power he had used against the Egyptians, the Israelites worshipped him and trusted him and his servant Moses.

15¹ Moses and the Israelites sang this song in praise of the LORD:

I sing praises to the LORD for his great victory! He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.

²The LORD is my strength, the reason for my song, because he has saved me. I praise and honour the LORD he is my God and the God of my ancestors.

³The LORD is his name, and he is a warrior!

⁴He threw the chariots and army of Egypt's king into the Red Sea, and he drowned the best of the king's officers.

⁵They sank to the bottom just like stones.

⁶With the tremendous force of your right arm, our LORD, you crushed your enemies.

⁷What a great victory was yours, as you defeated everyone who opposed you. Your fiery anger wiped them out, as though they were straw.

⁸You were so furious that the sea piled up like a wall, and the ocean depths curdled like cheese.

⁹Your enemies boasted that they would pursue and capture us, divide up our possessions, treat us as they wished,

then take out their swords and kill us there.

¹⁰But when you got furious, they sank like lead, swallowed by ocean waves.

¹¹Our LORD, no other gods compare with you Majestic and holy! Fearsome and glorious! Miracle worker!

¹²When you signalled with your right hand, your enemies were swallowed deep into the earth.

¹³The people you rescued were led by your powerful love to your holy place.

¹⁴Nations learnt of this and trembled Philistines shook with horror.

¹⁵The leaders of Edom and of Moab were terrified. Everyone in Canaan fainted,

¹⁶struck down by fear. Our LORD, your powerful arm kept them still as a rock until the people you rescued for your very own had marched by.

¹⁷You will let your people settle on your chosen mountain, where you built your home and your temple.

¹⁸Our LORD, you will rule for ever!

¹⁹The LORD covered the royal Egyptian cavalry and chariots with the sea, after

the Israelites had walked safely through on dry ground.

²⁰Miriam the sister of Aaron was a prophet. So she took her tambourine and led the other women out to play their tambourines and to dance.

²¹Then she sang to them: Sing praises to the LORD for his great victory! He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.

²²After the Israelites left the Red Sea, Moses led them through the Shur Desert for three days, before finding water.

²³They did find water at Marah, but it was bitter, which is how that place got its name.

²⁴The people complained and said, Moses, what are we going to drink?

²⁵Moses asked the LORD for help, and the LORD told him to throw a piece of wood into the water. Moses did so, and the water became fit to drink. At Marah the LORD tested his people and also gave them some laws and teachings.

²⁶Then he said, I am the LORD your God, and I cure your diseases. If you obey me by doing right and by following my laws and teachings, I won't punish

you with the diseases I sent on the Egyptians.

²⁷ Later the Israelites came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees. So they camped there.

16¹ On the fifteenth day of the second month after the Israelites had escaped from Egypt, they left Elim and started through the western edge of the Sinai Desert in the direction of Mount Sinai.

² There in the desert they started complaining to Moses and Aaron,

³ We wish the LORD had killed us in Egypt. When we lived there, we could at least sit down and eat all the bread and meat we wanted. But you have brought us out here into this desert, where we are going to starve.

⁴ The LORD said to Moses, I will send bread down from heaven like rain. Each day the people can go out and gather only enough for that day. That's how I will see if they obey me.

⁵ But on the sixth day of each week they must gather and cook twice as much.

⁶ Moses and Aaron told the people, This evening you will know that the LORD was the one who rescued you from Egypt.

⁷ And in the morning you will see his glorious power, because he has heard your complaints against him. Why should you grumble to us? Who are we?

⁸ Then Moses continued, You will know it is the LORD when he gives you meat each evening and more than enough bread each morning. He is really the one you are complaining about, not us we are nobodies but the LORD has heard your complaints.

⁹ Moses turned to Aaron and said, Bring the people together, because the LORD has heard their complaints.

¹⁰ Aaron was speaking to them, when everyone looked out towards the desert and saw the bright glory of the LORD in a cloud.

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses,

¹² I have heard my people complain. Now tell them that each evening they will have meat and each morning they will have more than enough bread. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God.

¹³That evening a lot of quails came and landed everywhere in the camp, and the next morning dew covered the ground.

¹⁴After the dew had gone, the desert was covered with thin flakes that looked like frost.

¹⁵The people had never seen anything like this, and they started asking each other, What is it? Moses answered, This is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

¹⁶And he orders you to gather about two litres for each person in your family that should be more than enough.

¹⁷They did as they were told. Some gathered more and some gathered less,

¹⁸according to their needs, and none was left over.

¹⁹Moses told them not to keep any overnight.

²⁰Some of them disobeyed, but the next morning what they kept was stinking and full of worms, and Moses was angry.

²¹Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and in the heat of the day the rest melted.

²² However, on the sixth day of the week, everyone gathered enough to have four litres, instead of two. When the leaders reported this to Moses,

²³ he told them that the LORD had said, Tomorrow is the Sabbath, a sacred day of rest in honour of me. So gather all you want to bake or boil, and make sure you save enough for tomorrow.

²⁴ The people obeyed, and the next morning the food smelt fine and had no worms.

²⁵ You may eat the food, Moses said. Today is the Sabbath in honour of the LORD, and there won't be any of this food on the ground today.

²⁶ You will find it there for the first six days of the week, but not on the Sabbath.

²⁷ A few of the Israelites did go out to look for some, but there was none.

²⁸ Then the LORD said, Moses, how long will you people keep disobeying my laws and teachings?

²⁹ Remember that I was the one who gave you the Sabbath. That's why on the sixth day I provide enough bread for two

days. Everyone is to stay at home and rest on the Sabbath.

³⁰And so they rested on the Sabbath.

³¹The Israelites called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and delicious as wafers made with honey.

³²Moses told the people that the LORD had said, Store up two litres of this manna, because I want future generations to see the food I gave you during the time you were in the desert after I rescued you from Egypt.

³³Then Moses told Aaron, Put some manna in a jar and store it in the place of worship for future generations to see.

³⁴Aaron followed the LORD's instructions and put the manna in front of the sacred chest for safekeeping.

³⁵The Israelites ate manna for forty years, before they came to the border of Canaan that was a settled land.

³⁶(16: 35)

17¹The Israelites left the desert and moved from one place to another each time the LORD ordered them to. Once they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for them to drink.

²The people started complaining to Moses, Give us some water! Moses replied, Why are you complaining to me and trying to put the LORD to the test?

³But the people were thirsty and kept on complaining, Moses, did you bring us out of Egypt just to let us and our families and our animals die of thirst?

⁴Then Moses prayed to the LORD, What am I going to do with these people? They are about to stone me to death!

⁵The LORD answered, Take some of the leaders with you and go ahead of the rest of the people. Also take along the walking stick you used to strike the River Nile,

⁶and when you get to the rock at Mount Sinai, I will be there with you. Strike the rock with the stick, and water will pour out for the people to drink. Moses did this while the leaders watched.

⁷The people had complained and tested the LORD by asking, Is the LORD really with us? So Moses named that place Massah, which means testing and Meribah, which means complaining.

⁸When the Israelites were at Rephidim, they were attacked by the Amalekites.

⁹ So Moses told Joshua, Have some men ready to attack the Amalekites tomorrow. I will stand on a hilltop, holding this walking stick that has the power of God.

¹⁰ Joshua led the attack as Moses had commanded, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur stood on the hilltop.

¹¹ The Israelites out-fought the Amalekites as long as Moses held up his arms, but they started losing whenever he had to lower them.

¹² Finally, Moses was so tired that Aaron and Hur got a rock for him to sit on. Then they stood beside him and supported his arms in the same position until sunset.

¹³ That's how Joshua defeated the Amalekites.

¹⁴ Afterwards, the LORD said to Moses, Write an account of this victory and read it to Joshua. I want the Amalekites to be forgotten for ever.

¹⁵ Moses built an altar and named it The LORD Gives me Victory.

¹⁶ Then Moses explained, This is because I depended on the LORD. But in future generations, the LORD will have to fight the Amalekites again.

18¹ Jethro was the priest of Midian and the father-in-law of Moses. And he heard what the LORD God had done for Moses and his people, after rescuing them from Egypt.

²In the meantime, Moses had sent his wife Zipporah and her two sons to stay with Jethro, and he had welcomed them. Moses was still a foreigner in Midian when his first son was born, and so Moses said, I'll name him Gershom. When his second son was born, Moses said, I'll name him Eliezer, because the God my father worshipped has saved me from the king of Egypt.

³(18: 2)

⁴(18: 2)

⁵While Israel was camped in the desert near Mount Sinai, Jethro sent Moses this message: I am coming to visit you, and I am bringing your wife and two sons.

⁶(18: 5)

⁷When they arrived, Moses went out and bowed down in front of Jethro, then kissed him. After they had greeted each other, they went into the tent,

⁸where Moses told him everything the LORD had done to protect Israel against

the Egyptians and their king. He also told him how the LORD had helped them in all their troubles.

⁹Jethro was so pleased to hear this good news about what the LORD had done,

¹⁰that he shouted, Praise the LORD! He rescued you and the Israelites from the Egyptians and their king.

¹¹Now I know that the LORD is the greatest God, because he has rescued Israel from their arrogant enemies.

¹²Jethro offered sacrifices to God. Then Aaron and Israel's leaders came to eat with Jethro there at the place of worship.

¹³The next morning Moses sat down at the place where he decided legal cases for the people, and everyone crowded around him until evening.

¹⁴Jethro saw how much Moses had to do for the people, and he asked, Why are you the only judge? Why do you let these people crowd around you from morning till evening?

¹⁵Moses answered, Because they come here to find out what God wants them to do.

¹⁶They bring their complaints to me, and I make decisions on the basis of God's laws.

¹⁷Jethro replied: That isn't the best way to do it.

¹⁸You and the people who come to you will soon be worn out. The job is too much for one person; you can't do it alone.

¹⁹God will help you if you follow my advice. You should be the one to speak to God for the people,

²⁰and you should teach them God's laws and show them what they must do to live right.

²¹You will need to appoint some competent leaders who respect God and are trustworthy and honest. Then put them over groups of ten, fifty, a hundred, and a thousand.

²²These judges can handle the ordinary cases and bring the more difficult ones to you. Having them to share the load will make your work easier.

²³This is the way God wants it done. You won't be under nearly as much stress, and everyone else will return home feeling satisfied.

²⁴ Moses followed Jethro's advice.

²⁵ He chose some competent leaders from every tribe in Israel and put them over groups of ten, fifty, a hundred, and a thousand.

²⁶ They served as judges, deciding the easy cases themselves, but bringing the more difficult ones to Moses.

²⁷ After Moses and his father-in-law Jethro had said goodbye to each other, Jethro returned home.

19¹ The Israelites left Rephidim. Then two months after leaving Egypt, they arrived at the desert near Mount Sinai, where they set up camp at the foot of the mountain.

² (19:1)

³ Moses went up the mountain to meet with the LORD God, who told him to say to the people:

⁴ You saw what I did in Egypt, and you know how I brought you here to me, just as a mighty eagle carries its young.

⁵ Now if you will faithfully obey me, you will be my very own people. The whole world is mine,

⁶but you will be my holy nation and serve me as priests. Moses, that is what you must tell the Israelites.

⁷After Moses went back, he reported to the leaders what the LORD had said,

⁸and they promised, We will do everything the LORD has commanded. So Moses told the LORD about this.

⁹The LORD said to Moses, I will come to you in a thick cloud and let the people hear me speak to you. Then they will always trust you. Again Moses reported to the people what the LORD had told him.

¹⁰Once more the LORD spoke to Moses: Go back and tell the people that today and tomorrow they must get themselves ready to meet me. They must wash their clothes

¹¹and be ready by the day after tomorrow, when I will come down to Mount Sinai, where all of them can see me.

¹²Warn the people that they are forbidden to touch any part of the mountain. Anyone who does will be put to death,

¹³ either with stones or arrows, and no one must touch the body of a person killed in this way. Even an animal that touches this mountain must be put to death. You may go up the mountain only after a signal is given on the trumpet.

¹⁴ After Moses went down the mountain, he gave orders for the people to wash their clothes and make themselves acceptable to worship God.

¹⁵ He told them to be ready in three days and not to have sex in the meantime.

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning. A thick cloud covered the mountain, a loud trumpet blast was heard, and everyone in camp trembled with fear.

¹⁷ Moses led them out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

¹⁸ Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the LORD had come down in a flaming fire. Smoke poured out of the mountain just like a furnace, and the whole mountain shook.

¹⁹The trumpet blew louder and louder. Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder.

²⁰The LORD came down to the top of Mount Sinai and told Moses to meet him there.

²¹Then he said, Moses, go and warn the people not to cross the boundary that you set at the foot of the mountain. They must not cross it to come and look at me, because if they do, many of them will die.

²²Only the priests may come near me, and they must obey strict rules before I let them. If they don't, they will be punished.

²³Moses replied, The people cannot come up the mountain. You warned us to stay away because it is holy.

²⁴Then the LORD told Moses, Go down and bring Aaron back here with you. But the priests and people must not try to push their way through, or I will rush at them like a flood!

²⁵After Moses had gone back down, he told the people what the LORD had said.

20¹ God said to the people of Israel:
² I am the LORD your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves.

³ Do not worship any god except me.

⁴ Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the sea under the earth.

⁵ Don't bow down and worship idols. I am the LORD your God, and I demand all your love. If you reject me, I will punish your families for three or four generations.

⁶ But if you love me and obey my laws, I will be kind to your families for thousands of generations.

⁷ Do not misuse my name. I am the LORD your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

⁸ Remember that the Sabbath Day belongs to me.

⁹ You have six days when you can do your work,

¹⁰ but the seventh day of each week belongs to me, your God. No one is to work on that day not you, your children, your slaves, your animals, or the foreigners who live in your towns.

¹¹ In six days I made the sky, the earth, the seas, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That's why I made the Sabbath a special day that belongs to me.

¹² Respect your father and your mother, and you will live a long time in the land I am giving you.

¹³ Do not murder.

¹⁴ Be faithful in marriage.

¹⁵ Do not steal.

¹⁶ Do not tell lies about others.

¹⁷ Do not want to take anything that belongs to someone else. Don't want to take anyone's house, wife or husband, slaves, oxen, donkeys or anything else.

¹⁸ The people trembled with fear when they heard the thunder and the trumpet and saw the lightning and the smoke coming from the mountain. They stood a long way off

¹⁹ and said to Moses, If you speak to us, we will listen. But don't let God speak to us, or we will die!

²⁰ Don't be afraid! Moses replied. God has come only to test you, so that by obeying him you won't sin.

²¹ But when Moses went near the thick cloud where God was, the people stayed a long way off.

²² The LORD told Moses to say to the people of Israel: With your own eyes, you saw me speak to you from heaven.

²³ So you must never make idols of silver or gold to worship in place of me.

²⁴ Build an altar out of earth, and offer on it your sacrifices of sheep, goats, and cattle. Wherever I choose to be worshipped, I will come down to bless you.

²⁵ If you ever build an altar for me out of stones, do not use any tools to chisel the stones, because that would make the altar unfit.

²⁶ And don't build an altar that requires steps; you might expose yourself when you climb up.

21 ¹ The LORD gave Moses the following laws for his people:

² If you buy a Hebrew slave, he must remain your slave for six years. But in the seventh year you must set him free, without cost to him.

³ If he was single at the time you bought him, he alone must be set free. But if he

was married at the time, both he and his wife must be given their freedom.

⁴If you give him a wife, and they have children, only the man himself must be set free; his wife and children remain the property of his owner.

⁵But suppose the slave loves his wife and children so much that he won't leave without them.

⁶Then he must stand beside either the door or the doorpost at the place of worship, while his owner punches a small hole through one of his ears with a sharp metal rod. This makes him a slave for life.

⁷A young woman who was sold by her father doesn't gain her freedom in the same way that a man does.

⁸If she doesn't please the man who bought her to be his wife, he must let her be bought back. He cannot sell her to foreigners; this would break the contract he made with her.

⁹If he selects her as a wife for his son, he must treat her as his own daughter.

¹⁰If the man later marries another woman, he must continue to provide

food and clothing for the one he bought and to treat her as a wife.

¹¹ If he fails to do any of these things, she must be given her freedom without cost.

¹² The LORD said: Death is the punishment for murder.

¹³ But if you did not intend to kill someone, and I, the LORD, let it happen anyway, you may run for safety to a place that I have set aside.

¹⁴ If you plan in advance to murder someone, there's no escape, not even by holding on to my altar. You will be dragged off and killed.

¹⁵ Death is the punishment for attacking your father or mother.

¹⁶ Death is the punishment for kidnapping. If you sell the person you kidnapped, or if you are caught with that person, the penalty is death.

¹⁷ Death is the punishment for cursing your father or mother.

¹⁸ Suppose two of you are arguing, and you hit the other with either a rock or your fist, without causing a fatal injury. If the victim has to stay in bed,

¹⁹and later has to use a stick when walking outside, you must pay for the loss of time and do what you can to help until the injury is completely healed. That's your only responsibility.

²⁰Death is the punishment for beating to death any of your slaves.

²¹However, if the slave lives a few days after the beating, you are not to be punished. After all, you have already lost the services of that slave who was your property.

²²Suppose a pregnant woman suffers a miscarriage as the result of an injury caused by someone who is fighting. If she isn't badly hurt, the one who injured her must pay whatever fine her husband demands and the judges approve.

²³But if she is seriously injured, the payment will be life for life,

²⁴eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

²⁵burn for burn, cut for cut, and bruise for bruise.

²⁶If you hit one of your slaves and cause the loss of an eye, the slave must be set free.

²⁷ The same law applies if you knock out a slave's tooth the slave goes free.

²⁸ A bull that kills someone with its horns must be killed and its meat destroyed, but the owner of the bull isn't responsible for the death.

²⁹ Suppose you own a bull that has been in the habit of attacking people, but you have refused to keep it fenced in. If that bull kills someone, both you and the bull must be put to death by stoning.

³⁰ However, you may save your own life by paying whatever fine is demanded.

³¹ This same law applies if the bull gores someone's son or daughter.

³² If the bull kills a slave, you must pay the slave owner thirty pieces of silver for the loss of the slave, and the bull must be killed by stoning.

³³ Suppose someone's ox or donkey is killed by falling into an open pit that you dug or left uncovered on your property.

³⁴ You must pay for the dead animal, and it becomes yours.

³⁵ If your bull kills someone else's, yours must be sold. Then the money from your bull and the meat from the dead bull

must be divided equally between you and the other owner.

³⁶If you refuse to fence in a bull that is known to attack others, you must pay for any animal it kills, but the dead animal will belong to you.

22¹The LORD said: If you steal an ox and slaughter or sell it, you must replace it with five oxen; if you steal a sheep and slaughter it or sell it, you must replace it with four sheep.

²But if you cannot afford to replace the animals, you must be sold as a slave to pay for what you have stolen. If you steal an ox, donkey, or sheep, and are caught with it still alive, you must pay the owner double. If you happen to kill a burglar who breaks into your home after dark, you are not guilty. But if you kill someone who breaks in during the day, you are guilty of murder.

³(22: 2)

⁴(22: 2)

⁵If you allow any of your animals to stray from your property and graze in someone else's field or vineyard, you must repay the damage from the best

part of your own harvest of grapes and grain.

⁶If you carelessly let a fire spread from your property to someone else's, you must pay the owner for any crops or fields destroyed by the fire.

⁷Suppose a neighbour asks you to keep some silver or other valuables, and they are stolen from your house. If the thief is caught, the thief must repay double.

⁸But if the thief isn't caught, some judges will decide if you are the guilty one.

⁹Suppose two people claim to own the same ox or donkey or sheep or piece of clothing. Then the judges must decide the case, and the guilty person will pay the owner double.

¹⁰Suppose a neighbour who is going to be away asks you to keep a donkey or an ox or a sheep or some other animal, and it dies or gets injured or is stolen while no one is looking.

¹¹If you swear with me as your witness that you did not harm the animal, you do not have to replace it. Your word is enough.

¹²But if the animal was stolen while in your care, you must replace it.

¹³If the animal was attacked and killed by a wild animal, and you can show the remains of the dead animal to its owner, you do not have to replace it.

¹⁴Suppose you borrow an animal from a neighbour, and it gets injured or dies while the neighbour isn't around. Then you must replace it.

¹⁵But if something happens to the animal while the owner is present, you do not have to replace it. If you had leased the animal, the money you paid the owner will cover any harm done to it.

¹⁶The LORD said: Suppose a young woman has never been married and isn't engaged. If a man talks her into having sex, he must pay the bride price and marry her.

¹⁷But if her father refuses to let her marry the man, the bride price must still be paid.

¹⁸Death is the punishment for witchcraft.

¹⁹Death is the punishment for having sex with an animal.

²⁰Death is the punishment for offering sacrifices to any god except me.

²¹Do not ill-treat or abuse foreigners who live among you. Remember, you were foreigners in Egypt.

²²Do not ill-treat widows or orphans.

²³If you do, they will beg for my help, and I will come to their rescue.

²⁴In fact, I will get so angry that I will kill your men and make widows of their wives and orphans of their children.

²⁵Don't charge interest when you lend money to any of my people who are in need.

²⁶Before sunset you must return any coat taken as security for a loan,

²⁷because that is the only cover the poor have when they sleep at night. I am a merciful God, and when they call out to me, I will come to help them.

²⁸Don't speak evil of me or of the ruler of your people.

²⁹Don't fail to give me the offerings of grain and wine that belong to me. Dedicate to me your firstborn sons

³⁰and the firstborn of your cattle and sheep. Let the animals stay with their

mothers for seven days, then on the eighth day give them to me, your God.

³¹ You are my chosen people, so don't eat the meat of any of your livestock that was killed by a wild animal. Instead, feed the meat to dogs.

23¹ The LORD said: Don't spread harmful rumours or help a criminal by giving false evidence.

² Always tell the truth in court, even if everyone else is dishonest and stands in the way of justice.

³ And don't favour the poor, simply because they are poor.

⁴ If you find an ox or a donkey that has wandered off, take it back where it belongs, even if the owner is your enemy.

⁵ If a donkey is overloaded and falls down, you must do what you can to help, even if it belongs to someone who doesn't like you.

⁶ Make sure that the poor are given equal justice in court.

⁷ Don't bring false charges against anyone or sentence an innocent person to death. I won't forgive you if you do.

⁸ Don't accept bribes. Judges are blinded and justice is twisted by bribes.

⁹ Don't ill-treat foreigners. You were foreigners in Egypt, and you know what it is like.

¹⁰ The LORD said: Plant and harvest your crops for six years,

¹¹ but let the land rest during the seventh year. The poor are to eat what they want from your fields, vineyards, and olive trees during that year, and when they have all they want from your fields, leave the rest for wild animals.

¹² Work the first six days of the week, but rest and relax on the seventh day. This law is not only for you, but for your oxen, donkeys, and slaves, as well as for any foreigners among you.

¹³ Make certain that you obey everything I have said. Don't pray to other gods or even mention their names.

¹⁴ The LORD said: Celebrate three festivals each year in my honour.

¹⁵ Celebrate the Festival of Thin Bread by eating bread made without yeast, just as I have commanded. Do this at the proper time during the month of Abib, because it is the month when you left

Egypt. And make certain that everyone brings the proper offerings.

¹⁶Celebrate the Harvest Festival each spring when you start harvesting your wheat, and celebrate the Festival of Shelters each autumn when you pick your fruit.

¹⁷Your men must come to these three festivals each year to worship me.

¹⁸Do not offer bread made with yeast when you sacrifice an animal to me. And make sure that the fat of the animal is burnt that same day.

¹⁹Each year bring the best part of your first harvest to the place of worship. Don't boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

²⁰The LORD said: I am sending an angel to protect you and to lead you into the land I have ready for you.

²¹Carefully obey everything the angel says, because I am giving him complete authority, and he won't tolerate rebellion.

²²If you faithfully obey him, I will be a fierce enemy of your enemies.

²³My angel will lead you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites,

Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out.

²⁴ Don't worship their gods or follow their customs. Instead, destroy their idols and shatter their stone images.

²⁵ Worship only me, the LORD your God! I will bless you with plenty of food and water and keep you strong.

²⁶ Your women will give birth to healthy children, and everyone will live a long life.

²⁷ I will terrify those nations and make your enemies so confused that they will run from you.

²⁸ I will make the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites panic as you approach.

²⁹ But I won't do all this in the first year, because the land would become poor, and wild animals would be everywhere.

³⁰ Instead, I will force out your enemies little by little and give your nation time to grow strong enough to take over the land.

³¹ I will see that your borders reach from the Red Sea to the River Euphrates and from the Mediterranean Sea to the desert. I will let you defeat the people

who live there, and you will force them out of the land.

³² But you must not make any agreements with them or with their gods.

³³ Don't let them stay in your land. They will trap you into sinning against me and worshipping their gods.

24¹ The LORD said to Moses, Come up to me on this mountain. Bring along Aaron, as well as his two sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of Israel's leaders. They must worship me at a distance,

² but you are to come near. Don't let anyone else come up.

³ Moses gave the LORD's instructions to the people, and they promised, We will do everything the LORD has commanded!

⁴ Then Moses wrote down what the LORD had said. The next morning Moses got up early. He built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up a large stone for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

⁵ He also sent some young men to burn offerings and to sacrifice bulls as special offerings to the LORD.

⁶ Moses put half of the blood from the animals into bowls and sprinkled the rest on the altar.

⁷ Then he read aloud the LORD's commands and promises, and the people shouted, We will obey the LORD and do everything he has commanded!

⁸ Moses took the blood from the bowls and sprinkled it on the people. Next, he told them, With this blood the LORD makes his agreement with you.

⁹ Moses and Aaron, together with Nadab and Abihu and the seventy leaders, went up the mountain

¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something that looked like a pavement made out of sapphire, and it was as bright as the sky.

¹¹ Even though these leaders of Israel saw God, he did not punish them. So they ate and drank.

¹² The LORD said to Moses, Come up on the mountain and stay here for a while. I will give you the two flat stones on which I have written the laws that my people must obey.

¹³ Moses and Joshua his assistant got ready, then Moses started up the mountain to meet with God.

¹⁴ Moses had told the leaders, Wait here until we come back. Aaron and Hur will be with you, and they can settle any arguments while we are away.

¹⁵ When Moses went up on Mount Sinai, a cloud covered it,

¹⁶ and the bright glory of the LORD came down and stayed there. The cloud covered the mountain for six days, and on the seventh day the LORD told Moses to come into the cloud.

¹⁷ Moses did so and stayed there forty days and nights. To the people, the LORD's glory looked like a blazing fire on top of the mountain.

¹⁸ (24: 17)

25 ¹ The LORD said to Moses:
² Tell everyone in Israel who wants to give gifts that they must bring them to you.

³ Here is a list of what you are to collect: gold, silver, and bronze;

⁴ blue, purple, and red wool; fine linen; goat hair;

⁵ tanned ram skins; fine leather; acacia wood;

⁶ olive oil for the lamp; sweet-smelling spices to mix with the oil for dedicating the tent and ordaining the priests;

⁷ and onyx stones for the sacred apron and the breastpiece.

⁸ I also want them to build a special place where I can live among my people.

⁹ Make it and its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

¹⁰ The LORD said to Moses: Tell the people to build a chest of acacia wood one hundred and ten centimetres long, sixty-six centimetres wide, and sixty-six centimetres high.

¹¹ Cover it inside and out with pure gold and put a gold edging around the lid.

¹² Make four gold rings and fasten one of them to each of the four legs of the chest.

¹³ Make two poles of acacia wood. Cover them with gold

¹⁴ and put them through the rings, so the chest can be carried by the poles.

¹⁵ Don't ever remove the poles from the rings.

¹⁶When I give you the Ten Commandments written on two flat stones, put them inside the chest.

¹⁷Cover the lid of the chest with pure gold.

¹⁸Then hammer out two winged creatures of pure gold and fasten them to the lid at the ends of the chest.

¹⁹(25: 18)

²⁰The creatures must face each other with their wings spread over the chest.

²¹Inside it place the two flat stones with the Ten Commandments and put the gold lid on top of the chest.

²²I will meet you there between the two creatures and tell you what my people must do and what they must not do.

²³The LORD said: Make a table of acacia wood eighty-eight centimetres long, forty-four centimetres wide, and sixty-six centimetres high.

²⁴Cover it with pure gold and put a gold edging around it with a border seventy-five millimetres wide.

²⁵(25: 24)

²⁶Make four gold rings and attach one to each of the legs

²⁷ near the edging. The poles for carrying the table are to be placed through these rings and are to be made of acacia wood covered with gold.

²⁸ (25: 27)

²⁹ The table is to be kept in the holy place, and the sacred loaves of bread must always be put on it. All bowls, plates, jars, and cups for wine offerings are to be made of pure gold and set on this table.

³⁰ (25: 29)

³¹ The LORD said: Make a lampstand of pure gold. The whole lampstand, including its decorative flowers, must be made from a single piece of hammered gold

³² with three branches on each of its two sides.

³³ There are to be three decorative almond blossoms on each branch

³⁴ and four on the stem.

³⁵ There must also be a blossom where each pair of branches comes out from the stem.

³⁶ The lampstand, including its branches and decorative flowers, must be made

from a single piece of hammered pure gold.

³⁷The lamp on the top and those at the end of each of its six branches must be made so as to shine towards the front of the lampstand.

³⁸The tongs and trays for taking care of the lamps are to be made of pure gold.

³⁹The lampstand and its equipment will require thirty-five kilogrammes of pure gold,

⁴⁰and they must be made according to the pattern I showed you on the mountain.

26¹The LORD said to Moses: Furnish the sacred tent with curtains made from ten pieces of the finest linen. They must be woven with blue, purple, and red wool and embroidered with figures of winged creatures.

²Make each piece twelve metres long and two metres wide

³and sew them together into two curtains with five sections each.

⁴Put fifty loops of blue cloth along one of the wider sides of each curtain, then fasten the two curtains at the loops with fifty gold hooks.

⁵ (26: 4)

⁶ (26: 4)

⁷ As the material for the tent, use goat hair to weave eleven sections thirteen metres by two metres each.

⁸ (26: 7)

⁹ Sew five of the sections together to make one panel. Then sew the other six together to make a second panel, and fold the sixth section double over the front of the tent.

¹⁰ Put fifty loops along one of the wider sides of each panel

¹¹ and fasten the two panels at the loops with fifty bronze hooks.

¹² The panel of goat hair will be a metre longer than the tent itself, so fold fifty centimetres of the material behind the tent and on each side as a protective covering.

¹³ (26: 12)

¹⁴ Make two more coverings one with ram skins dyed red and the other with fine leather.

¹⁵ The LORD said: Build a framework of acacia wood for the walls of the sacred tent.

¹⁶ Each frame is to be four metres high and sixty-six centimetres wide

¹⁷ with two wooden pegs near the bottom.

¹⁸ Place two silver stands under each frame with sockets for the pegs, so the frames can be joined together. Twenty of these frames are to be used along the south side and twenty more along the north.

¹⁹ (26: 18)

²⁰ (26: 18)

²¹ (26: 18)

²² For the back wall along the west side use six frames

²³ with two more at the south-west and north-west corners. Make certain that these corner frames are joined from top to bottom.

²⁴ (26: 23)

²⁵ Altogether, this back wall will have eight frames with two silver stands under each one.

²⁶ Make five crossbars for each of the wooden frames,

²⁷ (26: 26)

²⁸ with the centre crossbar running the full length of the wall.

²⁹ Cover the frames and the crossbars with gold and attach gold rings to the frames to run the crossbars through.

³⁰ Then set up the tent in the way I showed you on the mountain.

³¹ The LORD said: Make a curtain to separate the holy place from the most holy place. Use fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool, and embroidered with figures of winged creatures. Cover four acacia wood posts with gold and set them each on a silver stand. Then fasten gold hooks to the posts and hang the curtain there.

³² (26: 31)

³³ (26: 31)

³⁴ Inside the most holy place, you must put the sacred chest that has the place of mercy on its lid.

³⁵ Outside the curtain put the table for the sacred bread on the right side and the gold lampstand on the left.

³⁶ For the entrance to the tent, use a piece of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool and embroidered with fine needlework.

³⁷ Cover five acacia wood posts with gold and set them each on a bronze

stand. Then put gold hooks on the posts and hang the curtain there.

27 ¹The LORD said to Moses: Use acacia wood to build an altar two and a quarter metres square and one and a third metres high,

²and make each of the four top corners stick up like the horn of a bull. Then cover the whole altar with bronze, including the four horns.

³All the equipment for the altar must also be made of bronze the pans for the hot ashes, the shovels, the sprinkling bowls, the meat forks, and the fire pans.

⁴Half-way up the altar build a ledge around it, and cover the bottom half of the altar with a decorative bronze grating. Then attach a bronze ring beneath the ledge at the four corners of the altar.

⁵ (27: 4)

⁶Cover two acacia wood poles with bronze and put them through the rings for carrying the altar.

⁷ (27: 6)

⁸Construct the altar in the shape of an open box, just as you were shown on the mountain.

⁹The LORD said: Surround the sacred tent with a courtyard forty-four metres long on the south and north and twenty-two metres wide on the east and west. Use twenty bronze posts on bronze stands for the south and north and ten for the west. Then hang a curtain of fine linen on the posts along each of these three sides by using silver hooks and rods. Place three bronze posts on each side of the entrance at the east and hang a curtain six and two thirds metres wide on each set of posts.

¹⁰(27: 9)

¹¹(27: 9)

¹²(27: 9)

¹³(27: 9)

¹⁴(27: 9)

¹⁵(27: 9)

¹⁶Use four more of these posts for the entrance way, then hang on them an embroidered curtain of fine linen nine metres long and woven with blue, purple, and red wool.

¹⁷The curtains that surround the courtyard must be two and a quarter metres high and are to be hung from the bronze posts with silver hooks and rods.

¹⁸(27:17)

¹⁹The rest of the equipment for the sacred tent must be made of bronze, including the pegs for the tent and for the curtain surrounding the courtyard.

²⁰The LORD said to Moses: Command the people of Israel to supply you with the purest olive oil. Do this so the lamp will keep burning

²¹in front of the curtain that separates the holy place from the most holy place, where the sacred chest is kept. Aaron and his sons are responsible for keeping the lamp burning every night in the sacred tent. The Israelites must always obey this command.

28¹The LORD said to Moses: Send for your brother Aaron and his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. They are the ones I have chosen from Israel to serve as my priests.

²Make Aaron some beautiful clothes that are worthy of a high priest.

³Aaron is to be dedicated as my high priest, and his clothes must be made only by persons who possess skills that I have given them.

⁴ Here are the items that need to be made: a breastpiece, a priestly apron, a robe, an embroidered shirt, a turban, and a sash. These sacred clothes are to be made for your brother Aaron and his sons who will be my priests.

⁵ Only gold and fine linen, woven with blue, purple, and red wool, are to be used for making these clothes.

⁶ The LORD said: The entire priestly apron must be made of fine linen skilfully woven with blue, purple, and red wool, and decorated with gold. It is to have two shoulder straps to support it and a sash that fastens around the waist.

⁷ (28: 6)

⁸ (28: 6)

⁹ Put two onyx stones in gold settings, then attach one to each of the shoulder straps. On one of these stones engrave the names of Israel's first six sons in the order of their birth. And do the same with his remaining six sons on the other stone. In this way Aaron will always carry the names of the tribes of Israel when he enters the holy place, and I will never forget my people.

¹⁰ (28: 9)

¹¹ (28: 9)

¹² (28: 9)

¹³ Attach two gold settings to the shoulder straps and fasten them with two braided chains of pure gold.

¹⁴ (28: 13)

¹⁵ The LORD said: From the same costly material make a breastpiece for the high priest to use in learning what I want my people to do.

¹⁶ It is to be twenty-two centimetres square and folded double

¹⁷ with four rows of three precious stones: in the first row put a carnelian, a chrysolite, and an emerald;

¹⁸ in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

¹⁹ in the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

²⁰ and in the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. Mount the stones in delicate gold settings

²¹ and engrave on each of them the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

²² Attach two gold rings to the upper front corners of the breastpiece and

fasten them with two braided gold chains to gold settings on the shoulder straps.

²³ (28: 22)

²⁴ (28: 22)

²⁵ (28: 22)

²⁶ Attach two other gold rings to the lower inside corners next to the apron

²⁷ and two more near the bottom of the shoulder straps just above the sash.

²⁸ Then take a blue cord and tie the two lower rings on the breastpiece to those on the apron. This will keep the breastpiece in place.

²⁹ In this way Aaron will have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on his heart each time he enters the holy place, and I will never forget my people.

³⁰ He must also wear on his breastpiece the two small objects that he uses to receive answers from me.

³¹ The LORD said: Under his apron Aaron must wear a robe of blue wool

³² with an opening in the centre for his head. Be sure to bind the material around the collar to keep it from fraying.

³³ Along the hem of the robe weave pomegranates of blue, purple, and red

wool with a gold bell between each of them.

³⁴ (28: 33)

³⁵ If Aaron wears these clothes when he enters the holy place as my high priest, the sound of the bells will be heard, and his life will not be in danger.

³⁶ On a narrow strip of pure gold engrave the words: Dedicated to the LORD.

³⁷ Fasten it to the front of Aaron's turban with a blue cord,

³⁸ so he can wear it on his forehead. This will show that he will take on himself the guilt for any sins the people of Israel commit in offering their gifts to me, and I will forgive them.

³⁹ Make Aaron's robe and turban of fine linen and decorate his sash with fine needlework.

⁴⁰ Since Aaron's sons are priests, they should also look dignified. So make robes, sashes, and special caps for them.

⁴¹ Then dress Aaron and his sons in these clothes, pour olive oil on their heads, and ordain them as my priests.

⁴² Make linen shorts for them that reach from the waist down to the thigh, so they won't expose themselves.

⁴³ Whenever they enter the sacred tent or serve at the altar or enter the holy place, they must wear these shorts, or else they will be guilty and die. This same rule applies to any of their descendants who serve as priests.

29 ¹ The LORD said to Moses: When you ordain one of Aaron's sons as my priest, choose a young bull and two rams that have nothing wrong with them.

² Then from your finest flour make three batches of dough without yeast. Shape some of it into larger loaves, some into smaller loaves mixed with olive oil, and the rest into thin wafers brushed with oil.

³ Put all this bread in a basket and bring it when you come to sacrifice the three animals to me.

⁴ Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the sacred tent and make them wash themselves.

⁵ Dress Aaron in the priestly shirt, the robe that goes under the sacred apron,

the apron itself, the breastpiece, and the sash.

⁶Put on his turban with its narrow strip of engraved gold

⁷and then ordain him by pouring olive oil on his head.

⁸Next, dress Aaron's sons in their special shirts

⁹and caps and their sashes, then ordain them, because they and their descendants will always be priests.

¹⁰Lead the bull to the entrance of the sacred tent, where Aaron and his sons will lay their hands on its head.

¹¹Kill the bull near my altar in front of the tent.

¹²Use a finger to smear some of its blood on each of the four corners of the altar and pour out the rest of the blood on the ground next to the altar.

¹³Then take the fat from the animal's insides, as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat, and send them up in smoke on the altar.

¹⁴But the meat, the skin, and the food still in the bull's stomach must be burnt outside the camp as an offering to ask forgiveness for the sins of the priests.

¹⁵ Bring one of the rams to Aaron and his sons and make them lay their hands on its head.

¹⁶ Kill the ram and splatter its blood against all four sides of the altar.

¹⁷ Cut up the ram, wash its insides and legs, and lay all its parts on the altar, including the head.

¹⁸ Then make sure that the whole animal goes up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

¹⁹ Bring the other ram to Aaron and his sons and make them lay their hands on its head.

²⁰ Kill the ram and place some of its blood on Aaron's right ear lobe, his right thumb, and the big toe of his right foot. Do the same for each of his sons and splatter the rest of the blood against the four sides of the altar.

²¹ Then take some of the blood from the altar, mix it with the oil used for ordination, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his clothes, and also on his sons and their clothes. This will show that they and their clothes have been dedicated to me.

²²This ram is part of the ordination service. So remove its right hind leg, its fat tail, the fat on its insides, as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat.

²³Take one loaf of each kind of bread from the basket,

²⁴and put this bread, together with the meat, into the hands of Aaron and his sons. Then they will lift it all up to show that it is dedicated to me.

²⁵After this, the meat and bread are to be placed on the altar and sent up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

²⁶You may eat the choice ribs from this second ram, but you must first lift them up to show that this meat is dedicated to me.

²⁷In the future, when anyone from Israel offers the ribs and a hind leg of a ram either to ordain a priest or to ask for my blessing, the meat belongs to me, but it may be eaten by the priests. This law will never change.

²⁸(29: 27)

²⁹After Aaron's death, his priestly clothes are to be handed down to each descendant who succeeds him as high

priest, and these clothes must be worn during the seven-day ceremony of ordination.

³⁰ (29: 29)

³¹ Boil the meat of the ordination ram in a sacred place,

³² then Aaron and his sons are to eat it together with the three kinds of bread at the entrance to the sacred tent.

³³ At their ordination, a ceremony of forgiveness was performed for them with this sacred food, and only they have the right to eat it.

³⁴ If any of the sacred food is left until morning, it must be burnt up.

³⁵ Repeat this ordination ceremony for Aaron and his sons seven days in a row, just as I have instructed you.

³⁶ Each day you must offer a bull as a sacrifice for sin and as a way of purifying the altar. In addition, you must smear the altar with olive oil to make it completely holy.

³⁷ Do this for seven days, and the altar will become so holy that anyone who touches it will become holy.

³⁸ The LORD said: Each day you must sacrifice two lambs a year old,

³⁹one in the morning and one in the evening.

⁴⁰With each lamb offer one kilogramme of your finest flour mixed with a litre of pure olive oil, and also pour out a litre of wine as an offering. The smell of this sacrifice on the fires of the altar will be pleasing to me.

⁴¹(29: 40)

⁴²You and your descendants must always offer this sacrifice on the altar at the entrance to the sacred tent. People of Israel, I will meet and speak with you there, and my shining glory will make the place holy.

⁴³(29: 42)

⁴⁴Because of who I am, the tent will become sacred, and Aaron and his sons will become worthy to serve as my priests.

⁴⁵I will live among you as your God,

⁴⁶and you will know that I am the LORD your God, the one who rescued you from Egypt, so that I could live among you.

30¹The LORD said to Moses: Build an altar of acacia wood where you can burn incense.

² Make it forty-five centimetres square and ninety centimetres high, and make each of its four corners stick up like the horn of a bull.

³ Cover it with pure gold and put a gold edging around it.

⁴ Then below the edging on opposite sides attach two gold rings through which you can put the poles for carrying the altar.

⁵ These poles are also to be made of acacia wood covered with gold.

⁶ Put the altar in front of the inside curtain of the sacred tent. The chest with the place of mercy is kept behind that curtain, and I will talk with you there.

⁷ From now on, when Aaron tends the lamp each morning and evening, he must burn sweet-smelling incense to me on the altar.

⁸ (30: 7)

⁹ Burn only the proper incense on the altar and never use it for grain sacrifices or animal sacrifices or drink offerings.

¹⁰ Once a year Aaron must purify the altar by smearing on its four corners the blood of an animal sacrificed for sin, and this practice must always be

followed. The altar is sacred because it is dedicated to me.

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses:

¹² Find out how many grown men there are in Israel and require each of them to pay me to keep him safe from danger while you are counting them.

¹³ Each man over nineteen, whether rich or poor, must pay me the same amount of money, weighed according to the official standards.

¹⁴ (30: 13)

¹⁵ (30: 13)

¹⁶ This money is to be used for the upkeep of the sacred tent, and because of it, I will never forget my people.

¹⁷ The LORD said to Moses:

¹⁸ Make a large bronze bowl and a bronze stand for it. Then put them between the altar for sacrifice and the sacred tent, so the priests can wash their hands and feet before entering the tent or offering a sacrifice on the altar. Each priest in every generation must wash himself in this way, or else he will die there.

¹⁹ (30: 18)

²⁰ (30: 18)

²¹ (30: 18)

²² The LORD said to Moses:

²³ Mix four litres of olive oil with the following costly spices: six kilogrammes of myrrh, three kilogrammes of cinnamon, three kilogrammes of cane, and six kilogrammes of cassia. Measure these according to the official standards. Then use this sacred mixture

²⁴ (30: 23)

²⁵ (30: 23)

²⁶ for dedicating the tent and chest,

²⁷ the table with its equipment, the lampstand with its equipment, the incense altar with all its utensils,

²⁸ the altar for sacrifices, and the large bowl with its stand.

²⁹ By dedicating them in this way, you will make them so holy that anyone who even touches them will become holy.

³⁰ When you ordain Aaron and his sons as my priests, sprinkle them with some of this oil,

³¹ and say to the people of Israel: This oil must always be used in the ordination service of a priest. It is holy because it is dedicated to the LORD.

³² So treat it as holy! Don't ever use it for everyday purposes or mix any for yourselves.

³³ If you do, you will no longer belong to the LORD's people.

³⁴ Mix equal amounts of the costly spices stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense, then add salt to make the mixture pure and holy.

³⁵ (30: 34)

³⁶ Pound some of it into powder and sprinkle it in front of the sacred chest, where I meet with you. Be sure to treat this incense as something very holy.

³⁷ It is truly holy because it is dedicated to me, so don't ever make any for yourselves.

³⁸ If you ever make any of it to use as perfume, you will no longer belong to my people.

31 ¹ The LORD said to Moses:
² I have chosen Bezalel from the Judah tribe to make the sacred tent and its furnishings.

³ Not only have I filled him with my Spirit, but I have given him wisdom and made him a skilled craftsman who can

create objects of art with gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood.

⁴ (31: 3)

⁵ (31: 3)

⁶ I have appointed Oholiab from the tribe of Dan to work with him, and I have also given skills to those who will help them make everything exactly as I have commanded you:

⁷ the sacred tent with its furnishings, the sacred chest with its place of mercy, the table with all that is on it, the lamp with its equipment, the incense altar, the altar for sacrifices with its equipment, the bronze bowl with its stand, the beautiful priestly clothes for Aaron and his sons, the oil for dedication and ordination services, and the sweet-smelling incense for the holy place.

⁸ (31: 7)

⁹ (31: 7)

¹⁰ (31: 7)

¹¹ (31: 7)

¹² Moses told the Israelites that the LORD had said: The Sabbath belongs to me. Now I command you and your descendants always to obey the laws

of the Sabbath. By doing this, you will know that I have chosen you as my own.

¹³(31:12)

¹⁴Keep the Sabbath holy. You have six days to do your work, but the Sabbath is mine, and it must remain a day of rest. If you work on the Sabbath, you will no longer be part of my people, and you will be put to death.

¹⁵(31:14)

¹⁶Every generation of Israelites must respect the Sabbath.

¹⁷This day will always serve as a reminder, both to me and to the Israelites, that I made the heavens and the earth in six days, then on the seventh day I rested and relaxed.

¹⁸When God had finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two flat stones on which he had written all his laws with his own hand.

32¹ After the people saw that Moses had been on the mountain for a long time, they went to Aaron and said, Make us an image of a god who will lead and protect us. Moses brought us out of Egypt, but nobody knows what has happened to him.

²Aaron told them, Bring me the gold earrings that your wives and sons and daughters are wearing.

³Everybody took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron,

⁴then he melted them and made an idol in the shape of a young bull. All the people said to one another, This is the god who brought us out of Egypt!

⁵When Aaron saw what was happening, he built an altar in front of the idol and said, Tomorrow we will celebrate in honour of the LORD.

⁶The people got up early the next morning and killed some animals to be used for sacrifices and others to be eaten. Then everyone ate and drank so much that they began to carry on like wild people.

⁷The LORD said to Moses: Hurry back down! Those people you led out of Egypt are acting like fools.

⁸They have already stopped obeying me and have made themselves an idol in the shape of a young bull. They have bowed down to it, offered sacrifices, and said that it is the god who brought them out of Egypt.

⁹ Moses, I have seen how stubborn these people are,

¹⁰ and I'm angry enough to destroy them, so don't try to stop me. But I will make your descendants into a great nation.

¹¹ Moses tried to get the LORD God to change his mind: Our LORD, you used your mighty power to bring these people out of Egypt. Now don't become angry and destroy them.

¹² If you do, the Egyptians will say that you brought your people out here into the mountains just to get rid of them. Please don't be angry with your people. Don't destroy them!

¹³ Remember the solemn promise you made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You promised that some day they would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky and that you would give them land.

¹⁴ So even though the LORD had threatened to destroy the people, he changed his mind and let them live.

¹⁵ Moses went back down the mountain with the two flat stones on which God had written all his laws with his own

hand, and he had used both sides of the stones.

¹⁶(32: 15)

¹⁷When Joshua heard the noisy shouts of the people, he said to Moses, A battle must be going on down in the camp.

¹⁸But Moses replied, It doesn't sound like they are shouting because they have won or lost a battle. They are singing wildly!

¹⁹As Moses got closer to the camp, he saw the idol, and he also saw the people dancing around. This made him so angry that he threw down the stones and broke them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

²⁰He melted the idol the people had made, and he ground it into powder. He scattered it in their water and made them drink it.

²¹Moses asked Aaron, What did these people do to harm you? Why did you make them sin in this terrible way?

²²Aaron answered: Don't be angry with me. You know as well as I do that they are determined to do evil.

²³They even told me, That man Moses led us out of Egypt, but now we don't

know what has happened to him. Make us a god to lead us.

²⁴Then I asked them to bring me their gold earrings. They took them off and gave them to me. I threw the gold into a fire, and out came this bull.

²⁵Moses knew that the people were out of control and that it was Aaron's fault. And now they had made fools of themselves in front of their enemies.

²⁶So Moses stood at the gate of the camp and shouted, Everyone who is on the LORD's side come over here! Then the men of the Levi tribe gathered around Moses,

²⁷and he said to them, The LORD God of Israel commands you to strap on your swords and go through the camp, killing your relatives, your friends, and your neighbours.

²⁸The men of the Levi tribe followed his orders, and that day they killed about three thousand men.

²⁹Moses said to them, You obeyed the LORD and did what was right, and so you will serve as his priests for the people of Israel. It was hard for you to kill your own sons and brothers, but the

LORD has blessed you and made you his priests today.

³⁰The next day Moses told the people, This is a terrible thing you have done. But I will go back to the LORD to see if I can do something to keep this sin from being held against you.

³¹Moses returned to the LORD and said, The people have committed a terrible sin. They have made a gold idol to be their god.

³²But I beg you to forgive them. If you don't, please wipe my name out of your book.

³³The LORD replied, I will wipe out of my book the name of everyone who has sinned against me.

³⁴Now take my people to the place I told you about, and my angel will lead you. But when the time comes, I will punish them for this sin.

³⁵So the LORD punished the people of Israel with a terrible disease for talking Aaron into making the gold idol.

33¹ The LORD said to Moses: You led the people of Israel out of Egypt. Now get ready to lead them to the land

I promised their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

²It is a land rich with milk and honey, and I will send an angel to force out those people who live there the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. I would go with my people, but they are so rebellious that I would destroy them before they get there.

³(33: 2)

⁴Even before the LORD said these harsh things, he had told Moses, These people really are rebellious, and I would kill them at once, if I went with them. But tell them to take off their jewellery, then I'll decide what to do with them. So the people started mourning,

⁵(33: 4)

⁶and after leaving Mount Sinai, they stopped wearing jewellery.

⁷Moses used to set up a tent far from camp. He called it the meeting tent, and whoever needed some message from the LORD would go there.

⁸Each time Moses went out to the tent, everyone would stand at the entrance to their own tents and watch him enter.

⁹Then they would bow down because a thick cloud would come down in front of the tent, and the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, just like a friend. Afterwards, Moses would return to camp, but his young assistant Joshua would stay at the tent.

¹⁰(33: 9)

¹¹(33: 9)

¹²Moses said to the LORD, I know that you have told me to lead these people to the land you promised them. But you have not told me who my assistant will be. You have said that you are my friend and that you are pleased with me.

¹³If this is true, let me know what your plans are, then I can obey and continue to please you. And don't forget that you have chosen this nation to be your own.

¹⁴The LORD said, I will go with you and give you peace.

¹⁵Then Moses replied, If you aren't going with us, please don't make us leave this place.

¹⁶But if you do go with us, everyone will know that you are pleased with your people and with me. That way, we will

be different from the rest of the people on earth.

¹⁷ So the LORD told him, I will do what you have asked, because I am your friend and I am pleased with you.

¹⁸ Then Moses said, I pray that you will let me see you in all your glory.

¹⁹ The LORD answered: All right. I am the LORD, and I show mercy and kindness to anyone I choose. I will let you see my glory and hear my holy name,

²⁰ but I won't let you see my face, because anyone who sees my face will die.

²¹ There is a rock not far from me. Stand beside it,

²² and before I pass by in all my shining glory, I will put you in a large crack in the rock. I will cover your eyes with my hand until I have passed by.

²³ Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back. You will not see my face.

34¹ One day the LORD said to Moses, Cut two flat stones like the first ones I made, and I will write on them

the same commandments that were on the two you broke.

²Be ready tomorrow morning to come up Mount Sinai and meet me at the top.

³No one is to come with you or to be on the mountain at all. Don't even let the sheep and cattle graze at the foot of the mountain.

⁴So Moses cut two flat stones like the first ones, and early the next morning he carried them to the top of Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded.

⁵The LORD God came down in a cloud and stood beside Moses there on the mountain. God spoke his holy name, the LORD.

⁶Then he passed in front of Moses and called out, I am the LORD God. I am merciful and very patient with my people. I show great love, and I can be trusted.

⁷I keep my promises to my people for ever, but I also punish anyone who sins. When people sin, I punish them and their children, and also their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

⁸Moses quickly bowed down to the ground and worshipped the LORD.

⁹He prayed, LORD, if you really are pleased with me, I pray that you will go with us. It is true that these people are sinful and rebellious, but forgive our sin and let us be your people.

¹⁰The LORD said: I promise to perform miracles for you that have never been seen anywhere on earth. Neighbouring nations will stand in fear and know that I was the one who did these marvellous things.

¹¹I will force out the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, but you must do what I command you today.

¹²Don't make treaties with any of those people. If you do, it will be like falling into a trap.

¹³Instead, you must destroy their altars and tear down the sacred poles they use in the worship of the goddess Asherah.

¹⁴I demand your complete loyalty you must not worship any other god!

¹⁵Don't make treaties with the people there, or you will soon find yourselves worshipping their gods and taking part in their sacrificial meals.

¹⁶Your men will even marry their women and be influenced to worship their gods.

¹⁷Don't make metal images of gods.

¹⁸Don't fail to observe the Festival of Thin Bread in the month of Abib. Obey me and eat bread without yeast for seven days during Abib, because that is the month you left Egypt.

¹⁹The firstborn males of your families and of your flocks and herds belong to me.

²⁰You can save the life of a firstborn donkey by sacrificing a lamb; if you don't, you must break the donkey's neck. You must save every firstborn son. Bring an offering every time you come to worship.

²¹Do your work in six days and rest on the seventh day, even during the seasons for ploughing and harvesting.

²²Celebrate the Harvest Festival each spring when you start harvesting your wheat, and celebrate the Festival of Shelters each autumn when you pick your fruit.

²³Your men must come to worship me three times a year, because I am the LORD God of Israel.

²⁴I will force the nations out of your land and enlarge your borders. Then no one will try to take your property when you come to worship me these three times each year.

²⁵When you sacrifice an animal on the altar, don't offer bread made with yeast. And don't save any part of the Passover meal for the next day.

²⁶I am the LORD your God, and you must bring the first part of your harvest to the place of worship. Don't boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

²⁷The LORD told Moses to put these laws in writing, as part of his agreement with Israel.

²⁸Moses stayed on the mountain with the LORD for forty days and nights, without eating or drinking. And he wrote down the Ten Commandments, the most important part of God's agreement with his people.

²⁹Moses came down from Mount Sinai, carrying the Ten Commandments. His face was shining brightly because the

LORD had been speaking to him. But Moses did not know at first that his face was shining.

³⁰When Aaron and the others looked at Moses, they saw that his face was shining, and they were afraid to go near him.

³¹Moses called out for Aaron and the leaders to come to him, and he spoke with them.

³²Then the rest of the people of Israel gathered around Moses, and he gave them the laws that the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

³³The face of Moses kept shining, and after he had spoken with the people, he covered his face with a veil.

³⁴Moses would always remove the veil when he went into the sacred tent to speak with the LORD. And when he came out, he would tell the people everything the LORD had told him to say.

³⁵They could see that his face was still shining. So after he had spoken with them, he would put the veil back on and leave it on until the next time he went to speak with the LORD.

35¹ Moses called together the people of Israel and told them that the LORD had said:

²You have six days in which to do your work. But the seventh day must be dedicated to me, your LORD, as a day of rest. Whoever works on the Sabbath will be put to death.

³Don't even build a cooking fire at home on the Sabbath.

⁴Moses told the people of Israel that the LORD had said:

⁵I would welcome an offering from anyone who wants to give something. You may bring gold, silver, or bronze;

⁶blue, purple, or red wool; fine linen; goat hair;

⁷tanned ram skin or fine leather; acacia wood;

⁸olive oil for the lamp; sweet-smelling spices for the oil of dedication and for the incense; or

⁹onyx stones or other gems for the sacred apron and breastpiece.

¹⁰If you have any skills, you should use them to help make what I have commanded:

¹¹ the sacred tent with its covering and hooks, its framework and crossbars, and its post and stands;

¹² the sacred chest with its carrying poles, its place of mercy, and the curtain in front of it;

¹³ the table with all that goes on it, including the sacred bread;

¹⁴ the lamp with its equipment and oil;

¹⁵ the incense altar with its carrying poles and sweet-smelling incense; the ordination oil; the curtain for the entrance to the sacred tent;

¹⁶ the altar for sacrifices with its bronze grating, its carrying poles, and its equipment; the large bronze bowl with its stand;

¹⁷ the curtains with the posts and stands that go around the courtyard;

¹⁸ the pegs and ropes for the tent and the courtyard;

¹⁹ and the finely woven priestly clothes for Aaron and his sons.

²⁰ Moses finished speaking, and everyone left.

²¹ Then those who wanted to bring gifts to the LORD, brought them to be used

for the sacred tent, the worship services, and the priestly clothes.

²²Men and women came willingly and gave all kinds of gold jewellery such as pins, earrings, rings, and necklaces.

²³Everyone brought their blue, purple, and red wool, their fine linen, and their cloth made of goat hair, as well as their ram skins dyed red and their fine leather.

²⁴Anyone who had silver or bronze or acacia wood brought it as a gift to the LORD.

²⁵The women who were good at weaving cloth brought the blue, purple, and red wool and the fine linen they had made.

²⁶And the women who knew how to make cloth from goat hair were glad to do so.

²⁷The leaders brought different kinds of jewels to be sewn on the special clothes and the breastpiece for the high priest.

²⁸They also brought sweet-smelling spices to be mixed with the incense and olive oil that were for the lamps and for ordaining the priests.

²⁹ Moses had told the people what the LORD wanted them to do, and many of them decided to bring their gifts.

³⁰ Moses said to the people of Israel: The LORD has chosen Bezalel of the Judah tribe.

³¹ Not only has the LORD filled him with his Spirit, but he has given him wisdom and made him a skilled craftsman who can create objects of art with gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood.

³² (35: 31)

³³ (35: 31)

³⁴ The LORD is urging him and Oholiab from the tribe of Dan to teach others.

³⁵ And he has given them all kinds of artistic skills, including the ability to design and embroider with blue, purple, and red wool and to weave fine linen.

36 ¹ The LORD has given to Bezalel, Oholiab, and others the skills needed for building a place of worship, and they will follow the LORD's instructions.

² Then Moses brought together these workers who were eager to work,

³ and he gave them the money that the people of Israel had donated for building

the place of worship. In fact, so much money was being given each morning,⁴ that finally everyone stopped working⁵ and said, Moses, there is already more money than we need for what the LORD has assigned us to do.

⁶So Moses sent word for the people to stop giving, and they did.

⁷But there was already more than enough to do what needed to be done.

⁸The skilled workers got together to make the sacred tent and its linen curtains woven with blue, purple, and red wool and embroidered with figures of winged creatures. Each of the ten panels was twelve metres long and two metres wide,

⁹(36: 8)

¹⁰and they were sewn together to make two curtains with five panels each.

¹¹Then fifty loops of blue cloth were put along one of the wider sides of each curtain, and the two curtains were fastened together at the loops with fifty gold hooks.

¹²(36: 11)

¹³(36: 11)

¹⁴As the material for the tent, goat hair was used to weave eleven sections thirteen metres by two metres each.

¹⁵(36: 14)

¹⁶These eleven sections were joined to make two panels, one with five and the other with six sections.

¹⁷Fifty loops were put along one of the wider sides of each panel,

¹⁸and the two panels were fastened at the loops with fifty bronze hooks.

¹⁹Two other coverings were made one with fine leather and the other with ram skins dyed red.

²⁰Acacia wood was used to build the framework for the walls of the sacred tent.

²¹Each frame was four metres high and sixty-six centimetres wide

²²with two wooden pegs near the bottom. Then two silver stands were placed under each frame with sockets for the pegs, so they could be joined together. Twenty of these frames were used along the south side and twenty more along the north.

²³(36: 22)

²⁴(36: 22)

²⁵ (36: 22)

²⁶ (36: 22)

²⁷ Six frames were used for the back wall along the west side

²⁸ with two more at the south-west and north-west corners. These corner frames were joined from top to bottom.

²⁹ (36: 28)

³⁰ Altogether, along the back wall there were eight frames with two silver stands under each of them.

³¹ Five crossbars were made for each of the wooden frames, with the centre crossbar running the full length of the wall.

³² (36: 31)

³³ (36: 31)

³⁴ The frames and crossbars were covered with gold, and gold rings were attached to the frames to run the crossbars through.

³⁵ They made the inside curtain of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool, and embroidered with figures of winged creatures.

³⁶ They also made four acacia wood posts and covered them with gold. Then

gold rings were fastened to the posts, which were set on silver stands.

³⁷ For the entrance to the tent, they used a curtain of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool and embroidered with fancy needlework.

³⁸ They made five posts, covered them completely with gold, and set them each on a gold-covered bronze stand. Finally, they attached hooks for the curtain.

37 ¹ Bezalel built a chest of acacia wood one hundred and ten centimetres long, sixty-six centimetres wide, and sixty-six centimetres high.

² He covered it inside and out with pure gold and put a gold edging around the top.

³ He made four gold rings and fastened one of them to each of the four legs of the chest.

⁴ Then he made two poles of acacia wood, covered them with gold,

⁵ and put them through the rings, so the chest could be carried by the poles.

⁶ The entire lid of the chest, which was also covered with pure gold, was the place of mercy.

⁷ On each of the two ends of the chest he made a winged creature of hammered gold. They faced each other, and their wings covered the place of mercy.

⁸ (37: 7)

⁹ (37: 7)

¹⁰ Bezalel built a table of acacia wood eighty-eight centimetres long, forty-four centimetres wide, and sixty-six centimetres high.

¹¹ He covered it with pure gold and put a gold edging around it with a border seventy-five millimetres wide.

¹² (37: 11)

¹³ He made four gold rings and attached one to each of the legs

¹⁴ near the edging. The poles for carrying the table were placed through these rings

¹⁵ and were made of acacia wood covered with gold.

¹⁶ Everything that was to be set on the table was made of pure gold the bowls, plates, jars, and cups for wine offerings.

¹⁷ Bezalel made a lampstand of pure gold. The whole lampstand, including its decorative flowers, was made from a single piece of hammered gold,

¹⁸with three branches on each of its two sides.

¹⁹There were three decorative almond blossoms on each branch

²⁰and four on the stem.

²¹There was also a blossom where each pair of branches came out from the stem.

²²The lampstand, including its branches and decorative flowers, was made from a single piece of hammered pure gold.

²³The lamp and its equipment, including the tongs and trays, were made of about thirty-five kilogrammes of pure gold.

²⁴ (37: 23)

²⁵For burning incense, Bezalel made an altar of acacia wood. It was forty-five centimetres square and ninety centimetres high with each of its four corners sticking up like the horn of a bull.

²⁶He covered it with pure gold and put a gold edging around it.

²⁷Then below the edging on opposite sides he attached two gold rings through which he put the poles for carrying the altar.

²⁸These poles were also made of acacia wood and covered with gold.

²⁹Bezalel mixed the oil for dedication and the sweet-smelling spices for the incense.

38¹Bezalel built an altar of acacia wood for offering sacrifices. It was two and a quarter metres square and one and a third metres high

²with each of its four corners sticking up like the horn of a bull, and it was completely covered with bronze.

³The equipment for the altar was also made of bronze the pans for the hot ashes, the shovels, the meat forks, and the fire pans.

⁴Half-way up the altar he built a ledge around it and covered the bottom half of the altar with a decorative bronze grating.

⁵Then he attached a bronze ring beneath the ledge at the four corners to put the poles through.

⁶He covered two acacia wood poles with bronze and

⁷put them through the rings for carrying the altar, which was shaped like an open box.

⁸Bezalel made a large bowl and a stand out of bronze from the mirrors of the women who helped at the entrance to the sacred tent.

⁹Around the sacred tent Bezalel built a courtyard forty-four metres long on the south and north and twenty-two metres wide on the east and west. He used twenty bronze posts on bronze stands for the south and north and ten for the west. Then he hung a curtain of fine linen on the posts along each of these three sides by using silver hooks and rods. He placed three bronze posts on each side of the entrance at the east and hung a curtain six and two thirds metres wide on each set of posts.

¹⁰(38: 9)

¹¹(38: 9)

¹²(38: 9)

¹³(38: 9)

¹⁴(38: 9)

¹⁵(38: 9)

¹⁶(38: 9)

¹⁷(38: 9)

¹⁸For the entrance to the courtyard, Bezalel made a curtain nine metres long, which he hung on four bronze posts that

were set on bronze stands. This curtain was the same height as the one for the rest of the courtyard and was made of fine linen embroidered and woven with blue, purple, and red wool. He hung the curtain on the four posts, using silver hooks and rods.

¹⁹ (38: 18)

²⁰ The pegs for the tent and for the curtain around the tent were made of bronze.

²¹ Bezalel had worked closely with Oholiab, who was an expert at designing and engraving, and at embroidering blue, purple, and red wool. The two of them completed the work that the LORD had commanded. Moses made Aaron's son Ithamar responsible for keeping record of the metals used for the sacred tent.

²² (38: 21)

²³ (38: 21)

²⁴ According to the official weights, the amount of gold given was a thousand kilogrammes,

²⁵ and the silver that was collected when the people were counted came to

three thousand four hundred and thirty kilogrammes.

²⁶ Everyone who was counted paid the required amount, and there was a total of 603,550 men who were twenty years old or older.

²⁷ Thirty-four kilogrammes of the silver were used to make each of the one hundred stands for the sacred tent and the curtain.

²⁸ The remaining thirty kilogrammes of silver were used for the hooks and rods and for covering the tops of the posts.

²⁹ Two thousand four hundred and twenty-five kilogrammes of bronze were given.

³⁰ And it was used to make the stands for the entrance to the tent, the altar and its grating, the equipment for the altar,

³¹ the stands for the posts that surrounded the courtyard, including those at the entrance to the courtyard, and the pegs for the tent and the courtyard.

39¹ Beautiful priestly clothes were made of blue, purple, and red wool for Aaron to wear when he

performed his duties in the holy place. This was done exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²The entire priestly apron was made of fine linen, woven with blue, purple, and red wool. Thin sheets of gold were hammered out and cut into threads that were skilfully woven into the apron.

³(39:2)

⁴It had two shoulder straps to support it and a sash that fastened around the waist.

⁵(39:4)

⁶Onyx stones were placed in gold settings, and each one was engraved with the name of one of Israel's sons.

⁷Then these were attached to the shoulder straps of the apron, so the LORD would never forget his people. Everything was done exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁸The breastpiece was made with the same materials and designs as the priestly apron.

⁹It was twenty-two centimetres square and folded double

¹⁰with four rows of three precious stones: a carnelian, a chrysolite, and an emerald were in the first row;

¹¹a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond were in the second row;

¹²a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst were in the third row;

¹³and a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper were in the fourth row. They were mounted in a delicate gold setting,

¹⁴and on each of them was engraved the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹⁵Two gold rings were attached to the upper front corners of the breastpiece and fastened with two braided gold chains to gold settings on the shoulder straps.

¹⁶(39: 15)

¹⁷(39: 15)

¹⁸(39: 15)

¹⁹Two other gold rings were attached to the lower inside corners next to the apron,

²⁰and two more near the bottom of the shoulder straps just above the sash.

²¹To keep the breastpiece in place, a blue cord was used to tie the two lower

rings on the breastpiece to those on the apron. These things were done exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²²The priestly robe was made of blue wool

²³with an opening in the centre for the head. The material around the collar was bound so as to keep it from fraying.

²⁴Along the hem of the robe were woven pomegranates of blue, purple, and red wool with a bell of pure gold between each of them. This robe was to be worn by Aaron when he performed his duties.

²⁵ (39: 24)

²⁶ (39: 24)

²⁷Everything that Aaron and his sons wore was made of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool, including their robes and turbans, their fine caps and underwear, and even their sashes that were embroidered with needlework.

²⁸ (39: 27)

²⁹ (39: 27)

³⁰Dedicated to the LORD was engraved on a narrow strip of pure gold,

³¹ which was fastened to Aaron's turban. These things were done exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³² So the people of Israel finished making everything the LORD had told Moses to make.

³³ Then they brought it all to Moses: the sacred tent and its equipment, including the hooks, the framework and crossbars, and its posts and stands;

³⁴ the covering of tanned ram skins and fine leather; the inside curtain;

³⁵ the sacred chest with its carrying poles and the place of mercy;

³⁶ the table with all that goes on it, including the sacred bread;

³⁷ the lampstand of pure gold, together with its equipment and oil;

³⁸ the gold-covered incense altar; the ordination oil and the sweet-smelling incense; the curtain for the entrance to the tent;

³⁹ the bronze altar for sacrifices with its bronze grating, its carrying poles, and its equipment; the large bronze bowl with its stand;

⁴⁰ the curtain with its posts and cords, and its pegs and stands that go around

the courtyard; everything needed for the sacred tent;

⁴¹ and the finely woven priestly clothes for Aaron and his sons.

⁴² When Moses saw that the people had done everything exactly as the LORD had commanded, he gave them his blessing.

⁴³ (39: 42)

40¹ The LORD said to Moses:
² Set up my tent on the first day of the year

³ and put the chest with the Ten Commandments behind the inside curtain of the tent.

⁴ Bring in the table and set on it those things that are made for it. Also bring in the lampstand and attach the lamps to it.

⁵ Then place the gold altar of incense in front of the sacred chest and hang a curtain at the entrance to the tent.

⁶ Set the altar for burning sacrifices in front of the entrance to my tent.

⁷ Put the large bronze bowl between the tent and the altar and fill the bowl with water.

⁸Surround the tent and the altar with the wall of curtains and hang the curtain that was made for the entrance.

⁹Use the sacred olive oil to dedicate the tent and everything in it to me.

¹⁰Do the same thing with the altar for offering sacrifices and its equipment

¹¹and with the bowl and its stand.

¹²Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent and make them wash themselves.

¹³Dress Aaron in the priestly clothes, then use the sacred olive oil to ordain him and dedicate him to me as my priest.

¹⁴Put the priestly robes on Aaron's sons

¹⁵and ordain them in the same way, so they and their descendants will always be my priests.

¹⁶Moses followed the LORD's instructions.

¹⁷And on the first day of the first month of the second year, the sacred tent was set up.

¹⁸The posts, stands, and framework were put in place,

¹⁹then the two layers of coverings were hung over them.

²⁰The stones with the Ten Commandments written on them were stored in the sacred chest, the place of mercy was put on top of it, and the carrying poles were attached.

²¹The chest was brought into the tent and set behind the curtain in the most holy place. These things were done exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²²The table for the sacred bread was put along the north wall of the holy place,

²³after which the bread was set on the table.

²⁴The lampstand was put along the south wall,

²⁵then the lamps were attached to it there in the presence of the LORD.

²⁶The gold incense altar was set up in front of the curtain,

²⁷and sweet-smelling incense was burnt on it. These things were done exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²⁸The curtain was hung at the entrance to the sacred tent.

²⁹ Then the altar for offering sacrifices was put in front of the tent, and animal sacrifices and gifts of grain were offered there.

³⁰ The large bronze bowl was placed between the altar and the entrance to the tent. It was filled with water,

³¹ then Moses and Aaron, together with Aaron's sons, washed their hands and feet.

³² In fact, they washed each time before entering the tent or offering sacrifices at the altar. These things were done exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³³ Finally, Moses had the curtain hung around the courtyard.

³⁴ Suddenly the sacred tent was covered by a thick cloud and filled with the glory of the LORD.

³⁵ And so, Moses could not enter the tent.

³⁶ Whenever the cloud moved from the tent, the people would break camp and follow;

³⁷ then they would set up camp and stay there, until it moved again.

³⁸ No matter where the people travelled, the LORD was with them. Each day his

cloud was over the tent, and each night a fire could be seen in the cloud.

Leviticus

1 ¹The LORD spoke to Moses from the sacred tent and gave him instructions for the community of Israel to follow when they offered sacrifices. The LORD said: Sacrifices to please me must be completely burnt on the bronze altar. Bulls or rams or goats are the animals to be used for these sacrifices. If the animal is a bull, it must not have anything wrong with it. Lead it to the entrance of the sacred tent, and I will let you know if it is acceptable to me.

²(1: 1)

³(1: 1)

⁴Lay your hand on its head, and I will accept the animal as a sacrifice for taking away your sins.

⁵After the bull is killed in my presence, some priests from Aaron's family will offer its blood to me by splattering it against the four sides of the altar.

⁶Skin the bull and cut it up,

⁷while the priests pile wood on the altar fire to make it start blazing.

⁸Wash the bull's insides and hind legs, so the priests can lay them on the altar with the head, the fat, and the rest of the animal. A priest will then send all of it up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

⁹(1: 8)

¹⁰If you sacrifice a ram or a goat, it must not have anything wrong with it.

¹¹Lead the animal to the north side of the altar, where it is to be killed in my presence. Then some of the priests will splatter its blood against the four sides of the altar.

¹²Cut up the animal and wash its insides and hind legs. A priest will put these parts on the altar with the head, the fat, and the rest of the animal. Then he will send all of it up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

¹³(1: 12)

¹⁴If you offer a bird for this kind of sacrifice, it must be a dove or a pigeon.

¹⁵A priest will take the bird to the bronze altar, where he will wring its neck and put its head on the fire. Then he will drain out its blood on one side of the altar,

¹⁶remove the bird's craw with what is in it, and throw them on the ash heap at the east side of the altar.

¹⁷Finally, he will take the bird by its wings, tear it partially open, and send it up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

2¹The LORD said: When you offer sacrifices to give thanks to me, you must use only your finest flour. Put it in a dish, sprinkle olive oil and incense on the flour,

²and take it to the priests from Aaron's family. One of them will scoop up the incense together with a handful of the flour and oil. Then, to show that the whole offering belongs to me, the priest will lay this part on the bronze altar and send it up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

³The rest of this sacrifice is for the priests; it is very holy because it was offered to me.

⁴If you bake bread in an oven for this sacrifice, use only your finest flour, but without any yeast. You may make the flour into a loaf mixed with olive oil, or

you may make it into thin wafers and brush them with oil.

⁵If you cook bread in a shallow pan for this sacrifice, use only your finest flour. Mix it with olive oil, but do not use any yeast.

⁶Then break the bread into small pieces and sprinkle them with oil.

⁷If you cook your bread in a pan with a lid on it, you must also use the finest flour mixed with oil.

⁸You may prepare sacrifices to give thanks in any of these three ways. Bring your sacrifice to a priest, and he will take it to the bronze altar.

⁹Then, to show that the whole offering belongs to me, the priest will lay part of it on the altar and send it up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

¹⁰The rest of this sacrifice is for the priests; it is very holy because it was offered to me.

¹¹Yeast and honey must never be burnt on the altar, so don't ever mix either of these in a grain sacrifice.

¹²You may offer either of them separately, when you present the first

part of your harvest to me, but they must never be burnt on the altar.

¹³Salt is offered when you make an agreement with me, so sprinkle salt on these sacrifices.

¹⁴Freshly cut grain, either roasted or coarsely ground, must be used when you offer the first part of your grain harvest.

¹⁵You must mix in some olive oil and put incense on top, because this is a grain sacrifice.

¹⁶A priest will sprinkle all the incense and some of the grain and oil on the altar and send them up in smoke to show that the whole offering belongs to me.

3¹The LORD said: When you offer sacrifices to ask my blessing, you may offer either a bull or a cow, but there must be nothing wrong with the animal.

²Lead it to the entrance of the sacred tent, lay your hand on its head, and have it killed there. A priest from Aaron's family will splatter its blood against the four sides of the altar.

³Offer all the fat on the animal's insides,

⁴ as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat.

⁵ Some of the priests will lay these pieces on the altar and send them up in smoke with a smell that pleases me, together with the sacrifice that is offered to please me.

⁶ Instead of a bull or a cow, you may offer any sheep or goat that has nothing wrong with it.

⁷ If you offer a sheep, you must present it to me at the entrance to the sacred tent.

⁸ Lay your hand on its head and have it killed there. A priest will then splatter its blood against the four sides of the altar.

⁹ Offer the fat on the tail, the tailbone, and the insides,

¹⁰ as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat.

¹¹ One of the priests will lay these pieces on the altar and send them up in smoke as a food offering for me.

¹² If you offer a goat, you must also present it to me

¹³ at the entrance to the sacred tent. Lay your hand on its head and have it

killed there. A priest will then splatter its blood against the four sides of the altar.

¹⁴ Offer all the fat on the animal's insides,

¹⁵ as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat.

¹⁶ One of the priests will put these pieces on the altar and send them up in smoke as a food offering with a smell that pleases me. All fat belongs to me.

¹⁷ So you and your descendants must never eat any fat or any blood, not even in the privacy of your own homes. This law will never change.

4¹ The LORD told Moses² to say to the community of Israel: Offer a sacrifice to ask forgiveness when you sin by accidentally doing something I have told you not to do.

³ The LORD said: When the high priest sins, he makes everyone else guilty too. And so, he must sacrifice a young bull that has nothing wrong with it.

⁴ The priest will lead the bull to the entrance of the sacred tent, lay his hand on its head, and kill it there.

⁵ He will take a bowl of the blood inside the tent,

⁶dip a finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of it seven times towards the sacred chest behind the curtain.

⁷Then, in my presence, he will smear some of the blood on each of the four corners of the incense altar, before pouring out the rest at the foot of the bronze altar near the entrance to the tent.

⁸The priest will remove the fat from the bull, just as he does when he sacrifices a bull to ask my blessing. This includes the fat on the insides, as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat. He will then send it all up in smoke.

⁹(4: 8)

¹⁰(4: 8)

¹¹The skin and flesh of the bull, together with its legs, insides, and the food still in its stomach, are to be taken outside the camp and burnt on a wood fire near the ash heap.

¹²(4: 11)

¹³The LORD said: When the nation of Israel disobeys me without meaning to, the whole nation is still guilty.

¹⁴ Once you realize what has happened, you must sacrifice a young bull to ask my forgiveness. Lead the bull to the entrance of the sacred tent,

¹⁵ where your tribal leaders will lay their hands on its head, before having it killed in my presence.

¹⁶ The priest will take a bowl of the animal's blood inside the sacred tent,

¹⁷ dip a finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of it seven times towards the sacred chest behind the curtain.

¹⁸ Then, in my presence, he must smear some of the blood on each of the four corners of the incense altar, before pouring out the rest at the foot of the bronze altar near the entrance to the tent.

¹⁹ After this, the priest will remove the fat from the bull and send it up in smoke on the altar. Finally, he will burn its remains outside the camp, just as he did with the other bull. By this sacrifice the sin of the whole nation will be forgiven.

²⁰ (4: 19)

²¹ (4: 19)

²²The LORD God said: Any tribal leader who disobeys me without meaning to is still guilty.

²³As soon as the leader realizes what has happened, he must sacrifice a goat that has nothing wrong with it.

²⁴This is a sacrifice for sin. So he will lay his hand on the animal's head, before having it killed in my presence at the north side of the bronze altar.

²⁵The priest will dip a finger in the blood, smear some of it on each of the four corners of the altar, and pour out the rest at the foot of the altar.

²⁶Then he must send all the fat up in smoke, just as he does when a sacrifice is offered to ask my blessing. By this sacrifice the leader's sin will be forgiven.

²⁷The LORD said: When any of you ordinary people disobey me without meaning to, you are still guilty.

²⁸As soon as you realize what you have done, you must sacrifice a female goat that has nothing wrong with it.

²⁹Lead the goat to the north side of the bronze altar and lay your hand on its head, before having it killed.

³⁰Then a priest will dip a finger in the blood; he will smear some of it on each of the four corners of the altar and pour out the rest at the foot of the altar.

³¹After this, the priest will remove all the fat, just as he does when an animal is sacrificed to ask my blessing. The priest will then send the fat up in smoke with a smell that pleases me. This animal is sacrificed so that I will forgive you ordinary people when you sin.

³²If you offer a lamb instead of a goat as a sacrifice for sin, it must be a female that has nothing wrong with it.

³³Lead the lamb to the altar and lay your hand on its head, before having it killed.

³⁴The priest will dip a finger in the blood, smear some of it on each of the four corners of the altar, and pour out the rest at the foot of the altar.

³⁵After this, all the fat must be removed, just as when an animal is sacrificed to ask my blessing. Then the priest will send it up in smoke to me, together with a food offering, and your sin will be forgiven.

5¹ The LORD said: If you refuse to testify in court about something you saw or know has happened, you have sinned and can be punished.

² You are guilty and unfit to worship me, if you accidentally touch the dead body of any kind of unclean animal.

³ You are guilty if you find out that you have accidentally touched any waste that comes from a human body.

⁴ You are guilty the moment you realize that you have made a hasty promise to do something good or bad.

⁵ As soon as you discover that you have committed any of these sins, you must confess what you have done.

⁶ Then you must bring a female sheep or goat to me as the price for your sin. A priest will sacrifice the animal, and you will be forgiven.

⁷ If you are poor and cannot afford to bring an animal, you may bring two doves or two pigeons. One of these will be a sacrifice to ask my forgiveness, and the other will be a sacrifice to please me.

⁸ Give both birds to the priest, who will offer one as a sacrifice to ask my

forgiveness. He will wring its neck without tearing off its head,

⁹splatter some of its blood on one side of the bronze altar, and drain out the rest at the foot of the altar.

¹⁰Then he will follow the proper rules for offering the other bird as a sacrifice to please me. You will be forgiven when the priest offers these sacrifices as the price for your sin.

¹¹If you are so poor that you cannot afford doves or pigeons, you may bring one kilogramme of your finest flour. This is a sacrifice to ask my forgiveness, so don't sprinkle olive oil or sweet-smelling incense on it.

¹²Give the flour to a priest, who will scoop up a handful and send it up in smoke together with the other offerings. This is a reminder that all the flour belongs to me.

¹³By offering this sacrifice, the priest pays the price for any of these sins you may have committed. The priest gets the rest of the flour, just as he does with grain sacrifices.

¹⁴The LORD told Moses what the people must do to make things right when they

find out they have cheated the LORD without meaning to: If this happens, you must either sacrifice a ram that has nothing wrong with it or else pay the price of a ram with the official money used by the priests.

¹⁵ (5: 14)

¹⁶ In addition, you must pay what you owe plus a fine of twenty per cent. Then the priest will offer the ram as a sacrifice to make things right, and you will be forgiven.

¹⁷ If you break any of my commands without meaning to, you are still guilty, and you can be punished. When you realize what you have done, you must either bring to the priest a ram that has nothing wrong with it or else pay him for one. The priest will then offer it as a sacrifice to make things right, and you will be forgiven.

¹⁸ (5: 17)

¹⁹ (5: 17)

6¹ The LORD told Moses what the people must do when they commit other sins against the LORD: You have sinned if you rob or cheat someone, if you keep back money or valuables left in

your care, or if you find something and claim not to have it.

² (6: 1)

³ (6: 1)

⁴ When this happens, you must return what doesn't belong to you

⁵ and pay the owner a fine of twenty per cent.

⁶ In addition, you must either bring to the priest a ram that has nothing wrong with it or else pay him for one. The priest will then offer it as a sacrifice to make things right, and you will be forgiven for what you did wrong.

⁷ (6: 6)

⁸ The LORD told Moses to tell Aaron and his sons how to offer the daily sacrifices that are sent up in smoke to please the LORD: You must put the animal for the sacrifice on the altar in the evening and let it stay there all night. But make sure the fire keeps burning.

⁹ (6: 8)

¹⁰ The next morning you will dress in your priestly clothes, including your linen underwear. Then clean away the ashes left by the sacrifices and pile them beside the altar.

¹¹ Change into your everyday clothes, take the ashes outside the camp, and pile them in the special place.

¹² The fire must never go out, so put wood on it each morning. After this, you are to lay an animal on the altar next to the fat that you sacrifice to ask my blessing. Then send it all up in smoke to me.

¹³ The altar fire must always be kept burning it must never go out.

¹⁴ The LORD said: When someone offers a sacrifice to give thanks to me, the priests from Aaron's family must bring it to the front of the bronze altar,

¹⁵ where one of them will scoop up a handful of the flour and oil, together with all the incense on it. Then, to show that the whole offering belongs to me, he will lay all of this on the altar and send it up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

¹⁶ The rest of it is to be baked without yeast and eaten by the priests in the sacred courtyard of the sacred tent. This bread is very holy, just like the sacrifices for sin or for making things right, and I have given this part to the priests from what is offered to me on the altar.

¹⁷ (6:16)

¹⁸ Only the men in Aaron's family are allowed to eat this bread, and they must go through a ceremony to be made holy before touching it. This law will never change.

¹⁹ The LORD spoke to Moses

²⁰ and told him what sacrifices the priests must offer on the morning and evening of the day they are ordained: It is the same as the regular morning and evening sacrifices half a kilogramme of flour

²¹ mixed with olive oil and cooked in a shallow pan. The bread must then be crumbled into small pieces and sent up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

²² Each of Aaron's descendants who is ordained as a priest must perform this ceremony and make sure that the bread is completely burnt on the altar. None of it may be eaten!

²³ (6:22)

²⁴ The LORD told Moses

²⁵ how the priests from Aaron's family were to offer the sacrifice for sin: This sacrifice is very sacred, and the animal

must be killed in my presence at the north side of the bronze altar.

²⁶The priest who offers this sacrifice must eat it in the sacred courtyard of the sacred tent,

²⁷and anyone or anything that touches the meat will be holy. If any of the animal's blood is splattered on the clothes of the priest, they must be washed in a holy place.

²⁸If the meat was cooked in a clay pot, the pot must be destroyed, but if it was cooked in a bronze pot, the pot must be scrubbed and rinsed with water.

²⁹This sacrifice is very holy, and only the priests may have any part of it.

³⁰None of the meat may be eaten from the sacrifices for sin that require blood to be brought into the sacred tent. These sacrifices must be completely burnt.

7¹The LORD said: The sacrifice to make things right is very sacred.

²The animal must be killed in the same place where the sacrifice to please me is killed, and the animal's blood must be splattered against the four sides of the bronze altar.

³ Offer all the animal's fat, including the fat on its tail and on its insides,

⁴ as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat.

⁵ One of the priests will lay these pieces on the altar and send them up in smoke to me.

⁶ This sacrifice for making things right is very holy. Only the priests may eat it, and they must eat it in a holy place.

⁷ The ceremony for this sacrifice and the one for sin are alike, and the meat may be eaten only by the priest who performs this ceremony of forgiveness.

⁸ In fact, the priest who offers a sacrifice to please me may keep the skin of the animal,

⁹ just as he may eat the bread from a sacrifice to give thanks to me.

¹⁰ All other grain sacrifices with or without olive oil in them are to be divided equally among the priests of Aaron's family.

¹¹ The LORD said: Here are the instructions for offering a sacrifice to ask my blessing:

¹² If you offer it to give thanks, you must offer some bread together with it.

Use the finest flour to make three kinds of bread without yeast two in the form of loaves mixed with olive oil and one in the form of thin wafers brushed with oil.

¹³You must also make some bread with yeast.

¹⁴Give me one loaf or wafer from each of these four kinds of bread, after which they will belong to the priest who splattered the blood against the bronze altar.

¹⁵When you offer an animal to ask a blessing from me or to thank me, the meat belongs to you, but it must be eaten the same day.

¹⁶It is different with the sacrifices you offer when you make me a promise or voluntarily give me something. The meat from those sacrifices may be kept and eaten the next day,

¹⁷but any that is left must be destroyed. If you eat any after the second day, your sacrifice will be useless and unacceptable, and you will be both disgusting and guilty.

¹⁸(7: 17)

¹⁹Don't eat any of the meat that touches something unclean. Instead,

burn it. The rest of the meat may be eaten by anyone who is clean and acceptable to me.

²⁰But don't eat any of this meat if you have become unclean by touching something unclean from a human or an animal or from any other creature. If you do, you will no longer belong to the community of Israel.

²¹ (7: 20)

²²The LORD told Moses

²³to say to the people: Don't eat the fat of cattle, sheep, or goats.

²⁴If one of your animals dies or is killed by some wild animal, you may do anything with its fat except eat it.

²⁵If you eat the fat of an animal that can be used as a sacrifice to me, you will no longer belong to the community of Israel.

²⁶And no matter where you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal,

²⁷or you will no longer belong to the community of Israel.

²⁸The LORD also told Moses

²⁹to say to the people of Israel: If you want to offer a sacrifice to ask my

blessing, you must bring the part to be burnt and lay it on the bronze altar. But you must first lift up the choice ribs with their fat to show that the offering is dedicated to me.

³⁰ (7: 29)

³¹ A priest from Aaron's family will then send the fat up in smoke, but the ribs belong to the priests.

³² The upper joint of the right hind leg is for the priest who offers the blood and the fat of the animal.

³³ (7: 32)

³⁴ I have decided that the people of Israel must always give the choice ribs and the upper joint of the right hind leg to Aaron's descendants

³⁵ who have been ordained as priests to serve me.

³⁶ This law will never change. I am the LORD!

³⁷ These are the ceremonies for sacrifices to please the LORD, to give him thanks, and to ask his blessing or his forgiveness, as well as the ceremonies for those sacrifices that demand a payment and for the sacrifices that are offered when priests are ordained.

³⁸While Moses and the people of Israel were in the desert at Mount Sinai, the LORD commanded them to start offering these sacrifices.

8¹The LORD said to Moses:

²Send for Aaron and his sons, as well as their priestly clothes, the oil for ordination, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams, and a basket of bread made without yeast.

³Then bring the whole community of Israel together at the entrance to the sacred tent.

⁴Moses obeyed the LORD, and when everyone had come together,

⁵he said, We are here to follow the LORD's instructions.

⁶After Moses told Aaron and his sons to step forward, he made them wash themselves.

⁷He put the priestly shirt and robe on Aaron and wrapped the sash around his waist. Then he put the sacred apron on Aaron and fastened it with the finely woven belt.

⁸Next, he put on Aaron the sacred breastpiece that was used in learning what the LORD wanted his people to do.

⁹He placed the turban on Aaron's head, and on the front of the turban was the narrow strip of thin gold as a sign of his dedication to the LORD.

¹⁰Moses then dedicated the sacred tent and everything in it to the LORD by sprinkling them with some of the oil for ordination.

¹¹He sprinkled the bronze altar seven times, and he sprinkled its equipment, as well as the large bronze bowl and its base.

¹²He also poured some of the oil on Aaron's head to dedicate him to the LORD.

¹³At last, Moses dressed Aaron's sons in their shirts, then tied sashes around them and put special caps on them, just as the LORD had commanded.

¹⁴Moses led out the bull that was to be sacrificed for sin, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.

¹⁵After it was killed, Moses dipped a finger in the blood and smeared some of it on each of the four corners of the bronze altar, before pouring out the rest at the foot of the altar. This purified the

altar and made it a fit place for offering the sacrifice for sin.

¹⁶ Moses then took the fat on the bull's insides, as well as the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat, and sent them up in smoke on the altar fire.

¹⁷ Finally, he took the skin and the flesh of the bull, together with the food still in its stomach, and burnt them outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded.

¹⁸ Moses led out the ram for the sacrifice to please the LORD. After Aaron and his sons had laid their hands on its head,

¹⁹ Moses killed the ram and splattered its blood against the four sides of the altar.

²⁰ Moses had the animal cut up, and he washed its insides and hind legs. Then he laid the head, the fat, and the rest of the ram on the altar and sent them up in smoke with a smell that pleased the LORD. All this was done just as the LORD had commanded.

²¹ (8: 20)

²² Moses led out the ram for the ceremony of ordination. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head,

²³ and it was killed. Moses smeared some of its blood on Aaron's right ear lobe, some on his right thumb, and some on the big toe of his right foot.

²⁴ Moses did the same thing for Aaron's sons, before splattering the rest of the blood against the four sides of the altar.

²⁵ He took the animal's fat tail, the fat on its insides, and the lower part of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat, and the right hind leg.

²⁶ Then he took from a basket some of each of the three kinds of bread that had been made without yeast and had been dedicated to the LORD.

²⁷ Moses placed the bread on top of the meat and gave it all to Aaron and his sons, who lifted it up to show that it was dedicated to the LORD.

²⁸ After this, Moses placed it on the fires of the altar and sent it up in smoke with a smell that pleased the LORD. This was part of the ordination ceremony.

²⁹ Moses lifted up the choice ribs of the ram to show that they were dedicated

to the LORD. This was the part that the LORD had said Moses could have.

³⁰ Finally, Moses sprinkled the priestly clothes of Aaron and his sons with some of the oil for ordination and with some of the blood from the altar. So Aaron and his sons, together with their priestly clothes, were dedicated to the LORD.

³¹ Moses said to Aaron and his sons: The LORD told me that you must boil this meat at the entrance to the sacred tent and eat it there with the bread.

³² Burn what is left over

³³ and stay near the entrance to the sacred tent until the ordination ceremony ends seven days from now.

³⁴ We have obeyed the LORD in everything that has been done today, so that your sins may be forgiven.

³⁵ The LORD has told me that you must stay near the entrance to the tent for seven days and nights, or else you will die.

³⁶ Aaron and his sons obeyed everything that the LORD had told Moses they must do.

9¹ Eight days later Moses called together Aaron, his sons, and Israel's leaders.

² Then he said to Aaron: Find a young bull and a ram that have nothing wrong with them. Offer the bull to the LORD as a sacrifice for sin and the ram as a sacrifice to please him.

³ Tell the people of Israel that they must offer sacrifices as well. They must offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin, and a bull and a ram as a sacrifice to please the LORD. The bull and the ram must be a year old and have nothing wrong with them.

⁴ Then the people must offer a bull and a ram as a sacrifice to ask the LORD's blessing and also a grain sacrifice mixed with oil. Do this, because the LORD will appear to you today.

⁵ After the animals and the grain had been brought to the front of the sacred tent, and the people were standing there in the presence of the LORD,

⁶ Moses said: The LORD has ordered you to do this, so that he may appear to you in all his glory.

⁷ Aaron, step up to the altar and offer the sacrifice to please the LORD, then

offer the sacrifices for the forgiveness of your sins and for the sins of the people, just as the LORD has commanded.

⁸Aaron stepped up to the altar and killed the bull that was to be the sacrifice for his sins.

⁹His sons brought him the blood. He dipped a finger in it, smeared some on the four corners of the bronze altar, and poured out the rest at its foot.

¹⁰But he sent up in smoke the fat, the kidneys, and the lower part of the liver, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹¹Then Aaron burnt the skin and the flesh outside the camp.

¹²After Aaron had killed the ram that was sacrificed to please the LORD, Aaron's sons brought him the blood, and he splattered it against all four sides of the altar.

¹³They brought him each piece of the animal, including the head, and he burnt them all on the altar.

¹⁴He washed the insides and the hind legs and also sent them up in smoke.

¹⁵Next, Aaron sacrificed the goat for the sins of the people, as he had done with the sacrifice for his own sins.

¹⁶And so, he burnt this sacrifice on the altar in the proper way.

¹⁷He also presented the grain sacrifice and burnt a handful of the flour on the altar as part of the morning sacrifice.

¹⁸At last, he killed the bull and the ram as a sacrifice to ask the LORD's blessing on the people. Aaron's sons brought him the blood, and he splattered it against the four sides of the altar.

¹⁹His sons placed all the fat, as well as the kidneys and the lower part of the liver

²⁰on top of the choice ribs.

²¹Then Aaron burnt the fat on the altar and lifted up the ribs and the right hind leg to show that these were dedicated to the LORD. This was done just as the LORD had instructed Moses.

²²Aaron held out his hand and gave the people his blessing, before coming down from the bronze altar where he had offered the sacrifices.

²³He and Moses went into the sacred tent, and when they came out, they gave

the people their blessing. Then the LORD appeared to the people in all his glory.

²⁴The LORD sent fiery flames that burnt up everything on the altar, and when everyone saw this, they shouted and fell to their knees to worship the LORD.

10¹Nadab and Abihu were two of Aaron's sons, but they disobeyed the LORD by burning incense to him on a fire pan, when they were not supposed to.

²Suddenly the LORD sent fiery flames and burnt them to death.

³Then Moses told Aaron that this was exactly what the LORD had meant when he said: I demand respect from my priests, and I will be praised by everyone! Aaron was speechless.

⁴Moses sent for Mishael and Elzaphan, the two sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel. Then he told them, Take these two dead relatives of yours outside the camp far from the entrance to the sacred tent.

⁵So they dragged the dead men away by their clothes.

⁶Then Moses told Aaron and his other two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: Don't show your sorrow by leaving your hair

uncombed and tearing your priestly clothes, or the LORD will get angry. He will kill the three of you and punish everyone else. It's all right for your relatives, the people of Israel, to mourn for those he destroyed by fire.

⁷ But you are the LORD's chosen priests, and you must not leave the sacred tent, or you will die. Aaron and his two sons obeyed Moses.

⁸ The LORD said to Aaron:

⁹ When you or your sons enter the sacred tent, you must never drink beer or wine. If you do, you will die there! This law will never change.

¹⁰ You must learn the difference between what is holy and what isn't holy and between the clean and the unclean.

¹¹ You must also teach the people of Israel everything that I commanded Moses to say to them.

¹² Moses told Aaron and his two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: The grain sacrifice that was offered to give thanks to the LORD is very holy. So make bread without yeast from the part that wasn't sent up in smoke and eat it beside the altar.

¹³The LORD has said that this belongs to you and your sons, and that it must be eaten in a holy place.

¹⁴But the choice ribs and the hind leg that were lifted up may be eaten by your entire family, as long as you do so in an acceptable place. These parts are yours from the sacrifices that the people offer to ask the LORD's blessing. This is what the LORD has commanded, and it will never change.

¹⁵(10:14)

¹⁶When Moses asked around and learnt that the ram for the sin sacrifice had already been burnt on the altar, he became angry with Eleazar and Ithamar and said,

¹⁷Why didn't you eat the meat from this sacrifice in an acceptable place? It is very holy, and the LORD has given you this sacrifice to remove Israel's sin and guilt.

¹⁸Whenever an animal's blood isn't brought into the sacred tent, I commanded you to eat its meat in an acceptable place, but you burnt it instead.

¹⁹Their father Aaron replied, Today two of my sons offered the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice to please the LORD, and look what has happened to me! Would the LORD have approved if I had eaten the sacrifice for sin?

²⁰Moses was satisfied with Aaron's reply.

11 ¹The LORD told Moses and Aaron ²to say to the community of Israel: You may eat

³any animal that has divided hoofs and chews the cud.

⁴But you must not eat animals such as camels, rock badgers, and rabbits that chew the cud but don't have divided hoofs. And you must not eat pigsthey have divided hoofs, but don't chew the cud. All these animals are unclean, and you are forbidden even to touch their dead bodies.

⁵(11: 4)

⁶(11: 4)

⁷(11: 4)

⁸(11: 4)

⁹You may eat anything that lives in water and has fins and scales. But it would be disgusting for you to eat

anything else that lives in water, and you must not even touch their dead bodies.

¹⁰ (11: 9)

¹¹ (11: 9)

¹² (11: 9)

¹³ Eagles, vultures, buzzards, crows, ostriches, hawks, seagulls, owls, pelicans, storks, herons, hoopoes, and bats are also disgusting, and you are forbidden to eat any of them.

¹⁴ (11: 13)

¹⁵ (11: 13)

¹⁶ (11: 13)

¹⁷ (11: 13)

¹⁸ (11: 13)

¹⁹ (11: 13)

²⁰ The only winged insects you may eat are locusts, grasshoppers, and crickets. All other winged insects that crawl are too disgusting for you to eat.

²¹ (11: 20)

²² (11: 20)

²³ (11: 20)

²⁴ Don't even touch the dead bodies of animals that have divided hoofs but don't chew the cud. And don't touch the dead bodies of animals that have paws.

If you do, you must wash your clothes, but you are still unclean until evening.

²⁵ (11: 24)

²⁶ (11: 24)

²⁷ (11: 24)

²⁸ (11: 24)

²⁹ Moles, rats, mice, and all kinds of lizards are unclean.

³⁰ (11: 29)

³¹ Anyone who touches their dead bodies or anything touched by their dead bodies becomes unclean until evening.

³² If something made of wood, cloth, or leather touches one of their dead bodies, it must be washed, but it is still unclean until evening.

³³ If any of these animals is found dead in a clay pot, the pot must be broken to pieces, and everything in it becomes unclean.

³⁴ If you pour water from this pot on any food, that food becomes unclean, and anything drinkable in the pot becomes unclean.

³⁵ If the dead body of one of these animals touches anything else, including ovens and stoves, that thing becomes unclean and must be destroyed.

³⁶A spring or a cistern where one of these dead animals is found is still clean, but anyone who touches the animal becomes unclean.

³⁷If the dead body of one of these animals is found lying on seeds that have been set aside for planting, the seeds remain clean.

³⁸But seeds that are soaking in water become unclean, if the dead animal is found in the water.

³⁹If an animal that may be eaten happens to die, and you touch it, you become unclean until evening.

⁴⁰If you eat any of its meat or carry its body away, you must wash your clothes, but you are still unclean until evening.

⁴¹Don't eat any of those disgusting little creatures that crawl or walk close to the ground.

⁴²(11:41)

⁴³If you eat any of them, you will become just as disgusting and unclean as they are.

⁴⁴I am the LORD your God, and you must dedicate yourselves to me and be holy, just as I am holy. Don't become

disgusting by eating any of these unclean creatures.

⁴⁵I brought you out of Egypt so that I could be your God. Now you must become holy, because I am holy!

⁴⁶I have given these laws so that you will know what animals, birds, and fish are clean and may be eaten, and which ones are unclean and may not be eaten.

⁴⁷ (11: 46)

12¹ The LORD told Moses² to say to the community of Israel: If a woman gives birth to a son, she is unclean for seven days, just as she is during her monthly period.

³ Her son must be circumcised on the eighth day,

⁴ but her loss of blood keeps her from being completely clean for another thirty-three days. During this time she must not touch anything holy or go to the place of worship.

⁵ Any woman who gives birth to a daughter is unclean for two weeks, just as she is during her period. And she won't be completely clean for another sixty-six days.

⁶When the mother has completed her time of cleansing, she must come to the front of the sacred tent and bring to the priest a year-old lamb as a sacrifice to please me and a dove or a pigeon as a sacrifice for sin.

⁷After the priest offers the sacrifices to me, the mother will become completely clean from her loss of blood, whether her child is a boy or a girl.

⁸If she cannot afford a lamb, she can offer two doves or two pigeons, one as a sacrifice to please me and the other as a sacrifice for sin.

13¹The LORD told Moses and Aaron to say to the people:

²If sores or boils or a skin rash should break out and start spreading on your body, you must be brought to Aaron or to one of the other priests.

³If the priest discovers that the hair in the infected area has turned white and that the infection seems more than skin deep, he will say, This is leprosy you are unclean.

⁴But if the infected area is white and only skin deep, and if the hair in it hasn't turned white, the priest will order you to

stay away from everyone else for seven days.

⁵If the disease hasn't spread by that time, he will order you to stay away from everyone else for another seven days.

⁶Then if the disease hasn't got any worse or spread, the priest will say, You are clean. It was only a sore. After you wash your clothes, you may go home.

⁷However, if the disease comes back, you must return to the priest.

⁸If it is discovered that the disease has started spreading, he will say, This is leprosy you are unclean.

⁹Any of you with a skin disease must be brought to a priest.

¹⁰If he discovers that the sore spot is white with pus and that the hair around it has also turned white,

¹¹he will say, This is leprosy. You are unclean and must stay away from everyone else.

¹²But if the disease has run its course and only the scars remain, he will say, You are clean.

¹³(13: 12)

¹⁴ If the sores come back and turn white with pus, he will say, This is leprosy you are unclean.

¹⁵ (13: 14)

¹⁶ However, if the sores heal and only white spots remain, the priest will say, You are now clean.

¹⁷ (13: 16)

¹⁸ If you have a sore that either swells or turns reddish-white after it has healed, then you must show it to a priest.

¹⁹ (13: 18)

²⁰ If he discovers that the hair in the infected area has turned white and that the infection seems more than skin deep, he will say, This is leprosy you are unclean.

²¹ But if the white area is only on the surface of the skin and hasn't got any worse, and if the hair in it hasn't turned white, he will make you stay away from everyone else for seven days.

²² If the sore begins spreading during this time, the priest will say, You are unclean because you have a disease.

²³ But if it doesn't spread, and only a scar remains, he will say, You are now clean.

²⁴ If you have a burn that gets infected and turns red or reddish-white,

²⁵ a priest must examine it. Then if he discovers that the hair in the infected area has turned white and that the infection seems more than skin deep, he will say, The burn has turned into leprosy, and you are unclean.

²⁶ But if the priest finds that the hair in the infected area hasn't turned white and that the sore is only skin deep and it is healing, he will make you stay away from everyone else for seven days.

²⁷ On the seventh day the priest will examine you again, and if the infection is spreading, he will say, This is leprosy you are unclean.

²⁸ However, if the infection hasn't spread and has begun to heal, and if only a scar remains, he will say, Only a scar remains from the burn, and you are clean.

²⁹ If you have a sore on your head or chin,

³⁰it must be examined by a priest. If the infection seems more than skin deep, and the hair in it has thinned out and lost its colour, he will say, This is leprosy you are unclean.

³¹On the other hand, if he discovers that the itchy spot is only skin deep, but that the hair still isn't healthy, he will order you to stay away from everyone else for seven days.

³²By that time, if the itch hasn't spread, if the hairs seem healthy, and if the itch is only skin deep,

³³you must shave off the hairs around the infection, but not those on it. Then the priest will tell you to stay away from everyone else for another seven days.

³⁴By that time, if the itch hasn't spread and seems no more than skin deep, he will say, You are clean; now you must wash your clothes.

³⁵Later, if the itch starts spreading, even though the hair is still healthy, the priest will say, You are unclean.

³⁶(13: 35)

³⁷But if he thinks you are completely well, he will say, You are clean.

³⁸If white spots break out on your skin,

³⁹ but the priest discovers that it is only a rash, he will say, You are clean.

⁴⁰ If you become bald on any part of your head, you are still clean.

⁴¹ (13: 40)

⁴² But if a priest discovers that a reddish-white sore has broken out on the bald spot and looks like leprosy, he will say,

⁴³ (13: 42)

⁴⁴ This is leprosy you are unclean.

⁴⁵ If you ever have leprosy, you must tear your clothes, leave your hair uncombed, cover the lower part of your face, and go around shouting, I'm unclean! I'm unclean!

⁴⁶ As long as you have the disease, you are unclean and must live alone outside the camp.

⁴⁷ If a greenish or reddish spot appears anywhere on any of your clothing or on anything made of leather, you must let the priest examine the clothing or the leather. He will put it aside for seven days,

⁴⁸ (13: 47)

⁴⁹ (13: 47)

⁵⁰ (13: 47)

⁵¹ and if the mildew has spread in that time, he will say, This is unclean

⁵² because the mildew has spread. Then he will burn the clothing or the piece of leather.

⁵³ If the priest discovers that the mildew hasn't spread,

⁵⁴ he will tell you to wash the clothing or leather and put it aside for another seven days,

⁵⁵ after which he will examine it again. If the spot hasn't spread, but is still greenish or reddish, the clothing or leather is unclean and must be burnt.

⁵⁶ But if the spot has faded after being washed, he will tear away the spot.

⁵⁷ Later, if the spot reappears elsewhere on the clothing or the leather, you must burn it.

⁵⁸ Even if the spot completely disappears after being washed, it must be washed again before it is clean.

⁵⁹ These are the rules for deciding if clothing is clean or unclean after a spot appears on it.

14¹ The LORD told Moses to say to the people:

²After you think you are healed of leprosy, you must ask for a priest to come outside the camp and examine you. And if you are well,

³(14: 2)

⁴he will order someone to bring out two live birds that are acceptable for sacrifice, together with a stick of cedar wood, a piece of red yarn, and a branch from a hyssop plant.

⁵The priest will order someone to kill one of the birds over a clay pot of spring water.

⁶Then he will dip the other bird, the cedar, the red yarn, and the hyssop in the blood of the dead bird.

⁷Next, he will sprinkle you seven times with the blood and say, You are now clean. Finally, he will release the bird and let it fly away.

⁸After this you must wash your clothes, shave your entire body, and take a bath before you are completely clean. You may move back into camp, but you must not enter your tent for seven days.

⁹Then you must once again shave your head, face, and eyebrows, as well as the hair on the rest of your body. Finally,

wash your clothes and take a bath, and you will be completely clean.

¹⁰On the eighth day you must bring to the priest two rams and a year-old female lamb that have nothing wrong with them; also bring a third of a litre of olive oil and three kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with oil.

¹¹Then the priest will present you and your offerings to me at the entrance to my sacred tent.

¹²There he will offer one of the rams, together with the one third of a litre of oil, as a sacrifice to make things right. He will also lift them up to show that they are dedicated to me.

¹³This sacrifice is very holy. It belongs to the priest and must be killed in the same place where animals are killed as sacrifices for sins and as sacrifices to please me.

¹⁴The priest will smear some of the blood from this sacrifice on your right ear lobe, some on your right thumb, and some on the big toe of your right foot.

¹⁵He will then pour some of the olive oil into the palm of his left hand,

¹⁶ dip a finger of his right hand into the oil, and sprinkle some of it seven times towards the sacred tent.

¹⁷ Next, he will smear some of the oil on your right ear lobe, some on your right thumb, and some on the big toe of your right foot,

¹⁸ and pour the rest of the oil from his palm on your head. Then he will offer the other two animals one as a sacrifice for sin and the other as a sacrifice to please me, together with a grain sacrifice. After this you will be completely clean.

¹⁹ (14: 18)

²⁰ (14: 18)

²¹ If you are poor and cannot afford to offer this much, you may offer a ram as a sacrifice to make things right, together with a third of a litre of olive oil and one kilogramme of flour mixed with oil as a grain sacrifice. The priest will then lift these up to dedicate them to me.

²² Depending on what you can afford, you must also offer either two doves or two pigeons, one as a sacrifice for sin and the other as a sacrifice to please me.

²³The priest will offer these to me in front of the sacred tent on the eighth day.

²⁴The priest will kill this ram for the sacrifice to make things right, and he will lift it up with the olive oil in dedication to me. Then he will smear some of the blood on your right ear lobe, some on your right thumb, and some on the big toe of your right foot.

²⁵(14: 24)

²⁶The priest will pour some of the olive oil into the palm of his left hand,

²⁷then dip a finger of his right hand in the oil and sprinkle some of it seven times towards the sacred tent.

²⁸He will smear some of the oil on your right ear lobe, some on your right thumb, and some on the big toe of your right foot, just as he did with the blood of the sacrifice to make things right.

²⁹And he will pour the rest of the oil from his palm on your head. Then, depending on what you can afford, he will offer either the doves or the pigeons together with the grain sacrifice. One of the birds is the sacrifice for sin, and the

other is the sacrifice to please me. After this you will be completely clean.

³⁰ (14: 29)

³¹ (14: 29)

³² These are the things you must do if you have leprosy and cannot afford the usual sacrifices to make you clean.

³³ The LORD told Moses and Aaron to say to the people:

³⁴ After I have given you the land of Canaan as your permanent possession, here is what you must do, if I ever put mildew on the walls of any of your homes.

³⁵ First, you must say to a priest, I think mildew is on the wall of my house.

³⁶ The priest will reply, Empty the house before I inspect it, or else everything in it will be unclean.

³⁷ If the priest discovers greenish or reddish spots that go deeper than the surface of the walls,

³⁸ he will have the house closed for seven days.

³⁹ Then he will return and check to see if the mildew has spread.

⁴⁰ If so, he will order someone to scrape the plaster from the walls, remove the

filthy stones, then haul everything off and dump it in an unclean place outside the town.

⁴¹ (14: 40)

⁴² Afterwards the wall must be repaired with new stones and fresh plaster.

⁴³ If the mildew appears a second time,

⁴⁴ the priest will come and say, This house is unclean. It's covered with mildew that can't be removed.

⁴⁵ Then he will have the house torn down and every bit of wood, stone, and plaster hauled off to an unclean place outside the town.

⁴⁶ Meanwhile, if any of you entered the house while it was closed, you will be unclean until evening.

⁴⁷ And if you either slept or ate in the house, you must wash your clothes.

⁴⁸ On the other hand, if the priest discovers that mildew hasn't reappeared after the house was newly plastered, he will say, This house is clean the mildew has gone.

⁴⁹ Then, to show that the house is now clean, he will get two birds, a stick of cedar wood, a piece of red yarn, and a

branch from a hyssop plant and bring them to the house.

⁵⁰He will kill one of the birds over a clay pot of spring water

⁵¹and let its blood drain into the pot. Then he will dip the cedar, the hyssop, the yarn, and the other bird into the mixture of blood and water. Next, he will sprinkle the house seven times with the mixture, then the house will be completely clean.

⁵²(14: 51)

⁵³Finally, he will release the bird and let it fly away, ending the ceremony for purifying the house.

⁵⁴These are the things you must do if you discover that you are unclean because of an itch or a sore, or that your clothing or house is unclean because of mildew.

⁵⁵(14: 54)

⁵⁶(14: 54)

⁵⁷(14: 54)

15¹The LORD told Moses and Aaron² to say to the community of Israel: Any man with an infected penis is unclean,

³ whether it is stopped up or keeps dripping.

⁴ Anything that he rests on or sits on is also unclean,

⁵ and if you touch either these or him, you must wash your clothes and take a bath, but you still remain unclean until evening.

⁶ (15: 5)

⁷ (15: 5)

⁸ If you are spat on by the man, you must wash your clothes and take a bath, but you still remain unclean until evening.

⁹ Any saddle or seat on which the man sits is unclean. And if you touch or carry either of these, you must wash your clothes and take a bath, but you still remain unclean until evening.

¹⁰ (15: 9)

¹¹ If the man touches you without first washing his hands, you must wash your clothes and take a bath, but you still remain unclean until evening.

¹² Any clay pot that he touches must be destroyed, and any wooden bowl that he touches must be washed.

¹³Seven days after the man gets well, he will be considered clean, if he washes his clothes and takes a bath in spring water.

¹⁴On the eighth day he must bring either two doves or two pigeons to the front of my sacred tent and give them to a priest.

¹⁵The priest will offer one of the birds as a sacrifice for sin and the other as a sacrifice to please me, then I will consider the man completely clean.

¹⁶Any man who has a flow of semen must take a bath, but he still remains unclean until evening.

¹⁷If the semen touches anything made of cloth or leather, these must be washed, but they still remain unclean until evening.

¹⁸After having sex, both the man and the woman must take a bath, but they still remain unclean until evening.

¹⁹When a woman has her monthly period, she remains unclean for seven days, and if you touch her, you must take a bath, but you remain unclean until evening.

²⁰ Anything that she rests on or sits on is also unclean, and if you touch either of these, you must wash your clothes and take a bath, but you still remain unclean until evening.

²¹ (15: 20)

²² (15: 20)

²³ (15: 20)

²⁴ Any man who has sex with her during this time becomes unclean for seven days, and anything he rests on is also unclean.

²⁵ Any woman who has a flow of blood outside her regular monthly period is unclean until it stops, just as she is during her monthly period.

²⁶ Anything that she rests on or sits on during this time is also unclean, just as it would be during her period.

²⁷ If you touch either of these, you must wash your clothes and take a bath, but you still remain unclean until evening.

²⁸ Seven days after the woman gets well, she will be considered clean.

²⁹ On the eighth day, she must bring either two doves or two pigeons to the front of my sacred tent and give them to a priest.

³⁰He will offer one of the birds as a sacrifice for sin and the other as a sacrifice to please me; then I will consider the woman completely clean.

³¹When any of you are unclean, you must stay away from the rest of the community of Israel. Otherwise, my sacred tent will become unclean, and the whole nation will die.

³²These are the things you men must do if you become unclean because of an infected penis or if you have a flow of semen. And these are the things you women must do when you become unclean either because of your monthly period or an unusual flow of blood. This is also what you men must do if you have sex with a woman who is unclean.

³³(15: 32)

16¹Two of Aaron's sons had already lost their lives for disobeying the LORD, so the LORD told Moses to say to Aaron: I, the LORD, appear in a cloud over the place of mercy on the sacred chest, which is behind the inside curtain of the sacred tent. And I warn you not to go there except at the proper time. Otherwise, you will die!

²(16:1)

³Before entering this most holy place, you must offer a bull as a sacrifice for your sins and a ram as a sacrifice to please me.

⁴You will take a bath and put on the sacred linen clothes, including the underwear, the robe, the sash, and the turban.

⁵Then the community of Israel will bring you a ram and two goats, both of them males. The goats are to be used as sacrifices for sin, and the ram is to be used as a sacrifice to please me.

⁶Aaron, you must offer the bull as a sacrifice of forgiveness for your own sins and for the sins of your family.

⁷Then you will lead the two goats into my presence at the front of the sacred tent,

⁸where I will show you which goat will be sacrificed to me and which one will be sent into the desert to the demon Azazel.

⁹After you offer the first goat as a sacrifice for sin,

¹⁰the other one must be presented to me alive, before you send it into

the desert to take away the sins of the people.

¹¹You must offer the bull as a sacrifice to ask forgiveness for your own sins and for the sins of your family.

¹²Then you will take a fire pan of live coals from the bronze altar, together with two handfuls of finely ground incense, into the most holy place.

¹³There you will present them to me by placing the incense on the coals, so that the place of mercy will be covered with a cloud of smoke. Do this, or you will die there!

¹⁴Next, use a finger to sprinkle some of the blood on the place of mercy, which is on the lid of the sacred chest; then sprinkle blood seven times in front of the chest.

¹⁵Aaron, you must next sacrifice the goat for the sins of the people, and you must sprinkle its blood inside the most holy place, just as you did with the blood of the bull.

¹⁶By doing this, you will take away the sins that make both the most holy place and the people of Israel unclean. Do the

same for the sacred tent, which is here among the people.

¹⁷ Only you are allowed in the sacred tent from the time you enter until the time you come out.

¹⁸ After leaving the tent, you will purify the bronze altar by smearing each of its four corners with some of the blood from the bull and from the goat.

¹⁹ Use a finger to sprinkle the altar seven times with the blood, and it will be completely clean from the sins of the people.

²⁰ After you have purified the most holy place, the sacred tent, and the bronze altar, you must bring the live goat to the front of the tent.

²¹ There you will lay your hands on its head, while confessing every sin the people have committed, and you will appoint someone to lead the goat into the desert, so that it can take away their sins.

²² Finally, this goat that carries the heavy burden of Israel's sins must be released deep in the desert.

²³ Aaron, after this you must go inside the sacred tent, take a bath, put on your

ordinary priestly clothes, and leave there the clothes you put on before entering the most holy place. Then you will come out and offer sacrifices to please me and sacrifices for your sins and for the sins of the people.

²⁴ (16: 23)

²⁵ The fat from these sacrifices for sin must be sent up in smoke on the bronze altar.

²⁶ The one who led the goat into the desert and sent it off to the demon Azazel must take a bath and wash his clothes before coming back into camp.

²⁷ The remains of the bull and the goat whose blood was taken into the most holy place must be taken outside the camp and burnt.

²⁸ And whoever does this must take a bath and change clothes before coming back into camp.

²⁹ The LORD told Moses to say to the people: On the tenth day of the seventh month of each year, you must go without eating to show sorrow for your sins, and no one, including foreigners who live among you, is allowed to work.

³⁰This is the day on which the sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins will be made in my presence,

³¹and from now on, it must be celebrated each year. Go without eating and make this a day of complete rest just like the Sabbath.

³²The high priest must offer the sacrifices for cleansing from sin, while wearing the sacred linen clothes.

³³He will offer these sacrifices for the most holy place, the sacred tent, the bronze altar, all the priests, and for the whole community.

³⁴You must celebrate this day each year it is the Great Day of Forgiveness for all the sins of the people of Israel. Moses did exactly as the LORD had commanded.

17 ¹The LORD told Moses ²to tell Aaron, his sons, and everyone else in Israel:

³Whenever you kill any of your cattle, sheep, or goats as sacrifices to me, you must do it at the entrance to the sacred tent. If you don't, you will be guilty of pouring out blood, and you will no longer belong to the community of Israel.

⁴ (17: 3)

⁵ And so, when you sacrifice an animal to ask my blessing, it must not be done out in a field,

⁶ but in front of the sacred tent. Then a priest can splatter its blood against the bronze altar and send its fat up in smoke with a smell that pleases me.

⁷ Don't ever turn from me again and offer sacrifices to goat-demons. This law will never change.

⁸ Remember! No one in Israel, including foreigners, is to offer a sacrifice anywhere

⁹ except at the entrance to the sacred tent. If you do, you will no longer belong to my people.

¹⁰ The LORD said: I will turn against any of my people who eat blood. This also includes any foreigners living among you.

¹¹ Life is in the blood, and I have given you the blood of animals to sacrifice in place of your own.

¹² That's also why I have forbidden you to eat blood.

¹³Even if you should hunt and kill a bird or an animal, you must drain out the blood and cover it with soil.

¹⁴The life of every living creature is in its blood. That's why I have forbidden you to eat blood and why I have warned you that anyone who does will no longer belong to my people.

¹⁵If you happen to find a dead animal and eat it, you must take a bath and wash your clothes, but you are still unclean until evening.

¹⁶If you don't take a bath, you will suffer for what you did wrong.

18¹The LORD told Moses
²to tell the people of Israel: I am the LORD your God!

³So don't follow the customs of Egypt where you used to live or those of Canaan where I am bringing you.

⁴I am the LORD your God, and you must obey my teachings.

⁵Obey them and you will live. I am the LORD.

⁶Don't have sex with any of your close relatives,

⁷especially your own mother. This would disgrace your father.

⁸And don't disgrace him by having sex with any of his other wives.

⁹Don't have sex with your sister or stepsister, whether you grew up together or not.

¹⁰Don't disgrace yourself by having sex with your granddaughter

¹¹or half sister

¹²or a sister of your father or mother.

¹³(18: 12)

¹⁴Don't disgrace your uncle by having sex with his wife.

¹⁵Don't have sex with your daughter-in-law

¹⁶or sister-in-law.

¹⁷And don't have sex with the daughter or granddaughter of any woman that you have earlier had sex with. You may be having sex with a relative, and that would make you unclean.

¹⁸As long as your wife is alive, don't cause trouble for her by taking one of her sisters as a second wife.

¹⁹When a woman is having her monthly period, she is unclean, so don't have sex with her.

²⁰Don't have sex with another man's wife that would make you unclean.

²¹ Don't sacrifice your children on the altar fires to the god Molech. I am the LORD your God, and that would disgrace me.

²² It is disgusting for a man to have sex with another man.

²³ Anyone who has sex with an animal is unclean.

²⁴ Don't make yourselves unclean by any of these disgusting practices of those nations that I am forcing out of the land for you. They made themselves

²⁵ and the land so unclean, that I punished the land because of their sins, and I made it vomit them up.

²⁶ Now don't do these sickening things that make the land filthy. Instead, obey my laws and teachings.

²⁷ (18: 26)

²⁸ Then the land won't become sick of you and vomit you up, just as it did them.

²⁹ If any of you do these vulgar, disgusting things, you will be unclean and no longer belong to my people. I am the LORD your God, and I forbid you to follow their sickening way of life.

³⁰ (18: 29)

19¹ The LORD told Moses² to say to the community of Israel: I am the LORD your God. I am holy, and you must be holy too!

³ Respect your father and your mother, honour the Sabbath, and don't make idols or images. I am the LORD your God.

⁴ (19: 3)

⁵ When you offer a sacrifice to ask my blessing, be sure to follow my instructions.

⁶ You may eat the meat either on the day of the sacrifice or on the next day, but you must burn anything left until the third day.

⁷ If you eat any of it on the third day, the sacrifice will be disgusting to me, and I will reject it.

⁸ In fact, you will be punished for not respecting what I say is holy, and you will no longer belong to the community of Israel.

⁹ When you harvest your grain, always leave some of it standing along the edges of your fields and don't pick up what falls on the ground.

¹⁰Don't strip your grapevines clean or gather the grapes that fall off the vines. Leave them for the poor and for those foreigners who live among you. I am the LORD your God.

¹¹Do not steal or tell lies or cheat others.

¹²Do not misuse my name by making promises you don't intend to keep. I am the LORD your God.

¹³Do not steal anything or cheat anyone, and don't fail to pay your workers at the end of each day.

¹⁴I am the LORD your God, and I command you not to make fun of the deaf or to cause a blind person to stumble.

¹⁵Be fair, no matter who is on trial don't favour either the poor or the rich.

¹⁶Don't be a gossip, but never hesitate to speak up in court, especially if your testimony can save someone's life.

¹⁷Don't hold grudges. On the other hand, it's wrong not to correct someone who needs correcting.

¹⁸Stop being angry and don't try to take revenge. I am the LORD, and I

command you to love others as much as you love yourself.

¹⁹Breed your livestock animals only with animals of the same kind, and don't plant two kinds of seed in the same field or wear clothes made of different kinds of material.

²⁰If a man has sex with a slave woman who is promised in marriage to someone else, he must pay a fine, but they are not to be put to death. After all, she was still a slave at the time.

²¹The man must bring a ram to the entrance of the sacred tent and give it to a priest, who will then offer it as a sacrifice to me, so the man's sins will be forgiven.

²²(19: 21)

²³After you enter the land, you will plant fruit trees, but you are not to eat any of their fruit for the first three years.

²⁴In the fourth year the fruit must be set apart, as an expression of thanks

²⁵to me, the LORD God. Do this, and in the fifth year, those trees will produce an abundant harvest of fruit for you to eat.

²⁶Don't eat the blood of any animal. Don't practise any kind of witchcraft.

²⁷ I forbid you to shave any part of your head or beard or to cut and tattoo yourself as a way of worshipping the dead.

²⁸ (19:27)

²⁹ Don't let your daughters serve as temple prostitutes this would bring disgrace both to them and the land.

³⁰ I command you to respect the Sabbath and the place where I am worshipped.

³¹ Don't make yourselves disgusting to me by going to people who claim they can talk to the dead.

³² I command you to show respect for older people and to obey me with fear and trembling.

³³ Don't ill-treat any foreigners who live in your land.

³⁴ Instead, treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

³⁵ Use honest scales and don't cheat when you weigh or measure anything. I am the LORD your God. I rescued you from Egypt,

³⁶ (19: 35)

³⁷ and I command you to obey my laws.

20¹ The LORD told Moses
² to say to the community of Israel: Death by stoning is the penalty for any citizens or foreigners in the country who sacrifice their children to the god Molech.

³ They have disgraced both the place where I am worshipped and my holy name, and so I will turn against them and no longer let them belong to my people.

⁴ Some of you may let them get away with human sacrifice,

⁵ but not me. If any of you worship Molech, I will turn against you and your entire family, and I will no longer let you belong to my people.

⁶ I will be your enemy if you go to someone who claims to speak with the dead, and I will destroy you from among my people.

⁷ Dedicate yourselves to me and be holy because I am the LORD your God.

⁸ I have chosen you as my people, and I expect you to obey my laws.

⁹If you curse your father or mother, you will be put to death, and it will be your own fault.

¹⁰If any of you men have sex with another man's wife, both you and the woman will be put to death.

¹¹Having sex with one of your father's wives disgraces him. So both you and the woman will be put to death, just as you deserve.

¹²It isn't natural to have sex with your daughter-in-law, and both of you will be put to death, just as you deserve.

¹³It's disgusting for men to have sex with one another, and those who do will be put to death, just as they deserve.

¹⁴It isn't natural for a man to marry both a mother and her daughter, and so all three of them will be burnt to death.

¹⁵If any of you have sex with an animal, both you and the animal will be put to death, just as you deserve.

¹⁶(20: 15)

¹⁷If you marry one of your sisters, you will be punished, and the two of you will be disgraced by being openly forced out of the community.

¹⁸If you have sex with a woman during her monthly period, both you and the woman will be cut off from the people of Israel.

¹⁹The sisters of your father and mother are your own relatives, and you will be punished for having sex with any of them.

²⁰If you have sex with your uncle's wife, neither you nor she will ever have any children.

²¹And if you marry your sister-in-law, neither of you will ever have any children.

²²Obey my laws and teachings. Or else the land I am giving you will become sick of you and throw you out.

²³The nations I am chasing out did these disgusting things, and I hated them for it, so don't follow their example.

²⁴I am the LORD your God, and I have promised you their land that is rich with milk and honey. I have chosen you to be different from other people.

²⁵That's why you must make a difference between animals and birds that I have said are clean and unclean

this will keep you from becoming disgusting to me.

²⁶I am the LORD, the holy God. You have been chosen to be my people, and so you must be holy too.

²⁷If you claim to receive messages from the dead, you will be put to death by stoning, just as you deserve.

21 ¹The LORD gave Moses these instructions for Aaron's sons, the priests: Touching a dead body will make you unclean. So don't go near a dead relative,

²except your mother, father, son, daughter, brother,

³or an unmarried sister, who has no husband to take care of her.

⁴Don't make yourself unclean by attending the funeral of someone related to you by marriage.

⁵Don't shave any part of your head or trim your beard or cut yourself to show that you are mourning.

⁶I am the LORD your God, and I have chosen you alone to offer sacrifices of food to me on the altar. That's why you must keep yourselves holy.

⁷ Don't marry a divorced woman or a woman who has served as a temple prostitute. You are holy,

⁸ because I am holy. And so, you must be treated with proper respect, since you offer food sacrifices to me, the God of holiness.

⁹ If any of you priests has a daughter who disgraces you by serving as a temple prostitute, she must be burnt to death.

¹⁰ If you are the high priest, you must not leave your hair uncombed or tear your clothes in order to mourn for the dead.

¹¹ Don't make yourself unclean by going near a dead body, not even that of your own father or mother.

¹² If you leave the sacred place to attend a funeral, both you and the sacred place become unclean, because you are the high priest.

¹³ If you are the high priest, you must marry only a virgin

¹⁴ from your own tribe. Don't marry a divorced woman or any other woman who has already had sex, including a temple prostitute.

¹⁵In this way, your descendants will be qualified to serve me. Remember! I am the LORD, and I have chosen you.

¹⁶The LORD told Moses

¹⁷to say to Aaron: No descendant of yours can ever serve as my priest if he is blind or lame, if his face is disfigured, if one leg is shorter than the other,

¹⁸(21: 17)

¹⁹if either a foot or a hand is crippled,

²⁰if he is a hunchback or a dwarf, if an eye or his skin is diseased, or if his testicles have been damaged.

²¹These men may not serve as my priests and burn sacrifices to me.

²²They may eat the food offerings presented to me,

²³but they may not enter the sacred place or serve me at the altar. Remember! I am the LORD, the one who makes a priest holy.

²⁴Moses told all this to Aaron, his sons, and the people of Israel.

22¹The LORD told Moses

²to say to Aaron and his sons: I am the LORD God, and I demand that you honour my holy name by showing

proper respect for the offerings brought to me by the people of Israel.

³If any of you are unclean when you accept an offering for me, I will no longer let you serve as a priest.

⁴None of you may take part in the sacred meals while you have a skin disease or an infected penis, or after you have been near a dead body or have had a flow of semen,

⁵or if you have touched an unclean creature of any sort, including an unclean person.

⁶Once you are unclean, you must take a bath, but you still cannot eat any of the sacred food until evening.

⁷ (22: 6)

⁸I command you not to eat anything that is killed by a wild animal or dies a natural death. This would make you unclean.

⁹Obey me, or you will die on duty for disgracing the place of worship. Remember! I am the LORD, the one who makes a priest holy.

¹⁰Only you priests and your families may eat the food offerings; these are too sacred for any of your servants.

¹¹ However, any slave that you own, including those born into your household, may eat this food.

¹² If your daughter marries someone who isn't a priest, she can no longer have any of this food.

¹³ But if she returns to your home, either widowed or divorced, and has no children, she may join in the meal. Only members of a priestly family can eat this food,

¹⁴ and anyone else who accidentally does so, must pay for the food plus a fine of twenty per cent.

¹⁵ I warn you not to treat lightly the offerings that are brought by the people of Israel.

¹⁶ Don't let them become guilty of eating this sacred food. Remember I am the LORD, the one who makes these offerings holy.

¹⁷ The LORD told Moses

¹⁸ to tell Aaron and his sons and everyone else the rules for offering sacrifices. He said: The animals that are to be completely burnt on the altar

¹⁹ must have nothing wrong with them, or else I won't accept them. Bulls or

rams or goats are the animals to be used for these sacrifices.

²⁰ (22:19)

²¹ When you offer a sacrifice to ask my blessing, there must be nothing wrong with the animal. This is true, whether the sacrifice is part of a promise or something you do voluntarily.

²² Don't offer an animal that is blind or injured or that has an infection or a skin disease.

²³ If one of your cattle or lambs has a leg that is longer or shorter than the others, you may offer it voluntarily, but not as part of a promise.

²⁴ As long as you live in this land, don't offer an animal with injured testicles.

²⁵ And don't bring me animals you bought from a foreigner. I won't accept them, because they are no better than one that has something wrong with it.

²⁶ The LORD told Moses to say:

²⁷ Newborn cattle, sheep, or goats must remain with their mothers for seven days, but on the eighth day, you may send them up in smoke to me, and I will accept the offering.

²⁸ Don't sacrifice a newborn animal and its mother on the same day.

²⁹ When you offer a sacrifice to give thanks to me, you must do it in a way that is acceptable.

³⁰ Eat all the meat that same day and don't save any for the next day. I am the LORD your God!

³¹ Obey my laws and teachings! I am the LORD.

³² I demand respect from the people of Israel, so don't disgrace my holy name. Remember! I am the one who chose you to be priests and rescued all of you from Egypt, so that I would be your LORD.

³³ (22: 32)

23 ¹ The LORD told Moses ² to say to the community of Israel: I have chosen certain times for you to come together and worship me.

³ You have six days when you can do your work, but the seventh day of each week is holy because it belongs to me. No matter where you live, you must rest on the Sabbath and come together for worship. This law will never change.

⁴ The LORD said: Passover is another time when you must come together to

worship me, and it must be celebrated on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month of each year.

⁵ (23: 4)

⁶The Festival of Thin Bread begins on the fifteenth day of that same month; it lasts seven days, and during this time you must honour me by eating bread made without yeast.

⁷On the first day of this festival you must rest from your work and come together for worship.

⁸Each day of this festival you must offer sacrifices. Then on the final day you must once again rest from your work and come together for worship.

⁹The LORD told Moses

¹⁰to say to the community of Israel: After you enter the land I am giving you, the first bundle of wheat from each crop must be given to me. So bring it to a priest

¹¹on the day after the Sabbath. He will lift it up in dedication to me, and I will accept you.

¹²You must also offer a sacrifice to please me. So bring the priest a

one-year-old lamb that has nothing wrong with it

¹³and two kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil. Then he will place these on the bronze altar and send them up in smoke with a smell that pleases me. Together with these, you must bring a litre of wine as a drink offering.

¹⁴I am your God, and I forbid you to eat any new grain or anything made from it until you have brought these offerings. This law will never change.

¹⁵The LORD said: Seven weeks after you offer this bundle of grain, each family must bring another offering of new grain.

¹⁶Do this exactly fifty days later, which is the day following the seventh Sabbath.

¹⁷Bring two loaves of bread to be lifted up in dedication to me. Each loaf is to be made with yeast and with two kilogrammes of the finest flour from the first part of your harvest.

¹⁸At this same time, the entire community of Israel must bring seven lambs that are a year old, a young bull, and two rams. These animals must have

nothing wrong with them, and they must be offered as a sacrifice to please me. You must also offer the proper grain and wine sacrifices with each animal.

¹⁹ Offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin, and two rams a year old as a sacrifice to ask my blessing.

²⁰ The priest will lift up the rams together with the bread in dedication to me. These offerings are holy and are my gift to the priest.

²¹ This is a day of celebration and worship, a time of rest from your work. You and your descendants must obey this law.

²² When you harvest your grain, always leave some of it standing around the edges of your fields and don't pick up what falls on the ground. Leave it for the poor and for those foreigners who live among you. I am the LORD your God!

²³ The LORD told Moses

²⁴ to say to the people of Israel: The first day of the seventh month must be a day of complete rest. Then at the sound of the trumpets, you will come together to worship and to offer sacrifices on the altar.

²⁵ (23: 24)

²⁶ The LORD God said to Moses:

²⁷ The tenth day of the seventh month is the Great Day of Forgiveness. It is a solemn day of worship; everyone must go without eating to show sorrow for their sins, and sacrifices must be burnt.

²⁸ No one is to work on that day it is the Great Day of Forgiveness, when sacrifices will be offered to me, so that I will forgive your sins.

²⁹ I will destroy anyone who refuses to go without eating.

³⁰ None of my people are ever to do any work on that day not now or in the future. And I will wipe out those who do!

³¹ (23: 30)

³² This is a time of complete rest just like the Sabbath, and everyone must go without eating from the evening of the ninth to the evening of the tenth.

³³ The LORD told Moses

³⁴ to say to the community of Israel: Beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and continuing for seven days, everyone must celebrate the Festival of Shelters in honour of me.

³⁵No one is to do any work on the first day of the festival it is a time when everyone must come together for worship.

³⁶For seven days, sacrifices must be offered on the altar. The eighth day is also to be a day of complete rest, as well as a time of offering sacrifices on the altar and of coming together for worship.

³⁷I have chosen these festivals as times when my people must come together for worship and when animals, grain, and wine are to be offered on the proper days.

³⁸These festivals must be celebrated in addition to the Sabbaths and the times when you offer special gifts or sacrifices to keep a promise or as a voluntary offering.

³⁹Remember to begin the Festival of Shelters on the fifteenth day of the seventh month after you have harvested your crops. Celebrate this festival for seven days in honour of me and don't do any work on the first day or on the day following the festival.

⁴⁰Pick the best fruit from your trees and cut leafy branches to use during the

time of this joyous celebration in my honour.

⁴¹ I command you and all your descendants to celebrate this festival during the seventh month of each year.

⁴² For seven days every Israelite must live in a shelter,

⁴³ so future generations will know that I made their ancestors live in shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

⁴⁴ This is how Moses instructed the people of Israel to celebrate the LORD's festivals.

24 ¹ The LORD told Moses ² to say to the community of Israel: You must supply the purest olive oil for the lamps in the sacred tent, so they will keep burning.

³ Aaron will set up the gold lampstand in the holy place of the sacred tent. Then he will light the seven lamps that must be kept burning there in my presence, every night from now on. This law will never change.

⁴ (24: 3)

⁵The LORD said: Use your finest flour to bake twelve loaves of bread about two kilogrammes each,

⁶then take them into the sacred tent and lay them on the gold table in two rows of six loaves.

⁷Beside each row put some pure incense that will be sent up by fire in place of the bread as an offering to me.

⁸Aaron must lay fresh loaves on the table each Sabbath, and priests in all generations must continue this practice as part of Israel's agreement with me.

⁹This bread will always belong to Aaron and his family; it is very holy because it was offered to me, and it must be eaten in a holy place.

¹⁰Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri from the tribe of Dan, had married an Egyptian, and they had a son. One day their son got into a fight with an Israelite man in camp and cursed the name of the LORD. So the young man was dragged off to Moses,

¹¹ (24: 10)

¹²who had him guarded while everyone waited for the LORD to tell them what to do.

¹³ Finally, the LORD said to Moses:

¹⁴ This man has cursed me! Take him outside the camp and make the witnesses lay their hands on his head. Then command the whole community of Israel to stone him to death.

¹⁵ And warn the others that everyone else who curses me will die in the same way, whether they are Israelites by birth or foreigners living among you.

¹⁶ (24: 15)

¹⁷ Death is also the penalty for murder,

¹⁸ but the killing of an animal that belongs to someone else requires only that the animal be replaced.

¹⁹ Personal injuries to others must be dealt with in keeping with the crime

²⁰ a broken bone for a broken bone, an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth.

²¹ It's possible to pay the owner for an animal that has been killed, but death is the penalty for murder.

²² I am the LORD your God, and I demand equal justice both for you Israelites and for those foreigners who live among you.

²³ When Moses finished speaking, the people did what the LORD had told

Moses, and they stoned to death the man who had cursed the LORD.

25¹ When Moses was on Mount Sinai, the LORD told him

² to say to the community of Israel: After you enter the land that I am giving you, it must be allowed to rest one year out of every seven.

³ You may raise grain and grapes for six years,

⁴ but the seventh year you must let your fields and vineyards rest in honour of me, your LORD.

⁵ This is to be a time of complete rest for your fields and vineyards, so don't harvest anything they produce.

⁶ However, you and your slaves and your hired workers, as well as any domestic or wild animals, may eat whatever grows on its own.

⁷ (25: 6)

⁸ The LORD said to his people: Once every forty-nine years

⁹ on the tenth day of the seventh month, which is also the Great Day of Forgiveness, trumpets are to be blown everywhere in the land.

¹⁰This fiftieth year is sacred it is a time of freedom and of celebration when everyone will receive back their original property, and slaves will return home to their families.

¹¹This is a year of complete celebration, so don't plant any seed or harvest what your fields or vineyards produce.

¹²In this time of sacred celebration you may eat only what grows on its own.

¹³During this year, all property must go back to its original owner.

¹⁴So when you buy or sell farmland, the price is to be determined by the number of crops it can produce before the next Year of Celebration. Don't try to cheat.

¹⁵(25: 14)

¹⁶If it is a long time before the next Year of Celebration, the price will be higher, because what is really being sold are the crops that the land can produce.

¹⁷I am the LORD your God, so obey me and don't cheat anyone.

¹⁸If you obey my laws and teachings, you will live safely in the land and enjoy its abundant crops.

¹⁹(25: 18)

²⁰ Don't ever worry about what you will eat during the seventh year when you are forbidden to plant or harvest.

²¹ I will see to it that you harvest enough in the sixth year to last for three years.

²² In the eighth year you will live on what you harvested in the sixth year, but in the ninth year you will eat what you plant and harvest in the eighth year.

²³ No land may be permanently bought or sold. It all belongs to me; it isn't your land, and you only live there for a little while.

²⁴ When property is being sold, the original owner must be given the first chance to buy it.

²⁵ If any of you Israelites become so poor that you are forced to sell your property, your closest relative must buy it back,

²⁶ if that relative has the money. Later, if you can afford to buy it,

²⁷ you must pay enough to make up for what the present owner will lose on it before the next Year of Celebration, when the property would become yours again.

²⁸ But if you don't have the money to pay the present owner a fair price, you will have to wait until the Year of Celebration, when the property will once again become yours.

²⁹ If you sell a house in a walled city, you have only one year in which to buy it back.

³⁰ If you don't buy it back before that year is up, it becomes the permanent property of the one who bought it, and it will not be returned to you in the Year of Celebration.

³¹ But a house out in a village may be bought back at any time just like a field. And it must be returned to its original owner in the Year of Celebration.

³² If any Levites own houses inside a walled city, they will always have the right to buy them back.

³³ And any houses that they do not buy back will be returned to them in the Year of Celebration, because these homes are their permanent property among the people of Israel.

³⁴ No pasture land owned by the Levi tribe can ever be sold; it is their permanent possession.

³⁵The LORD said: If any of your people become poor and unable to support themselves, you must help them, just as you are supposed to help foreigners who live among you.

³⁶Don't take advantage of them by charging any kind of interest or selling them food for profit. Instead, honour me by letting them stay where they now live.

³⁷ (25: 36)

³⁸Remember! I am the LORD your God! I rescued you from Egypt and gave you the land of Canaan, so that I would be your God.

³⁹Suppose some of your people become so poor that they have to sell themselves and become your slaves.

⁴⁰Then you must treat them as servants, rather than as slaves. And in the Year of Celebration they are to be set free,

⁴¹so they and their children may return home to their families and property.

⁴²I brought them out of Egypt to be my servants, not to be sold as slaves.

⁴³So obey me, and don't be cruel to the poor.

⁴⁴ If you want slaves, buy them from other nations

⁴⁵ or from the foreigners who live in your own country, and make them your property.

⁴⁶ You can own them, and even leave them to your children when you die, but do not make slaves of your own people or be cruel to them.

⁴⁷ Even if some of you Israelites become so much in debt that you must sell yourselves to foreigners in your country,

⁴⁸ you still have the right to be set free by a relative, such as a brother

⁴⁹ or uncle or cousin, or some other family member. In fact, if you ever get enough money, you may buy your own freedom

⁵⁰ by paying your owner for the number of years you would still be a slave before the next Year of Celebration.

⁵¹ The longer the time until then, the more you will have to pay.

⁵² (25: 51)

⁵³ And even while you are the slaves of foreigners in your own country, your people must make sure that you are not ill-treated.

⁵⁴ If you cannot gain your freedom in any of these ways, both you and your children will still be set free in the Year of Celebration.

⁵⁵ People of Israel, I am the LORD your God, and I brought you out of Egypt to be my own servants.

26 ¹ The LORD said: I am the LORD your God! So don't make or worship any sort of idols or images.

² Respect the Sabbath and honour the place where I am worshipped, because I am the LORD.

³ Faithfully obey my laws,

⁴ and I will send rain to make your crops grow and your trees produce fruit.

⁵ Your harvest of grain and grapes will be so abundant, that you won't know what to do with it all. You will eat and be satisfied, and you will live in safety.

⁶ I will bless your country with peace, and you will rest without fear. I will wipe out the dangerous animals and protect you from enemy attacks.

⁷ You will chase and destroy your enemies,

⁸even if there are only five of you and a hundred of them, or only a hundred of you and ten thousand of them.

⁹I will treat you with such kindness that your nation will grow strong, and I will also keep my promises to you.

¹⁰Your barns will overflow with grain each year.

¹¹I will live among you and never again look on you with disgust.

¹²I will walk with you; I will be your God, and you will be my people.

¹³I am the LORD your God, and I rescued you from Egypt, so that you would never again be slaves. I have set you free; now walk with your heads held high.

¹⁴The LORD said: If you disobey me and my laws, and if you break our agreement,

¹⁵(26:14)

¹⁶I will punish you terribly, and you will be ruined. You will be struck with incurable diseases and with fever that leads to blindness and depression. Your enemies will eat the crops you plant,

¹⁷ and I will turn from you and let you be destroyed by your attackers. You will even run at the very rumour of attack.

¹⁸ Then, if you still refuse to obey me, I will punish you seven times for each of your sins,

¹⁹ until your pride is completely crushed. I will hold back the rain, so the sky above you will be like iron, and the ground beneath your feet will be like copper.

²⁰ All your hard work will be for nothing and there will be no harvest of grain or fruit.

²¹ If you keep rebelling against me, I'll punish you seven times worse, just as your sins deserve!

²² I'll send wild animals to attack you, and they will gobble up your children and livestock. So few of you will be left that your roads will be deserted.

²³ If you remain my enemies after this,

²⁴ I'll remain your enemy and punish you even worse.

²⁵ War will break out because you broke our agreement, and if you escape to your walled cities, I'll punish you with horrible

diseases, and you will be captured by your enemies.

²⁶You will have such a shortage of bread, that ten women will be able to bake their bread in the same oven. Each of you will get only a few crumbs, and you will go hungry.

²⁷Then if you don't stop rebelling,

²⁸I'll really get furious and punish you terribly for your sins!

²⁹In fact, you will be so desperate for food that you will eat your own children.

³⁰I'll destroy your shrines and tear down your incense altars, leaving your dead bodies piled on top of your idols. And you will be disgusting to me.

³¹I'll wipe out your towns and your places of worship and will no longer be pleased with the smell of your sacrifices.

³²Your land will become so desolate that even your enemies who settle there will be shocked when they see it.

³³After I destroy your towns and ruin your land with war, I'll scatter you among the nations.

³⁴While you are prisoners in foreign lands, your own land will enjoy years of rest and refreshment, as it should have

done each seventh year when you lived there.

³⁵ (26: 34)

³⁶ In the land of your enemies, you will tremble at the rustle of a leaf, as though it were a sword. And you will become so weak that you will stumble and fall over each other, even when no one is chasing you.

³⁷ (26: 36)

³⁸ Many of you will die in foreign lands,
³⁹ and others of you will waste away in sorrow as the result of your sins and the sins of your ancestors.

⁴⁰ Then suppose you realize that I turned against you and brought you to the land of your enemies because both you and your ancestors had stubbornly sinned against me. If you humbly confess what you have done and start living right,

⁴¹ (26: 40)

⁴² I'll keep the promise I made to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will bless your land

⁴³ and let it rest during the time that you are in a foreign country, paying for your rebellion against me and my laws.

⁴⁴No matter what you have done, I am still the LORD your God, and I will never completely reject you or become absolutely disgusted with you there in the land of your enemies.

⁴⁵While nations watched, I rescued your ancestors from Egypt so that I would be their God. Yes, I am your LORD, and I will never forget our agreement.

⁴⁶Moses was on Mount Sinai when the LORD gave him these laws and teachings for the people of Israel.

27 ¹The LORD told Moses ²to say to the community of Israel: If you ever want to free someone who has been promised to me,

³you may do so by paying the following amounts, weighed according to the official standards: fifty pieces of silver for men aged twenty to sixty, and thirty pieces for women; twenty pieces of silver for young men aged five to twenty, and ten pieces for young women; fifteen pieces of silver for men aged sixty and above and ten pieces for women; five pieces of silver for boys aged one month to five years, and three pieces for girls.

⁴(27: 3)

⁵ (27: 3)

⁶ (27: 3)

⁷ (27: 3)

⁸ If you have promised to give someone to me and can't afford to pay the full amount for that person's release, you will be taken to a priest, and he will decide how much you can afford.

⁹ If you promise to sacrifice an animal to me, it becomes holy, and there is no way you can set it free.

¹⁰ If you try to substitute any other animal, no matter how good, for the one you promised, they will both become holy and must be sacrificed.

¹¹ Donkeys are unfit for sacrifice, so if you promise me a donkey, you must bring it to the priest,

¹² and let him determine its value.

¹³ But if you want to buy it back, you must pay an additional twenty per cent.

¹⁴ If you promise a house to me, a priest will set the price, whatever the condition of the house.

¹⁵ But if you decide to buy it back, you must pay an additional twenty per cent.

¹⁶ If you promise part of your family's land to me, its value must be determined

by the amount of seed needed to plant the land, and the rate will be ten pieces of silver for every twenty kilogrammes of seed.

¹⁷If this promise is made in the Year of Celebration, the land will be valued at the full price.

¹⁸But any time after that, the price will be worked out according to the number of years before the next Year of Celebration.

¹⁹If you decide to buy back the land, you must pay the price plus an additional twenty per cent,

²⁰but you cannot buy it back once someone else has bought it.

²¹When the Year of Celebration comes, the land becomes holy because it belongs to me, and it will be given to the priests.

²²If you promise me a field that you have bought,

²³its value will be decided by a priest, according to the number of years before the next Year of Celebration, and the money you pay will be mine.

²⁴ However, on the next Year of Celebration, the land will go back to the family of its original owner.

²⁵ Every price will be set by the official standards.

²⁶ The LORD said: All firstborn animals of your flocks and herds are already mine, and so you cannot promise any of them to me.

²⁷ If you promise me a donkey, you may buy it back by adding an additional twenty per cent to its value. If you don't buy it back, it can be sold to someone else for whatever a priest has said it is worth.

²⁸ Anything that you completely dedicate to me must be completely destroyed. It cannot be bought back or sold. Every person, animal, and piece of property that you dedicate completely is only for me.

²⁹ In fact, any humans who have been promised to me in this way must be put to death.

³⁰ Ten per cent of everything you harvest is holy and belongs to me, whether it grows in your fields or on your fruit trees.

³¹ If you want to buy back this part of your harvest, you may do so by paying what it is worth plus an additional twenty per cent.

³² When you count your flocks and herds, one out of ten of every newborn animal is holy and belongs to me,

³³ no matter how good or bad it is. If you substitute one animal for another, both of them become holy, and neither can be bought back.

³⁴ Moses was on Mount Sinai when the LORD gave him these laws for the people of Israel.

Numbers

1 ¹ The people of Israel had left Egypt and were living in the Sinai Desert. Then on the first day of the second month of the second year, Moses was in the sacred tent when the LORD said:

² I want you and Aaron to find out how many people are in each of Israel's clans and families. And make a list of all the men twenty years and older who are able to fight in battle.

³ (1: 2)

⁴ The following twelve family leaders, one from each tribe, will help you: Elizur son of Shedeur from Reuben, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai from Simeon, Nahshon son of Amminadab from Judah, Nethanel son of Zuar from Issachar, Eliab son of Helon from Zebulun, Elishama son of Ammihud from Ephraim, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur from Manasseh, Abidan son of Gideoni from Benjamin, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai from Dan, Pagiel son of Ochrán from Asher, Eliasaph son of

Deuel from Gad, and Ahira son of Enan from Naphtali.

⁵ (1: 4)

⁶ (1: 4)

⁷ (1: 4)

⁸ (1: 4)

⁹ (1: 4)

¹⁰ (1: 4)

¹¹ (1: 4)

¹² (1: 4)

¹³ (1: 4)

¹⁴ (1: 4)

¹⁵ (1: 4)

¹⁶ Moses and Aaron, together with these twelve tribal leaders,

¹⁷ (1: 16)

¹⁸ called together the people that same day. They were counted according to their clans and families. Then Moses and the others listed the names of the men twenty years and older,

¹⁹ just as the LORD had commanded.

²⁰ The number of men from each tribe who were at least twenty years old and strong enough to fight in Israel's army was as follows: 46,500 from Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob, 59,300 from Simeon, 45,650 from Gad, 74,600 from

Judah, 54,400 from Issachar, 57,400 from Zebulun, 40,500 from Ephraim, 32,200 from Manasseh, 35,400 from Benjamin, 62,700 from Dan, 41,500 from Asher, 53,400 from Naphtali. The total number of men registered by Moses, Aaron, and the twelve leaders was 603,550.

21 (1: 20)

22 (1: 20)

23 (1: 20)

24 (1: 20)

25 (1: 20)

26 (1: 20)

27 (1: 20)

28 (1: 20)

29 (1: 20)

30 (1: 20)

31 (1: 20)

32 (1: 20)

33 (1: 20)

34 (1: 20)

35 (1: 20)

36 (1: 20)

37 (1: 20)

38 (1: 20)

39 (1: 20)

40 (1: 20)

41 (1: 20)

42 (1: 20)

43 (1: 20)

44 (1: 20)

45 (1: 20)

46 (1: 20)

47 But those from the Levi tribe were not included

48 because the LORD had said to Moses:

49 When you count the Israelites, do not include those from the Levi tribe.

50 Instead, give them the job of caring for the sacred tent, its furnishings, and the objects used for worship. They will camp around the tent, and whenever you move, they will take it down, carry it to the new camp, and set it up again. Anyone else who tries to go near it must be put to death.

51 (1: 50)

52 The rest of the Israelites will camp in their own groups and under their own banners.

53 But the Levites will camp around the sacred tent to make sure that no one goes near it and makes me furious with the Israelites.

⁵⁴ The people of Israel did everything the LORD had commanded.

2¹ The LORD told Moses and Aaron ² how the Israelites should arrange their camp: Each tribe must set up camp under its own banner and under the flags of its ancestral families. These camps will be arranged around the sacred tent, but not close to it.

³ Judah and the tribes that march with it must set up camp on the east side of the sacred tent, under their own banner. The 74,600 troops of the tribe of Judah will be arranged by divisions and led by Nahshon son of Amminadab.

⁴ (2: 3)

⁵ On one side of Judah will be the tribe of Issachar, with Nethanel son of Zuar as the leader of its 54,400 troops.

⁶ (2: 5)

⁷ On the other side will be the tribe of Zebulun, with Eliab son of Helon as the leader of its 57,400 troops.

⁸ (2: 7)

⁹ These 186,400 troops will march into battle first.

¹⁰ Reuben and the tribes that march with it must set up camp on the south

side of the sacred tent, under their own banner. The 46,500 troops of the tribe of Reuben will be arranged by divisions and led by Elizur son of Shedeur.

¹¹ (2: 10)

¹² On one side of Reuben will be the tribe of Simeon, with Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai as the leader of its 59,300 troops.

¹³ (2: 12)

¹⁴ On the other side will be the tribe of Gad, with Eliasaph son of Deuel as the leader of its 45,650 troops.

¹⁵ (2: 14)

¹⁶ These 151,450 troops will march into battle second.

¹⁷ Marching behind Reuben will be the Levites, arranged in groups, just as they are camped. They will carry the sacred tent and their own banners.

¹⁸ Ephraim and the tribes that march with it must set up camp on the west side of the sacred tent, under their own banner. The 40,500 troops of the tribe of Ephraim will be arranged by divisions and led by Elishama son of Ammihud.

¹⁹ (2: 18)

²⁰ On one side of Ephraim will be the tribe of Manasseh, with Gamaliel son of Pedahzur as the leader of its 32,200 troops.

²¹ (2: 20)

²² On the other side will be the tribe of Benjamin, with Abidan son of Gideoni as the leader of its 35,400 troops.

²³ (2: 22)

²⁴ These 108,100 troops will march into battle third.

²⁵ Dan and the tribes that march with it must set up camp on the north side of the sacred tent, under their own banner. The 62,700 troops of the tribe of Dan will be arranged by divisions and led by Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

²⁶ (2: 25)

²⁷ On one side of Dan will be the tribe of Asher, with Pagiel son of Ocran as the leader of its 41,500 troops.

²⁸ (2: 27)

²⁹ On the other side will be the tribe of Naphtali with Ahira son of Enan as the leader of its 53,400 troops.

³⁰ (2: 29)

³¹ These 157,600 troops will march into battle last.

³² So all the Israelites in the camp were counted according to their ancestral families. The troops were arranged by divisions and totalled 603,550.

³³ The only Israelites not included were the Levites, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁴ Israel did everything the LORD had told Moses. They arranged their camp according to clans and families, with each tribe under its own banner. And that was the order by which they marched into battle.

3¹ When the LORD talked with Moses on Mount Sinai,

² Aaron's four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar,

³ were the ones to be ordained as priests.

⁴ But the LORD killed Nadab and Abihu in the Sinai Desert when they used fire that was unacceptable in their offering to the LORD. And because Nadab and Abihu had no sons, only Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests with their father Aaron.

⁵ The LORD said to Moses:

⁶ Assign the Levi tribe to Aaron the priest. They will be his assistants

⁷ and will work at the sacred tent for him and for all the Israelites.

⁸ The Levites will serve the community by being responsible for the furnishings of the tent.

⁹ They are assigned to help Aaron and his sons,

¹⁰ who have been appointed to be priests. Anyone else who tries to perform the duties of a priest must be put to death.

¹¹ Moses, I have chosen these Levites from all Israel, and they will belong to me in a special way. When I killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, I decided that the firstborn sons in every Israelite family and the firstborn males of their flocks and herds would be mine. But now I accept these Levites in place of the firstborn sons of the Israelites.

¹² (3: 11)

¹³ (3: 11)

¹⁴ In the Sinai Desert the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁵ Now I want you to count the men and boys in the Levi tribe by families and by clans. Include every one at least a month old.

¹⁶So Moses obeyed and counted them.

¹⁷Levi's three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, had become the heads of their own clans.

¹⁸Gershon's sons were Libni and Shimei.

¹⁹Kohath's sons were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

²⁰And Merari's sons were Mahli and Mushi. These were the sons and grandsons of Levi, and they had become the leaders of the Levite clans.

²¹The two Gershon clans were the Libnites and Shimeites,

²²and they had seven thousand five hundred men and boys at least one month old.

²³The Gershonites were to camp on the west side of the sacred tent,

²⁴under the leadership of Eliasaph son of Lael.

²⁵Their duties at the tent included taking care of the tent itself, along with its outer covering, the curtain for the entrance,

²⁶the curtains hanging inside the courtyard around the tent, as well as the curtain and ropes for the entrance to the

courtyard and its altar. The Gershonites were responsible for setting these things up and taking them down.

²⁷The four Kohath clans were the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites, and the Uzzielites,

²⁸and they had eight thousand six hundred men and boys at least one month old.

²⁹The Kohathites were to camp on the south side of the sacred tent,

³⁰under the leadership of Elizaphan son of Uzziel.

³¹Their duties at the tent included taking care of the sacred chest, the table for the sacred bread, the lampstand, the altars, the objects used for worship, and the curtain in front of the most holy place. The Kohathites were responsible for setting these things up and taking them down.

³²Eleazar son of Aaron was the head of the Levite leaders, and he made sure that the work at the sacred tent was done.

³³The two Merari clans were the Mahlites and the Mushites,

³⁴ and they had six thousand two hundred men and boys at least one month old.

³⁵ The Merarites were to camp on the north side of the sacred tent, under the leadership of Zuriel son of Abihail.

³⁶ Their duties included taking care of the tent frames and the pieces that held the tent up: the bars, the posts, the stands, and its other equipment. They were also in charge of the posts that supported the courtyard, as well as their stands, tent pegs, and ropes. The Merari clans were responsible for setting these things up and taking them down.

³⁷ (3: 36)

³⁸ Moses, Aaron, and his sons were to camp in front of the sacred tent, on the east side, and to make sure that the Israelites worshipped in the proper way. Anyone else who tried to do the work of Moses and Aaron was to be put to death.

³⁹ So Moses and Aaron obeyed the LORD and counted the Levites by their clans. The total number of Levites at least one month old was twenty-two thousand.

⁴⁰The LORD said to Moses, Make a list and count the firstborn sons at least one month old in each of the Israelite families.

⁴¹They belong to me, but I will accept the Levites as substitutes for them, and I will accept the Levites' livestock as substitutes for the Israelites' firstborn livestock.

⁴²Moses obeyed the LORD and counted the firstborn sons;

⁴³there were 22,273 of them.

⁴⁴Then the LORD said,

⁴⁵The Levites will belong to me and will take the place of the firstborn sons; their livestock will take the place of the Israelites' firstborn livestock.

⁴⁶But since there are more firstborn sons than Levites, the extra two hundred and seventy-three men and boys must be bought back from me.

⁴⁷For each one, you are to collect five pieces of silver, weighed according to the official standards.

⁴⁸This money must then be given to Aaron and his sons.

⁴⁹ Moses collected the silver from the extra two hundred and seventy-three firstborn men and boys,

⁵⁰ and it amounted to one thousand three hundred and sixty-five pieces of silver, weighed according to the official standards.

⁵¹ Then he gave it to Aaron and his sons, just as the LORD had commanded.

4 ¹ The LORD told Moses and Aaron:
² Find out how many men between the ages of thirty and fifty are in the four Levite clans of Kohath. Count only those who are able to work at the sacred tent.

³ (4: 2)

⁴ The Kohathites will be responsible for carrying the sacred objects used in worship at the sacred tent.

⁵ When the Israelites are ready to move their camp, Aaron and his sons will enter the tent and take down the curtain that separates the sacred chest from the rest of the tent. They will cover the chest with this curtain,

⁶ and then with a piece of fine leather, and cover it all with a solid blue cloth. After this they will put the carrying poles in place.

⁷Next, Aaron and his sons will use another blue cloth to cover the table for the sacred bread. On the cloth they will place the dishes, the bowls for incense, the cups, the jugs for wine, as well as the bread itself.

⁸They are to cover all of this with a bright red cloth, and then with a piece of fine leather, before putting the carrying poles in place.

⁹With another blue cloth they will cover the lampstand, along with the lamps, the lamp snuffers, the fire pans, and the jars of oil for the lamps.

¹⁰All of this will then be covered with a piece of fine leather and placed on a carrying frame.

¹¹The gold incense altar is to be covered with a blue cloth, and then with a piece of fine leather, before its carrying poles are put in place.

¹²Next, Aaron and his sons will take blue cloth and wrap all the objects used in worship at the sacred tent. These will need to be covered with a piece of fine leather, then placed on a carrying frame.

¹³They are to remove the ashes from the bronze altar and cover it with a purple cloth.

¹⁴On that cloth will be placed the utensils used at the altar, including the fire pans, the meat forks, the shovels, and the sprinkling bowls. All of this will then be covered with a piece of fine leather, before the carrying poles are put in place.

¹⁵When the camp is ready to be moved, the Kohathites will be responsible for carrying the sacred objects and the furnishings of the sacred tent. But Aaron and his sons must have already covered those things so the Kohathites won't touch them and die.

¹⁶Eleazar son of Aaron the priest will be in charge of the oil for the lamps, the sweet-smelling incense, the grain for the sacrifices, and the olive oil used for dedications and ordinations. Eleazar is responsible for seeing that the sacred tent, its furnishings, and the sacred objects are taken care of.

¹⁷The Kohathites must not go near or even look at the sacred objects until Aaron and his sons have covered those

objects. If they do, their entire clan will be wiped out. So make sure that Aaron and his sons go into the tent with them and tell them what to carry.

¹⁸ (4: 17)

¹⁹ (4: 17)

²⁰ (4: 17)

²¹ The LORD said to Moses:

²² Find out how many men between the ages of thirty and fifty are in the two Levite clans of Gershon. Count only those who are able to work at the sacred tent.

²³ (4: 22)

²⁴ The Gershonites will be responsible

²⁵ for carrying the curtains of the sacred tent, its two outer coverings, the curtain for the entrance to the tent,

²⁶ the curtains hanging around the courtyard of the tent, and the curtain and ropes for the entrance to the courtyard. The Gershonites are to do whatever needs to be done to take care of these things,

²⁷ and they will carry them wherever Aaron and his sons tell them to.

²⁸ These are the duties of the Gershonites at the sacred tent, and

Ithamar son of Aaron will make sure they do their work.

²⁹The LORD said: Moses, find out how many men between thirty and fifty are in the two Levite clans of Merari, but count only those who are able to work at the sacred tent.

³⁰ (4: 29)

³¹ The Merarites will be responsible for carrying the frames of the tent and its other pieces, including the bars, the posts, the stands,

³² as well as the posts that support the courtyard, together with their stands, tent pegs, and ropes. The Merarites are to be told exactly what objects they are to carry,

³³ and Ithamar son of Aaron will make sure they do their work.

³⁴ Moses, Aaron, and the other Israelite leaders obeyed the LORD and counted the Levi tribe by families and clans, to find out how many men there were between the ages of thirty and fifty who could work at the sacred tent. There were two thousand seven hundred and fifty Kohathites, two thousand six hundred and thirty Gershonites, and

three thousand two hundred Merarites, making a total of eight thousand five hundred and eighty. Then they were all assigned their duties.

³⁵ (4: 34)

³⁶ (4: 34)

³⁷ (4: 34)

³⁸ (4: 34)

³⁹ (4: 34)

⁴⁰ (4: 34)

⁴¹ (4: 34)

⁴² (4: 34)

⁴³ (4: 34)

⁴⁴ (4: 34)

⁴⁵ (4: 34)

⁴⁶ (4: 34)

⁴⁷ (4: 34)

⁴⁸ (4: 34)

⁴⁹ (4: 34)

5¹ The LORD told Moses² to say to the people of Israel, Put out of the camp everyone who has leprosy or a bodily discharge or who has touched a dead body. Now that I live among my people, their camp must be kept clean.

³ (5: 2)

⁴The Israelites obeyed the LORD's instructions.

⁵The LORD told Moses

⁶to say to the community of Israel: If any of you commit a crime against someone, you have sinned against me.

⁷You must confess your guilt and pay the victim in full for whatever damage has been done, plus a fine of twenty per cent.

⁸If the victim has no relative who can accept this money, it belongs to me and will be paid to the priest. In addition to that payment, you must take a ram for the priest to sacrifice so your sin will be forgiven.

⁹When you make a donation to the sacred tent, that money belongs only to the priest, and each priest will keep what is given to him.

¹⁰(5: 9)

¹¹The LORD told Moses

¹²to say to the people of Israel: Suppose a man becomes jealous and suspects that his wife has been unfaithful, but he has no proof.

¹³(5: 12)

¹⁴(5: 12)

¹⁵He must take his wife to the priest, together with one kilogramme of ground barley as an offering to find out if she is guilty. No olive oil or incense is to be put on that offering.

¹⁶The priest is to make the woman stand at my altar,

¹⁷where he will pour sacred water into a clay jar and stir in some dust from the floor of the sacred tent.

¹⁸Next, he will remove her veil, then hand her the barley offering, and say, If you have been faithful to your husband, this water won't harm you. But if you have been unfaithful, it will bring down the LORD's curse you will never be able to give birth to a child, and everyone will curse your name. Then the woman will answer, If I am guilty, let it happen just as you say.

¹⁹(5: 18)

²⁰(5: 18)

²¹(5: 18)

²²(5: 18)

²³The priest will write these curses on special paper and wash them off into the bitter water,

²⁴ so that when the woman drinks this water, the curses will enter her body.

²⁵ He will take the barley offering from her and lift it up in dedication to me, the LORD. Then he will place it on my altar

²⁶ and burn part of it as a sacrifice. After that, the woman must drink the bitter water.

²⁷ If the woman has been unfaithful, the water will immediately make her unable to have children, and she will be a curse among her people.

²⁸ But if she is innocent, her body will not be harmed, and she will still be able to have children.

²⁹ This is the ceremony that must take place at my altar when a husband suspects that his wife has been unfaithful. The priest must make the woman stand in my presence and carefully follow these instructions.

³⁰ (5: 29)

³¹ If the husband is wrong, he will not be punished; but if his wife is guilty, she will be punished.

6¹ The LORD told Moses
² to say to the people of Israel: If
any of you want to dedicate yourself to
me by vowing to become a Nazirite,
³ you must no longer drink any wine or
beer or use any kind of vinegar. Don't
drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins
⁴ not even the seeds or skins.

⁵ Even the hair of a Nazirite is sacred to
me, and as long as you are a Nazirite,
you must never cut your hair.

⁶ During the time that you are a
Nazirite, you must never go close to a
dead body,

⁷ not even that of your father, mother,
brother, or sister. That would make you
unclean. Your hair is the sign that you
are dedicated to me, so remain holy.

⁸ (6: 7)

⁹ If someone suddenly dies near you,
your hair is no longer sacred, and you
must shave it seven days later during
the ceremony to make you clean.

¹⁰ Then on the next day, bring two
doves or two pigeons to the priest at the
sacred tent.

¹¹ He will offer one of the birds as
a sacrifice for sin and the other as a

sacrifice to please me. You will then be forgiven for being too near a dead body, and your hair will again become sacred.

¹²But the dead body made you unacceptable, so you must make another vow to become a Nazirite and be dedicated once more. Finally, a year-old ram must be offered as the sacrifice to make things right.

¹³When you have completed your promised time of being a Nazirite, go to the sacred tent

¹⁴and offer three animals that have nothing wrong with them: a year-old ram as a sacrifice to please me, a year-old female lamb as a sacrifice for sin, and a full-grown ram as a sacrifice to ask my blessing.

¹⁵Wine offerings and grain sacrifices must also be brought with these animals. Finally, you are to bring a basket of bread made with your finest flour and olive oil, but without yeast. Also bring some thin wafers brushed with oil.

¹⁶The priest will take these gifts to my altar and offer them, so that I will be pleased and will forgive you.

¹⁷ Then he will sacrifice the ram and offer the wine, grain, and bread.

¹⁸ After that, you will stand at the entrance to the sacred tent, shave your head, and put the hair in the fire where the priest has offered the sacrifice to ask my blessing.

¹⁹ Once the meat from the ram's shoulder has been boiled, the priest will take it, along with one loaf of bread and one wafer brushed with oil, and give them to you.

²⁰ You will hand them back to the priest, who will lift them up in dedication to me. Then he can eat the meat from the ram's shoulder, its choice ribs, and its hind leg, because this is his share of the sacrifice. After this, you will no longer be a Nazirite and will be free to drink wine.

²¹ These are the requirements for Nazirites. However, if you can afford to offer more, you must do so.

²² The LORD told Moses,

²³ When Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel, they must say:

²⁴ I pray that the LORD will bless and protect you,

²⁵ and that he will show you mercy and kindness.

²⁶ May the LORD be good to you and give you peace.

²⁷ Then the LORD said, If Aaron and his sons ask me to bless the Israelites, I will give them my blessing.

7¹ When Moses had finished setting up the sacred tent, he dedicated it to the LORD, together with its furnishings, the altar, and its equipment.

² Then the twelve tribal leaders of Israel, the same men who had been in charge of counting the people, came to the tent

³ with gifts for the LORD. They brought six strong carts and twelve oxen one ox from each leader and a cart from every two.

⁴ The LORD said to Moses,

⁵ Accept these gifts, so the Levites can use them here at the sacred tent for carrying the sacred things.

⁶ Then Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the Levites,

⁷ who were under the leadership of Ithamar son of Aaron. Moses gave two carts and four oxen to the Gershonites

for their work, and four carts and eight oxen to the Merarites for their work.

⁸ (7: 7)

⁹ But Moses did not give any to the Kohathites, because they were in charge of the sacred objects that had to be carried on their shoulders.

¹⁰ On the day the altar was dedicated, the twelve leaders brought offerings for its dedication.

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, Each day one leader is to give his offering for the dedication.

¹² So each leader brought the following gifts: a silver bowl that weighed one and a half kilogrammes and a silver sprinkling bowl weighing almost a kilogramme, both of them filled with flour and olive oil as grain sacrifices and weighed according to the official standards; a small gold dish filled with incense; a young bull, a full-grown ram, and a year-old ram as sacrifices to please the LORD; a goat as a sacrifice for sin; and two bulls, five full-grown rams, five goats, and five rams a year old as sacrifices to ask the LORD's blessing. The tribal leaders brought their gifts and

offerings in the following order: On the first day Nahshon from Judah, on the second day Nethanel from Issachar, on the third day Eliab from Zebulun, on the fourth day Elizur from Reuben, on the fifth day Shelumiel from Simeon, on the sixth day Eliasaph from Gad, on the seventh day Elishama from Ephraim, on the eighth day Gamaliel from Manasseh, on the ninth day Abidan from Benjamin, on the tenth day Ahiezer from Dan, on the eleventh day Pagiel from Asher, on the twelfth day Ahira from Naphtali.

¹³ (7: 12)

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⁸⁴ And so when the altar was dedicated to the LORD, these twelve leaders brought the following gifts: twelve silver bowls and twelve silver sprinkling bowls, weighing a total of almost twenty-eight kilogrammes, according to the official standards; twelve gold dishes filled with incense and weighing over a kilogramme; twelve bulls, twelve full-grown rams, and twelve rams a year old as sacrifices to please the LORD, along with the proper grain sacrifices; twelve goats as sacrifices for sin; and twenty-four bulls, sixty full-grown rams, sixty goats, and sixty rams a year old as sacrifices to ask the LORD's blessing.

⁸⁵ (7: 84)

⁸⁶ (7: 84)

⁸⁷ (7: 84)

⁸⁸ (7: 84)

⁸⁹ Whenever Moses needed to talk with the LORD, he went into the sacred tent, where he heard the LORD's voice coming from between the two winged creatures above the lid of the sacred chest.

8¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² Tell Aaron to put the seven lamps on the lampstand so they shine towards the front.

³ Aaron obeyed and placed the lamps as he was told.

⁴ The lampstand was made of hammered gold from its base to the decorative flowers on top, exactly like the pattern the LORD had described to Moses.

⁵ The LORD said to Moses:

⁶ The Levites must be acceptable to me before they begin working at the sacred tent. So separate them from the rest of the Israelites

⁷ and sprinkle them with the water that washes away their sins. Then tell them to shave their entire bodies and wash their clothes.

⁸ They are to bring a bull and its proper grain sacrifice of flour mixed with olive oil. And they must bring a second bull as a sacrifice for sin.

⁹ Then you, Moses, will call together all the people of Israel and make the Levites go to my sacred tent,

¹⁰where the people will place their hands on them.

¹¹Aaron will present the Levites to me as a gift from the people, so that the Levites will do my work.

¹²After this, the Levites are to place their hands on the heads of the bulls. Then one of the bulls will be sacrificed for the forgiveness of sin, and the other to make sure that I am pleased.

¹³The Levites will stand at my altar in front of Aaron and his sons, who will then dedicate the Levites to me.

¹⁴This ceremony will show that the Levites are different from the other Israelites and belong to me in a special way.

¹⁵After they have been made acceptable and have been dedicated, they will be allowed to work at my sacred tent.

¹⁶They are mine and will take the place of the firstborn Israelite sons.

¹⁷When I killed the eldest sons of the Egyptians, I decided that the firstborn sons in each Israelite family would be mine, as well as every firstborn male from their flocks and herds.

¹⁸But now I have chosen these Levites as substitutes for the firstborn sons,
¹⁹and I have given them as gifts to Aaron and his sons to serve at the sacred tent. I will hold them responsible for what happens to anyone who gets too close to the sacred tent.

²⁰Moses, Aaron, and the other Israelites made sure that the Levites did everything the LORD had commanded.

²¹The Levites sprinkled themselves with the water of forgiveness and washed their clothes. Then Aaron brought them to the altar and offered sacrifices to forgive their sins and make them acceptable to the LORD.

²²After this, the Levites worked at the sacred tent as assistants to Aaron and his sons, just as the LORD had commanded.

²³The LORD also told Moses,

²⁴Levites who are between the ages of twenty-five and fifty can work at my sacred tent. But once they turn fifty, they must retire.

²⁵(8: 24)

²⁶They may help the other Levites in their duties, but they must no longer be

responsible for any work themselves. Remember this when you assign their duties.

9¹ During the first month of Israel's second year in the Sinai Desert, the LORD had told Moses

² to say to the people, Celebrate Passover

³ in the evening of the fourteenth day of this month and do it by following all the regulations.

⁴ Moses told the people what the LORD had said, and they celebrated Passover there in the desert in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month.

⁵ (9: 4)

⁶ Some people in Israel's camp had touched a dead body and had become unfit to worship the LORD, and they could not celebrate Passover. But they asked Moses and Aaron,

⁷ Even though we have touched a dead body, why can't we celebrate Passover and offer sacrifices to the LORD at the same time as everyone else?

⁸ Moses said, Wait here while I go into the sacred tent and find out what the LORD says about this.

⁹The LORD then told Moses

¹⁰to say to the community of Israel: If any of you or your descendants touch a dead body and become unfit to worship me, or if you are away on a long journey, you may still celebrate Passover.

¹¹But it must be done in the second month, in the evening of the fourteenth day. Eat the Passover lamb with thin bread and bitter herbs,

¹²and don't leave any of it until morning or break any of the animal's bones. Be sure to follow these regulations.

¹³But if any of you refuse to celebrate Passover when you are not away on a journey, you will no longer belong to my people. You will be punished because you did not offer sacrifices to me at the proper time.

¹⁴Anyone, including foreigners who live among you, can celebrate Passover, if they follow all the regulations.

¹⁵As soon as the sacred tent was set up, a thick cloud appeared and covered it. The cloud was there each day, and during the night, a fire could be seen in it.

¹⁶(9:15)

¹⁷The LORD used this cloud to tell the Israelites when to move their camp and where to set it up again. As long as the cloud covered the tent, the Israelites did not break camp. But when the cloud moved, they followed it, and wherever it stopped, they camped and stayed there,

¹⁸(9: 17)

¹⁹(9: 17)

²⁰whether it was only one night, a few days, a month, or even a year. As long as the cloud remained over the tent, the Israelites stayed where they were. But when the cloud moved, so did the Israelites.

²¹(9: 20)

²²(9: 20)

²³They obeyed the LORD's commands and went wherever he directed Moses.

10¹The LORD told Moses:
²Have two trumpets made out of hammered silver. These will be used to call the people together and to give the signal for moving your camp.

³If both trumpets are blown, everyone is to meet with you at the entrance to the sacred tent.

⁴ But if just one is blown, only the twelve tribal leaders need to come together.

⁵ Give a signal on a trumpet when it is time to break camp. The first blast will be the signal for the tribes camped on the east side, and the second blast will be the signal for those on the south.

⁶ (10: 5)

⁷ But when you want everyone to come together, sound a different signal on the trumpet.

⁸ The priests of Aaron's family will be the ones to blow the trumpets, and this law will never change.

⁹ Whenever you go into battle against an enemy attacking your land, give a warning signal on the trumpets. Then I, the LORD, will hear it and rescue you.

¹⁰ During the celebration of the New Moon Festival and other religious festivals, sound the trumpets while you offer sacrifices. This will be a reminder that I am the LORD your God.

¹¹ On the twentieth day of the second month of that same year, the cloud over the sacred tent moved on.

¹² So the Israelites broke camp and left the Sinai Desert. And some time later, the cloud stopped in the Paran Desert.

¹³ This was the first time the LORD had told Moses to command the people of Israel to move on.

¹⁴ Judah and the tribes that camped beside it marched out first, carrying their banner. Nahshon son of Amminadab was the leader of the Judah tribe,

¹⁵ Nethanel son of Zuar was the leader of the Issachar tribe,

¹⁶ and Eliab son of Helon was the leader of the Zebulun tribe.

¹⁷ The sacred tent had been taken down, and the Gershonites and the Merarites carried it, marching behind the Judah camp.

¹⁸ Reuben and the tribes that camped beside it marched out second, carrying their banner. Elizur son of Shedeur was the leader of the Reuben tribe,

¹⁹ Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai was the leader of the Simeon tribe,

²⁰ and Eliasaph son of Deuel was the leader of the Gad tribe.

²¹ Next were the Kohathites, carrying the objects for the sacred tent, which

was to be set up before they arrived at the new camp.

²² Ephraim and the tribes that camped beside it marched next, carrying their banner. Elishama son of Ammihud was the leader of the Ephraim tribe,

²³ Gamaliel son of Pedahzur was the leader of the Manasseh tribe,

²⁴ and Abidan son of Gideoni was the leader of the Benjamin tribe.

²⁵ Dan and the tribes that camped beside it were to protect the Israelites against an attack from behind, and so they marched last, carrying their banner. Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai was the leader of the tribe of Dan,

²⁶ Pagiel son of Ocran was the leader of the Asher tribe,

²⁷ and Ahira son of Enan was the leader of the Naphtali tribe.

²⁸ This was the order in which the Israelites marched each time they moved their camp.

²⁹ Hobab the Midianite, the father-in-law of Moses, was there. And Moses said to him, We're leaving for the place the LORD has promised us. He has said that all will go well for us. So come along,

and we will make sure that all goes well for you.

³⁰No, I won't go, Hobab answered. I'm returning home to be with my own people.

³¹Please go with us! Moses said. You can be our guide because you know the places to camp in the desert.

³²Besides that, if you go, we will give you a share of the good things the LORD gives us.

³³The people of Israel began their journey from Mount Sinai. They travelled three days, and the Levites who carried the sacred chest led the way, so the LORD could show them where to camp.

³⁴And the cloud always stayed with them.

³⁵Each day as the Israelites began their journey, Moses would pray, Our LORD, defeat your enemies and make them run!

³⁶And when they stopped to set up camp, he would pray, Our LORD, stay close to Israel's thousands and thousands of people.

11 ¹One day the Israelites started complaining about their troubles.

The LORD heard them and became so angry that he destroyed the outer edges of their camp with fire.

²When the people begged Moses to help, he prayed, and the fire went out.

³They named the place Burning, because in his anger the LORD had set their camp on fire.

⁴One day some worthless foreigners among the Israelites became greedy for food, and even the Israelites themselves began moaning, We don't have any meat!

⁵In Egypt we could eat all the fish we wanted, and there were cucumbers, melons, onions, and garlic.

⁶But we're starving out here, and the only food we have is this manna.

⁷The manna was like small whitish seeds

⁸and tasted like something baked with sweet olive oil. It appeared at night with the dew. In the morning the people would collect the manna, grind or crush it into flour, then boil it and make it into thin wafers.

⁹(11:8)

¹⁰The Israelites stood around their tents complaining. Moses heard them and was upset that they had made the LORD angry.

¹¹He prayed: I am your servant, LORD, so why are you doing this to me? What have I done to deserve this? You've made me responsible for all these people,

¹²but they're not my children. You told me to nurse them along and to carry them to the land you promised their ancestors.

¹³They keep whining for meat, but where can I get meat for them?

¹⁴This job is too much for me. How can I take care of all these people by myself?

¹⁵If this is the way you're going to treat me, just kill me now and end my miserable life!

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses: Choose seventy of Israel's respected leaders and go with them to the sacred tent.

¹⁷While I am talking with you there, I will give them some of your authority, so they can share responsibility for my people. You will no longer have to care for them by yourself.

¹⁸As for the Israelites, I have heard them complaining about not having meat and about being better off in Egypt. So tell them to make themselves acceptable to me, because tomorrow they will have meat.

¹⁹In fact, they will have meat day after day for a whole monthnot just a few days, or even ten or twenty. They turned against me and wanted to return to Egypt. Now they will eat meat until they get sick of it.

²⁰(11:19)

²¹Moses replied, At least six hundred thousand grown men are here with me. How can you say there will be enough meat to feed them and their families for a whole month?

²²Even if we butchered all our sheep and cattle, or caught every fish in the sea, we wouldn't have enough to feed them.

²³The LORD answered, I can do anything! Watch and you'll see my words come true.

²⁴Moses told the people what the LORD had said. Then he chose seventy respected leaders and went with them to

the sacred tent. While the leaders stood in a circle around the tent, Moses went inside,

²⁵ and the LORD spoke with him.

Then the LORD took some authority from Moses and gave it to the seventy leaders. And when the LORD's Spirit took control of them, they started shouting like prophets. But they did it only this one time.

²⁶ Eldad and Medad were two leaders who had not gone to the tent. But when the Spirit took control of them, they began shouting like prophets there in camp.

²⁷ A boy ran to Moses and told him about Eldad and Medad.

²⁸ Joshua was there helping Moses, as he had done since he was young. And he said to Moses, Sir, you must stop them!

²⁹ But Moses replied, Are you concerned what this might do to me? I wish the LORD would give his Spirit to all his people so everyone could be a prophet.

³⁰ Then Moses and the seventy leaders went back to camp.

³¹ Some time later the LORD sent a strong wind that blew quails in from the

sea until Israel's camp was completely surrounded with birds, piled up about a metre high for miles in every direction.

³²The people picked up quails for two days each person collected at least a thousand kilogrammes. Then they spread them out to dry.

³³But before the meat could be eaten, the LORD became angry and sent a disease through the camp.

³⁴After they had buried the people who had been so greedy for meat, they called the place Graves for the Greedy.

³⁵Israel then broke camp and travelled to Hazeroth.

12¹ Although Moses was the most humble person in all the world, Miriam and Aaron started complaining, Moses had no right to marry that woman from Ethiopia! Who does he think he is? The LORD has spoken to us, not just to him. The LORD heard their complaint

² (12: 1)

³ (12: 1)

⁴ and told Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to come to the entrance of the sacred tent.

⁵There the LORD appeared in a cloud and told Aaron and Miriam to come closer.

⁶Then after commanding them to listen carefully, he said: I, the LORD, speak to prophets in visions and dreams.

⁷But my servant Moses is the leader of my people.

⁸He sees me face to face, and everything I say to him is perfectly clear. You have no right to criticize my servant Moses.

⁹The LORD became angry with Aaron and Miriam. And after the LORD left

¹⁰and the cloud disappeared from over the sacred tent, Miriam's skin turned white with leprosy. When Aaron saw what had happened to her,

¹¹he said to Moses, Sir, please don't punish us for doing such a foolish thing.

¹²Don't let Miriam's flesh rot away like a child born dead!

¹³Moses prayed, LORD God, please heal her.

¹⁴But the LORD replied, Miriam would be disgraced for seven days if her father had punished her by spitting in her face.

So make her stay outside the camp for seven days, before coming back.

¹⁵The people of Israel did not move their camp until Miriam returned seven days later.

¹⁶Then they left Hazeroth and set up camp in the Paran Desert.

13 ¹The LORD said to Moses,
²Choose a leader from each tribe and send them into Canaan to explore the land I am giving you.

³So Moses sent twelve tribal leaders from Israel's camp in the Paran Desert

⁴with orders to explore the land of Canaan. And here are their names: Shammua son of Zaccur from Reuben, Shaphat son of Hori from Simeon, Caleb son of Jephunneh from Judah, Igal son of Joseph from Issachar, Joshua son of Nun from Ephraim, Palti son of Raphu from Benjamin, Gaddiel son of Sodi from Zebulun, Gaddi son of Susi from Manasseh, Ammiel son of Gemalli from Dan, Sethur son of Michael from Asher, Nahbi son of Vophsi from Naphtali, and Geuel son of Machi from Gad.

⁵(13: 4)

⁶(13: 4)

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¹⁶ (13: 4)

¹⁷ Before Moses sent them into Canaan, he said: After you go through the Southern Desert of Canaan, continue north into the hill country

¹⁸ and find out what those regions are like. Be sure to remember how many people live there, how strong they are,

¹⁹ and if they live in open towns or walled cities. See if the land is good for growing crops and find out what kinds of trees grow there. It's time for grapes to ripen, so try to bring back some of the fruit that grows there.

²⁰ (13: 19)

²¹ The twelve men left to explore Canaan from the Zin Desert in the south all the way to the town of Rehob near Lebo-Hamath in the north.

²²As they went through the Southern Desert, they came to the town of Hebron, which was seven years older than the Egyptian town of Zoan. In Hebron, they saw the three Anakim clans of Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi.

²³When they got to Bunch Valley, they cut off a branch with such a huge bunch of grapes, that it took two men to carry it on a pole. That's why the place was called Bunch Valley. Along with the grapes, they also took back pomegranates and figs.

²⁴(13: 23)

²⁵After exploring the land of Canaan for forty days,

²⁶the twelve men returned to Kadesh in the Paran Desert and told Moses, Aaron, and the people what they had seen. They showed them the fruit

²⁷and said: Look at this fruit! The land we explored is rich with milk and honey.

²⁸But the people who live there are strong, and their cities are large and walled. We even saw the three Anakim clans.

²⁹Besides that, the Amalekites live in the Southern Desert; the Hittites,

Jebusites, and Amorites are in the hill country; and the Canaanites live along the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan.

³⁰ Caleb calmed down the crowd and said, Let's go and take the land. I know we can do it!

³¹ But the other men replied, Those people are much too strong for us.

³² Then they started spreading rumours and saying, We won't be able to grow anything in that soil. And the people are like giants.

³³ In fact, we saw the Nephilim who are the ancestors of the Anakim. They were so big that we felt as small as grasshoppers.

14 ¹ After the Israelites heard the report from the twelve men who had explored Canaan, the people cried all night

² and complained to Moses and Aaron, We wish we had died in Egypt or somewhere out here in the desert!

³ Is the LORD leading us into Canaan, just to have us killed and our women and children captured? We'd be better off in Egypt.

⁴Then they said to one another, Let's choose our own leader and go back.

⁵Moses and Aaron bowed down to pray in front of the crowd.

⁶Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in sorrow

⁷and said: We saw the land ourselves, and it's very good.

⁸If we obey the LORD, he will surely give us that land rich with milk and honey.

⁹So don't rebel. We have no reason to be afraid of the people who live there. The LORD is on our side, and they won't stand a chance against us!

¹⁰The crowd threatened to stone Moses and Aaron to death. But just then, the LORD appeared in a cloud at the sacred tent.

¹¹The LORD said to Moses, I have done great things for these people, and they still reject me by refusing to believe in my power.

¹²So they will no longer be my people. I will destroy them, but I will make you the ancestor of a nation even stronger than theirs.

¹³ Moses replied: With your mighty power you rescued your people from Egypt, so please don't destroy us here in the desert. If you do, the Egyptians will hear about it and tell the people of Canaan. Those Canaanites already know that we are your people, and that we see you face to face. And they have heard how you lead us with a thick cloud during the day and flaming fire at night. But if you kill us, they will claim it was because you weren't powerful enough to lead us into Canaan as you promised.

¹⁴ (14: 13)

¹⁵ (14: 13)

¹⁶ (14: 13)

¹⁷ Show us your great power, LORD. You promised

¹⁸ that you love to show mercy and kindness. And you said that you are very patient, but that you will punish everyone guilty of doing wrong not only them but their children and grandchildren as well.

¹⁹ You are merciful, and you treat people better than they deserve. So please forgive these people, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt.

²⁰Then the LORD said to Moses: In answer to your prayer, I do forgive them.

²¹But as surely as I live and my power has no limit,

²²I swear that not one of these Israelites will enter the land I promised to give their ancestors. These people have seen my power in Egypt and in the desert, but they will never see Canaan. They have disobeyed and tested me too many times.

²³(14: 22)

²⁴But my servant Caleb isn't like the others. So because he has faith in me, I will allow him to cross into Canaan, and his descendants will settle there.

²⁵Now listen, Moses! The Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys of Canaan. And tomorrow morning, you'll need to turn round and head back into the desert towards the Red Sea.

²⁶The LORD told Moses and Aaron

²⁷to give this message to the people of Israel: You sinful people have complained against me too many times! Now I swear by my own life that I will give you exactly what you wanted.

²⁸(14: 27)

²⁹You will die here in the desert, and your dead bodies will cover the ground. You have insulted me, and none of you men who are over twenty years old

³⁰will enter the land that I solemnly promised to give you as your own only Caleb and Joshua will go in.

³¹You were worried that your own children would be captured. But I, the LORD, will let them enter the land you have rejected.

³²You will die here in the desert!

³³Your children will wander around in this desert forty years, suffering because of your sins, until all of you are dead.

³⁴I will cruelly punish you every day for the next forty years one year for each day that the land was explored.

³⁵You sinful people who ganged up against me will die here in the desert.

³⁶Ten of the men sent to explore the land had brought back bad news and had made the people complain against the LORD.

³⁷So he sent a deadly disease that killed those men,

³⁸but he let Joshua and Caleb live.

³⁹The people of Israel were very sad after Moses gave them the LORD's message.

⁴⁰So they got up early the next morning and got ready to head towards the hill country of Canaan. They said, We were wrong to complain about the LORD. Let's go into the land that he promised us.

⁴¹But Moses replied, You're disobeying the LORD! Your plan won't work,

⁴²so don't even try it. The LORD refuses to help you, because you turned your backs on him. The Amalekites and the Canaanites are your enemies, and they will attack and defeat you.

⁴³(14: 42)

⁴⁴But the Israelites ignored Moses and marched towards the hill country, even though the sacred chest and Moses did not go with them.

⁴⁵The Amalekites and the Canaanites came down from the hill country, defeated the Israelites, and chased them as far as the town of Hormah.

15 ¹The LORD told Moses ²to give the Israelites the following laws about offering sacrifices:

³Bulls or rams or goats are the animals that you may burn on the altar as sacrifices to please me. You may also offer sacrifices voluntarily or because you made a promise, or because they are part of your regular religious ceremonies. The smell of the smoke from these sacrifices is pleasing to me.

⁴If you sacrifice a young ram or goat, you must also offer a kilogramme of your finest flour mixed with a litre of olive oil as a grain sacrifice. A litre of wine must also be poured on the altar.

⁵(15:4)

⁶And if the animal is a full-grown ram, you must offer two kilogrammes of flour mixed with one and a half litres of olive oil. One and a half litres of wine must also be poured on the altar. The smell of this smoke is pleasing to me.

⁷(15:6)

⁸If a bull is offered as a sacrifice to please me or to ask my blessing,

⁹you must offer three kilogrammes of flour mixed with two litres of olive oil.

¹⁰Two litres of wine must also be poured on the altar. The smell of this smoke is pleasing to me.

¹¹ If you are a native Israelite, you must obey these rules each time you offer a bull, a ram, or a goat as a sacrifice.

¹² (15: 11)

¹³ (15: 11)

¹⁴ And the foreigners who live among you must also follow these rules.

¹⁵ This law will never change. I am the LORD, and I consider all people the same, whether they are Israelites or foreigners living among you.

¹⁶ (15: 15)

¹⁷ When you eat food in the land that I am giving you, remember to set aside some of it as an offering to me.

¹⁸ (15: 17)

¹⁹ (15: 17)

²⁰ From the first batch of bread dough that you make after each new grain harvest, make a loaf of bread and offer it to me, just as you offer grain.

²¹ All your descendants must follow this law and offer part of the first batch of bread dough.

²² The LORD also told Moses to tell the people what must be done if they ever disobey his laws:

²³ (15: 22)

²⁴ If all of you disobey one of my laws without meaning to, you must offer a bull as a sacrifice to please me, together with a grain sacrifice, a wine offering, and a goat as a sacrifice for sin.

²⁵ Then the priest will pray and ask me to forgive you. And since you did not mean to do wrong, and you offered sacrifices,

²⁶ the sin of everyone both Israelites and foreigners among you will be forgiven.

²⁷ But if one of you does wrong without meaning to, you must sacrifice a year-old female goat as a sacrifice for sin.

²⁸ The priest will then ask me to forgive you, and your sin will be forgiven.

²⁹ The law will be the same for anyone who does wrong without meaning to, whether an Israelite or a foreigner living among you.

³⁰ But if one of you does wrong on purpose, whether Israelite or foreigner, you have sinned against me by disobeying my laws. You will be sent away and will no longer live among the people of Israel.

³¹ (15: 30)

³² Once, while the Israelites were travelling through the desert, a man was caught gathering firewood on the Sabbath.

³³ He was taken to Moses, Aaron, and the rest of the community.

³⁴ But no one knew what to do with him, so he was not allowed to leave.

³⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, Tell the people to take that man outside the camp and stone him to death!

³⁶ So he was killed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁷ The LORD told Moses

³⁸ to say to the people of Israel, Sew tassels on to the bottom edge of your clothes and tie a purple string to each tassel.

³⁹ These will remind you that you must obey my laws and teachings. And when you do, you will be dedicated to me and won't follow your own sinful desires.

⁴⁰ (15: 39)

⁴¹ I am the LORD your God who led you out of Egypt.

16¹ Korah son of Izhar was a Levite from the Kohathite clan. One day he called together Dathan, Abiram,

and On from the Reuben tribe, and the four of them decided to rebel against Moses. So they asked two hundred and fifty respected Israelite leaders for their support, and together they went to Moses

² (16: 1)

³ and Aaron and said, Why do you think you're so much better than anyone else? We're part of the LORD's holy people, and he's with all of us. What makes you think you're the only ones in charge?

⁴ When Moses heard this, he knelt down to pray.

⁵ Then he said to Korah and his followers: Tomorrow morning the LORD will show us the person he has chosen to be his priest, and that man will faithfully serve him.

⁶ Korah, now here is what you and your followers must do: get some fire pans, fill them with coals and incense, and place them near the sacred tent. And the man the LORD chooses will be his priest. Korah, this time you Levites have gone too far!

⁷ (16: 6)

⁸You know that the God of Israel has chosen you Levites from all Israel to serve him by being in charge of the sacred tent and by helping the community to worship in the proper way. What more do you want?

⁹(16:8)

¹⁰The LORD has given you a special responsibility, and now, Korah, you think you should also be his priest.

¹¹You and your followers have rebelled against the LORD, not against Aaron.

¹²Then Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, but they sent back this message: We won't come!

¹³It's bad enough that you took us from our rich farmland in Egypt to let us die here in the desert. Now you also want to boss us around!

¹⁴You keep promising us rich farmlands with fertile fields and vineyards but where are they? Stop trying to trick these people. No, we won't come to see you.

¹⁵Moses was very angry and said to the LORD, Don't listen to these men! I haven't done anything wrong to them. I haven't taken as much as a donkey.

¹⁶Then he said to Korah, Tomorrow you and your followers must go with Aaron to the LORD's sacred tent.

¹⁷Each of you take along your fire pan with incense in it and offer the incense to the LORD.

¹⁸The next day the men placed incense and coals in their fire pans and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the sacred tent.

¹⁹Meanwhile, Korah had convinced the rest of the Israelites to rebel against their two leaders. When that happened, the LORD appeared in all his glory

²⁰and said to Moses and Aaron,

²¹Get away from the rest of the Israelites so I can kill them at once!

²²But the two men bowed down and prayed, Our God, you gave these people life. Why would you punish everyone here when only one man has sinned?

²³The LORD answered Moses,

²⁴Tell the people to stay away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

²⁵Moses walked over to Dathan and Abiram, and the other leaders of Israel followed.

²⁶Then Moses warned the people, Get away from the tents of these sinful men! Don't touch anything that belongs to them or you'll be wiped out.

²⁷So everyone moved away from those tents, except Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their families.

²⁸Moses said to the crowd, The LORD has chosen me and told me to do these things it wasn't my idea. And here's how you will know:

²⁹if these men die a natural death, it means the LORD hasn't chosen me.

³⁰But suppose the LORD does something that has never been done before. For example, what if a huge crack appears in the ground, and these men and their families fall into it and are buried alive, together with everything they own? Then you will know they have turned their backs on the LORD!

³¹As soon as Moses said this, the ground under the men opened up

³²and swallowed them alive, together with their families and everything they owned. Then the ground closed back up, and they were gone.

³³(16: 32)

³⁴The rest of the Israelites heard their screams, so they ran off, shouting, We don't want that to happen to us!

³⁵Suddenly the LORD sent a fire that burnt up the two hundred and fifty men who had offered incense to him.

³⁶Then the LORD said to Moses,

³⁷Tell Aaron's son Eleazar to take the fire pans from the smouldering fire and scatter the coals. The pans are now sacred,

³⁸because they were used for offering incense to me. Have them hammered into a thin layer of bronze as a covering for the altar. Those men died because of their sin, and now their fire pans will become a warning for the rest of the community.

³⁹Eleazar collected the pans and had them hammered into a thin layer of bronze as a covering for the altar,

⁴⁰just as the LORD had told Moses. The pans were a warning to the Israelites that only Aaron's descendants would be allowed to offer incense to the LORD. Anyone else who tried would be punished like Korah and his followers.

⁴¹ The next day the people of Israel again complained against Moses and Aaron, The two of you killed some of the LORD's people!

⁴² As the people crowded around them, Moses and Aaron turned towards the sacred tent, and the LORD appeared in his glory in the cloud covering the tent.

⁴³ So Moses and Aaron walked to the front of the tent,

⁴⁴ where the LORD said to them,

⁴⁵ Stand back! I am going to wipe out these Israelites once and for all. They immediately bowed down and prayed.

⁴⁶ Then Moses told Aaron, Grab your fire pan and fill it with hot coals from the altar. Put incense in it, then quickly take it to where the people are and offer it to the LORD, so they can be forgiven. The LORD is very angry, and people have already started dying!

⁴⁷ Aaron did exactly what he had been told. He ran over to the crowd of people and stood between the dead bodies and the people who were still alive. He placed the incense on the pan, then offered it to the LORD and asked him to forgive the people's sin. The disease immediately

stopped spreading, and no one else died from it.

⁴⁸ (16: 47)

⁴⁹ But fourteen thousand seven hundred Israelites were dead, not counting those who had died with Korah and his followers.

⁵⁰ Aaron walked back and stood with Moses at the sacred tent.

17 ¹ The LORD told Moses:
² Call together the twelve tribes of Israel and tell the leader of each tribe to write his name on the walking stick he carries as a symbol of his authority. Make sure Aaron's name is written on the one from the Levi tribe, then collect all the sticks.

³ (17: 2)

⁴ Place these sticks in the tent in front of the sacred chest where I appear to you.

⁵ I will then choose a man to be my priest, and his stick will sprout. After that happens, I won't have to listen to any more complaints about you.

⁶ Moses told the people what the LORD had commanded, and they gave him the walking sticks from the twelve tribal

leaders, including Aaron's from the Levi tribe.

⁷ Moses took them and placed them in the LORD's sacred tent.

⁸ The next day when Moses went into the tent, flowers and almonds were already growing on Aaron's stick.

⁹ Moses brought the twelve sticks out of the tent and showed them to the people. Each of the leaders found his own and took it.

¹⁰ But the LORD told Moses, Put Aaron's stick back! Let it stay near the sacred chest as a warning to anyone who might think about rebelling. If these people don't stop their grumbling about me, I will wipe them out.

¹¹ Moses did what he was told.

¹² The Israelites cried out to Moses, We're done for

¹³ and doomed if we even get near the sacred tent!

18¹ The LORD said to Aaron: You, your sons, and the other Levites of the Kohath clan, are responsible for what happens at the sacred tent. And you and your sons will be responsible for what the priests do.

²The Levites are your relatives and are here to help you in your service at the tent.

³You must see that they perform their duties. But if they go near any of the sacred objects or the altar, all of you will die.

⁴No one else is allowed to take care of the sacred tent or to do anything connected with it.

⁵Follow these instructions, so I won't become angry and punish the Israelites ever again.

⁶I alone chose the Levites from all the other tribes to belong to me, and I have given them to you as your helpers.

⁷But only you and your sons can serve as priests at the altar and in the most holy place. Your work as priests is a gift from me, and anyone else who tries to do that work must be put to death.

⁸The LORD said to Aaron: I have put you in charge of the sacred gifts and sacrifices that the Israelites bring to me. And from now on, you, your sons, and your descendants will receive part of the sacrifices for sin, as well as part of the grain sacrifices, and the sacrifices to

make things right. Your share of these sacrifices will be the parts not burnt on the altar.

⁹(18:8)

¹⁰Since these things are sacred, they must be eaten near the sacred tent, but only men are allowed to eat them.

¹¹You will also receive part of the special gifts and offerings that the Israelites bring to me. Any member of your family who is clean and acceptable for worship can eat these things.

¹²For example, when the Israelites bring me the first batches of oil, wine, and grain, you can have the best parts of those gifts.

¹³And the first part of the crops from their fields and vineyards also belongs to you. The people will offer this to me, then anyone in your family who is clean may have some of it.

¹⁴Everything in Israel that has been completely dedicated to me will now belong to you.

¹⁵The firstborn son in every Israelite family, as well as the firstborn males of their flocks and herds, belong to me.

But a firstborn son and every firstborn donkey must be bought back from me.

¹⁶The price for a firstborn son who is at least one month old will be five pieces of silver, weighed according to the official standards.

¹⁷However, all firstborn cattle, sheep, and goats belong to me and cannot be bought back. Splatter their blood on the altar and send their fat up in smoke, so I can smell it and be pleased.

¹⁸You are allowed to eat the meat of those animals, just as you can eat the choice ribs and the right hind leg of the special sacrifices.

¹⁹From now on, the sacred offerings that the Israelites give to me will belong to you, your sons, and your daughters. This is my promise to you and your descendants, and it will never change.

²⁰You will not receive any land in Israel as your own. I am the LORD, and I will give you whatever you need.

²¹The LORD said to Aaron: Ten per cent of the Israelites' crops and one out of every ten of their newborn animals belong to me. But I am giving all this

to the Levites as their pay for the work they do at the sacred tent.

²²They are the only ones allowed to work at the tent, and they must not let anyone else come near it. Those who do must be put to death, and the Levites will also be punished. This law will never change. Since the Levites won't be given any land in Israel as their own,

²³(18: 22)

²⁴they will be given the crops and newborn animals that the Israelites offer to me.

²⁵The LORD told Moses

²⁶to say to the Levites: When you receive from the people of Israel ten per cent of their crops and newborn animals, you must offer a tenth of that to me.

²⁷Just as the Israelites give me part of their grain and wine, you must set aside part of what you receive

²⁸as an offering to me. That amount must then be given to Aaron,

²⁹so the best of what you receive will be mine.

³⁰After you have dedicated the best parts to me, you can eat the rest, just as

the Israelites eat part of their grain and wine after offering them to me.

³¹Your share may be eaten anywhere by anyone in your family, because it is your pay for working at the sacred tent.

³²You won't be punished for eating it, as long as you have already offered the best parts to me. The gifts and sacrifices brought by the people must remain sacred, and if you eat any part of them before they are offered to me, you will be put to death.

19¹ The LORD gave Moses and Aaron the following law: The people of Israel must bring Moses a reddish-brown cow that has nothing wrong with it and that has never been used for ploughing.

²(19: 1)

³Moses will give it to Eleazar the priest, then it will be led outside the camp and killed while Eleazar watches.

⁴He will dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it seven times in the direction of the sacred tent.

⁵Then the whole cow, including its skin, meat, blood, and insides must be burnt.

⁶A priest is to throw a stick of cedar wood, a hyssop branch, and a piece of red yarn into the fire.

⁷After the ceremony, the priest is to take a bath and wash his clothes. Only then can he go back into the camp, but he remains unclean and unfit for worship until evening.

⁸The man who burnt the cow must also wash his clothes and take a bath, but he is also unclean until evening.

⁹A man who isn't unclean must collect the ashes of the burnt cow and store them outside the camp in a clean place. The people of Israel can mix these ashes with the water used in the ceremony to wash away sin.

¹⁰The man who collects the ashes must wash his clothes, but will remain unclean until evening. This law must always be obeyed by the people of Israel and the foreigners living among them.

¹¹The LORD said: If you touch a dead body, you will be unclean for seven days.

¹²But if you wash with the water mixed with the cow's ashes on the third day and again on the seventh day, you will be clean and acceptable for worship. You

must wash yourself on those days; if you don't, you will remain unclean.

¹³Suppose you touch a dead body, but refuse to be made clean by washing with the water mixed with ashes. You will be guilty of making my sacred tent unclean and will no longer belong to the people of Israel.

¹⁴If someone dies in a tent while you are there, you will be unclean for seven days. And anyone who later enters the tent will also be unclean.

¹⁵Any open jar in the tent is unclean.

¹⁶If you touch the body of someone who was killed or who died of old age, or if you touch a human bone or a grave, you will be unclean for seven days.

¹⁷Before you can be made clean, someone who is clean must take some of the ashes from the burnt cow and stir them into a pot of spring water. That same person must dip a hyssop branch in the water and ashes, then sprinkle it on the tent and everything in it, including everyone who was inside. If you have touched a human bone, a grave, or a dead body, you must be sprinkled with that water.

¹⁸(19: 17)

¹⁹If this is done on the third day and on the seventh day, you will be clean. Then after you take a bath and wash your clothes, you can worship that evening.

²⁰If you are unclean and refuse to be made clean by washing with the water mixed with ashes, you will be guilty of making my sacred tent unclean, and you will no longer belong to the people of Israel.

²¹These laws will never change. The man who sprinkled the water and the ashes on you when you were unclean must also wash his clothes. And whoever touches this water is unclean until evening.

²²When you are unclean, everything you touch becomes unclean, and anyone who touches you will be unclean until evening.

20¹The people of Israel arrived at the Zin Desert during the first month and set up camp near the town of Kadesh. It was there that Miriam died and was buried.

²The Israelites had no water, so they went to Moses and Aaron

³and complained, Moses, we'd be better off if we had died along with the others in front of the LORD's sacred tent.

⁴You brought us into this desert, and now we and our livestock are going to die!

⁵Egypt was better than this horrible place. At least there we had grain and figs and grapevines and pomegranates. But now we don't even have any water.

⁶Moses and Aaron went to the entrance to the sacred tent, where they bowed down. The LORD appeared to them in all his glory

⁷and said, Moses, get your walking stick. Then you and Aaron call the people together and command that rock to give you water. That's how you will provide water for the people of Israel and their livestock.

⁸(20: 7)

⁹Moses obeyed and took his stick from the sacred tent.

¹⁰After he and Aaron had gathered the people around the rock, he said, Look, you rebellious people, and you will see water flow from this rock!

¹¹ He raised his stick in the air and struck the rock two times. At once, water gushed from the rock, and the people and their livestock had water to drink.

¹² But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, Because you refused to believe in my power, these people did not respect me. And so, you will not be the ones to lead them into the land I have promised.

¹³ The Israelites had complained against the LORD, and he had shown them his holy power by giving them water to drink. So they named the place Meribah, which means Complaining.

¹⁴ Moses sent messengers from Israel's camp near Kadesh with this message for the king of Edom: We are Israelites, your own relatives, and we're sure you have heard the terrible things that have happened to us.

¹⁵ Our ancestors settled in Egypt and lived there a long time. But later the Egyptians were cruel to us,

¹⁶ and when we begged our LORD for help, he answered our prayer and brought us out of that land. Now we are camped at the border of your territory, near the town of Kadesh.

¹⁷ Please let us go through your country. We won't go near your fields and vineyards, and we won't drink any water from your wells. We will stay on the main road until we leave your territory.

¹⁸ But the Edomite king answered, No, I won't let you go through our country! And if you try, we will attack you.

¹⁹ Moses sent back this message: We promise to stay on the main road, and if any of us or our livestock drink your water, we will pay for it. We just want to pass through.

²⁰ But the Edomite king insisted, You can't go through our land! Then Edom sent out its strongest troops

²¹ to keep Israel from passing through its territory. So the Israelites had to go in another direction.

²² After the Israelites had left Kadesh and had gone as far as Mount Hor

²³ on the Edomite border, the LORD said,

²⁴ Aaron, this is where you will die. You and Moses disobeyed me at Meribah, and so you will not enter the land I promised the Israelites.

²⁵ Moses, go with Aaron and his son Eleazar to the top of the mountain.

²⁶ Then take Aaron's priestly robe from him and place it on Eleazar. Aaron will die there.

²⁷ Moses obeyed, and everyone watched as he and Aaron and Eleazar walked to the top of Mount Hor.

²⁸ Moses then took the priestly robe from Aaron and placed it on Eleazar. Aaron died there. When Moses and Eleazar came down,

²⁹ the people knew that Aaron had died, and they mourned his death for thirty days.

21 ¹ The Canaanite king of Arad lived in the Southern Desert of Canaan, and when he heard that the Israelites were on their way to the village of Atharim, he attacked and took some of them hostage.

² The Israelites prayed, Our LORD, if you will help us defeat these Canaanites, we will completely destroy their towns and everything in them, to show that they belong to you.

³ The LORD answered their prayer and helped them wipe out the Canaanite

army and completely destroy their towns. That's why one of the towns is named Hormah, which means Destroyed Place.

⁴The Israelites had to go around the territory of Edom, so when they left Mount Hor, they headed south towards the Red Sea. But along the way, the people became so impatient

⁵that they complained against God and said to Moses, Did you bring us out of Egypt, just to let us die in the desert? There's no water out here, and we can't stand this awful food!

⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes that bit and killed many of them.

⁷Some of the people went to Moses and admitted, It was wrong of us to insult you and the LORD. Now please ask him to make these snakes go away. Moses prayed,

⁸and the LORD answered, Make a snake out of bronze and place it on top of a pole. Anyone who gets bitten can look at the snake and won't die.

⁹Moses obeyed the LORD. And all of those who looked at the bronze snake

lived, even though they had been bitten by the poisonous snakes.

¹⁰As the Israelites continued their journey to Canaan, they camped at Oboth,

¹¹then at Iye-Abarim in the desert east of Moab,

¹²and then in the Zered Gorge.

¹³After that, they crossed the gorge of the River Arnon and camped in the Moabite desert bordering Amorite territory. The Arnon was the border between the Moabites and the Amorites.

¹⁴A song in The Book of the LORD's Battles mentions the town of Waheb with its creeks in the territory of Suphah. It also mentions the River Arnon,

¹⁵with its valleys that lie beside the Moabite border and extend to the town of Ar.

¹⁶From the Arnon, the Israelites went to the well near the town of Beer, where the LORD had said to Moses, Call the people together, and I will give them water to drink.

¹⁷That's also the same well the Israelites sang about in this song: Let's celebrate! The well has given us water.

¹⁸With their royal sceptres, our leaders pointed out where to dig the well. The Israelites left the desert and camped near the town of Mattanah,

¹⁹then at Nahaliel, and then at Bamoth.

²⁰Finally, they reached Moabite territory, where they camped near Mount Pisgah in a valley overlooking the desert north of the Dead Sea.

²¹The Israelites sent this message to King Sihon of the Amorites:

²²Please let us pass through your territory. We promise to stay away from your fields and vineyards, and we won't drink any water from your wells. As long as we're in your land, we won't get off the main road.

²³But Sihon refused to let Israel travel through his land. Instead, he called together his entire army and marched into the desert to attack Israel near the town of Jahaz.

²⁴Israel defeated them and took over the Amorite territory from the gorge of the River Arnon in the south to the gorge of the River Jabbok in the north. Beyond the Jabbok was the territory of the

Ammonites, who were much stronger than Israel.

²⁵The Israelites settled in the Amorite towns, including the capital city of Heshbon with its surrounding villages.

²⁶King Sihon had ruled from Heshbon, after defeating the Moabites and taking over their land north of the Arnon gorge.

²⁷That's why the Amorites had written this poem about Heshbon: Come and rebuild Heshbon, King Sihon's capital city!

²⁸His armies marched out like fiery flames, burning down the town of Ar and destroying the hills along the River Arnon.

²⁹You Moabites are done for! Your god Chemosh deserted your people; they were captured, taken away by King Sihon the Amorite.

³⁰We completely defeated Moab. The towns of Heshbon and Dibon, of Nophah and Medeba are ruined and gone.

³¹After the Israelites had settled in the Amorite territory,

³²Moses sent some men to explore the town of Jazer. Later, the Israelites

captured the villages surrounding it and forced out the Amorites who lived there.

³³The Israelites headed towards the region of Bashan, where King Og ruled, and he led his entire army to Edrei to meet Israel in battle.

³⁴The LORD said to Moses, Don't be afraid of Og. I will help you defeat him and his army, just as you did King Sihon who ruled in Heshbon. Og's territory will be yours.

³⁵So the Israelites wiped out Og, his family, and his entire army there were no survivors. Then Israel took over the land of Bashan.

22¹ Israel moved from there to the hills of Moab, where they camped across the River Jordan from the town of Jericho.

²When King Balak of Moab and his people heard how many Israelites there were and what they had done to the Amorites, he and the Moabites were terrified and panicked.

³(22: 2)

⁴They said to the Midianite leaders, Those Israelites will wipe out everything

in sight, like a bull eating grass in a field.
So King Balak

⁵ sent a message to Balaam son of Beor who lived among his relatives in the town of Pethor near the River Euphrates. It said: I need your help. A huge group of people has come here from Egypt and settled near my territory.

⁶ They are too powerful for us to defeat, so would you come and place a curse on them? Perhaps then we can drive them out. I know that anyone you bless will be successful, but anyone you curse will fail.

⁷ The leaders of Moab and Midian left and took along money to pay Balaam for his work. When they got to his house, they gave him Balak's message.

⁸ Spend the night here, Balaam replied, and tomorrow I will tell you the LORD's answer. So the officials stayed at his house.

⁹ During the night, God asked Balaam, Who are these people at your house?

¹⁰ They are messengers from King Balak of Moab, Balaam answered. He sent them

¹¹ to ask me to go to Moab and place a curse on the people who have come there from Egypt. They have settled everywhere around him, and he wants to drive them out.

¹² But God replied, Don't go with Balak's messengers. I have blessed those people who have come from Egypt, so don't curse them.

¹³ The next morning, Balaam said to Balak's officials, Go back home. The LORD says I cannot go with you.

¹⁴ The officials left and told Balak that Balaam refused to come.

¹⁵ Then Balak sent a larger group of officials, who were even more important than the first ones.

¹⁶ They went to Balaam and told him that Balak had said, Balaam, if you come to Moab,

¹⁷ I'll pay you very well and do whatever you ask. Just come and place a curse on these people.

¹⁸ Balaam answered, Even if Balak offered me a palace full of silver or gold, I wouldn't do anything to disobey the LORD my God.

¹⁹You are welcome to spend the night here, just as the others did. I will find out if the LORD has something else to say about this.

²⁰That night, God said, Balaam, I'll let you go to Moab with Balak's messengers, but do only what I say.

²¹So Balaam got up the next morning and saddled his donkey, then left with the Moabite officials.

²²Balaam was riding his donkey to Moab, and two of his servants were with him. But God was angry that Balaam had gone, so one of the LORD's angels stood in the road to stop him.

²³When Balaam's donkey saw the angel standing there with a sword, it walked off the road and into an open field. Balaam had to beat the donkey to get it back on the road.

²⁴Then the angel stood between two vineyards, in a narrow path with a stone wall on each side.

²⁵When the donkey saw the angel, it walked so close to one of the walls that Balaam's foot scraped against the wall. Balaam beat the donkey again.

²⁶The angel moved once more and stood in a spot so narrow that there was no room for the donkey to go around.

²⁷So it just lay down. Balaam lost his temper, then picked up a stick and hit the donkey.

²⁸When that happened, the LORD told the donkey to speak, and it asked Balaam, What have I done to you that made you beat me three times?

²⁹You made me look stupid! Balaam answered. If I had a sword, I'd kill you here and now!

³⁰But you're my owner, replied the donkey, and you've ridden me many times. Have I ever done anything like this before? No, Balaam admitted.

³¹Just then, the LORD let Balaam see the angel standing in the road, holding a sword, and Balaam bowed down.

³²The angel said, You had no right to treat your donkey like that! I was the one who blocked your way, because I don't think you should go to Moab.

³³If your donkey had not seen me and stopped those three times, I would have killed you and let the donkey live.

³⁴ Balaam replied, I was wrong. I didn't know you were trying to stop me. If you don't think I should go, I'll return home at once.

³⁵ It's all right for you to go, the LORD's angel answered. But you must say only what I tell you. So Balaam went on with Balak's officials.

³⁶ When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went to meet him at the town of Ir, which is on the northern border of Moab.

³⁷ Balak asked, Why didn't you come when I invited you the first time? Did you think I wasn't going to pay you?

³⁸ I'm here now, Balaam answered. But I will say only what God tells me to say.

³⁹ They left and went to the town of Kiriath-Huzoth,

⁴⁰ where Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep and gave some of the meat to Balaam and the officials who were with him.

⁴¹ The next morning, Balak took Balaam to the town of Bamoth-Baal. From there, Balaam could see some of the Israelites.

23¹ Balaam said to Balak, Build seven altars here, then bring seven bulls and seven rams.

² After Balak had done this, they sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar.

³ Then Balaam said, Wait here beside your offerings, and I'll go somewhere to be alone. Perhaps the LORD will appear to me. If he does, I will tell you everything he says. And he left.

⁴ When God appeared to him, Balaam said, I have built seven altars and have sacrificed a bull and a ram on each one.

⁵ The LORD gave Balaam a message, then sent him back to tell Balak.

⁶ When Balaam returned, he found Balak and his officials standing beside the offerings.

⁷ Balaam said: King Balak of Moab brought me from the hills of Syria to curse Israel and announce its doom.

⁸ But I can't go against God! He did not curse or condemn Israel.

⁹ From the mountain peaks, I look down and see Israel, the obedient people of God.

¹⁰ They are living alone in peace. And though they are many, they don't bother

the other nations. I hope to obey God for as long as I live and to die in such peace.

¹¹ Balak said, What are you doing? I asked you to come and place a curse on my enemies. But you have blessed them instead!

¹² Balaam answered, I can say only what the LORD tells me.

¹³ Balak said to Balaam, Let's go somewhere else. Perhaps if you see a smaller part of the Israelites, you will be able to curse them for me.

¹⁴ So he took Balaam to a field on top of Mount Pisgah where lookouts were stationed. Then he built seven altars there and sacrificed a bull and a ram on each one.

¹⁵ Wait here beside your offerings, Balaam said. The LORD will appear to me over there.

¹⁶ The LORD appeared to Balaam and gave him another message, then he told him to go and tell Balak.

¹⁷ Balaam went back and saw him and his officials standing beside the offerings. Balak asked, What did the LORD say?

¹⁸ Balaam answered: Pay close attention to my words

¹⁹ God is no mere human! He doesn't tell lies or change his mind. God always keeps his promises.

²⁰ My command from God was to bless these people, and there's nothing I can do to change what he has done.

²¹ Israel's king is the LORD God. He lives there with them and intends them no harm.

²² With the strength of a wild ox, God led Israel out of Egypt.

²³ No magic charms can work against them just look what God has done for his people.

²⁴ They are like angry lions ready to attack; and they won't rest until their victim is gobbled up.

²⁵ Balak shouted, If you're not going to curse Israel, then at least don't bless them.

²⁶ I've already told you, Balaam answered. I will say only what the LORD tells me.

²⁷ Balak said to Balaam, Come on, let's try another place. Perhaps God will let you curse Israel from there.

²⁸ So he took Balaam to Mount Peor overlooking the desert north of the Dead Sea.

²⁹ Balaam said, Build seven altars here, then bring me seven bulls and seven rams.

³⁰ After Balak had done what Balaam asked, he sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar.

24 ¹ Balaam was sure that the LORD would tell him to bless Israel again. So he did not use any magic to find out what the LORD wanted him to do, as he had the first two times. Instead, he looked out towards the desert

² and saw the tribes of Israel camped below. Just then, God's Spirit took control of him,

³ and Balaam said: I am the son of Beor, and my words are true, so listen to my message!

⁴ It comes from the LORD, the God All-Powerful. I bowed down to him and saw a vision of Israel.

⁵ People of Israel, your camp is lovely.

⁶ It's like a grove of palm trees or a garden beside a river. You are like tall

aloe trees that the LORD has planted, or like cedars growing near water.

⁷You and your descendants will prosper like an orchard beside a stream. Your king will rule with power and be a greater king than Agag the Amalekite.

⁸With the strength of a wild ox, God led you out of Egypt. You will defeat your enemies, shooting them with arrows and crushing their bones.

⁹Like a lion you lie down, resting after an attack. Who would dare disturb you? Anyone who blesses you will be blessed; anyone who curses you will be cursed.

¹⁰When Balak heard this, he was so furious that he pounded his fist against his hand and said, I called you here to place a curse on my enemies, and you've blessed them three times.

¹¹Leave now and go home! I told you I would pay you well, but since the LORD didn't let you do what I asked, you won't be paid.

¹²Balaam answered, I told your messengers

¹³that even if you offered me a palace full of silver or gold, I would still obey

the LORD. And I explained that I would say only what he told me.

¹⁴ So I'm going back home, but I'm leaving you with a warning about what the Israelites will some day do to your nation.

¹⁵ Balaam said: I am the son of Beor, and my words are true, so listen to my message!

¹⁶ My knowledge comes from God Most High, the LORD All-Powerful. I bowed down to him and saw a vision of Israel.

¹⁷ What I saw in my vision hasn't happened yet. But some day, a king of Israel will appear like a star. He will wipe out you Moabites and destroy those tribes who live in the desert.

¹⁸ Israel will conquer Edom and capture the land of that enemy nation.

¹⁹ The king of Israel will rule and destroy the survivors of every town there.

²⁰ And I saw this vision about the Amalekites: Their nation is now great, but it will some day disappear for ever.

²¹ And this is what I saw about the Kenites: They think they're safe, living among the rocks,

²² but they will be wiped out when Assyria conquers them.

²³ No one can survive if God plans destruction.

²⁴ Ships will come from Cyprus, bringing people who will invade the lands of Assyria and Eber. But finally, Cyprus itself will be ruined.

²⁵ After Balaam finished, he started home, and Balak also left.

25 ¹ While the Israelites were camped at Acacia, some of the men had sex with Moabite women.

² These women then invited the men to ceremonies where sacrifices were offered to their gods. The men ate the meat from the sacrifices and worshipped the Moabite gods.

³ The LORD was angry with Israel because they had worshipped the god Baal-Peor.

⁴ So he said to Moses, Take the Israelite leaders who are responsible for this and have them killed in front of my sacred tent where everyone can see. Perhaps then I will stop being angry with the Israelites.

⁵ Moses told Israel's officials, Each of you must put to death any of your men who worshipped Baal.

⁶ Later, Moses and the people were at the sacred tent, crying, when one of the Israelite men brought a Midianite woman to meet his family.

⁷ Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron the priest, saw the couple and left the crowd. He found a spear

⁸ and followed the man into his tent, where he ran the spear through the man and into the woman's stomach. The LORD immediately stopped punishing Israel with a deadly disease,

⁹ but twenty-four thousand Israelites had already died.

¹⁰ The LORD said to Moses,

¹¹ In my anger, I would have wiped out the Israelites if Phinehas had not been faithful to me.

¹² But instead of punishing them, I forgave them. So because of the loyalty that Phinehas showed, I solemnly promise that he and his descendants will always be my priests.

¹³ (25: 12)

¹⁴The Israelite man that was killed was Zimri son of Salu, who was one of the leaders of the Simeon tribe.

¹⁵And the Midianite woman killed with him was Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite clan leader named Zur.

¹⁶The LORD told Moses,

¹⁷The Midianites are now enemies of Israel, so attack and defeat them! They tricked the people of Israel into worshipping their god at Peor, and they are responsible for the death of Cozbi, the daughter of one of their own leaders.

¹⁸(25: 17)

26¹ After the LORD had stopped the deadly disease from killing the Israelites, he said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron,

²I want you to find out how many Israelites are in each family. And list every man twenty years and older who is able to serve in Israel's army.

³Israel was now camped in the hills of Moab across the River Jordan from the town of Jericho. Moses and Eleazar told them

⁴what the LORD had said about counting the men twenty years and

older, just as Moses and their ancestors had done when they left Egypt.

⁵There were 43,730 men from the tribe of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob. These men were from the clans of Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

⁶(26: 5)

⁷(26: 5)

⁸Pallu was the father of Eliab

⁹and the grandfather of Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These are the same Dathan and Abiram who had been chosen by the people, but who followed Korah and rebelled against Moses, Aaron, and the LORD.

¹⁰That's when the LORD made the earth open up and swallow Dathan, Abiram, and Korah. At the same time, fire destroyed two hundred and fifty men as a warning to the other Israelites.

¹¹But the Korahite clan wasn't destroyed.

¹²There were 22,200 men from the tribe of Simeon; they were from the clans of Nemuel, Jamin, Jachin, Zerah, and Shaul.

¹³(26: 12)

¹⁴(26: 12)

¹⁵There were 40,500 men from the tribe of Gad; they were from the clans of Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ozni, Eri, Arod, and Areli.

¹⁶(26: 15)

¹⁷(26: 15)

¹⁸(26: 15)

¹⁹There were 76,500 men from the tribe of Judah; they were from the clans of Shelah, Perez, Zerah, Hezron, and Hamul. Judah's sons Er and Onan had died in Canaan.

²⁰(26: 19)

²¹(26: 19)

²²(26: 19)

²³There were 64,300 men from the tribe of Issachar; they were from the clans of Tola, Puvah, Jashub, and Shimron.

²⁴(26: 23)

²⁵(26: 23)

²⁶There were 60,500 men from the tribe of Zebulun; they were from the clans of Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

²⁷(26: 26)

²⁸There were 52,700 men from the tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph; they were from the clan of Machir, the

clan of Gilead his son, and the clans of his six grandsons: Iezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Shemida, and Hopher. Zelophehad son of Hopher had no sons, but he had five daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

²⁹ (26: 28)

³⁰ (26: 28)

³¹ (26: 28)

³² (26: 28)

³³ (26: 28)

³⁴ (26: 28)

³⁵ There were 32,500 men from the tribe of Ephraim son of Joseph; they were from the clans of Shuthelah, Becher, Tahan, and Eran the son of Shuthelah.

³⁶ (26: 35)

³⁷ (26: 35)

³⁸ There were 45,600 men from the tribe of Benjamin; they were from the clans of Bela, Ashbel, Ahiham, Shephupham, Hupham, as well as from Ard and Naaman, the two sons of Bela.

³⁹ (26: 38)

⁴⁰ (26: 38)

⁴¹ (26: 38)

⁴² There were 64,400 men from the tribe of Dan; they were all from the clan of Shuham.

⁴³ (26: 42)

⁴⁴ There were 53,400 men from the tribe of Asher; they were from the clans of Imnah, Ishvi, and Beriah, and from the two clans of Heber and Malchiel, the sons of Beriah. Asher's daughter was Serah.

⁴⁵ (26: 44)

⁴⁶ (26: 44)

⁴⁷ (26: 44)

⁴⁸ There were 45,400 men from the tribe of Naphtali; they were from the clans of Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

⁴⁹ (26: 48)

⁵⁰ (26: 48)

⁵¹ The total number of Israelite men listed was 601,730.

⁵² The LORD said to Moses,

⁵³ Divide the land of Canaan among these tribes, according to the number of people in each one,

⁵⁴ so the larger tribes have more land than the smaller ones.

⁵⁵ I will show you what land to give each tribe, and they will receive as much land as they need, according to the number of people in it.

⁵⁶ (26: 55)

⁵⁷ The tribe of Levi included the clans of the Gershonites, Kohathites, Merarites,

⁵⁸ as well as the clans of Libni, Hebron, Mahli, Mushi, and Korah. Kohath the Levite was the father of Amram,

⁵⁹ the husband of Levi's daughter Jochebed, who was born in Egypt. Amram and Jochebed's three children were Aaron, Moses, and Miriam.

⁶⁰ Aaron was the father of Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁶¹ But Nadab and Abihu had died when they offered fire that was unacceptable to the LORD.

⁶² In the tribe of Levi there were 23,000 men and boys at least a month old. They were not listed with the other tribes, because they would not receive any land in Canaan.

⁶³ Moses and Eleazar counted the Israelites while they were camped in the hills of Moab across the River Jordan from Jericho.

⁶⁴None of the people that Moses and Aaron had counted in the Sinai Desert were still alive,

⁶⁵except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. The LORD had said that everyone else would die there in the desert.

27 ¹Zelophehad was from the Manasseh tribe, and he had five daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

²One day his daughters went to the sacred tent, where they met with Moses, Eleazar, and some other leaders of Israel, as well as a large crowd of Israelites. The young women said:

³You know that our father died in the desert. But it was for something he did wrong, not for joining with Korah in rebelling against the LORD. Our father left no sons

⁴to carry on his family name. But why should his name die out for that reason? Give us some land like the rest of his relatives in our clan, so our father's name can live on.

⁵Moses asked the LORD what should be done,

⁶and the LORD answered:

⁷Zelophehad's daughters are right. They should each be given part of the land their father would have received.

⁸Tell the Israelites that when a man dies without a son, his daughter will inherit his land.

⁹If he has no daughter, his brothers will inherit the land.

¹⁰But if he has no brothers, his father's brothers will inherit the land.

¹¹And if his father has no brothers, the land must be given to his nearest relative in the clan. This is my law, and the Israelites must obey it.

¹²The LORD said to Moses, One day you will go up into the Abarim Mountains, and from there you will see the land I am giving the Israelites.

¹³After you have seen it, you will die, just like your brother Aaron,

¹⁴because both of you disobeyed me at Meribah near the town of Kadesh in the Zin Desert. When the Israelites insulted me there, you didn't believe in my holy power.

¹⁵Moses replied,

¹⁶You are the LORD God, and you know what is in everyone's heart. So I ask you to appoint a leader for Israel.

¹⁷Your people need someone to lead them into battle, or else they will be like sheep wandering around without a shepherd.

¹⁸The LORD answered, Joshua son of Nun can do the job. Place your hands on him to show that he is the one to take your place.

¹⁹Then go with him and make him stand in front of Eleazar the priest and the Israelites. Appoint Joshua as their new leader

²⁰and tell them they must now obey him, just as they obey you.

²¹But Joshua must depend on Eleazar to find out from me what I want him to do as he leads Israel into battle.

²²Moses followed the LORD's instructions and took Joshua to Eleazar and the people,

²³then he placed his hands on Joshua and appointed him Israel's leader.

28¹The LORD told Moses
²to say to the people of Israel:
Offer sacrifices to me at the appointed

times of worship, so that I will smell the smoke and be pleased.

³Each day offer two rams a year old as sacrifices to please me. The animals must have nothing wrong with them;

⁴one will be sacrificed in the morning, and the other in the evening.

⁵Along with each of them, one kilogramme of your finest flour mixed with a litre of olive oil must be offered as a grain sacrifice.

⁶This sacrifice to please me was first offered on Mount Sinai.

⁷Finally, along with each of these two sacrifices, a litre of wine must be poured on the altar as a drink offering.

⁸The second ram will be sacrificed that evening, along with the other offerings, just like the one sacrificed that morning. The smell of the smoke from these sacrifices will please me.

⁹The LORD said: On the Sabbath, in addition to the regular daily sacrifices, you must sacrifice two rams a year old to please me. These rams must have nothing wrong with them, and they will be sacrificed with a drink offering and

two kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil.

¹⁰(28: 9)

¹¹The LORD said: On the first day of each month, bring to the altar two bulls, one full-grown ram, and seven rams a year old that have nothing wrong with them. Then offer these as sacrifices to please me.

¹²Three kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil must be offered with each bull as a grain sacrifice. Two kilogrammes of flour mixed with oil must be offered with the ram,

¹³and one kilogramme of flour mixed with oil must be offered with each of the young rams. The smell of the smoke from these sacrifices will please me.

¹⁴Offer two litres of wine as a drink offering with each bull, one and a half litres with the ram, and one litre with each of the young rams. Finally, you must offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin. These sacrifices are to be offered on the first day of each month, in addition to the regular daily sacrifices.

¹⁵(28: 14)

¹⁶The LORD said: Celebrate Passover in honour of me on the fourteenth day of the first month of each year.

¹⁷The following day will begin the Festival of Thin Bread, which will last for a week. During this time you must honour me by eating bread made without yeast.

¹⁸On the first day of this festival, you must rest from your work and come together for worship.

¹⁹Bring to the altar two bulls, one full-grown ram, and seven rams a year old that have nothing wrong with them. And then offer these as sacrifices to please me.

²⁰Three kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil must be offered with each bull as a grain sacrifice. Two kilogrammes of flour mixed with oil must be offered with the ram,

²¹and one kilogramme of flour mixed with oil must be offered with each of the young rams.

²²Also offer a goat as a sacrifice for the sins of the people.

²³All of these are to be offered in addition to the regular daily sacrifices,

and the smoke from them will please me.

²⁴ (28: 23)

²⁵ Then on the last day of the festival, you must once again rest from work and come together for worship.

²⁶ The LORD said: On the first day of the Harvest Festival, you must rest from your work, come together for worship, and bring a sacrifice of new grain.

²⁷ Offer two young bulls, one full-grown ram, and seven rams a year old as sacrifices to please me.

²⁸ Three kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil must be offered with each bull as a grain sacrifice. Two kilogrammes of flour mixed with oil must be offered with the ram,

²⁹ and one kilogramme of flour mixed with oil must be offered with each of the young rams.

³⁰ Also offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin.

³¹ The animals must have nothing wrong with them and are to be sacrificed along with the regular daily sacrifices.

29¹ The LORD said: On the first day of the seventh month, you must rest from your work and come

together to celebrate at the sound of the trumpets.

²Bring to the altar one bull, one full-grown ram, and seven rams a year old that have nothing wrong with them. And then offer these as sacrifices to please me.

³Three kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil must be offered with the bull as a grain sacrifice. Two kilogrammes of flour mixed with oil must be offered with the ram,

⁴and one kilogramme of flour mixed with oil must be offered with each of the young rams.

⁵You must also offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin.

⁶These sacrifices will be made in addition to the regular daily sacrifices and the sacrifices for the first day of the month. The smoke from these sacrifices will please me.

⁷The LORD said: The tenth day of the seventh month is the Great Day of Forgiveness. On that day you must rest from all work and come together for worship. Show sorrow for your sins by going without food,

⁸and bring to the altar one young bull, one full-grown ram, and seven rams a year old that have nothing wrong with them. Then offer these as sacrifices to please me.

⁹Three kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil must be offered with the bull as a grain sacrifice. Two kilogrammes of flour mixed with oil must be offered with the ram,

¹⁰and one kilogramme of flour mixed with oil must be offered with each of the young rams.

¹¹A goat must also be sacrificed for the sins of the people. You will offer these sacrifices in addition to the sacrifice to ask forgiveness and the regular daily sacrifices.

¹²The LORD said: Beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and continuing for seven days, everyone must celebrate the Festival of Shelters in honour of me.

¹³On the first day, you must rest from your work and come together for worship. Bring to the altar thirteen bulls, two full-grown rams, and fourteen rams a year old that have nothing wrong with

them. Then offer these as sacrifices to please me.

¹⁴Three kilogrammes of your finest flour mixed with olive oil must be offered with each bull as a grain sacrifice. Two kilogrammes of flour mixed with oil must be offered with each of the rams,

¹⁵and one kilogramme of flour mixed with oil must be offered with each of the young rams.

¹⁶You must also offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin. These are to be offered in addition to the regular daily sacrifices.

¹⁷For the next six days of the festival, you will sacrifice one less bull than the day before, so that on the seventh day, seven bulls will be sacrificed. The other sacrifices and offerings must remain the same for each of these days.

¹⁸(29: 17)

¹⁹(29: 17)

²⁰(29: 17)

²¹(29: 17)

²²(29: 17)

²³(29: 17)

²⁴(29: 17)

²⁵(29: 17)

²⁶(29: 17)

²⁷ (29: 17)

²⁸ (29: 17)

²⁹ (29: 17)

³⁰ (29: 17)

³¹ (29: 17)

³² (29: 17)

³³ (29: 17)

³⁴ (29: 17)

³⁵ On the eighth day, you must once again rest from your work and come together for worship.

³⁶ Bring to the altar one bull, one full-grown ram, and seven rams a year old that have nothing wrong with them. Then offer these as sacrifices to please me.

³⁷ You must also offer the proper grain sacrifices and drink offerings of wine with each animal.

³⁸ And offer a goat as the sacrifice to ask forgiveness for the people. These sacrifices are made in addition to the regular daily sacrifices.

³⁹ You must offer all these sacrifices to me at the appointed times of worship, together with any offerings that are voluntarily given or given because of a promise.

⁴⁰ Moses told the people of Israel everything the LORD had told him about the sacrifices.

30¹ The LORD told Moses to say to Israel's tribal leaders:

² When one of you men makes a promise to the LORD, you must keep your word.

³ Suppose a young woman who is still living with her parents makes a promise to the LORD.

⁴ If her father hears about it and says nothing, she must keep her promise.

⁵ But if he hears about it and objects, then she no longer has to keep her promise. The LORD will forgive her, because her father did not agree with the promise.

⁶ Suppose a woman makes a promise to the LORD and then gets married. If her husband later hears about the promise but says nothing, she must do what she said, whether she meant it or not.

⁷ (30: 6)

⁸ But if her husband hears about the promise and objects, she no longer has to keep it, and the LORD will forgive her.

⁹Widows and divorced women must keep every promise they make to the LORD.

¹⁰Suppose a married woman makes a promise to the LORD.

¹¹If her husband hears about the promise and says nothing, she must do what she said.

¹²But if he hears about the promise and does object, she no longer has to keep it. The LORD will forgive her, because her husband would not allow her to keep the promise.

¹³Her husband has the final say about any promises she makes to the LORD.

¹⁴If her husband hears about a promise and says nothing about it for a whole day, she must do what she said since he did not object, the promise must be kept.

¹⁵But if he waits until the next day to stop her from keeping her promise, he is the one who must be punished.

¹⁶These are the laws that the LORD gave Moses about husbands and wives, and about young daughters who still live at home.

31 ¹The LORD said to Moses,
²Before you die, make sure that the Midianites are punished for what they did to Israel.

³Then Moses told the people, The LORD wants to punish the Midianites. So tell our men to prepare for battle.

⁴Each tribe will send a thousand men to fight.

⁵Twelve thousand men were picked from the tribes of Israel, and after they were prepared for battle,

⁶Moses sent them off to war. Phinehas the son of Eleazar went with them and took along some things from the sacred tent and the trumpets for sounding the battle signal.

⁷The Israelites fought against the Midianites, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. They killed all the men,

⁸including Balaam son of Beor and the five Midianite kings, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba.

⁹The Israelites captured every woman and child, then led away the Midianites' cattle and sheep, and took everything else that belonged to them.

¹⁰They also burnt down the Midianite towns and villages.

¹¹Israel's soldiers gathered together everything they had taken from the Midianites, including the captives and the animals.

¹²Then they returned to their own camp in the hills of Moab across the River Jordan from Jericho, where Moses, Eleazar, and the other Israelite leaders met the troops outside camp.

¹³(31:12)

¹⁴Moses became angry with the army commanders

¹⁵and said, I can't believe you let the women live!

¹⁶They are the ones who followed Balaam's advice and invited our people to worship the god Baal-Peor. That's why the LORD punished us by killing so many of our people.

¹⁷You must put to death every boy and all the women who have ever had sex.

¹⁸But do not kill the young women who have never had sex. You may keep them for yourselves.

¹⁹Then Moses said to the soldiers, If you killed anyone or touched a dead

body, you are unclean and have to stay outside the camp for seven days. On the third and seventh days, you must go through a ceremony to make yourselves and your captives clean.

²⁰Then wash your clothes and anything made from animal skin, goat's hair, or wood.

²¹Eleazar then explained, If you need to purify something that won't burn, such as gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, or lead, you must first place it in a hot fire. After you take it out, sprinkle it with the water that purifies. Everything else should only be sprinkled with the water. Do all of this, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

²²(31: 21)

²³(31: 21)

²⁴Wash your clothes on the seventh day, and after that, you will be clean and may return to the camp.

²⁵The LORD told Moses:

²⁶Make a list of everything taken from the Midianites, including the captives and the animals. Then divide them between the soldiers and the rest of the people.

Eleazar the priest and the family leaders will help you.

²⁷ (31: 26)

²⁸ From the half that belongs to the soldiers, set aside for the LORD one out of every five hundred people or animals and give these to Eleazar.

²⁹ (31: 28)

³⁰ From the half that belongs to the people, set aside one out of every fifty and give these to the Levites in charge of the sacred tent.

³¹ Moses and Eleazar followed the LORD's instructions

³² and listed everything that had been taken from the Midianites. The list included 675,000 sheep and goats, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 young women who had never had sex.

³³ (31: 32)

³⁴ (31: 32)

³⁵ (31: 32)

³⁶ Each half included 337,500 sheep and goats, 36,000 cattle, 30,500 donkeys, and 16,000 young women. From the half that belonged to the soldiers, Moses counted out 675 sheep and goats, 72

cattle, 61 donkeys, and 32 women and gave them to Eleazar to be dedicated to the LORD. Then from the half that belonged to the people, Moses set aside one out of every fifty animals and women, as the LORD had said, and gave them to the Levites.

³⁷ (31: 36)

³⁸ (31: 36)

³⁹ (31: 36)

⁴⁰ (31: 36)

⁴¹ (31: 36)

⁴² (31: 36)

⁴³ (31: 36)

⁴⁴ (31: 36)

⁴⁵ (31: 36)

⁴⁶ (31: 36)

⁴⁷ (31: 36)

⁴⁸ The army commanders went to Moses

⁴⁹ and said, Sir, we have counted our troops, and not one soldier is missing.

⁵⁰ So we want to give the LORD all the gold jewellery we took from the Midianites. It's our gift to him for watching over us and our troops.

⁵¹ Moses and Eleazar accepted the jewellery from the commanders,

⁵²and its total weight was nearly two hundred kilogrammes.

⁵³This did not include the things that the soldiers had kept for themselves.

⁵⁴So Moses and Eleazar placed the gold in the LORD's sacred tent to remind Israel of what had happened.

32¹The tribes of Reuben and Gad owned a lot of cattle and sheep, and they saw that the regions of Jazer and Gilead had good pasture land.

²So they went to Moses, Eleazar, and the other leaders of Israel and said,

³The LORD has helped us capture the land around the towns of Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon. That's good pasture land, and since we own cattle and sheep,

⁴(32: 3)

⁵would you let us stay here east of the River Jordan and have this land as our own?

⁶Moses answered: You mean you'd stay here while the rest of the Israelites go into battle?

⁷If you did that, it would discourage the others from crossing over into the land the LORD promised them.

⁸This is exactly what happened when I sent your ancestors from Kadesh-Barnea to explore the land.

⁹They went as far as Eshcol Valley, then returned and told the people that we should not enter it.

¹⁰The LORD became very angry.

¹¹And he said that no one who was twenty years or older when they left Egypt would enter the land he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not one of those people believed in the LORD's power,

¹²except Caleb and Joshua. They remained faithful to the LORD,

¹³but he was so angry with the others that he forced them to wander around in the desert forty years. By that time everyone who had sinned against him had died.

¹⁴Now you people of Reuben and Gad are doing the same thing and making the LORD even angrier.

¹⁵If you reject the LORD, he will once again abandon his people and leave them here in the desert. And you will be to blame!

¹⁶The men from Reuben and Gad replied: Let us build places to keep our sheep and goats, and towns for our wives and children,

¹⁷where they can stay and be safe. Then we'll prepare to fight and lead the other tribes into battle.

¹⁸We will stay with them until they have settled in their own tribal lands.

¹⁹The land on this side of the River Jordan will be ours, so we won't expect to receive any on the other side.

²⁰Moses said: You promised that you would be ready to fight for the LORD.

²¹You also agreed to cross the Jordan and stay with the rest of the Israelites, until the LORD forces our enemies out of the land. If you do these things,

²²then after the LORD helps Israel capture the land, you can return to your own land. You will no longer have to stay with the others.

²³But if you don't keep your promise, you will sin against the LORD and be punished.

²⁴Go ahead and build towns for your wives and children, and places for your

sheep and goats. Just be sure to do what you have promised.

²⁵The men from Reuben and Gad answered: Sir, we will do just what you have said.

²⁶Our wives and children and sheep and cattle will stay here in the towns in Gilead.

²⁷But those of us who are prepared for battle will cross the Jordan and fight for the LORD.

²⁸Then Moses said to Eleazar, Joshua, and the family leaders,

²⁹Make sure that the tribes of Gad and Reuben prepare for battle and cross the River Jordan with you. If they do, then after the land is in your control, give them the region of Gilead as their tribal land.

³⁰But if they break their promise, they will receive land on the other side of the Jordan, like the rest of the tribes.

³¹The tribes of Gad and Reuben replied, We are your servants and will do whatever the LORD has commanded.

³²We will cross the River Jordan, ready to fight for the LORD in Canaan. But the

land we will inherit as our own will be on this side of the river.

³³ So Moses gave the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh the territory and towns that King Sihon the Amorite had ruled, as well as the territory and towns that King Og of Bashan had ruled.

³⁴ The tribe of Gad rebuilt the towns of Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer,

³⁵ Atroth-Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah,

³⁶ Beth-Nimrah, and Beth-Haran. They built walls around them and also built places to keep their sheep and goats.

³⁷ The tribe of Reuben rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim,

³⁸ Sibmah, as well as the towns that used to be known as Nebo and Baal-Meon. They renamed all those places.

³⁹ The clan of Machir from the tribe of East Manasseh went to the region of Gilead, captured its towns, and forced out the Amorites.

⁴⁰ So Moses gave the Machirites the region of Gilead, and they settled there.

⁴¹ Jair from the Manasseh tribe captured villages and renamed them Villages of Jair.

⁴² Nobah captured the town of Kenath with its villages and renamed it Nobah.

33 ¹ As Israel travelled from Egypt under the command of Moses and Aaron,

² Moses kept a list of the places where they camped, just as the LORD had instructed. Here is the record of their journey:

³ Israel left the Egyptian city of Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month. This was the day after the LORD had punished Egypt's gods by killing the firstborn sons in every Egyptian family. So while the Egyptians were burying the bodies, they watched the Israelites proudly leave their country.

⁴ (33: 3)

⁵ After the Israelites left Rameses, they camped at Succoth,

⁶ and from there, they moved their camp to Etham on the edge of the desert.

⁷ Then they turned back towards Pi-Hahiroth, east of Baal-Zephon, and camped near Migdol.

⁸ They left Pi-Hahiroth, crossed the Red Sea, then walked three days into the Etham Desert and camped at Marah.

⁹ Next, they camped at Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees.

¹⁰ They left Elim and camped near the Red Sea,

¹¹ then turned east and camped along the western edge of the Sinai Desert.

¹² From there they went to Dophkah, Alush, and Rephidim, where they had no water.

¹³ (33: 12)

¹⁴ (33: 12)

¹⁵ They left Rephidim and finally reached the Sinai Desert.

¹⁶ As Israel travelled from the Sinai Desert to Kadesh in the Zin Desert, they camped at Kibroth-Hattaavah, Hazeroth, Rithmah, Rimmon-Perez, Libnah, Rissah, Kehelathah, Mount Shepher, Haradah, Makheloth, Tahath, Terah, Mithkah, Hashmonah, Moseroth, Bene-Jaakan,

Hor-Haggidgad, Jotbathah, Abroah, Ezion-Geber, and finally Kadesh.

¹⁷ (33: 16)

¹⁸ (33: 16)

¹⁹ (33: 16)

²⁰ (33: 16)

²¹ (33: 16)

²² (33: 16)

²³ (33: 16)

²⁴ (33: 16)

²⁵ (33: 16)

²⁶ (33: 16)

²⁷ (33: 16)

²⁸ (33: 16)

²⁹ (33: 16)

³⁰ (33: 16)

³¹ (33: 16)

³² (33: 16)

³³ (33: 16)

³⁴ (33: 16)

³⁵ (33: 16)

³⁶ (33: 16)

³⁷ When they left Kadesh, they came to Mount Hor, on the border of Edom.

³⁸ That's where the LORD commanded Aaron the priest to go to the top of the mountain. Aaron died there on the first

day of the fifth month, forty years after the Israelites left Egypt.

³⁹He was one hundred and twenty-three years old at the time.

⁴⁰It was then that the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Southern Desert of Canaan, heard that Israel was headed that way.

⁴¹The Israelites left Mount Hor and headed towards Moab. Along the way, they camped at Zalmonah, Punon, Oboth, Iye-Abarim in the territory of Moab, Dibon-Gad, Almon-Diblathaim, at a place near Mount Nebo in the Abarim Mountains,

⁴²(33: 41)

⁴³(33: 41)

⁴⁴(33: 41)

⁴⁵(33: 41)

⁴⁶(33: 41)

⁴⁷(33: 41)

⁴⁸and finally in the lowlands of Moab across the River Jordan from Jericho.

⁴⁹Their camp stretched from Beth-Jeshimoth to Acacia.

⁵⁰While Israel was camped in the lowlands of Moab across the River Jordan from Jericho, the LORD told Moses

⁵¹ to give the people of Israel this message: When you cross the River Jordan and enter Canaan,

⁵² you must force out the people living there. Destroy their idols and tear down their altars.

⁵³ Then settle in the land I have given it to you as your own.

⁵⁴ I will show you how to divide the land among the tribes, according to the number of clans in each one, so that the larger tribes will have more land than the smaller ones.

⁵⁵ If you don't force out all the people there, they will be like pointed sticks in your eyes and thorns in your back. They will always be trouble for you,

⁵⁶ and I will treat you as cruelly as I planned to treat them.

34 ¹ The LORD told Moses ² to tell the people of Israel that their land in Canaan would have the following borders:

³ The southern border will be the Zin Desert and the north-west part of Edom. This border will begin at the south end of the Dead Sea.

⁴It will go west from there, but will turn southward to include Scorpion Pass, the village of Zin, and the town of Kadesh-Barnea. From there, the border will continue to Hazar-Addar and on to Azmon.

⁵It will run along the Egyptian Gorge and end at the Mediterranean Sea.

⁶The western border will be the Mediterranean Sea.

⁷The northern border will begin at the Mediterranean, then continue eastward to Mount Hor.

⁸After that, it will run to Lebo-Hamath and across to Zedad, which is the northern edge of your land.

⁹From Zedad, the border will continue east to Ziphron and end at Hazar-Enan.

¹⁰The eastern border will begin at Hazar-Enan in the north, then run south to Shepham,

¹¹and on down to Riblah on the east side of Ain. From there, it will go south to the eastern hills of Lake Galilee,

¹²then follow the River Jordan down to the north end of the Dead Sea. The land within those four borders will belong to you.

¹³Then Moses told the people, You will receive the land inside these borders. It will be yours, but the LORD has commanded you to divide it among the nine and a half tribes.

¹⁴The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh have already been given their land

¹⁵across from Jericho, east of the River Jordan.

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses,

¹⁷Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun will divide the land for the Israelites.

¹⁸One leader from each tribe will help them,

¹⁹and here is the list of their names: Caleb son of Jephunneh from Judah, Shemuel son of Ammihud from Simeon, Elidad son of Chislon from Benjamin, Bukki son of Jogli from Dan, Hanniel son of Ephod from Manasseh, Kemuel son of Shiphthan from Ephraim, Elizaphan son of Parnach from Zebulun, Paltiel son of Azzan from Issachar, Ahihud son of Shelomi from Asher, and Pedahel son of Ammihud from Naphtali.

²⁰ (34: 19)

²¹ (34: 19)

²² (34: 19)

²³ (34: 19)

²⁴ (34: 19)

²⁵ (34: 19)

²⁶ (34: 19)

²⁷ (34: 19)

²⁸ (34: 19)

²⁹ These are the men the LORD commanded to help Eleazar and Joshua divide the land for the Israelites.

35¹ While the people of Israel were still camped in the lowlands of Moab across the River Jordan from Jericho, the LORD told Moses

² to say to them: When you receive your tribal lands, you must give towns and pastures to the Levi tribe.

³ That way, the Levites will have towns to live in and pastures for their animals.

⁴ The pasture around each of these towns must be in the shape of a square, with the town itself in the centre. The pasture is to measure nine hundred metres on each side, with four hundred and fifty metres of land outside each of the town walls. This will be the Levites' pasture land.

⁵ (35: 4)

⁶Six of the towns you give them will be Safe Towns where a person who has accidentally killed someone can run for protection. But you will also give the Levites forty-two other towns,

⁷so they will have a total of forty-eight towns with their surrounding pastures.

⁸Since the towns for the Levites must come from Israel's own tribal lands, the larger tribes will give more towns than the smaller ones.

⁹The LORD then told Moses

¹⁰to tell the people of Israel: After you have crossed the River Jordan and are settled in Canaan,

¹¹choose Safe Towns, where a person who has accidentally killed someone can run for protection.

¹²If the victim's relatives think it was murder, they might try to take revenge. Anyone accused of murder can run to one of these Safe Towns for protection and not be killed before a trial is held.

¹³There are to be six of these Safe Towns,

¹⁴three on each side of the River Jordan.

¹⁵They will be places of protection for anyone who lives in Israel and accidentally kills someone.

¹⁶The LORD said: Suppose you hit someone with a piece of iron or a large stone or a dangerous wooden tool. If that person dies, then you are a murderer and must be put to death

¹⁷ (35: 16)

¹⁸ (35: 16)

¹⁹by one of the victim's relatives. He will take revenge for his relative's death as soon as he finds you.

²⁰Or suppose you get angry and kill someone by pushing or hitting or by throwing something. You are a murderer and must be put to death by one of the victim's relatives.

²¹ (35: 20)

²²But if you are not angry and accidentally kill someone in any of these ways, the townspeople must hold a trial and decide if you are guilty.

²³ (35: 22)

²⁴ (35: 22)

²⁵If they decide that you are innocent, you will be protected from the victim's

relative and sent to stay in one of the Safe Towns until the high priest dies.

²⁶ But if you ever leave the Safe Town

²⁷ and are killed by the victim's relative, he cannot be punished for killing you.

²⁸ You must stay inside the town until the high priest dies; only then can you go back home.

²⁹ The community of Israel must always obey these laws.

³⁰ Death is the penalty for murder. But no one accused of murder can be put to death unless there are at least two witnesses to the crime.

³¹ You cannot give someone money to escape the death penalty; you must pay with your own life!

³² And if you have been proved innocent of murder and are living in a Safe Town, you cannot pay to go back home; you must stay there until the high priest dies.

³³ I, the LORD, live among you people of Israel, so your land must be kept pure. But when a murder takes place, blood pollutes the land, and it becomes unclean. If that happens, the murderer must be put to death, so the land will be clean again. Keep murder out of Israel!

³⁴ (35: 33)

36 ¹ One day the family leaders from the Gilead clan of the Manasseh tribe went to Moses and the other family leaders of Israel

² and said, Sir, the LORD has said that he will show what land each tribe will receive as their own. And the LORD has commanded you to give the daughters of our relative Zelophehad the land that he would have received.

³ But if they marry men from other tribes of Israel, the land they receive will become part of that tribe's inheritance and will no longer belong to us.

⁴ Even when land is returned to its original owner in the Year of Celebration, we will not get back Zelophehad's land it will belong to the tribe into which his daughters married.

⁵ So Moses told the people that the LORD had said: These men from the Manasseh tribe are right.

⁶ I will allow Zelophehad's daughters to marry anyone, as long as those men belong to one of the clans of the Manasseh tribe.

⁷ Tribal land must not be given to another tribe it will remain the property of the tribe that received it.

⁸ In the future, any daughter who inherits land must marry someone from her own tribe. Israel's tribal land is never to be passed from one tribe to another.

⁹ (36: 8)

¹⁰ Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah the daughters of Zelophehad obeyed the LORD and married their uncles' sons

¹¹ (36: 10)

¹² and remained part of the Manasseh tribe. So their land stayed in their father's clan.

¹³ These are the laws that the LORD gave to Moses and the Israelites while they were camped in the lowlands of Moab across the River Jordan from Jericho.

Deuteronomy

1 ¹ This book contains the speeches that Moses made while Israel was in the land of Moab, camped near the town of Suph in the desert east of the River Jordan. The town of Paran was in one direction from their camp, and the towns of Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab were in the opposite direction. Earlier, Moses had defeated the Amorite King Sihon of Heshbon. Moses had also defeated King Og of Bashan, who used to live in Ashtaroth for part of the year and in Edrei for the rest of the year. Although it takes only eleven days to walk from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea by way of the Mount Seir road, these speeches were not made until forty years after Israel left Egypt. The LORD had given Moses his laws for the people of Israel. And on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses began explaining those laws by saying:

² (1: 1)

³ (1: 1)

⁴ (1: 1)

⁵ (1: 1)

⁶ People of Israel, when we were in our camp at Mount Sinai, the LORD our God told us: You have stayed here long enough.

⁷ Leave this place and go into the land that belongs to the Amorites and their neighbours the Canaanites. This land includes the valley of the River Jordan, the hill country, the western foothills, the Southern Desert, the Mediterranean coast, the Lebanon Mountains, and all the territory as far as the River Euphrates.

⁸ I give you this land, just as I promised your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now you must go and take the land.

⁹ Moses said: Straight after the LORD commanded us to leave Mount Sinai, I told you: Israel, being your leader is too big a job for one person.

¹⁰ The LORD our God has blessed us, and so now there are as many of us as there are stars in the sky.

¹¹ God has even promised to bless us a thousand times more, and I pray that he will.

¹² But I cannot take care of all your problems and settle all your arguments alone.

¹³ Each tribe must choose some experienced men who are known for their wisdom and understanding, and I will make those men the official leaders of their tribes.

¹⁴ You answered, That's a good idea!

¹⁵ Then I took these men, who were already wise and respected leaders, and I appointed them as your official leaders. Some of them became military officers in charge of groups of a thousand, or a hundred, or fifty, or ten,

¹⁶ and others became judges. I gave these judges the following instructions: When you settle legal cases, your decisions must be fair. It doesn't matter if the case is between two Israelites, or between an Israelite and a foreigner living in your community.

¹⁷ And it doesn't matter if one is helpless and the other is powerful. Don't be afraid of anyone! No matter who comes to

your court, God will help you make a fair decision. If any case is too hard for you, bring the people to me, and I will make the decision.

¹⁸After I gave these instructions to the judges, I taught you the LORD's commands.

¹⁹Moses said to Israel: The LORD had commanded us to leave Mount Sinai and go to the hill country that belonged to the Amorites, so we started out into the huge desert. You remember how frightening it was, but soon we were at Kadesh-Barnea,

²⁰and I told you, We have reached the hill country. It belongs to the Amorites now, but the LORD our God is giving it to us. He is the same God our ancestors worshipped, and he has told us to go in and take this land, so don't hesitate and be afraid.

²¹ (1: 20)

²²Then all of you came to me and said, Before we go into the land, let's send some men to explore it. When they come back, they can tell us about the towns we will find and what roads we should take to get there.

²³ It seemed like a good idea, so I chose twelve men, one from each tribe.

²⁴ They explored the hill country as far as Bunch Valley

²⁵ and even brought back some of the fruit. They said, The LORD our God is giving us good land.

²⁶ Moses said to Israel: You did not want to go into the land, and you refused to obey the LORD your God.

²⁷ You stayed in your tents and grumbled, The LORD must hate us he brought us out of Egypt, just so he could hand us over to the Amorites and get rid of us.

²⁸ We are afraid, because the men who explored the land told us that the cities are large, with walls that reach to the sky. The people who live there are taller and stronger than we are, and some of them are Anakim. We have nowhere to go.

²⁹ Then I said, Don't worry!

³⁰ The LORD our God will lead the way. He will fight on our side, just as he did when we saw him do all those things to the Egyptians.

³¹ And you know that the LORD has taken care of us the whole time we've been in the desert, just as you might carry one of your children.

³² But you still would not trust the LORD,

³³ even though he had always been with us in the desert. During the daytime, the LORD was in the cloud, leading us in the right direction and showing us where to camp. And at night, he was there in the fire.

³⁴ You had made the LORD angry, and he said:

³⁵ You people of this generation are evil, and I refuse to let you go into the good land that I promised your ancestors.

³⁶ Caleb son of Jephunneh is the only one of your generation that I will allow to go in. He obeyed me completely, so I will give him and his descendants the land he explored.

³⁷ The LORD was even angry with me because of you people, and he said, Moses, I won't let you go into the land either.

³⁸ Instead, I will let Joshua your assistant lead Israel to conquer the land. So encourage him.

³⁹ Then the LORD spoke to you again: People of Israel, you said that your innocent young children would be taken prisoner in the battle for the land. But some day I will let them go into the land, and with my help they will conquer it and live there.

⁴⁰ Now, turn round and go back into the desert by way of Red Sea Road.

⁴¹ Then you told me, We disobeyed the LORD our God, but now we want to obey him. We will go into the hill country and fight, just as he told us to do. So you picked up your weapons, thinking it would be easy to take over the hill country.

⁴² But the LORD said, Moses, warn them not to go into the hill country. I won't help them fight, and their enemies will defeat them.

⁴³ I told you what the LORD had said, but you paid no attention. You disobeyed him and went into the hill country anyway. You thought you were so great!

⁴⁴ But when the Amorites in the hill country attacked from their towns, you ran from them as you would run from a swarm of bees. The Amorites chased your troops into Seir as far as Hormah, killing them as they went.

⁴⁵ Then you came back to the place of worship at Kadesh-Barnea and wept, but the LORD would not listen to your prayers.

⁴⁶ Moses said to Israel: After we had been in Kadesh for a few months, we obeyed the LORD and headed back into the desert by way of Red Sea Road.

2¹ We spent many years wandering around outside the hill country of Seir,

² until the LORD said: Moses,

³ Israel has wandered in these hills long enough. Turn and go north.

⁴ And give the people these orders: Be very careful, because you will soon go through the land that belongs to your relatives, the descendants of Esau. They are afraid of you,

⁵ but don't start a war with them. I have given them the hill country of Seir, so

I won't give any of it to you, not even enough to set a foot on.

⁶And as you go through their land, you will have to buy food and water from them.

⁷The LORD has helped us and taken care of us during the past forty years that we have been in this huge desert. We've had everything we needed, and the LORD has blessed us and made us successful in whatever we have done.

⁸We went past the territory that belonged to our relatives, the descendants of Esau. We followed Arabah Road that starts in the south at Elath and Ezion-Geber, then we turned on to the desert road that leads to Moab.

⁹The LORD told me, Don't try to start a war with Moab. Leave them alone, because I gave the land of Ar to them, and I will not let you have any of it.

¹⁰Before the LORD gave the Moabites their land, a large and powerful tribe lived there. They were the Emim, and they were as tall as the Anakim.

¹¹The Moabites called them Emim, though others sometimes used the name

Rephaim for both the Anakim and the Emim.

¹²The Horites used to live in Seir, but the Edomites took over that region. They killed many of the Horites and forced the rest of them to leave, just as Israel did to the people in the land that the LORD gave them.

¹³Moses said to Israel: When we came to the Zered Gorge along the southern border of Moab, the LORD told us to cross the gorge into Moab, and we did.

¹⁴This was thirty-eight years after we left Kadesh-Barnea, and by that time all the men who had been in the army at Kadesh-Barnea had died, just as the LORD had said they would.

¹⁵The LORD kept getting rid of them until finally none of them were left.

¹⁶(2: 15)

¹⁷Then the LORD told me,

¹⁸Moses, now go past the town of Ar and cross Moab's northern border

¹⁹into Ammon. But don't start a war with the Ammonites. I gave them their land, and I won't give any of it to Israel.

²⁰Before the Ammonites conquered the land that the LORD had given them,

some of the Rephaim used to live there, although the Ammonites called them Zamzummim.

²¹ The Zamzummim were a large and powerful tribe and were as tall as the Anakim. But the LORD helped the Ammonites, and they killed many of the Zamzummim and forced the rest to leave. Then the Ammonites settled there.

²² The LORD helped them as he had helped the Edomites, who killed many of the Horites in Seir and forced the rest to leave before settling there themselves.

²³ A group called the Avvim used to live in villages as far south as Gaza, but the Philistines killed them and settled on their land.

²⁴ Moses said: After we went through Ammon, the LORD told us: Israel, pack up your possessions, take down your tents, and cross the gorge of the River Arnon. The territory of the Amorite King Sihon of Heshbon lies on the other side of the river, but I now give you his land. So attack and take it!

²⁵ Today I will start making all other nations afraid of you. They will tremble

with fear when anyone mentions you, and they will be terrified when you appear.

²⁶ Moses said to Israel: After we had crossed the Arnon and had set up camp in the Kedemoth Desert, I sent messengers to King Sihon of Heshbon, telling him that his nation and ours could be at peace. I said:

²⁷ Please let Israel go across your country. We will walk straight through, without turning off the road.

²⁸ You can even sell us food and water, and we will pay with silver. We need to reach the River Jordan and cross it, because the LORD our God is giving us the land on the west side. The Edomites and Moabites have already let us cross their land. Please let us cross your land as well.

²⁹ (2: 28)

³⁰ But Sihon refused to let us go across his country, because the LORD made him stubborn and eager to fight us. The LORD told me, I am going to help you defeat Sihon and take his land, so attack him!

³¹ (2: 30)

³²We met Sihon and his army in battle at Jahaz,

³³and the LORD our God helped us defeat them. We killed Sihon, his sons, and everyone else in his army.

³⁴Then we captured and destroyed every town in Sihon's kingdom, killing everyone,

³⁵but keeping the livestock and everything else of value.

³⁶The LORD helped us capture every town from the gorge of the River Arnon north to the boundary of Gilead, including the town of Aroer on the edge of the gorge and the town in the middle of the gorge.

³⁷However, we stayed away from all the Ammonite towns, both in the hill country and near the River Jabbok, just as the LORD had commanded.

3¹ Moses said to Israel: When we turned on to the road that leads to Bashan, King Og of Bashan led out his whole army to fight us at Edrei.

²But the LORD told me, Moses, don't be afraid of King Og. I am going to help you defeat him and his army and take over his land. Destroy him and his people,

just as you did with the Amorite King Sihon of Heshbon.

³The LORD our God helped us destroy Og and his army and conquer his entire kingdom of Bashan, including the Argob region. His kingdom had lots of villages and sixty towns with high walls and gates that locked with bars. We completely destroyed them all, killing everyone,

⁴ (3: 3)

⁵ (3: 3)

⁶ (3: 3)

⁷but keeping the livestock and everything else of value.

⁸Sihon and Og had ruled Amorite kingdoms east of the River Jordan. Their land stretched from the gorge of the River Arnon in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, and we captured it all.

⁹Mount Hermon is called Mount Sirion by the people of Sidon, and it is called Mount Senir by the Amorites.

¹⁰We captured all the towns in the highlands, all of Gilead, and all of Bashan as far as Salecah and Edrei, two of the towns that Og had ruled.

¹¹ King Og was the last of the Rephaim, and his coffin is in the town of Rabbah in Ammon. It is made of hard black rock and is four metres long and almost two metres wide.

¹² Moses said to Israel: I gave some of the land and towns we captured to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Their share started at the gorge of the River Arnon in the south, took in the town of Aroer on the edge of the gorge, and went far enough north to include the southern half of the Gilead region. The northern part of their land went as far east as the upper gorge of the River Jabbok, which formed their border with the Ammonites. I also gave them the eastern side of the valley of the River Jordan, from Lake Galilee south to the Dead Sea below the slopes of Mount Pisgah. I gave the northern half of Gilead and all of the Bashan region to half the tribe of Manasseh. Bashan had belonged to King Og, and the Argob region in Bashan used to be called the Land of the Rephaim. Jair from the Manasseh tribe conquered the Argob region as far west as the kingdoms of Geshur and Maacah. The

Israelites even started calling Bashan by the name Villages of Jair, and that is still its name. I gave the northern half of Gilead to the Machir clan.

¹³ (3: 12)

¹⁴ (3: 12)

¹⁵ (3: 12)

¹⁶ (3: 12)

¹⁷ (3: 12)

¹⁸ At that time I told the men of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh: The LORD our God told me to give you this land with its towns, and that's what I have done. Now your wives and children can stay here with your large flocks of sheep and goats and your large herds of cattle. But all of you men who can serve in our army must cross the River Jordan and help the other tribes, because they are your relatives.

¹⁹ (3: 18)

²⁰ The LORD will let them defeat the enemy nations on the west side of the Jordan and take their land. Afterwards, you can come back here to the land I gave you.

²¹ Then I told Joshua, You saw how the LORD our God helped us destroy King

Sihon and King Og. So don't be afraid! Wherever you go, the LORD will fight on your side and help you destroy your enemies.

²² (3: 21)

²³ Moses said to Israel: At that time I prayed and begged,

²⁴ Our LORD, it seems that you have just begun to show me your great power. No other god in the sky or on earth is able to do the mighty things that you do.

²⁵ The land west of the Jordan is such good land. Please let me cross the Jordan and see the hills and the Lebanon Mountains.

²⁶ But the LORD was angry with me because of you people, and he refused to listen. That's enough! he said. I don't want to hear any more.

²⁷ Climb to the top of Mount Pisgah and look north, south, east, and west. Take a good look, but you are not going to cross the River Jordan.

²⁸ Joshua will lead Israel across the Jordan to take the land, so help him be strong and brave and tell him what he must do.

²⁹ After this we stayed in the valley at Beth-Peor.

4¹ Moses said: Israel, listen to these laws and teachings! If you obey them, you will live, and you will go in and take the land that the LORD is giving you. He is the God your ancestors worshipped,

² and now he is your God. I am telling you everything he has commanded, so don't add anything or take anything away.

³ You saw how he killed everyone who worshipped the god Baal-Peor.

⁴ But all of you who were faithful to the LORD your God are still alive today.

⁵ No other nation has laws that are as fair as the ones the Lord my God told me to give you. If you faithfully obey them when you enter the land, you will show other nations how wise you are. In fact, everyone who hears about your laws will say, That great nation certainly is wise! And what makes us greater than other nations? We have a God who is close to us and answers our prayers.

⁶ (4: 5)

⁷ (4: 5)

⁸(4: 5)

⁹You must be very careful not to forget the things you have seen God do for you. Keep reminding yourselves, and tell your children and grandchildren as well.

¹⁰Do you remember the day you stood in the LORD's presence at Mount Sinai? The LORD said, Moses, bring the people of Israel here. I want to speak to them so they will obey me as long as they live, and so they will teach their children to obey me too.

¹¹Mount Sinai was surrounded by deep dark clouds, and fire went up to the sky. You came to the foot of the mountain,

¹²and the LORD spoke to you from the fire. You could hear him and understand what he was saying, but you couldn't see him.

¹³The LORD said he was making an agreement with you, and he told you that your part of the agreement is to obey the Ten Commandments. Then the LORD wrote these Commandments on two flat stones.

¹⁴That's when the LORD commanded me to give you the laws and teachings

you must obey in the land that you will conquer west of the River Jordan.

¹⁵ Moses said to Israel: When God spoke to you from the fire, he was invisible. So be careful

¹⁶ not to commit the sin of worshipping idols. Don't make idols to be worshipped, whether they are shaped like men, women,

¹⁷ animals, birds,

¹⁸ reptiles, or fish.

¹⁹ And when you see the sun or moon or stars, don't be tempted to bow down and worship them. The LORD put them there for all the other nations to worship.

²⁰ But you are the LORD's people, because he led you through fiery trials and rescued you from Egypt.

²¹ The LORD was angry with me because of what you said, and he told me that he would not let me cross the River Jordan into the good land that he is giving you.

²² So I must stay here and die on this side of the Jordan, but you will cross the river and take the land.

²³ Always remember the agreement that the LORD your God made with you,

and don't make an idol in any shape or form.

²⁴The LORD will be angry if you worship other gods, and he can be like a fire destroying everything in its path.

²⁵Soon you will cross the River Jordan and settle down in the land. Then in the years to come, you will have children, and they will give you grandchildren. After many years, you might lose your sense of right and wrong and make idols, even though the LORD your God hates them. So I am giving you fair warning today, and I call the earth and the sky as witnesses. If you ever make idols, the LORD will be angry, and you won't have long to live, because the LORD will let you be wiped out.

²⁶ (4: 25)

²⁷Only a few of you will survive, and the LORD will force you to leave the land and will scatter you among the nations.

²⁸There you will have to worship gods made of wood and stone, and these are nothing but idols that can't see or hear or eat or smell.

²⁹In all your troubles, you may finally decide that you want to worship only the

LORD. And if you turn back to him and obey him completely, he will again be your God.

³⁰ (4: 29)

³¹ The LORD your God will have mercy he won't destroy you or desert you. The LORD will remember his promise, and he will keep the agreement he made with your ancestors.

³² When the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt, you saw how he fought for you and showed his great power by performing terrifying miracles. You became his people, and at Mount Sinai you heard him talking to you out of fiery flames. And yet you are still alive! Has anything like this ever happened since the time God created humans? No matter where you go or who you ask, you will get the same answer. No one has ever heard of another god even trying to do such things as the LORD your God has done for you.

³³ (4: 32)

³⁴ (4: 32)

³⁵ The LORD wants you to know he is the only true God, and he wants you to obey him. That's why he let you see his

mighty miracles and his fierce fire on earth, and why you heard his voice from that fire and from the sky.

³⁶ (4: 35)

³⁷ The LORD loved your ancestors and decided that you would be his people. So the LORD used his great power to bring you out of Egypt.

³⁸ Now you face other nations more powerful than you are, but the LORD has already started forcing them out of their land and giving it to you.

³⁹ So remember that the LORD is the only true God, whether in the sky above or on the earth below.

⁴⁰ Today I am explaining his laws and teachings. And if you always obey them, you and your descendants will live long and be successful in the land the LORD is giving you.

⁴¹ Moses said, People of Israel, you must set aside the following three towns east of the River Jordan as Safe Towns: Bezer in the desert highlands belonging to the Reuben tribe; Ramoth in Gilead, belonging to the Gad tribe; and Golan in Bashan, belonging to the Manasseh tribe. If you kill a neighbour without

meaning to, and if you had not been angry with that person, you can run to one of these towns and find safety.

⁴² (4: 41)

⁴³ (4: 41)

⁴⁴ The Israelites had come from Egypt and were camped east of the River Jordan near Beth-Peor, when Moses gave these laws and teachings. The land around their camp had once belonged to King Sihon of Heshbon. But Moses and the Israelites defeated him

⁴⁵ (4: 44)

⁴⁶ (4: 44)

⁴⁷ and King Og of Bashan, and took their lands. These two Amorite kings had ruled the territory east of the River Jordan

⁴⁸ from the town of Aroer on the edge of the gorge of the River Arnon, north to Mount Hermon.

⁴⁹ Their land included the eastern side of the Jordan valley, as far south as the Dead Sea below the slopes of Mount Pisgah.

5¹ Moses called together the people of Israel and said: Today I am telling

you the laws and teachings that you must follow, so listen carefully.

²The LORD our God made an agreement with our nation at Mount Sinai.

³That agreement wasn't only with our ancestors but with us, who are here today.

⁴The LORD himself spoke to you out of the fire,

⁵but you were afraid of the fire and refused to go up the mountain. So I spoke with the LORD for you, then I told you that he had said:

⁶I am the LORD your God, the one who brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves.

⁷Do not worship any god except me.

⁸Do not make idols that look like anything in the sky or on earth or in the ocean under the earth.

⁹Don't bow down and worship idols. I am the LORD your God, and I demand all your love. If you reject me and worship idols, I will punish your families for three or four generations.

¹⁰But if you love me and obey my laws, I will be kind to your families for thousands of generations.

¹¹ Do not misuse my name. I am the LORD your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

¹² Show respect for the Sabbath Day it belongs to me.

¹³ You have six days when you can do your work,

¹⁴ but the seventh day of the week belongs to me, your God. No one is to work on that day not you, your children, your oxen or donkeys or any other animal, not even those foreigners who live in your towns. And don't make your slaves do any work.

¹⁵ This special day of rest will remind you that I reached out my mighty arm and rescued you from slavery in Egypt.

¹⁶ Respect your father and mother, and you will live a long and successful life in the land I am giving you.

¹⁷ Do not murder.

¹⁸ Be faithful in marriage.

¹⁹ Do not steal.

²⁰ Do not tell lies about others.

²¹ Do not want to take anything that belongs to someone else. Don't want to take anyone's wife or husband, house,

land, slaves, oxen, donkeys, or anything else.

²²When we were gathered on the mountain, the LORD spoke to us in a loud voice from the dark fiery cloud. The LORD gave us these commands, and only these. Then he wrote them on two flat stones and gave them to me.

²³Moses said to Israel: When fire blazed from the mountain, and you heard the voice coming from the darkness, your tribal leaders came to me

²⁴and said: Today the LORD our God has shown us how powerful and glorious he is. He spoke to us from the fire, and we learnt that people can live, even though God speaks to them.

²⁵But we don't want to take a chance on being killed by that terrible fire, and if we keep on hearing the LORD's voice, we will die.

²⁶Has anyone else ever heard the only true God speaking from fire, as we have? And even if they have, would they live to tell about it?

²⁷Moses, go up close and listen to the LORD. Then come back and tell us, and we will do everything he says.

²⁸The LORD heard you and said: Moses, I heard what the people said to you, and I approve.

²⁹I wish they would always worship me with fear and trembling and be this willing to obey me! Then they and their children would always enjoy a successful life.

³⁰Now, tell them to return to their tents,

³¹but you come back here to me. After I tell you my laws and teachings, you will repeat them to the people, so they can obey these laws in the land I am giving them.

³²Moses said: Israel, you must carefully obey the LORD's commands.

³³Follow them, because they make a path that will lead to a long successful life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

6¹ Moses said to Israel: The LORD told me to give you these laws and teachings, so you can obey them in the land he is giving you. Soon you will cross the River Jordan and take that land.

²And if you and your descendants want to live a long time, you must always worship the LORD and obey his laws.

³Pay attention, Israel! Our ancestors worshipped the LORD, and he promised to give us this land that is rich with milk and honey. Be careful to obey him, and you will become a successful and powerful nation.

⁴Listen, Israel! The LORD our God is the only true God!

⁵So love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and strength.

⁶Memorize his laws

⁷and tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you're at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning.

⁸Write down copies and tie them to your wrists and foreheads to help you obey them.

⁹Write these laws on the door frames of your homes and on your town gates.

¹⁰Moses said to Israel: The LORD promised your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would give you this land. Now he will take you there

and give you large towns, with good buildings that you didn't build,

¹¹ and houses full of good things that you didn't put there. The LORD will give you wells that you didn't have to dig, and vineyards and olive orchards that you didn't have to plant. But when you have eaten so much that you can't eat any more,

¹² don't forget it was the LORD who set you free from slavery and brought you out of Egypt.

¹³ Worship and obey the LORD your God with fear and trembling, and promise that you will be loyal to him.

¹⁴ Don't have anything to do with gods that are worshipped by the nations around you.

¹⁵ If you worship other gods, the LORD will be furious and wipe you off the face of the earth. The LORD your God is with you,

¹⁶ so don't try to make him prove that he can help you, as you did at Massah.

¹⁷ Always obey the laws that the LORD has given you

¹⁸ and live in a way that pleases him. Then you will be able to go in and take

this good land from your enemies, just as he promised your ancestors.

¹⁹ (6: 18)

²⁰ Some day your children will ask, Why did the LORD give us these laws and teachings?

²¹ Then you will answer: We were slaves of the king of Egypt, but the LORD used his great power and set us free.

²² We saw him perform miracles and make horrible things happen to the king, his officials, and everyone else.

²³ The LORD rescued us from Egypt, so he could bring us into this land, as he had promised our ancestors.

²⁴ That's why the LORD our God demands that we obey his laws and worship him with fear and trembling. And if we do, he will protect us and help us be successful.

²⁵ (6: 24)

7¹ Moses said: People of Israel, the LORD your God will help you take the land of the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. These seven nations have more people and

are stronger than Israel, but when you attack them,

² the LORD will force them out of the land. Then you must destroy them without mercy. Don't make any peace treaties with them,

³ and don't let your sons and daughters marry any of them.

⁴ If you do, those people will lead your descendants to worship other gods and to turn their backs on the LORD. That will make him very angry, and he will quickly destroy Israel.

⁵ So when you conquer these nations, tear down the altars where they worship their gods. Break up their sacred stones, cut down the poles that they use in worshipping the goddess Asherah, and throw their idols in the fire.

⁶ Moses said: Israel, you are the chosen people of the LORD your God. There are many nations on this earth, but he chose only Israel to be his very own.

⁷ You were the weakest of all nations,

⁸ but the LORD chose you because he loves you and because he had made a promise to your ancestors. Then with his mighty arm, he rescued you from the

king of Egypt, who had made you his slaves.

⁹You know that the LORD your God is the only true God. So love him and obey his commands, and he will faithfully keep his agreement with you and your descendants for a thousand generations.

¹⁰But if you turn against the LORD, he will quickly destroy you.

¹¹So be sure to obey his laws and teachings I am giving you today.

¹²Moses said to Israel: If you completely obey these laws, the LORD your God will be loyal and keep the agreement he made with you, just as he promised our ancestors.

¹³The LORD will love you and bless you by giving you many children and plenty of food, wine, and olive oil. Your herds of cattle will have many calves, and your flocks of sheep will have many lambs.

¹⁴God will bless you more than any other nation your families will grow and your livestock increase.

¹⁵You will no longer suffer with the same horrible diseases that you sometimes had in Egypt. You will be

healthy, but the LORD will make your enemies suffer from those diseases.

¹⁶Moses said to Israel: When the LORD helps you defeat your enemies, you must destroy them without pity! And don't get trapped into worshipping their gods.

¹⁷You may be thinking, How can we destroy these nations? They are more powerful than we are.

¹⁸But stop worrying! Just remember what the LORD your God did to Egypt and its king.

¹⁹You saw how the LORD used his tremendous power to work great miracles and bring you out of Egypt. And he will again work miracles for you when you face these enemies you fear so much.

²⁰Some of them may try to survive by hiding from you, but the LORD will make them panic, and soon they will be dead.

²¹So don't be frightened when you meet them in battle. The LORD your God is great and fearsome, and he will fight at your side.

²²As you attack these nations, the LORD will force them out little by little. He won't let you get rid of them all at

once if he did, there wouldn't be enough people living in the land to keep down the number of wild animals.

²³ But when you attack your enemies, the LORD will make them panic, and you will easily destroy them. You will defeat them one after another until they are gone, and no one will remember they ever lived.

²⁴ (7: 23)

²⁵ After you conquer a nation, burn their idols. Don't get trapped into wanting the silver or gold on an idol. Even the metal on an idol is disgusting to the LORD,

²⁶ so destroy it. If you bring it home with you, both you and your house will be destroyed. Stay away from those disgusting idols!

8¹ Moses said: Israel, do you want to go into the land the LORD promised your ancestors? Do you want to capture it, live there, and become a powerful nation? Then be sure to obey every command I am giving you.

² Don't forget how the LORD your God has led you through the desert for the past forty years. He wanted to find out

if you were truly willing to obey him and depend on him,

³so he made you go hungry. Then he gave you manna, a kind of food that you and your ancestors had never even heard about. The LORD was teaching you that people need more than food to live they need every word that the LORD has spoken.

⁴Over the past forty years, your clothing hasn't worn out, and your feet haven't swollen.

⁵So keep in mind that the LORD has been correcting you, just as parents correct their children.

⁶Obey the commands the LORD your God has given you and worship him with fear and trembling.

⁷The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land with streams that flow from springs in the valleys and hills.

⁸You can dig for copper in those hills, and the stones are made of iron ore. And you won't go hungry. Wheat and barley fields are everywhere, and so are vineyards and orchards full of fig, pomegranate, and olive trees, and there is plenty of honey.

⁹ (8: 8)

¹⁰ Moses said to Israel: After you eat and are full, give praise to the LORD your God for the good land he gave you.

¹¹ Make sure that you never forget the LORD or disobey his laws and teachings that I am giving you today. If you always obey them,

¹² you will have plenty to eat, and you will build good houses to live in.

¹³ You will get more and more cattle, sheep, silver, gold, and other possessions.

¹⁴ But when all this happens, don't be proud! Don't forget that you were once slaves in Egypt and that it was the LORD who set you free.

¹⁵ Remember how he led you in that huge and frightening desert where poisonous snakes and scorpions live. There was no water, but the LORD split open a rock, and water poured out so you could drink.

¹⁶ He also gave you manna, a kind of food your ancestors had never even heard about. The LORD was testing you to make you trust him, so that later on he could be good to you.

¹⁷When you become successful, don't say, I'm rich, and I've earned it all myself.

¹⁸Instead, remember that the LORD your God gives you the strength to make a living. That's how he keeps the promise he made to your ancestors.

¹⁹But I'm warning you if you forget the LORD your God and worship other gods, the LORD will destroy you, just as he destroyed the nations you fought.

²⁰(8:19)

9¹ Moses said: Israel, listen to me! You will soon cross the River Jordan and go into the land to force out the nations that live there. They are more powerful than you are, and the walls around their cities reach to the sky.

²Some of these nations are descendants of the Anakim. You know how tall and strong they are, and you've heard that no one can defeat them in battle.

³But the LORD your God has promised to go ahead of you, like a raging fire burning everything in its path. So when you attack your enemies, it will be easy for you to destroy them and take their land.

⁴After the LORD helps you wipe out these nations and conquer their land, don't think he did it because you are such good people. You aren't good you are stubborn! No, the LORD is going to help you, because the nations that live there are evil, and because he wants to keep the promise he made to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

⁵(9: 4)

⁶(9: 4)

⁷Moses said to Israel: Don't ever forget how you kept rebelling and making the LORD angry the whole time you were in the desert. You rebelled from the day you left Egypt until the day you arrived here.

⁸At Mount Sinai you made the LORD so angry that he was going to destroy you.

⁹It happened during those forty days and nights that I was on the mountain, without anything to eat or drink. He had told me to come up there so he could give me the agreement he made with us. And this agreement was actually the same Ten Commandments he had announced to you when he spoke from the fire on the mountain. The LORD had

written them on two flat stones with his own hand. But after giving me the two stones,

¹⁰ (9: 9)

¹¹ (9: 9)

¹² he said: Moses, hurry down the mountain to those people you led out of Egypt. They have already disobeyed me and committed the terrible sin of making an idol.

¹³ I've been watching the Israelites, and I've seen how stubborn and rebellious they are.

¹⁴ So don't try to stop me! I am going to wipe them out, and no one on earth will remember they ever lived. Then I will let your descendants become an even bigger and more powerful nation than Israel.

¹⁵ Moses said: Fire was raging on the mountaintop as I went back down, carrying the two stones with the commandments on them.

¹⁶ I saw how quickly you had sinned and disobeyed the LORD your God. There you were, worshipping the metal idol you had made in the shape of a calf.

¹⁷ So I threw down the two stones and smashed them before your very eyes.

¹⁸ I bowed down at the place of worship and prayed to the LORD, without eating or drinking for forty days and nights. You had committed a terrible sin by making that idol, and the LORD hated what you had done. He was angry enough to destroy all of you and Aaron as well. So I prayed for you and Aaron as I had done before, and this time the LORD answered my prayers.

¹⁹ (9:18)

²⁰ (9:18)

²¹ It was a sin for you to make that idol, so I threw it into the fire to melt it down. Then I took the lump of gold, ground it into powder, and threw the powder into the stream flowing down the mountain.

²² You also made the LORD angry when you were staying at Taberah, at Massah, and at Kibroth-Hattaavah.

²³ Then at Kadesh-Barnea the LORD said, I am giving you the land, so go ahead and take it! But since you didn't trust the LORD, you rebelled and disobeyed his command.

²⁴In fact, you've rebelled against the LORD for as long as he has known you.

²⁵After you had made the idol in the shape of a calf, the LORD said he was going to destroy you. So I bowed down in front of the sacred tent for forty days and nights,

²⁶and I prayed: Our LORD, please don't wipe out your people. You used your great power to rescue them from Egypt and to make them your very own.

²⁷Israel's ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob obeyed you faithfully. Think about them, and not about Israel's stubbornness, evil, and sin.

²⁸If you destroy your people, the Egyptians will say, The LORD promised to give Israel land, but he wasn't powerful enough to keep his promise. In fact, he hated them so much that he took them into the desert and killed them.

²⁹But you, our LORD, chose the people of Israel to be your own, and with your mighty power you rescued them from Egypt.

10¹Moses said to the people: The LORD told me to chisel out two flat stones, just like the ones he had

given me earlier. He also commanded me to make a wooden chest, then come up the mountain and meet with him.

²He told me that he would write the same words on the new stones that he had written on the ones I broke, and that I could put these stones in this sacred chest.

³So I made a chest out of acacia wood, and I chiselled two flat stones like the ones I broke. Then I carried the stones up the mountain,

⁴where the LORD wrote the Ten Commandments on them, just as he had done the first time. The commandments were exactly what he had announced from the fire, when you were gathered at the mountain. After the LORD returned the stones to me,

⁵I took them down the mountainside and put them in the chest, just as he had commanded. And they are still there.

⁶Moses said to Israel: Later we set up camp at the wells belonging to the descendants of Jaakan. Then we moved on and camped at Moserah, where Aaron died and was buried, and his son Eleazar became the priest.

⁷ Next, we camped at Gudgodah and then at Jotbathah, where there are flowing streams.

⁸ Moses said to Israel: After I put the two stones in the sacred chest, the LORD chose the tribe of Levi, not only to carry the chest, but also to serve as his priests at the place of worship and to bless the other tribes in his name. And they still do these things.

⁹ The LORD promised that he would always provide for the tribe of Levi, and that's why he won't give them any land, when he divides it among the other tribes.

¹⁰ Moses said to Israel: When I had taken the second set of stones up the mountain, I spent forty days and nights there, just as I had done before. Once again, the LORD answered my prayer and did not destroy you.

¹¹ Instead, he told me, Moses, get ready to lead the people into the land that I promised their ancestors.

¹² Moses said: People of Israel, what does the LORD your God want from you? The LORD wants you to respect and

follow him, to love and serve him with all your heart and soul,

¹³and to obey his laws and teachings that I am giving you today. Do this, and all will go well for you.

¹⁴Everything belongs to the LORD your God, not only the earth and everything on it, but also the sky and the highest heavens.

¹⁵Yet the LORD loved your ancestors and wanted them to belong to him. So he chose them and their descendants rather than any other nation, and today you are still his people.

¹⁶Remember your agreement with the LORD and stop being so stubborn.

¹⁷The LORD your God is more powerful than all other gods and lords, and his tremendous power is to be feared. His decisions are always fair, and you cannot bribe him to change his mind.

¹⁸The LORD defends the rights of orphans and widows. He cares for foreigners and gives them food and clothing.

¹⁹And you should also care for them, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

²⁰ Respect the LORD your God, serve only him, and make promises in his name alone.

²¹ Offer your praises to him, because you have seen him work such terrifying miracles for you.

²² When your ancestors went to live in Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But the LORD has blessed you, and now there are more of you than there are stars in the sky.

11 ¹ Moses said to Israel: The LORD is your God, so you must always love him and obey his laws and teachings.

² Remember, he corrected you and not your children. You are the ones who saw the LORD use his great power

³ when he worked miracles in Egypt, making terrible things happen to the king and all his people.

⁴ And when the Egyptian army chased you in their chariots, you saw the LORD drown them and their horses in the Red Sea. Egypt still suffers from that defeat!

⁵ You saw what the LORD did for you while you were in the desert, right up to the time you arrived here.

⁶And you saw how the LORD made the ground open up in the middle of our camp underneath the tents of Dathan and Abiram, who were swallowed up along with their families, their animals, and their tents.

⁷With your own eyes, you saw the LORD's mighty power do all these things.

⁸Soon you will cross the River Jordan, and if you obey the laws and teachings I'm giving you today, you will be strong enough to conquer the land

⁹that the LORD promised your ancestors and their descendants. It's rich with milk and honey, and you will live there and enjoy it for a long time.

¹⁰It's better land than you had in Egypt, where you had to struggle just to water your crops.

¹¹But the hills and valleys in the promised land are watered by rain from heaven,

¹²because the LORD your God keeps his eye on this land and takes care of it all year long.

¹³The LORD your God commands you to love him and to serve him with all your heart and soul. If you obey him,

¹⁴ he will send rain at the right seasons, so you will have more than enough food, wine, and olive oil, and there will be plenty of grass for your cattle.

¹⁵ (11:14)

¹⁶ But watch out! You will be tempted to turn your backs on the LORD. And if you worship other gods,

¹⁷ the LORD will become angry and keep the rain from falling. Nothing will grow in your fields, and you will die and disappear from the good land that the LORD is giving you.

¹⁸ Memorize these laws and think about them. Write down copies and tie them to your wrists and your foreheads to help you obey them.

¹⁹ Teach them to your children. Talk about them all the timewhether you're at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning.

²⁰ Write them on the door frames of your homes and on your town gates.

²¹ Then you and your descendants will live a long time in the land that the LORD promised your ancestors. Your families

will live there as long as the sky is above the earth.

²² Love the LORD your God and obey all the laws and teachings that I'm giving you today. If you live the way the LORD wants,

²³ he will help you take the land. And even though the nations there are more powerful than you, the LORD will force them to leave when you attack.

²⁴ You will capture the land everywhere you go, from the Southern Desert to the Lebanon Mountains, and from the River Euphrates west to the Mediterranean Sea.

²⁵ No one will be able to stand up to you. The LORD will make everyone terrified of you, just as he promised.

²⁶ You have a choice do you want the LORD to bless you, or do you want him to put a curse on you?

²⁷ Today I am giving you his laws, and if you obey him, he will bless you.

²⁸ But if you disobey him and worship those gods that have never done anything for you, the LORD will put a curse on you.

²⁹After the LORD your God helps you take the land, you must have a ceremony where you announce his blessings from Mount Gerizim and his curses from Mount Ebal.

³⁰You know that these two mountains are west of the River Jordan in land now controlled by the Canaanites living in the Jordan valley. The mountains are west of the road near the sacred trees of Moreh on the other side of Gilgal.

³¹Soon you will cross the River Jordan to conquer the land that the LORD your God is giving you. And when you have settled there,

³²be careful to obey his laws and teachings that I am giving you today.

12¹Moses said to Israel: Now I'll tell you the laws and teachings that you have to obey as long as you live. Your ancestors worshipped the LORD, and he is giving you this land.

²But the nations that live there worship other gods. So after you capture the land, you must completely destroy their places of worship on mountains and hills or in the shade of large trees.

³Wherever these nations worship their gods, you must tear down their altars, break their sacred stones, burn the sacred poles used in worshipping the goddess Asherah, and smash their idols to pieces. Destroy these places of worship so completely that no one will remember they were ever there.

⁴Don't worship the LORD your God in the way those nations worship their gods.

⁵Soon you will cross the Jordan, and the LORD will help you conquer your enemies and let you live in peace, there in the land he has given you. But after you are settled, life will be different. You must not offer sacrifices anywhere you want to. Instead, the LORD will choose a place somewhere in Israel where you must go to worship him. All your sacrifices and offerings must be taken there, including sacrifices to please the LORD and any gift you promise or voluntarily give him. That's where you must also take one tenth of your grain, wine, and olive oil, as well as the firstborn of your cattle, sheep, and goats. You and your family and servants

will eat your gifts and sacrifices and celebrate there at the place of worship, because the LORD your God has made you successful in everything you have done. And since Levites will not have any land of their own, you must ask some of them to come along and celebrate with you. Sometimes you may want to kill an animal for food and not as a sacrifice. If the LORD has blessed you and given you enough cows or sheep or goats, then you can butcher one of them where you live. You can eat it just like the meat from a deer or gazelle that you kill when you go hunting. And even those people who are unclean and unfit for worship can have some of the meat. But you must not eat the blood of any animal let the blood drain out on the ground.

⁶ (12: 5)

⁷ (12: 5)

⁸ (12: 5)

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¹⁰ (12: 5)

¹¹ (12: 5)

¹² (12: 5)

¹³ (12: 5)

¹⁴ (12: 5)

¹⁵ (12: 5)

¹⁶ (12: 5)

¹⁷ (12: 5)

¹⁸ (12: 5)

¹⁹ (12: 5)

²⁰ The LORD has promised that later on he will give Israel more land, and some of you may not be able to travel all the way from your homes to the place of worship each time you are hungry for meat. But the LORD will give you cattle, sheep, and goats, and you can butcher any of those animals at home and eat as much as you want.

²¹ (12: 20)

²² It is the same as eating the meat from a deer or a gazelle that you kill when you go hunting. And in this way, anyone who is unclean and unfit for worship can have some of the meat.

²³ But don't eat the blood. It is the life of the animal, so let it drain out on the ground before you eat the meat.

²⁴ (12: 23)

²⁵ Do you want the LORD to make you successful? Do you want your children to be successful even after you are gone?

Then do what pleases the LORD and don't eat blood.

²⁶All sacrifices and offerings to the LORD must be taken to the place where he chooses to be worshipped. If you offer a sacrifice to please the LORD, all of its meat must be burnt on the altar. You can eat the meat from certain kinds of sacrifices, but you must always pour out the animal's blood on the altar.

²⁷ (12: 26)

²⁸If you obey these laws, you will be doing what the LORD your God says is right and good. Then he will help you and your descendants be successful.

²⁹Moses said: Israel, as you go into the land and attack the nations that are there, the LORD will get rid of them, and you can have their land.

³⁰But that's when you must be especially careful not to ask, How did those nations worship their gods? Shouldn't we worship the LORD in the same way?

³¹No, you should not! The LORD hates the disgusting way those nations worship their gods, because they even burn their sons and daughters as sacrifices.

³² Obey all the laws and teachings I am giving you. Don't add any, and don't take any away.

13¹ Moses said to Israel: Some day a prophet may come along who is able to perform miracles or tell what will happen in the future. Then the prophet may say, Let's start worshipping some new godssome gods that we know nothing about.

² (13:1)

³ If the prophet says this, don't listen! The LORD your God will be watching to find out whether or not you love him with all your heart and soul.

⁴ You must be completely faithful to the LORD. Worship and obey only the LORD and do this with fear and trembling,

⁵ because he rescued you from slavery in Egypt. If a prophet tells you to disobey the LORD your God and to stop worshipping him, then that prophet is evil and must be put to death.

⁶ Someone else may say to you, Let's worship other gods. That person may be your best friend, your brother or sister, your son or daughter, or your own dear wife or husband. But you must not listen

to people who say such things. Instead, you must stone them to death. You must be the first to throw the stones, then others from the community will finish the job. Don't show any pity. The gods worshipped by other nations have never done anything for you or your ancestors. People who ask you to worship other gods are trying to get you to stop worshipping the LORD, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt. So put to death anyone who asks you to worship another god.

⁷ (13: 6)

⁸ (13: 6)

⁹ (13: 6)

¹⁰ (13: 6)

¹¹ And when the rest of Israel hears about it, they will be afraid, and no one else will ever do such an evil thing again.

¹² After the LORD your God gives you towns to live in, you may hear a rumour about one of the towns.

¹³ You may hear that some worthless people have talked everyone there into worshipping other gods, even though these gods had never done anything for them.

¹⁴You must carefully find out if the rumour is true. Then if the people of that town have actually done such a disgusting thing in your own country, ¹⁵you must take your swords and kill every one of them, and their livestock too.

¹⁶Gather all the possessions of the people who lived there, and pile them up in the market place, without keeping anything for yourself. Set the pile and the whole town on fire, and don't ever rebuild the town. The whole town will be a sacrifice to the LORD your God. Then he won't be angry any more, and he will have mercy on you and make you successful, just as he promised your ancestors.

¹⁷ (13:16)

¹⁸That's why you must do what the LORD your God says is right. I am giving you his laws and teachings today, and you must obey them.

14¹ Moses said: People of Israel, you are the LORD's children, so when you mourn for the dead, you must not cut yourselves or shave your forehead.

² Out of all the nations on this earth, the LORD your God chose you to be his own. You belong to the LORD, so don't behave like those who worship other gods.

³ Don't eat any disgusting animals.

⁴ You may eat the meat of cattle, sheep, and goats; wild sheep and goats; and gazelles, antelopes, and all kinds of deer.

⁵ (14: 4)

⁶ It is all right to eat meat from any animals that have divided hoofs and also chew the cud.

⁷ But don't eat camels, rabbits, and rock badgers. These animals chew the cud but do not have divided hoofs. You must treat them as unclean.

⁸ And don't eat pork, since pigs have divided hoofs, but they do not chew their cud. Don't even touch a dead pig!

⁹ You can eat any fish that has fins and scales. But there are other creatures that live in the water,

¹⁰ and if they do not have fins and scales, you must not eat them. Treat them as unclean.

¹¹ You can eat any clean bird.

¹² But don't eat the meat of any of the following birds: eagles, vultures, falcons,

kites, ravens, ostriches, owls, seagulls, hawks, pelicans, ospreys, cormorants, storks, herons, and hoopoes. You must not eat bats.

¹³ (14: 12)

¹⁴ (14: 12)

¹⁵ (14: 12)

¹⁶ (14: 12)

¹⁷ (14: 12)

¹⁸ (14: 12)

¹⁹ Swarming insects are unclean, so don't eat them.

²⁰ However, you are allowed to eat certain kinds of winged insects.

²¹ You belong to the LORD your God, so if you happen to find a dead animal, don't eat its meat. You may give it to foreigners who live in your town or sell it to foreigners who are visiting your town. Don't boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

²² Moses said: People of Israel, every year you must set aside ten per cent of your grain harvest.

²³ Also set aside ten per cent of your wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of every cow, sheep, and goat. Take these to the place where the LORD chooses

to be worshipped, and eat them there. This will teach you to always respect the LORD your God.

²⁴ But suppose you can't carry that ten per cent of your harvest to the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped. If you live too far away, or if the LORD gives you a big harvest,

²⁵ then sell this part and take the money there instead.

²⁶ When you and your family arrive, spend the money on food for a big celebration. Buy cattle, sheep, goats, wine, beer, and if there are any other kinds of food that you want, buy those too.

²⁷ And since people of the Levi tribe won't own any land for growing crops, remember to ask the Levites to celebrate with you.

²⁸ Every third year, instead of using the ten per cent of your harvest for a big celebration, bring it into town and put it in a community storehouse.

²⁹ The Levites have no land of their own, so you must give them food from the storehouse. You must also give food to the poor who live in your town, including

orphans, widows, and foreigners. If they have enough to eat, then the LORD your God will be pleased and make you successful in everything you do.

15¹ Moses said: Every seven years you must announce, The LORD says loans do not need to be paid back. Then if you have loaned money to another Israelite, you can no longer ask for payment.

²(15: 1)

³This law applies only to loans you have made to other Israelites. Foreigners will still have to pay back what you have loaned them.

⁴No one in Israel should ever be poor. The LORD your God is giving you this land, and he has promised to make you very successful, if you obey his laws and teachings that I'm giving you today. You will lend money to many nations, but you won't have to borrow. You will rule many nations, but they won't rule you.

⁵(15: 4)

⁶(15: 4)

⁷After the LORD your God gives land to each of you, there may be poor Israelites in the town where you live. If there are,

then don't be mean and selfish with your money.

⁸Instead, be kind and lend them what they need.

⁹Be careful! Don't say to yourself, Soon it will be the seventh year, and then I won't be able to get my money back. It would be horrible for you to think that way and to be so selfish that you refuse to help the poor. They are your relatives, and if you don't help them, they may ask the LORD to decide whether you have done wrong. And he will say that you are guilty.

¹⁰You should be happy to give the poor what they need, because then the LORD will make you successful in everything you do.

¹¹There will always be some Israelites who are poor and needy. That's why I am commanding you to be generous with them.

¹²Moses said to Israel: If any of you buy Israelites as slaves, you must set them free after six years.

¹³And don't just tell them they are free to leave

¹⁴give them sheep and goats and a good supply of grain and wine. The more the LORD has given you, the more you should give them.

¹⁵I am commanding you to obey the LORD as a reminder that you were slaves in Egypt before he set you free.

¹⁶But one of your slaves may say, I love you and your family, and I would be better off staying with you, so please don't make me leave.

¹⁷Take the slave to the door of your house and push a sharp metal rod through one ear lobe and into the door. Such slaves will belong to you for life, whether they are men or women.

¹⁸Don't complain when you have to set a slave free. After all, you got six years of service at half the cost of hiring someone to do the work.

¹⁹Moses said to Israel: If the firstborn animal of a cow or sheep or goat is a male, it must be given to the LORD. Don't put firstborn cattle to work or cut wool from firstborn sheep.

²⁰Instead, each year you must take the firstborn of these animals to the place where the LORD your God chooses to

be worshipped. You and your family will sacrifice them to the LORD and then eat them as part of a sacred meal.

²¹ But if the animal is lame or blind or has something else wrong with it, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.

²² You can butcher it where you live, and eat it just like the meat of a deer or gazelle that you kill while hunting. Even those people who are unclean and unfit for worship can have some.

²³ But you must never eat the blood of an animal let it drain out on the ground.

16 ¹ Moses said: People of Israel, you must celebrate Passover in the month of Abib, because one night in that month years ago, the LORD your God rescued you from Egypt.

² The Passover sacrifice must be a cow, a sheep, or a goat, and you must offer it at the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped.

³ Eat all the meat of the Passover sacrifice that same night. But don't serve bread made with yeast at the Passover meal. Serve the same kind of thin bread that you ate when you were slaves

suffering in Egypt and when you had to leave Egypt quickly. As long as you live, this thin bread will remind you of the day you left Egypt. For seven days following Passover, don't make any bread with yeast. In fact, there should be no yeast anywhere in Israel.

⁴ (16: 3)

⁵ Don't offer the Passover sacrifice in any town where you happen to live.

⁶ It must be offered at the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped. Kill the sacrifice at sunset, the time of day when you left Egypt.

⁷ Then cook it and eat it there at the place of worship, returning to your tents the next morning.

⁸ Eat thin bread for the next six days. Then on the seventh day, don't do any work. Instead, come together and worship the LORD.

⁹ Moses said to Israel: Seven weeks after you start your grain harvest,

¹⁰ go to the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped and celebrate the Harvest Festival in honour of the LORD your God. Bring him an offering as large as you can afford, depending

on how big a harvest he has given you. Be sure to take along your sons and daughters and all your servants. Also invite the poor, including Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows.

¹¹ (16: 10)

¹² Remember that you used to be slaves in Egypt, so obey these laws.

¹³ Moses said to Israel: After you have finished the grain harvest and the grape harvest, take your sons and daughters and all your servants to the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped. Celebrate the Festival of Shelters for seven days. Also invite the poor, including Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows. The LORD will give you big harvests and make you successful in everything you do. You will be completely happy, so celebrate this festival in honour of the LORD your God.

¹⁴ (16: 13)

¹⁵ (16: 13)

¹⁶ Moses said: Each year there are three festivals when all Israelite men must go to the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped. These are the Festival of Thin Bread, the Harvest Festival, and the

Festival of Shelters. And don't forget to take along a gift for the LORD.

¹⁷The bigger the harvest the LORD gives you, the bigger your gift should be.

¹⁸Moses said to Israel: After you are settled in the towns that you will receive from the LORD your God, the people in each town must appoint judges and other officers. Those of you who become judges must be completely fair when you make legal decisions, even if someone important is involved. Don't take bribes to give unfair decisions. Bribes keep people who are wise from seeing the truth and turn honest people into liars.

¹⁹(16: 18)

²⁰People of Israel, if you want to enjoy a long and successful life, make sure that everyone is treated with justice in the land the LORD is giving you.

²¹Moses said to Israel: When you build the altar for offering sacrifices to the LORD your God, don't set up a sacred pole for the worship of the goddess Asherah.

²²And don't set up a sacred stone! The LORD hates these things.

17 ¹ Moses said to Israel: If an ox or a sheep has something wrong with it, don't offer it as a sacrifice to the LORD your God he will be disgusted!

² Moses said to Israel: The LORD your God is giving you towns to live in. But later, a man or a woman in your town may start worshipping other gods, or even the sun, moon, or stars. I have warned you not to worship other gods, because whoever worships them is disobeying the LORD and breaking the agreement he made with you.

³ (17: 2)

⁴ So when you hear that someone in your town is committing this disgusting sin, you must carefully find out if that person really is guilty.

⁵ But you will need two or three witnesses one witness isn't enough to prove a person guilty. Get rid of those who are guilty of such evil. Take them outside your town gates and let everyone stone them to death. But the witnesses must be the first to throw stones.

⁶ (17: 5)

⁷ (17: 5)

⁸ Moses said to Israel: It may be difficult to find out the truth in some legal cases in your town. You may not be able to decide if someone was killed accidentally or murdered. Or you may not be able to tell whether an injury or some property damage was done by accident or on purpose. If the case is too difficult, take it to the court at the place where the LORD your God chooses to be worshipped. This court will be made up of one judge and several priests who serve at the LORD's altar. They will explain the law to you and give you their decision about the case. Do exactly what they tell you, or you will be put to death.

⁹ (17: 8)

¹⁰ (17: 8)

¹¹ (17: 8)

¹² (17: 8)

¹³ When other Israelites hear about it, they will be afraid and obey the decisions of the court.

¹⁴ Moses said: People of Israel, after you capture the land the LORD your God is giving you, and after you settle on it, you will say, We want a king, just like the nations around us.

¹⁵Go ahead and appoint a king, but make sure that he is an Israelite and that he is the one the LORD has chosen.

¹⁶The king should not have many horses, especially those from Egypt. The LORD has said his people are never to go back there again.

¹⁷And the king must not have a lot of wives they might tempt him to be unfaithful to the LORD. Finally, the king must not try to get huge amounts of silver and gold.

¹⁸The official copy of God's laws will be kept by the priests of the Levi tribe. So, as soon as anyone becomes king, he must go to the priests and write out a copy of these laws while they watch.

¹⁹Each day the king must read and obey these laws, so that he will learn to worship the LORD with fear and trembling

²⁰and not think that he's better than everyone else. If the king completely obeys the LORD's commands, he and his descendants will rule Israel for many years.

18¹ Moses said to Israel: The people of the Levi tribe, including the

priests, will not receive any land. Instead, they will receive part of the sacrifices that are offered to the LORD,² because he has promised to provide for them in this way.

³When you sacrifice a bull or sheep, the priests will be given the shoulder, the jaws, and the stomach.

⁴In addition, they will receive the first part of your grain harvest and part of your first batches of wine and olive oil. You must also give them the first wool that is cut from your sheep each year.

⁵Give these gifts to the priests, because the LORD has chosen them and their descendants out of all the tribes of Israel to be his special servants at the place of worship.

⁶Any Levite can leave his home town, and go to the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped,

⁷and then be a special servant of the LORD there, just like all the other Levites.

⁸Some Levites may have money from selling family possessions, and others may not. But all Levites serving at the place of worship will receive the same

amount of food from the sacrifices and gifts brought by the people.

⁹Moses said to Israel: Soon you will go into the land that the LORD your God is giving you. The nations that live there do things that are disgusting to the LORD, and you must not follow their example.

¹⁰Don't sacrifice your son or daughter. And don't try to use any kind of magic or witchcraft to tell fortunes or to cast spells or to talk with spirits of the dead.

¹¹ (18: 10)

¹²The LORD is disgusted with anyone who does these things, and that's why he will help you destroy the nations that are in the land.

¹³Never be guilty of doing any of these disgusting things!

¹⁴Moses said to Israel: You will go in and take the land from nations that practise magic and witchcraft. But the LORD your God won't allow you to do those things.

¹⁵Instead, he will choose one of your own people to be a prophet just like me, and you must do what that prophet says.

¹⁶You were asking for a prophet the day you were gathered at Mount Sinai

and said to the LORD, Please don't let us hear your voice or see this terrible fire again if we do, we will die!

¹⁷Then the LORD told me: Moses, they have said the right thing.

¹⁸So when I want to speak to them, I will choose one of them to be a prophet like you. I will give my message to that prophet, who will tell the people exactly what I have said.

¹⁹Since the message comes from me, anyone who doesn't obey the message will have to answer to me.

²⁰But if I haven't spoken, and a prophet claims to have a message from me, you must kill that prophet, and you must also kill any prophet who claims to have a message from another god.

²¹Moses said to Israel: You may be asking yourselves, How can we tell if a prophet's message really comes from the LORD?

²²You will know, because if the LORD says something will happen, it will happen. And if it doesn't, you will know that the prophet was falsely claiming to speak for the LORD. Don't be afraid

of any prophet whose message doesn't come from the LORD.

19¹ Moses said to Israel: Soon you will go into the land and attack the nations. The LORD your God will destroy them and give you their lands, towns, and homes. Then after you are settled,

² you must choose three of your towns to be Safe Towns. Divide the land into three regions with one Safe Town near the middle of each, so that a Safe Town can be easily reached from anywhere in your land. Then, if one of you accidentally kills someone, you can run to a Safe Town and find protection from being put to death. But you must not have been angry with the person you killed.

³ (19: 2)

⁴ (19: 2)

⁵ For example, suppose you and a friend go into the forest to cut wood. You are chopping down a tree with an axe, when the axe head slips off the handle, hits your friend, and kills him. You can run to one of the Safe Towns and save your life.

⁶You don't deserve to die, since you did not mean to harm your friend. But he did get killed, and his relatives might be very angry. They might even choose one of the men from their family to track you down and kill you. If it is too far to one of the Safe Towns, the victim's relative might be able to catch you and kill you.

⁷That's why I said there must be three Safe Towns.

⁸Israel, the LORD your God has promised that if you obey his laws and teachings I'm giving you, and if you always love him, then he will give you the land he promised your ancestors. When that happens, you must name three more Safe Towns in the new territory.

⁹(19:8)

¹⁰You will need them, so innocent people won't be killed on your land while they are trying to reach a Safe Town that is too far away. You will be guilty of murder, if innocent people lose their lives because you didn't name enough Safe Towns in the land the LORD your God will give you.

¹¹ But what if you really do commit murder? Suppose one of you hates a neighbour. So you wait in a deserted place, kill the neighbour, and run to a Safe Town.

¹² If that happens, the leaders of your town must send messengers to bring you back from the Safe Town. They will hand you over to one of the victim's relatives, who will put you to death.

¹³ Israel, for the good of the whole country, you must kill anyone who murders an innocent person. Never show mercy to a murderer!

¹⁴ Moses said to Israel: In the land the LORD is giving you, there are already stones set up to mark the boundaries between fields. So don't move those stones.

¹⁵ Moses said to Israel: Before you are convicted of a crime, at least two witnesses must be able to testify that you did it.

¹⁶ If you accuse someone of a crime, but seem to be lying,

¹⁷ then both you and the accused must be taken to the court at the place where the LORD is worshipped. There the

priests and judges will find out if you are lying or telling the truth. If you are lying and the accused is innocent,

¹⁸(19:17)

¹⁹then you will be punished without mercy. You will receive the same punishment the accused would have received if found guilty, whether it means losing an eye, a tooth, a hand, a foot, or even your life. Israel, the crime of telling lies in court must be punished. And when people hear what happens to witnesses that lie, everyone else who testifies in court will tell the truth.

²⁰(19:19)

²¹(19:19)

20¹ Moses said to Israel: If you have to go to war, you may find yourselves facing an enemy army that is bigger than yours and that has horses and chariots. But don't be afraid! The LORD your God rescued you from Egypt, and he will help you fight.

²Before you march into battle, a priest will go to the front of the army

³and say, Soldiers of Israel, listen to me! Today when you go into battle, don't

be afraid of the enemy, and when you see them, don't panic.

⁴The LORD your God will fight beside you and help you win the battle.

⁵Then the tribal officials will say to the troops: If any of you have built a new house, but haven't yet moved in, you may go home. It isn't right for you to die in battle and for somebody else to live in your new house.

⁶If any of you have planted a vineyard but haven't had your first grape harvest, you may go home. It isn't right for you to die in battle and for somebody else to enjoy your grapes.

⁷If any of you are engaged to be married, you may go back home and get married. It isn't right for you to die in battle and for somebody else to marry the woman you are engaged to.

⁸Finally, if any of you are afraid, you may go home. We don't want you to discourage the other soldiers.

⁹When the officials have finished giving these orders, they will appoint officers to be in command of the army.

¹⁰Before you attack a town that is far from your land, offer peace to the people

who live there. If they surrender and open their town gates, they will become your slaves. But if they reject your offer of peace and try to fight, surround their town and attack. Then, after the LORD helps you capture it, kill all the men. Take the women and children as slaves and keep the livestock and everything else of value.

¹¹ (20: 10)

¹² (20: 10)

¹³ (20: 10)

¹⁴ (20: 10)

¹⁵ (20: 10)

¹⁶ Whenever you capture towns in the land the LORD your God is giving you, be sure to kill all the people and animals.

¹⁷ He has commanded you to completely wipe out the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

¹⁸ If you allow them to live, they will persuade you to worship their disgusting gods, and you will be unfaithful to the LORD.

¹⁹ When you are attacking a town, don't chop down its fruit trees, not even if you have had the town surrounded for a long

time. Fruit trees aren't your enemies, and they produce food that you can eat, so don't cut them down.

²⁰You may need wood to make ladders and towers to help you get over the walls and capture the town. But use only trees that you know are not fruit trees.

21 ¹Moses said to Israel: Suppose the body of a murder victim is found in a field in the land the LORD your God is giving you, and no one knows who the murderer is.

²The judges and other leaders from the towns around there must find out what town is the closest to where the body was found.

³The leaders from that town will go to their cattle herds and choose a young cow that has never been put to work.

⁴They and some of the priests will take this cow to a nearby valley where there is a stream, but no crops. Once they reach the valley, the leaders will break the cow's neck. The priests must be there, because the LORD your God has chosen them to be his special servants at the place of worship. The LORD has chosen them to bless the people in his

name and to be judges in all legal cases, whether property or injury is involved.

⁵ (21: 4)

⁶The town leaders will wash their hands over the body of the dead cow

⁷and say, We had no part in this murder, and we don't know who did it.

⁸But since an innocent person was murdered, we beg you, our LORD, to accept this sacrifice and forgive Israel. We are your people, and you rescued us. Please don't hold this crime against us. If you obey the LORD and do these things, he will forgive Israel.

⁹ (21: 8)

¹⁰Moses said to Israel: From time to time, you men will serve as soldiers and go off to war. The LORD your God will help you defeat your enemies, and you will take many prisoners.

¹¹One of these prisoners may be a beautiful woman, and you may want to marry her. But first you must bring her into your home, and she must shave her head, cut her nails, get rid of her foreign clothes, and start wearing Israelite clothes. She will mourn a month for her

father and mother, then you can marry her.

¹²(21:11)

¹³(21:11)

¹⁴Later on, if you are not happy with the woman, you can divorce her, and she can go free. But you have slept with her as your wife, so you cannot sell her as a slave or make her into your own slave.

¹⁵Moses said to Israel: Suppose a man has two wives and loves one more than the other. The first son of either wife is the man's firstborn son, even if the boy's mother is the wife the man doesn't love. Later, when the man is near death and is dividing up his property, he must give a double share to his firstborn son, simply because he was the first to be born.

¹⁶(21:15)

¹⁷(21:15)

¹⁸Moses said to Israel: A father and a mother may have a stubborn and rebellious son who refuses to obey them even after he has been punished.

¹⁹If a son is like that, his parents must drag him to the town gate, where the leaders of the town hold their meetings.

²⁰The parents will tell the leaders, This son of ours is stubborn and never obeys. He spends all his time drinking and feasting.

²¹The men of the town will stone that son to death, because they must get rid of the evil he brought into the community. Everyone in Israel will be afraid when they hear how he was punished.

²²Moses said to Israel: If a criminal is put to death, and you hang the dead body on a tree,

²³you must not let it hang there overnight. Bury it the same day, because the dead body of a criminal will bring God's curse on the land. The LORD your God is giving this land to you, so don't make it unclean by leaving the bodies of executed criminals on display.

22¹ Moses said to Israel: If you see a cow or sheep wandering around lost, take the animal back to its owner.

²If the owner lives too far away, or if you don't know who the owner is, take the animal home with you and take care of it. The owner will come looking for the animal, and then you can give it back.

³That's what you should do if you find anything that belongs to someone else. Do whatever you can to help, whether you find a cow or sheep or donkey or some clothing.

⁴Oxen and donkeys that carry heavy loads can stumble and fall, and be unable to get up by themselves. So as you walk along the road, help anyone who is trying to get an ox or donkey back on its feet.

⁵Moses said to Israel: Women must not pretend to be men, and men must not pretend to be women. The LORD your God is disgusted with people who do that.

⁶Moses said to Israel: As you walk along the road, you might see a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground. If the mother bird is in the nest with either her eggs or her baby birds, you are allowed to take the baby birds or the eggs, but not the mother bird. Let her go free, and the LORD will bless you with a long and successful life.

⁷(22: 6)

⁸If you build a house, make sure to put a low wall around the edge of the flat

roof. Then if someone falls off the roof and is killed, it won't be your fault.

⁹Moses said to Israel: If you plant a vineyard, don't plant any other fruit tree or crop in it. If you do plant something else there, you must bring to the place of worship everything you harvest from the vineyard.

¹⁰Don't hitch an ox and a donkey to your plough at the same time.

¹¹When you weave cloth for clothing, you can use thread made of flax or wool, but not both together.

¹²And when you make a coat, sew a tassel on each of the four corners.

¹³Moses said to Israel: Suppose a man starts hating his wife soon after they are married.

¹⁴He might tell ugly lies about her, and say, I married this woman, but when we slept together, I found out she wasn't a virgin.

¹⁵If this happens, the bride's father and mother must go to the town gate to show the town leaders the proof that the woman was a virgin.

¹⁶Her father will say, I let my daughter marry this man, but he started hating her

¹⁷and accusing her of not being a virgin. But he is wrong, because here is proof that she was a virgin! Then the bride's parents will show them the bed sheet from the woman's wedding night.

¹⁸The town leaders will beat the man with a whip

¹⁹because he accused his bride of not being a virgin. He will have to pay her father one hundred pieces of silver and will never be allowed to divorce her.

²⁰But if the man was right and there is no proof that his bride was a virgin,

²¹the men of the town will take the woman to the door of her father's house and stone her to death. This woman brought evil into your community by sleeping with someone before she got married, and you must get rid of that evil by killing her.

²²Moses said: People of Israel, if a man is caught having sex with someone else's wife, you must put them both to death. That way, you will get rid of the evil they have done in Israel.

²³ If a man is caught in town having sex with an engaged woman who isn't screaming for help, they both must be put to death. The man is guilty of having sex with a married woman. And the woman is guilty because she didn't call for help, even though she was inside a town and people were nearby. Take them both to the town gate and stone them to death. You must get rid of the evil they brought into your community.

²⁴ (22: 23)

²⁵ If an engaged woman is raped out in the country, only the man will be put to death.

²⁶ Do not punish the woman at all; she has done nothing wrong, and certainly nothing deserving death. This crime is like murder,

²⁷ because the woman was alone out in the country when the man attacked her. She screamed, but there was no one to help her.

²⁸ Suppose a woman isn't engaged to be married, and a man talks her into sleeping with him. If they are caught,

²⁹ they will be forced to get married. He must give her father fifty pieces of silver

as a bride price and can never divorce her.

³⁰A man must not marry a woman who was married to his father. This would be a disgrace to his father.

23¹ Moses said to Israel: If a man's private parts have been crushed or cut off, he cannot fully belong to the LORD's people.

²No one born outside a legal marriage, or any of their descendants for ten generations, can fully belong to the LORD's people.

³No Ammonites or Moabites, or any of their descendants for ten generations, can become part of Israel, the LORD's people.

⁴This is because when you came out of Egypt, they refused to provide you with food and water. And besides, they hired Balaam to put a curse on you.

⁵But the LORD your God loves you, so he refused to listen to Balaam and turned Balaam's curse into a blessing.

⁶Don't even think of signing a peace treaty with Moab or Ammon.

⁷But Edomites are your relatives, and you lived as foreigners in the country

of Egypt. Now you must be kind to Edomites and Egyptians

⁸and let their great-grandchildren become part of Israel, the LORD's people.

⁹Moses said to Israel: When you men go off to fight your enemies, make sure your camp is acceptable to the LORD.

¹⁰For example, if something happens at night that makes a man unclean and unfit for worship, he must go outside the camp and stay there

¹¹until late afternoon. Then he must take a bath, and at sunset he can go back into camp.

¹²Set up a place outside the camp to be used as a toilet area.

¹³And make sure that you have a small shovel in your equipment. When you go out to the toilet area, use the shovel to dig a hole. Then, after you relieve yourself, bury the waste in the hole.

¹⁴You must keep your camp clean of filthy and disgusting things. The LORD is always present in your camp, ready to rescue you and give you victory over your enemies. But if he sees something

disgusting in your camp, he may turn around and leave.

¹⁵ Moses said: When runaway slaves from other countries come to Israel and ask for protection, you must not hand them back to their owners.

¹⁶ Instead, you must let them choose which one of your towns they want to live in. Don't be cruel to runaway slaves.

¹⁷ Moses said: People of Israel, don't any of you ever be temple prostitutes.

¹⁸ The LORD your God is disgusted with men and women who are prostitutes of any kind, and he will not accept a gift from them, even if it had been promised to him.

¹⁹ Moses said: When you lend money, food, or anything else to another Israelite, you are not allowed to charge interest.

²⁰ You can charge a foreigner interest. But if you charge other Israelites interest, the LORD your God will not let you be successful in the land you are about to take.

²¹ Moses said: People of Israel, if you make a sacred promise to give a gift to the LORD, then do it as soon as you can.

If the LORD has to come looking for the gift you promised, you will be guilty of breaking that promise.

²²On the other hand, if you never make a sacred promise, you can't be guilty of breaking it.

²³You must keep whatever promises you make to the LORD. After all, you are the one who chose to make the promises.

²⁴If you go into a vineyard that belongs to someone else, you are allowed to eat as many grapes as you want while you are there. But don't take any with you when you leave.

²⁵In the same way, if you are in a grain field that belongs to someone else, you can pick heads of grain and eat the kernels. But don't cut down the stalks of grain and take them with you.

24¹ Moses said to Israel: Suppose a woman was divorced by her first husband because he found something disgraceful about her. He wrote out divorce papers, gave them to her, and sent her away.

² Later she married another man,

³ who then either divorced her in the same way or died.

⁴ Since she has slept with her second husband, she cannot marry her first husband again. Their marriage would pollute the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and he would be disgusted.

⁵ Moses said to Israel: If a man and a woman have been married less than one year, he must not be sent off to war or sent away to do forced labour. He must be allowed to stay home for a year and be happy with his wife.

⁶ Moses said to Israel: When you lend money to people, you are allowed to keep something of theirs as a guarantee that they will pay back the loan. But don't take one or both of their millstones, or else they may starve. They need these stones for grinding grain into flour to make bread.

⁷ Moses said to Israel: If you are guilty of kidnapping Israelites and forcing them into slavery, you will be put to death to remove this evil from the community.

⁸ Moses said to Israel: I have told the priests what to do if any of you have leprosy, so do exactly what they say.

⁹And remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam after you left Egypt.

¹⁰Moses said to Israel: When you lend money to people, you are allowed to keep something of theirs as a guarantee that the money will be paid back. But you must not go into their house to get it.

¹¹Wait outside, and they will bring out the item you have agreed on.

¹²Suppose someone is so poor that a coat is the only thing that can be offered as a guarantee on a loan. Don't keep the coat overnight.

¹³Instead, give it back before sunset, so the owner can keep warm and sleep and ask the LORD to bless you. Then the LORD your God will notice that you have done the right thing.

¹⁴Moses said: If you hire poor people to work for you, don't hold back their pay, whether they are Israelites or foreigners who live in your town.

¹⁵Pay them their wages at the end of each day, because they live in poverty and need the money to survive. If you don't pay them on time, they will

complain about you to the LORD, and he will punish you.

¹⁶Moses said to Israel: Parents must not be put to death for crimes committed by their children, and children must not be put to death for crimes committed by their parents. Don't put anyone to death for someone else's crime.

¹⁷Moses said to Israel: Make sure that orphans and foreigners are treated fairly. And if you lend money to a widow and want to keep something of hers to guarantee that she will pay you back, don't take any of her clothes.

¹⁸You were slaves in Egypt until the LORD your God rescued you. That's why I am giving you these laws.

¹⁹Moses said to Israel: If you forget to bring in a stack of harvested grain, don't go back in the field to get it. Leave it for the poor, including foreigners, orphans, and widows, and the LORD will make you successful in everything you do.

²⁰When you harvest your olives, don't try to get them all for yourself, but leave some for the poor.

²¹ And when you pick your grapes, go over the vines only once, then let the poor have what is left.

²² You lived in poverty as slaves in Egypt until the LORD your God rescued you. That's why I am giving you these laws.

25 ¹ Moses said to Israel: Suppose you and someone else each accuse the other of doing something wrong, and you go to court, where the judges decide you are guilty. If your punishment is to be beaten with a whip, one of the judges will order you to lie down, and you will receive the number of lashes you deserve.

² (25: 1)

³ Forty lashes is the most that you can be given, because more than that might make other Israelites think you are worthless.

⁴ Moses said to Israel: Don't muzzle an ox while it is threshing grain.

⁵ Moses said to Israel: Suppose two brothers are living on the same property, when one of them dies without having a son to carry on his name. If this happens, his widow must not marry

anyone outside the family. Instead, she must marry her late husband's brother, and their first son will be the legal son of the dead man.

⁶ (25: 5)

⁷ But suppose the brother refuses to marry the widow. She must go to a meeting of the town leaders at the town gate and say, My husband died without having a son to carry on his name. And my husband's brother refuses to marry me so I can have a son.

⁸ The leaders will call the living brother to the town gate and try to persuade him to marry the widow. But if he doesn't change his mind and marry her,

⁹ she must go over to him while the town leaders watch. She will pull off one of his sandals and spit in his face, while saying, That's what happens to a man who won't help provide descendants for his dead brother.

¹⁰ From then on, that man's family will be known as the family of the man whose sandal was pulled off.

¹¹ Moses said to Israel: If two men are fighting, and the wife of one man tries

to rescue her husband by grabbing the other man's private parts,

¹²you must cut off her hand. Don't have any mercy.

¹³Moses said to Israel: Don't try to cheat people by having two sets of weights or measures, one to get more when you are buying, and the other to give less when you are selling.

¹⁴(25: 13)

¹⁵If you weigh and measure things honestly, the LORD your God will let you enjoy a long life in the land he is giving you.

¹⁶But the LORD is disgusted with anyone who cheats or is dishonest.

¹⁷Moses said: People of Israel, do you remember what the Amalekites did to you after you came out of Egypt?

¹⁸You were tired, and they followed along behind, attacking those who could not keep up with the others. This showed that the Amalekites have no respect for God.

¹⁹The LORD your God will help you capture the land, and he will give you peace. But when that day comes, you

must wipe out Amalek so completely that no one will remember they ever lived.

26¹ Moses said to Israel: The LORD is giving you the land, and soon you will conquer it, settle down,

²and plant crops. And when you begin harvesting each of your crops, the very first things you pick must be put in a basket. Take them to the place where the LORD your God chooses to be worshipped,

³and tell the priest, Long ago the LORD our God promised our ancestors that he would give us this land. And today, I thank him for keeping his promise and giving me a share of the land.

⁴The priest will take the basket and set it in front of the LORD's altar.

⁵Then, standing there in front of the place of worship, you must pray: My ancestor was homeless, an Aramean who went to live in Egypt. There were only a few in his family then, but they became great and powerful, a nation of many people.

⁶The Egyptians were cruel and had no pity on us. They ill-treated our people and forced us into slavery.

⁷We called out for help to you, the LORD God of our ancestors. You heard our cries; you knew we were in trouble and abused.

⁸Then you terrified the Egyptians with your mighty miracles and rescued us from Egypt.

⁹You brought us here and gave us this land rich with milk and honey.

¹⁰Now, LORD, I bring to you the best of the crops that you have given me. After you say these things, place the basket in front of the LORD's altar and bow down to worship him.

¹¹Then you and your family must celebrate by eating a meal at the place of worship to thank the LORD your God for giving you such a good harvest. And remember to invite the Levites and the foreigners who live in your town.

¹²Moses said to Israel: Every year you are to give ten per cent of your harvest to the LORD. But every third year, this ten per cent must be given to the poor who live in your town, including Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows. That way, they will have enough to eat.

¹³Then you must pray: Our LORD and our God, you have said that ten per cent of my harvest is sacred. I have obeyed your command and given this to the poor, including the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows.

¹⁴I have not eaten any of this sacred food while I was in mourning; in fact, I never touched it when I was unclean. And none of it has been offered as a sacrifice to the spirits of the dead. I have done everything exactly as you commanded.

¹⁵Our LORD, look down from your temple in heaven and bless your people Israel. You promised our ancestors that you would give us this land rich with milk and honey, and you have kept your promise.

¹⁶Moses said to Israel: Today the LORD your God has commanded you to obey these laws and teachings with all your heart and soul.

¹⁷In response, you have agreed that the LORD will be your God, that you will obey all his laws and teachings, and that you will listen when he speaks to you.

¹⁸Since you have agreed to obey the LORD, he has agreed that you will be his people and that you will belong to him, just as he promised.

¹⁹The LORD created all nations, but he will make you more famous than any of them, and you will receive more praise and honour. You will belong only to the LORD your God, just as he promised.

27 ¹Moses stood together with the leaders and told the people of Israel: Obey all the laws and teachings that I am giving you today.

²Soon you will enter the land that the LORD your God is giving to you. He is the God your ancestors worshipped, and he has promised that this land is rich with milk and honey. After you cross the River Jordan, go to Mount Ebal. Set up large slabs of stone, then cover them with white plaster and write on them a copy of these laws.

³ (27: 2)

⁴ (27: 2)

⁵At this same place, build an altar for offering sacrifices to the LORD your God. But don't use stones that have been cut with iron tools.

⁶Look for stones that can be used without being cut. Then offer sacrifices to please the LORD, burning them completely on the altar.

⁷Next, offer sacrifices to ask the LORD's blessing, and serve the meat at a sacred meal where you will celebrate in honour of the LORD.

⁸Don't forget to write out a copy of these laws on the stone slabs that you are going to set up. Make sure that the writing is easy to read.

⁹Moses stood together with the priests and said, Israel, be quiet and listen to me! Today you have become the people of the LORD your God.

¹⁰So you must obey his laws and teachings that I am giving you.

¹¹That same day, Moses gave them the following instructions:

¹²After you cross the River Jordan, you will go to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. The tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin will go up on Mount Gerizim, where they will bless the people of Israel. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali will go up on

Mount Ebal where they will agree to the curses.

¹³ (27:12)

¹⁴ The people of the Levi tribe will speak each curse in a loud voice, then the rest of the people will agree to that curse by saying, Amen! Here are the curses: We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who makes an idol or worships idols, even secretly. The LORD is disgusted with idols. We ask the LORD to put a curse on all who do not show respect for their father and mother. We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who moves the rocks that mark boundaries. We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who tells blind people to go the wrong way. We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who keeps the poor from getting justice, whether these poor are foreigners, widows, or orphans. We ask the LORD to put a curse on any man who sleeps with his father's wife; that man has shown no respect for his father's marriage. We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who has sex with an animal. We ask the LORD to put a curse on any man who sleeps

with his sister or his half-sister or his mother-in-law. We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who commits murder, even when there are no witnesses to the crime. We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who accepts money to murder an innocent victim. We ask the LORD to put a curse on anyone who refuses to obey his laws. And so, to each of these curses, the people will answer, Amen!

¹⁵ (27: 14)

¹⁶ (27: 14)

¹⁷ (27: 14)

¹⁸ (27: 14)

¹⁹ (27: 14)

²⁰ (27: 14)

²¹ (27: 14)

²² (27: 14)

²³ (27: 14)

²⁴ (27: 14)

²⁵ (27: 14)

²⁶ (27: 14)

28¹ Moses said to Israel: Today I am giving you the laws and teachings of the LORD your God. Always obey them, and the LORD will make Israel the most famous and important nation

on earth, and he will bless you in many ways.

²(28: 1)

³The LORD will make your businesses and your farms successful.

⁴You will have many children. You will harvest large crops, and your herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats will produce many young.

⁵You will have plenty of bread to eat.

⁶The LORD will make you successful in your daily work.

⁷The LORD will help you defeat your enemies and make them scatter in all directions.

⁸The LORD your God is giving you the land, and he will make sure you are successful in everything you do. Your harvests will be so large that your storehouses will be full.

⁹If you follow and obey the LORD, he will make you his own special people, just as he promised.

¹⁰Then everyone on earth will know that you belong to the LORD, and they will be afraid of you.

¹¹The LORD will give you a lot of children and make sure that your

animals give birth to many young. The LORD promised your ancestors that this land would be yours, and he will make it produce large crops for you.

¹²The LORD will open the storehouses of the skies where he keeps the rain, and he will send rain on your land at just the right times. He will make you successful in everything you do. You will have plenty of money to lend to other nations, but you won't need to borrow any yourself.

¹³Obey the laws and teachings that I'm giving you today, and the LORD your God will make Israel a leader among the nations, and not a follower. Israel will be wealthy and powerful, not poor and weak.

¹⁴But you must not reject any of his laws and teachings or worship other gods.

¹⁵Moses said: Israel, today I am giving you the laws and teachings of the LORD your God. And if you don't obey them all, he will put many curses on you.

¹⁶Your businesses and farms will fail.

¹⁷You won't have enough bread to eat.

¹⁸You'll have only a few children, your crops will be small, and your herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats won't produce many young.

¹⁹The LORD will make you fail in everything you do.

²⁰No matter what you try to accomplish, the LORD will confuse you, and you will feel his anger. You won't last long, and you may even meet with disaster, all because you rejected the LORD.

²¹The LORD will send terrible diseases to attack you, and you will never be well again. You will suffer with burning fever and swelling and pain until you die somewhere in the land that you captured. The LORD will make the sky overhead seem like a bronze roof that keeps out the rain, and the ground under your feet will become as hard as iron. Your crops will be scorched by the hot east wind or ruined by mildew.

²²(28: 21)

²³(28: 21)

²⁴He will send dust and sandstorms instead of rain, and you will be wiped out.

²⁵The LORD will let you be defeated by your enemies, and you will scatter in all directions. You will be a horrible sight for the other nations to see,

²⁶and no one will disturb the birds and wild animals while they eat your dead bodies.

²⁷The LORD will make you suffer with diseases that will cause oozing sores or crusty itchy patches on your skin or boils like the ones that are common in Egypt. And there will be no cure for you!

²⁸You will become insane and go blind. The LORD will make you so confused,

²⁹that even in bright sunshine you will have to feel your way around like a blind person, who cannot tell day from night. For the rest of your life, people will beat and rob you, and no one will be able to stop them.

³⁰A man will be engaged to a woman, but before they can get married, she will be raped by enemy soldiers. Some of you will build houses, but never get to live in them. If you plant a vineyard, you won't be around long enough to enjoy the first harvest.

³¹Your cattle will be killed while you watch, but you won't get to eat any of the meat. Your donkeys and sheep will be stolen from you, and no one will be around to force your enemies to give them back.

³²Your sons and daughters will be dragged off to a foreign country, while you stand there helpless. And even if you watch for them until you go blind, you will never see them again.

³³You will work hard on your farms, but everything you harvest will be eaten by foreigners, who will ill-treat you and abuse you for the rest of your life.

³⁴What you see will be so horrible that you will go insane,

³⁵and the LORD will punish you from head to toe with boils that never heal.

³⁶The LORD will let you and your king be taken captive to a country that you and your ancestors have never even heard of, and there you will have to worship idols made of wood and stone.

³⁷People of nearby countries will shudder when they see your terrible troubles, but they will still make fun of you.

³⁸You will plant a lot of seed, but gather a small harvest, because locusts will eat your crops.

³⁹You will plant vineyards and work hard at taking care of them, but you won't gather any grapes, much less get any wine, and the vines themselves will be eaten by worms.

⁴⁰Even if your olive trees grow everywhere in your country, the olives will fall off before they are ready, and there won't be enough olive oil for combing your hair.

⁴¹Even your infant sons and daughters will be taken as prisoners of war.

⁴²Locusts will eat your crops and strip your trees of leaves and fruit.

⁴³Foreigners in your towns will become wealthy and powerful, while you become poor and powerless.

⁴⁴You will be so short of money that you will have to borrow from those foreigners. They will be the leaders in the community, and you will be the followers.

⁴⁵Moses said: Israel, if you don't obey the laws and teachings that the LORD

your God is giving you, he will send these curses to chase, attack, and destroy you.

⁴⁶Then everyone will look at you and your descendants and realize that the LORD has placed you under a curse.

⁴⁷If the LORD makes you wealthy, but you don't joyfully worship and honour him,

⁴⁸he will send enemies to attack you and make you their slaves. Then you will live in poverty with nothing to eat, drink, or wear, and your owners will work you to death.

⁴⁹Foreigners who speak a strange language will be sent to attack you without warning, just like an eagle swooping down.

⁵⁰They won't show any mercy, and they will have no respect for old people or pity for children.

⁵¹They will take your cattle, sheep, goats, grain, wine, and olive oil, then leave you to starve.

⁵²All over the land that the LORD your God gave you, the enemy army will surround your towns. You may feel safe inside your town walls, but the enemy will tear them down,

⁵³ while you wait in horror. Finally, you will get so hungry that you will eat the sons and daughters that the LORD gave you.

⁵⁴ Because of hunger, a man who had been gentle and kind will eat his own children and refuse to share the meal with his brother or wife or with his other children.

⁵⁵ (28: 54)

⁵⁶ A woman may have grown up in such luxury that she never had to put a foot on the ground. But times will be so bad that she will secretly eat both her newborn baby and the afterbirth, without sharing any with her husband or her other children.

⁵⁷ (28: 56)

⁵⁸ Moses said to Israel: You must obey everything in The Book of God's Law. Because if you don't respect the LORD,

⁵⁹ he will punish you and your descendants with incurable diseases,

⁶⁰ like those you were so afraid of in Egypt.

⁶¹ Remember! If the LORD decides to destroy your nation, he can use any

disease or disaster, not just the ones written in The Book of God's Law.

⁶²There are as many of you now as the stars in the sky, but if you disobey the LORD your God, only a few of you will be left.

⁶³The LORD is happy to make you successful and to help your nation grow while you conquer the land. But if you disobey him, he will be just as happy to pull you up by your roots.

⁶⁴Those of you who survive will be scattered to every nation on earth, and you will have to worship stone and wood idols that never helped you or your ancestors.

⁶⁵You will be restless always longing for home, but never able to return.

⁶⁶You will live in constant fear of death.

⁶⁷Each morning you will wake up to such terrible sights that you will say, I wish it were night! But at night you will be terrified and say, I wish it were day!

⁶⁸I told you never to go back to Egypt. But now the LORD himself will load you on ships and send you back. Then you will even try to sell yourselves as slaves, but no one will be interested.

29¹ So Moses finished telling the Israelites what they had to do in order to keep the agreement the LORD was making with them in Moab, which was in addition to the one the LORD had made with them at Mount Sinai.

² Moses called the nation of Israel together and told them: When you were in Egypt, you saw the LORD perform great miracles that caused trouble for the king, his officials, and everyone else in the country.

³ (29: 2)

⁴ He has even told you, For forty years I, the LORD, led you through the desert, but your clothes and your sandals didn't wear out, and I gave you special food. I did these things so you would realize that I am your God. But the LORD must give you a change of heart before you truly understand what you have seen and heard.

⁵ (29: 4)

⁶ (29: 4)

⁷ When we first camped here, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan attacked, but we defeated them.

⁸Then we captured their land and divided it among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh.

⁹Moses said: Israel, the LORD has made an agreement with you, and if you keep your part, you will be successful in everything you do.

¹⁰Today everyone in our nation is standing here in the LORD's presence, including leaders and officials, parents and children, and even those foreigners who cut wood and carry water for us. We are at this place of worship to promise that we will keep our part of the agreement with the LORD our God.

¹¹ (29: 10)

¹² (29: 10)

¹³In this agreement, the LORD promised that you would be his people and that he would be your God. He first made this promise to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and today the LORD is making this same promise to you. But it isn't just for you; it is also for your descendants.

¹⁴ (29: 13)

¹⁵ (29: 13)

¹⁶When we lived in Egypt, you saw the Egyptians worship disgusting idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold. Then as we travelled through other nations, you saw those people worship other disgusting idols.

¹⁷ (29: 16)

¹⁸So make sure that everyone in your tribe remains faithful to the LORD and never starts worshipping gods of other nations. If even one of you worships idols, you will be like the root of a plant that produces bitter, poisonous fruit.

¹⁹You may be an Israelite and know all about the LORD's agreement with us, but he won't bless you if you rebel against him. You may think you can get away with it, but you will cause the rest of Israel to be punished along with you.

²⁰The LORD will be furious, and instead of forgiving you, he will separate you from the other tribes. Then he will destroy you, by piling on you all the curses in The Book of God's Law, and you will be forgotten for ever.

²¹ (29: 20)

²²The LORD will strike your country with diseases and disasters. Your

descendants and foreigners from distant countries will see that your land

²³ has become a scorching desert of salt and sulphur, where nothing is planted, nothing sprouts, and nothing grows. It will be as lifeless as the land around the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, after the LORD became angry and destroyed them.

²⁴ People from other nations will ask, Why did the LORD destroy this country? Why was he so furious?

²⁵ And they will be given this answer: Our ancestors worshipped the LORD, but after he brought them out of Egypt and made an agreement with them, they rejected the agreement

²⁶ and decided to worship gods that had never helped them. The LORD had forbidden Israel to worship these gods,

²⁷ and so he became furious and punished the land with all the curses in The Book of God's Law. Then he pulled up Israel by the roots and tossed them into a foreign country, where they still are today.

²⁸ (29: 27)

²⁹The LORD our God hasn't explained the present or the future, but he has commanded us to obey the laws he gave to us and our descendants.

30¹ Moses said to Israel: I have told you everything the LORD your God will do for you, and I've also told you the curses he will put on you if you reject him. He will scatter you in faraway countries, but when you realize that he is punishing you,

²return to him with all your heart and soul and start obeying the commands I have given to you today.

³Then he will stop punishing you and treat you with kindness. He may have scattered you to the furthest countries on earth, but he will bring you back

⁴ (30: 3)

⁵to the land that had belonged to your ancestors and make you even more successful and powerful than they ever were.

⁶You and your descendants are stubborn, but the LORD will make you willing to obey him and love him with all your heart and soul, and you will enjoy a long life.

⁷ Then the LORD your God will remove the curses from you and put them on those enemies who hate and attack you.

⁸ You will again obey the laws and teachings of the LORD,

⁹ and he will bless you with many children, large herds and flocks, and abundant crops. The LORD will be happy to do good things for you, just as he did for your ancestors.

¹⁰ But you must decide once and for all to worship him with all your heart and soul and to obey everything in The Book of God's Law.

¹¹ Moses said to Israel: You know God's laws, and it isn't impossible to obey them.

¹² His commands aren't in heaven, so you can't excuse yourselves by saying, How can we obey the LORD's commands? They are in heaven, and no one can go up to get them, then bring them down and explain them to us.

¹³ And you can't say, How can we obey the LORD's commands? They are across the sea, and someone must go across, then bring them back and explain them to us.

¹⁴No, these commands are nearby and you know them by heart. All you have to do is obey!

¹⁵Today I am giving you a choice. You can choose life and success or death and disaster.

¹⁶I am commanding you to be loyal to the LORD, to live the way he has told you, and to obey his laws and teachings. You are about to cross the River Jordan and take the land that he is giving you. If you obey him, you will live and become successful and powerful. On the other hand, you might choose to disobey the LORD and reject him. So I'm warning you that if you bow down and worship other gods, you won't have long to live.

¹⁷(30: 16)

¹⁸(30: 16)

¹⁹Now I call the sky and the earth to be witnesses that I am offering you this choice. Will you choose for the LORD to make you prosperous and give you a long life? Or will he put you under a curse and kill you? Choose life!

²⁰Be completely faithful to the LORD your God, love him, and do whatever he tells you. The LORD is the only one who

can give life, and he will let you live a long time in the land that he promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

31 ¹ Moses again spoke to the whole nation of Israel:

² I am a hundred and twenty years old, and I am no longer able to be your leader. And besides that, the LORD your God has told me that he won't let me cross the River Jordan.

³ But he has promised that he and Joshua will lead you across the Jordan to attack the nations that live on the other side. The LORD will destroy those nations just as he destroyed Sihon and Og, those two Amorite kings. Just remember whenever you capture a place, kill everyone who lives there.

⁴ (31: 3)

⁵ (31: 3)

⁶ Be brave and strong! Don't be afraid of the nations on the other side of the Jordan. The LORD your God will always be at your side, and he will never abandon you.

⁷ Then Moses called Joshua up in front of the crowd and said: Joshua, be brave

and strong as you lead these people into their land. The LORD made a promise long ago to Israel's ancestors that this land would some day belong to Israel. That time has now come, and you must divide up the land among the people.

⁸The LORD will lead you into the land. He will always be with you and help you, so don't ever be afraid of your enemies.

⁹Moses wrote down all these laws and teachings and gave them to the priests and the leaders of Israel. The priests were from the Levi tribe, and they carried the sacred chest that belonged to the LORD.

¹⁰Moses told these priests and leaders: Each year the Israelites must come together to celebrate the Festival of Shelters at the place where the LORD chooses to be worshipped. You must read these laws and teachings to the people at the festival every seventh year, the year when loans do not need to be repaid.

¹¹ (31:10)

¹²Everyone must come men, women, children, and even the foreigners who live in your towns. And each new

generation will listen and learn to worship the LORD their God with fear and trembling and to do exactly what is said in God's Law.

¹³(31:12)

¹⁴The LORD told Moses, You will soon die, so bring Joshua to the sacred tent, and I will appoint him the leader of Israel. Moses and Joshua went to the sacred tent,

¹⁵and the LORD appeared in a thick cloud right over the entrance to the tent.

¹⁶The LORD said: Moses, you will soon die. But Israel is going into a land where other gods are worshipped, and Israel will reject me and start worshipping these gods. The people will break the agreement I made with them,

¹⁷and I will be so furious that I will abandon them and ignore their prayers. I will send disasters and suffering that will nearly wipe them out. Finally, they will realize that the disasters happened because I abandoned them.

¹⁸They will pray to me, but I will ignore them because they were evil and started worshipping other gods.

¹⁹ Moses and Joshua, I am going to give you the words to a new song. Write them down and teach the song to the Israelites. If they learn it, they will know what I want them to do, and so they will have no excuse for not obeying me.

²⁰ I am bringing them into the land that I promised their ancestors. It is a land rich with milk and honey, and the Israelites will have more than enough food to eat. But they will get fat and turn their backs on me and start worshipping other gods. The Israelites will reject me and break the agreement that I made with them.

²¹ When I punish the Israelites and their descendants with suffering and disasters, I will remind them that they know the words to this song, so they have no excuse for not obeying me. I will give them the land that I promised, but I know the way they are going to live later on.

²² Moses wrote down the words to the song straight away, and he taught it to the Israelites.

²³ The LORD told Joshua, Be brave and strong! I will help you lead the people of

Israel into the land that I have promised them.

²⁴ Moses wrote down all these laws and teachings in a book,

²⁵ then he went to the Levites who carried the sacred chest and said:

²⁶ This is The Book of God's Law. Keep it beside the sacred chest that holds the agreement the LORD your God made with Israel. This book is proof that you know what the LORD wants you to do.

²⁷ I know how stubborn and rebellious you and the rest of the Israelites are. You have rebelled against the LORD while I have been alive, and it will only get worse after I am gone.

²⁸ So call together the leaders and officials of the tribes of Israel. I will bring this book and read every word of it to you, and I will call the sky and the earth as witnesses that all of you know what you are supposed to do.

²⁹ I am going to die soon, and I know that in the future you will stop caring about what is right and what is wrong, and so you will disobey the LORD and stop living the way I told you to live. The

LORD will be angry, and terrible things will happen to you.

³⁰Moses called a meeting of all the people of Israel, so he could teach them the words to the song that the LORD had given him. And here are the words:

32 ¹Earth and Sky, listen to what I say!

²Israel, I will teach you. My words will be like gentle rain on tender young plants, or like dew on the grass.

³Join with me in praising the wonderful name of the LORD our God.

⁴The LORD is a mighty rock, and he never does wrong. God can always be trusted to bring justice.

⁵But you lie and cheat and are unfaithful to him. You have disgraced yourselves and are no longer worthy to be his children.

⁶Israel, the LORD is your Father, the one who created you, but you repaid him by being foolish.

⁷Think about past generations. Ask your parents or any of your elders. They will tell you

⁸ that God Most High gave land to every nation. He assigned a guardian angel to each of them,

⁹ but the LORD himself takes care of Israel.

¹⁰ Israel, the LORD discovered you in a barren desert filled with howling winds. God became your fortress, protecting you as though you were his own eyes.

¹¹ The LORD was like an eagle teaching its young to fly, always ready to swoop down and catch them on its back.

¹² Israel, the LORD led you, and without the aid of a foreign god,

¹³ he helped you capture the land. Your fields were rich with grain. Olive trees grew in your stony soil, and honey was found among the rocks.

¹⁴ Your flocks and herds produced milk and yoghurt, and you got choice meat from your sheep and goats that grazed in Bashan. Your wheat was the finest, and you drank the best wine.

¹⁵ Israel, you grew fat and rebelled against God, your Creator; you rejected the Mighty Rock, your only place of safety.

¹⁶You made God jealous and angry by worshipping disgusting idols and foreign gods.

¹⁷You offered sacrifices to demons, those useless gods that never helped you, new gods that your ancestors never worshipped.

¹⁸You turned away from God, your Creator; you forgot the Mighty Rock, the source of your life.

¹⁹You were the LORD's children, but you made him angry. Then he rejected you

²⁰and said, You are unfaithful and can't be trusted. So I won't answer your prayers; I'll just watch and see what happens to you.

²¹You worshipped worthless idols, and made me jealous and angry! Now I will send a cruel and worthless nation to make you jealous and angry.

²²My people, I will breathe out fire that sends you down to the world of the dead. It will scorch your farmlands and burn deep down under the mountains.

²³I'll send disaster after disaster to strike you like arrows.

²⁴You'll be struck by starvation and deadly diseases, by the fangs of wild animals and poisonous snakes.

²⁵Young and old alike will be killed in the streets and terrified at home.

²⁶I wanted to scatter you, so no one would remember that you had ever lived.

²⁷But I dreaded the sound of your enemies saying, We defeated Israel with no help from the LORD.

²⁸People of Israel, that's what the LORD has said to you. But you don't have good sense, and you never listen to advice.

²⁹If you did, you could see where you are headed.

³⁰How could one enemy soldier chase a thousand of Israel's troops? Or how could two of theirs pursue ten thousand of ours? It can only happen if the LORD stops protecting Israel and lets the enemy win.

³¹Even our enemies know that only our God is a Mighty Rock.

³²Our enemies are grapevines rooted in the fields of Sodom and Gomorrah. The grapes they produce are full of bitter poison;

³³ their wine is more deadly than cobra venom.

³⁴ But the LORD has written a list of their sins and locked it in his vault.

³⁵ Soon our enemies will get what they deserve suddenly they will slip, and total disaster will quickly follow.

³⁶ When only a few of the LORD's people remain, when their strength is gone, and some of them are slaves, the LORD will feel sorry for them and give them justice.

³⁷ But first the LORD will say, You ran for safety to other gods couldn't they help you?

³⁸ You offered them wine and your best sacrifices. Can't those gods help you now or give you protection?

³⁹ Don't you understand? I am the only God; there are no others. I am the one who takes life and gives it again. I punished you with suffering. But now I will heal you, and nothing can stop me!

⁴⁰ I make this solemn promise: just as I live for ever,

⁴¹ I will take revenge on my hateful enemies. I will sharpen my sword and let it flash like lightning.

⁴² My arrows will get drunk on enemy blood; my sword will taste the flesh and the blood of the enemy. It will kill prisoners, and cut off the heads of their leaders.

⁴³ Tell the heavens to celebrate and all gods to bow down to the LORD, because he will take revenge on those hateful enemies who killed his people. He will forgive the sins of Israel and purify their land.

⁴⁴ Moses spoke the words of the song so that all the Israelites could hear, and Joshua helped him. When Moses had finished,

⁴⁵ (32: 44)

⁴⁶ he said, Always remember this song I have taught you today. And let it be a warning that you must teach your children to obey everything written in The Book of God's Law.

⁴⁷ The Law isn't empty words. It can give you a long life in the land that you are going to take.

⁴⁸ Later that day the LORD said to Moses:

⁴⁹ Go up into the Abarim Mountain range here in Moab across the Jordan

valley from Jericho. And when you reach the top of Mount Nebo, you will be able to see the land of Canaan, which I am giving to Israel.

⁵⁰Then you will die and be buried on the mountaintop, just as your brother Aaron died and was buried on Mount Hor.

⁵¹Both of you were unfaithful to me at Meribah Spring near Kadesh in the Zin Desert. I am God, but there in front of the Israelites, you did not treat me with the honour and respect I deserve.

⁵²So I will give the land to the people of Israel, but you will only get to see it from a distance.

33¹ Moses was a prophet, and before he died, he blessed the tribes of Israel by saying:

²The LORD came from Mount Sinai. From Edom, he gave light to his people, and his glory was shining from Mount Paran. Thousands of his warriors were with him, and fire was at his right hand.

³The LORD loves the tribes of Israel, and he protects his people. They listen to his words and worship at his feet.

⁴I called a meeting of the tribes of Israel and gave you God's Law. Then you

and your leaders made the LORD your king.

⁵ (33: 4)

⁶Tribe of Reuben, you will live, even though your tribe will always be small.

⁷The LORD will listen to you, tribe of Judah, as you beg to come safely home. You fought your enemies alone; now the LORD will help you.

⁸At Massah and Meribah Spring, the LORD tested you, tribe of Levi. You were faithful, and so the priesthood belongs to the Levi tribe.

⁹Protecting Israel's agreement with the LORD was more important to you than the life of your father or mother, or brothers or sisters, or your own children.

¹⁰You teach God's laws to Israel, and at the place of worship you offer sacrifices and burn incense.

¹¹I pray that the LORD will bless everything you do, and make you strong enough to crush your enemies.

¹²The LORD Most High loves you, tribe of Benjamin. He will live among your hills and protect you.

¹³ Descendants of Joseph, the LORD will bless you with precious water from deep wells and with dew from the sky.

¹⁴ Month by month, your fruit will ripen in the sunshine.

¹⁵ You will have a rich harvest from the slopes of the ancient hills.

¹⁶ The LORD who appeared in the burning bush wants to give you the best the land can produce, and it will be a princely crown on Joseph's head.

¹⁷ The armies of Ephraim and Manasseh are majestic and fierce like a bull or a wild ox. They will run their spears through faraway nations.

¹⁸ Be happy, Zebulun, as your boats set sail; be happy, Issachar, in your tents.

¹⁹ The sea will make you wealthy, and from the sandy beach you will get treasure. So invite the other tribes to celebrate with you and offer sacrifices to God.

²⁰ Tribe of Gad, the LORD will bless you with more land. So shout his praises! Your tribe is like a lion ripping up its victim.

²¹ Your leaders met together and chose the best land for your tribe, but you

obeyed the LORD and helped the other tribes.

²²Tribe of Dan, you are like a lion cub, startled by a snake.

²³The LORD is pleased with you, people of Naphtali. He will bless you and give you the land to the west and the south.

²⁴The LORD's greatest blessing is for you, tribe of Asher. You will be the favourite of all the other tribes. You will be rich with olive oil

²⁵and have strong town gates with bronze and iron bolts. Your people will be powerful for as long as they live.

²⁶Israel, no other god is like ours the clouds are his chariot as he rides across the skies to come and help us.

²⁷The eternal God is our hiding place; he carries us in his arms. When God tells you to destroy your enemies, he will make them run.

²⁸Israel, you will live in safety; your enemies will be gone. The dew will fall from the sky, and you will have plenty of grain and wine.

²⁹The LORD has rescued you and given you more blessings than any other nation. He protects you like a shield and

is your majestic sword. Your enemies will bow in fear, and you will trample on their backs.

34¹ Some time later, Moses left the lowlands of Moab. He went up Mount Pisgah to the peak of Mount Nebo, which is across the River Jordan from Jericho. The LORD showed him all the land as far north as Gilead and the town of Dan.

² He let Moses see the territories that would soon belong to the tribes of Naphtali, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Judah, as far west as the Mediterranean Sea.

³ The LORD also showed him the land in the south, from the valley near the town of Jericho, known as The City of Palm Trees, down to the town of Zoar.

⁴ The LORD said, Moses, this is the land I was talking about when I solemnly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would give land to their descendants. I have let you see it, but you will not cross the Jordan and go in.

⁵ And so, Moses the LORD's servant died there in Moab, just as the LORD had said.

⁶The LORD buried him in a valley near the town of Beth-Peor, but even today no one knows exactly where.

⁷Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyesight was still good, and his body was strong.

⁸The people of Israel stayed in the lowlands of Moab, where they mourned and grieved thirty days for Moses, as was their custom.

⁹Before Moses died, he had placed his hands on Joshua, and the LORD had given Joshua wisdom. The Israelites paid attention to what Joshua said and obeyed the commands that the LORD had given Moses.

¹⁰There has never again been a prophet in Israel like Moses. The LORD spoke face to face with him

¹¹and sent him to perform powerful miracles in the presence of the king of Egypt and his entire nation.

¹²No one else has ever had the power to do such great things as Moses did for everyone to see.

Joshua

1 ¹ Moses, the LORD's servant, was dead. So the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had been the assistant of Moses. The LORD said:

² My servant Moses is dead. Now you must lead Israel across the River Jordan into the land I'm giving to all of you.

³ Wherever you go, I'll give you that land, as I promised Moses.

⁴ It will reach from the Southern Desert to the Lebanon Mountains in the north, and to the north-east as far as the great River Euphrates. It will include the land of the Hittites, and the land from here at the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

⁵ Joshua, I will always be with you and help you as I helped Moses, and no one will ever be able to defeat you.

⁶ Long ago I promised the ancestors of Israel that I would give this land to their descendants. So be strong and brave! Be careful to do everything my servant Moses taught you. Never stop reading

The Book of the Law he gave you. Day and night you must think about what it says. If you obey it completely, you and Israel will be able to take this land.

⁷ (1: 6)

⁸ (1: 6)

⁹ I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the LORD your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go.

¹⁰ Joshua ordered the tribal leaders

¹¹ to go through the camp and tell everyone: In a few days we will cross the River Jordan to take the land that the LORD our God is giving us. So prepare as much food as you'll need for the march into the land.

¹² Joshua told the men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh:

¹³ The LORD's servant Moses said that the LORD our God has given you land here on the east side of the River Jordan, where you could live in peace. Your wives and children and your animals can stay here in the land Moses gave you. But all of you who can serve in our army must pick up your weapons and lead the

men of the other tribes across the River Jordan. They are your relatives, so you must help them

¹⁴(1:13)

¹⁵conquer the land that the LORD is giving them. The LORD will give peace to them as he has given peace to you, and then you can come back and settle here in the land that Moses promised you.

¹⁶The men answered: We'll cross the River Jordan and help our relatives. We'll fight anywhere you send us.

¹⁷If the LORD our God will help you as he helped Moses, and if you are strong and brave, we will obey you as we obeyed Moses. We'll even put to death anyone who rebels against you or refuses to obey you.

¹⁸(1:17)

2¹ Joshua chose two men as spies and sent them from their camp at Acacia with these instructions: Go across the river and find out as much as you can about the whole region, especially about the town of Jericho. The two spies left the Israelite camp at Acacia and went to Jericho, where they decided to spend the

night at the house of a prostitute named Rahab.

²But someone found out about them and told the king of Jericho, Some Israelite men came here tonight, and they are spies.

³So the king sent soldiers to Rahab's house to arrest the spies. Meanwhile, Rahab had taken the men up to the flat roof of her house and had hidden them under some piles of flax plants that she had put there to dry. The soldiers came to her door and demanded, Let us have the men who are staying at your house. They are spies. She answered, Some men did come to my house, but I didn't know where they had come from. They left about sunset, just before it was time to close the town gate. I don't know where they were going, but if you hurry, perhaps you can catch them. The guards at the town gate let the soldiers leave Jericho, but they closed the gate again as soon as the soldiers went through. Then the soldiers headed towards the River Jordan to look for the spies at the place where people cross the river.

⁴ (2: 3)

⁵ (2: 3)

⁶ (2: 3)

⁷ (2: 3)

⁸ Rahab went back up to her roof. The spies were still awake, so she told them:

⁹ I know that the LORD has given Israel this land. Everyone shakes with fear because of you.

¹⁰ We heard how the LORD dried up the Red Sea so you could leave Egypt. And we heard how you destroyed Sihon and Og, those two Amorite kings east of the River Jordan.

¹¹ We know that the LORD your God rules heaven and earth, and we've lost our courage and our will to fight.

¹² Please promise me in the LORD's name that you will be as kind to my family as I have been to you. Do something to show

¹³ that you won't let your people kill my father and mother and my brothers and sisters and their families.

¹⁴ Rahab, the spies answered, if you keep quiet about what we're doing, we promise to be kind to you when the LORD gives us this land. We pray that

the LORD will kill us if we don't keep our promise!

¹⁵Rahab's house was built into the town wall, and one of the windows in her house faced outside the wall. She gave the spies a rope, showed them the window, and said, Use this rope to let yourselves down to the ground outside the wall.

¹⁶Then hide in the hills. The men who are looking for you won't be able to find you there. They'll give up and come back after a few days, and you can be on your way.

¹⁷The spies said: You made us promise to let you and your family live. We will keep our promise, but you can't tell anyone why we were here. You must tie this red rope on your window when we attack, and your father and mother, your brothers, and everyone else in your family must be here with you. We'll take the blame if anyone who stays in this house gets hurt. But anyone who leaves your house will be killed, and it won't be our fault.

¹⁸(2:17)

¹⁹(2:17)

²⁰ (2:17)

²¹ I'll do exactly what you said, Rahab promised. Then she sent them on their way and tied the red rope to the window.

²² The spies hid in the hills for three days while the king's soldiers looked for them along the roads. As soon as the soldiers gave up and returned to Jericho,

²³ the two spies went down into the Jordan valley and crossed the river.

They reported to Joshua and told him everything that had happened.

²⁴ We're sure the LORD has given us the whole country, they said. The people there shake with fear every time they think of us.

3¹ Early the next morning, Joshua and the Israelites packed up and left Acacia. They went to the River Jordan and camped there that night.

² Two days later their leaders went through the camp,

³ shouting, When you see some of the priests carrying the sacred chest, you'll know it is time to cross to the other side. You've never been there before, and you won't know the way, unless you follow

the chest. But don't get too close! Stay about a kilometre back.

⁴ (3: 3)

⁵ Joshua told the people, Make yourselves acceptable to worship the LORD, because he is going to do some amazing things for us.

⁶ Then Joshua turned to the priests and said, Take the chest and cross the River Jordan ahead of us. So the priests picked up the chest by its carrying poles and went on ahead.

⁷ The LORD told Joshua, Beginning today I will show the people that you are their leader, and they will know that I am helping you as I helped Moses.

⁸ Now, tell the priests who are carrying the chest to go a little way into the river and stand there.

⁹ Joshua spoke to the people: Come here and listen to what the LORD our God said he will do!

¹⁰ The Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites control the land on the other side of the river. But the living God will be with you and will force them out of the land when you

attack. And now, God is going to prove that he's powerful enough to force them out.

¹¹ Just watch the sacred chest that belongs to the LORD, the ruler of the whole earth. As soon as the priests carrying the chest step into the Jordan, the water will stop flowing and pile up as if someone had built a dam across the river. The LORD has also said that each of the twelve tribes should choose one man to represent it.

¹² (3: 11)

¹³ (3: 11)

¹⁴ The Israelites packed up and left camp. The priests carrying the chest walked in front,

¹⁵ until they came to the River Jordan. The water in the river had risen over its banks, as it often does in springtime. But as soon as the feet of the priests touched the water,

¹⁶ the river stopped flowing, and the water started piling up at the town of Adam near Zarethan. No water flowed towards the Dead Sea, and the priests stood in the middle of the dry river bed

near Jericho while everyone else crossed over.

¹⁷ (3: 16)

4¹ After Israel had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua:

² Tell one man from each of the twelve tribes to pick up a large rock from where the priests are standing. Then tell the men to set up those rocks as a monument at the place where you camp tonight.

³ (4: 2)

⁴ Joshua chose twelve men; he called them together,

⁵ and told them: Go to the middle of the river bed where the sacred chest is, and pick up a large rock. Carry it on your shoulder to our camp. There are twelve of you, so there will be one rock for each tribe.

⁶ Some day your children will ask, Why are these rocks here? Then you can tell them how the water stopped flowing when the chest was being carried across the river. These rocks will always remind our people of what happened here today.

⁷ (4: 6)

⁸The men followed the instructions that the LORD had given Joshua. They picked up twelve rocks, one for each tribe, and carried them to the camp, where they put them down.

⁹Joshua told some other men to set up a monument next to the place where the priests were standing. This monument was also made of twelve large rocks, and it is still there in the middle of the river.

¹⁰The army got ready for battle and crossed the Jordan. They marched quickly past the sacred chest and into the desert near Jericho. Forty thousand soldiers from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh led the way, as Moses had ordered. The priests stayed where they were until the army had followed the orders that the LORD had given Moses and Joshua. Then the army watched as the priests carried the chest the rest of the way across.

¹¹ (4: 10)

¹² (4: 10)

¹³ (4: 10)

¹⁴Joshua, the LORD said, tell the priests to come up from the Jordan and bring the chest with them. So Joshua went

over to the priests and told them what the LORD had said. And as soon as the priests carried the chest past the highest place that the flood waters of the Jordan had reached, the river flooded its banks again. That's how the LORD showed the Israelites that Joshua was their leader. For the rest of Joshua's life, they respected him as they had respected Moses.

¹⁵ (4: 14)

¹⁶ (4: 14)

¹⁷ (4: 14)

¹⁸ (4: 14)

¹⁹ It was the tenth day of the first month of the year when Israel crossed the River Jordan. They set up camp at Gilgal, which was east of the land controlled by Jericho.

²⁰ The men who had carried the twelve rocks from the Jordan brought them to Joshua, and they made them into a monument.

²¹ Then Joshua told the people: Years from now your children will ask you why these rocks are here.

²² Tell them, The LORD our God dried up the River Jordan so we could walk

across. He did the same thing here for us that he did for our people at the Red Sea,

²³ (4: 22)

²⁴ because he wants everyone on earth to know how powerful he is. And he wants us to worship only him.

5¹ The Amorite kings west of the River Jordan and the Canaanite kings along the Mediterranean Sea lost their courage and their will to fight, when they heard how the LORD had dried up the River Jordan to let Israel go across.

² While Israel was camped at Gilgal, the LORD said, Joshua, make some flint knives and circumcise the rest of the Israelite men and boys.

³ Joshua made the knives, then circumcised those men and boys at Haaraloth Hill.

⁴ This had to be done, because none of Israel's baby boys had been circumcised during the forty years that Israel had wandered through the desert after leaving Egypt. And why had they wandered for forty years? It was because straight after they left Egypt, the men in the army had disobeyed the LORD. And

the LORD had said, None of you men will ever live to see the land that I promised Israel. It is a land rich with milk and honey, and some day your children will live there, but not before you die here in the desert.

⁵ (5: 4)

⁶ (5: 4)

⁷ (5: 4)

⁸ Everyone who had been circumcised needed time to heal, and they stayed in camp.

⁹ The LORD told Joshua, It was a disgrace for my people to be slaves in Egypt, but now I have taken away that disgrace. So the Israelites named the place Gilgal, and it still has that name.

¹⁰ Israel continued to camp at Gilgal in the desert near Jericho, and on the fourteenth day of the same month, they celebrated Passover.

¹¹ The next day, God stopped sending the Israelites manna to eat each morning, and they started eating food grown in the land of Canaan. They ate roasted grain and thin bread made of the barley they had gathered from nearby fields.

¹²(5: 11)

¹³One day, Joshua was near Jericho when he saw a man standing some distance in front of him. The man was holding a sword, so Joshua walked up to him and asked, Are you on our side or on our enemies' side?

¹⁴Neither, he answered. I am here because I am the commander of the LORD's army. Joshua fell to his knees and bowed down to the ground. I am your servant, he said. Tell me what to do.

¹⁵Take off your sandals, the commander answered. This is a holy place. So Joshua took off his sandals.

6¹ Meanwhile, the people of Jericho had been locking the gates in their town wall because they were afraid of the Israelites. No one could go out or come in.

²The LORD said to Joshua: With my help, you and your army will defeat the king of Jericho and his army, and you will capture the town. Here is how to do it: march slowly around Jericho once a day for six days.

³(6: 2)

⁴ Take along the sacred chest and make seven priests walk in front of it, carrying trumpets. But on the seventh day, march slowly around the town seven times while the priests blow their trumpets.

⁵ Then the priests will blast on their trumpets, and everyone else will shout. The wall will fall down, and your soldiers can go straight in from every side.

⁶ Joshua called the priests together and said, Take the chest and make seven priests carry trumpets and march ahead of it.

⁷ Next, he gave the army their orders: March slowly around Jericho. A few of you will go ahead of the chest to guard it, but most of you will follow it. Don't shout the battle cry or yell or even talk until the day I tell you to. Then let out a shout! As soon as Joshua finished giving the orders, the army started marching. One group of soldiers led the way, with seven priests marching behind them and blowing trumpets. Then came the priests carrying the chest, followed by the rest of the soldiers.

⁸ (6: 7)

⁹ (6: 7)

¹⁰(6: 7)

¹¹They obeyed Joshua's orders and carried the chest once around the town before returning to camp for the night.

¹²Early the next morning, Joshua and everyone else started marching around Jericho in the same order as the day before. One group of soldiers was in front, followed by the seven priests with trumpets and the priests who carried the chest. The rest of the army came next. The seven priests blew their trumpets while everyone marched slowly around Jericho and back to camp. They did this once a day for six days.

¹³(6: 12)

¹⁴(6: 12)

¹⁵On the seventh day, the army got up at daybreak. They marched slowly around Jericho as they had done for the past six days, except on this day they went around seven times.

¹⁶Then the priests blew the trumpets, and Joshua yelled: Get ready to shout! The LORD will let you capture this town.

¹⁷But you must destroy it and everything in it, to show that it now belongs to the LORD. The woman Rahab

helped the spies we sent, so protect her and the others who are inside her house. But kill everyone else in the town.

¹⁸The silver and gold and everything made of bronze and iron belong to the LORD and must be put in his treasury. Be careful to follow these instructions, because if you see something you want and take it, the LORD will destroy Israel. And it will be all your fault.

¹⁹(6:18)

²⁰The priests blew their trumpets again, and the soldiers shouted as loud as they could. The walls of Jericho fell flat. Then the soldiers rushed up the hill, went straight into the town, and captured it.

²¹They killed everyone, men and women, young and old, everyone except Rahab and the others in her house. They even killed every cow, sheep, and donkey. Joshua said to the two men who had been spies, Rahab kept you safe when I sent you to Jericho. We promised to protect her and her family, and we will keep that promise. Now go into her house and bring them out. The two men went into Rahab's house and

brought her out, along with her father and mother, her brothers, and her other relatives. Rahab and her family had to stay in a place just outside the Israelite army camp. But later they were allowed to live among the Israelites, and her descendants still do. The Israelites took the silver and gold and the things made of bronze and iron and put them with the rest of the treasure that was kept at the LORD's house. Finally, they set fire to Jericho and everything in it.

²² (6: 21)

²³ (6: 21)

²⁴ (6: 21)

²⁵ (6: 21)

²⁶ After Jericho was destroyed, Joshua warned the people, Some day a man will rebuild Jericho, but the LORD will put a curse on him, and the man's eldest son will die when he starts to build the town wall. And by the time he finishes the wall and puts gates in it, all his children will be dead.

²⁷ The LORD helped Joshua in everything he did, and Joshua was famous everywhere in Canaan.

7¹ The LORD had said that everything in Jericho belonged to him. But Achan from the Judah tribe took some of the things from Jericho for himself. And so the LORD was angry with the Israelites, because one of them had disobeyed him.

² While Israel was still camped near Jericho, Joshua sent some spies with these instructions: Go to the town of Ai and find out whatever you can about the region around the town. The spies left and went to Ai, which is east of Bethel and near Beth-Aven.

³ They went back to Joshua and reported, You don't need to send the whole army to attack Ai two or three thousand troops will be enough. Why bother the whole army for a town that small?

⁴ Joshua sent about three thousand soldiers to attack Ai. But the men of Ai fought back and chased the Israelite soldiers away from the town gate and down the hill to the stone quarries. Thirty-six Israelite soldiers were killed, and the Israelite army felt discouraged.

⁵ (7: 4)

⁶Joshua and the leaders of Israel tore their clothes and put dust on their heads to show their sorrow. They lay face down on the ground in front of the sacred chest until sunset.

⁷Then Joshua said: Our LORD, did you bring us across the River Jordan just so the Amorites could destroy us? This wouldn't have happened if we had agreed to stay on the other side of the Jordan.

⁸I don't even know what to say to you, since Israel's army has turned and run from the enemy.

⁹Everyone will think you weren't strong enough to protect your people. Now the Canaanites and everyone else who lives in the land will surround us and wipe us out.

¹⁰The LORD answered: Stop lying there on the ground! Get up!

¹¹I said everything in Jericho belonged to me and had to be destroyed. But the Israelites have kept some of the things for themselves. They stole from me and hid what they took. Then they lied about it.

¹²What they stole was supposed to be destroyed, and now Israel itself must be destroyed. I cannot help you any more until you do exactly what I have said. That's why Israel turns and runs from its enemies instead of standing up to them.

¹³Tell the people of Israel, Tomorrow you will meet with the LORD your God, so make yourselves acceptable to worship him. The LORD says that you have taken things that should have been destroyed. You won't be able to stand up to your enemies until you get rid of those things.

¹⁴Tomorrow morning everyone must gather near the place of worship. You will come forward tribe by tribe, and the LORD will show which tribe is guilty. Next, the clans in that tribe must come forward, and the LORD will show which clan is guilty. The families in that clan must come, and the LORD will point out the guilty family. Finally, the men in that family must come,

¹⁵and the LORD will show who stole what should have been destroyed. That man must be put to death, his body burnt, and his possessions thrown into the fire. He has done a terrible thing by

breaking the sacred agreement that the LORD made with Israel.

¹⁶Joshua got up early the next morning and brought each tribe to the place of worship, where the LORD showed that the Judah tribe was guilty.

¹⁷Then Joshua brought the clans of Judah to the LORD, and the LORD showed that the Zerah clan was guilty. One by one he brought the leader of each family in the Zerah clan to the LORD, and the LORD showed that Zabdi's family was guilty.

¹⁸Finally, Joshua brought each man in Zabdi's family to the LORD, and the LORD showed that Achan was the guilty one.

¹⁹Achan, Joshua said, the LORD God of Israel has decided that you are guilty. Is this true? Tell me what you did, and don't try to hide anything.

²⁰It's true, Achan answered. I sinned and disobeyed the LORD God of Israel.

²¹While we were in Jericho, I saw a beautiful Babylonian robe, two hundred pieces of silver, and a gold bar that weighed the same as fifty pieces of gold. I wanted them for myself, so I took

them. I dug a hole under my tent and hid the silver, the gold, and the robe. Joshua told some people to run to Achan's tent, where they found the silver, the gold, and the robe.

²² (7: 21)

²³ They brought them back and put them in front of the sacred chest, so Joshua and the rest of the Israelites could see them.

²⁴ Then everyone took Achan and the things he had stolen to Trouble Valley. They also took along his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys, and sheep, his tent, and everything else that belonged to him.

²⁵ Joshua said, Achan, you caused us a lot of trouble. Now the LORD is paying you back with the same kind of trouble. The people of Israel then stoned to death Achan and his family. They made a fire and burnt the bodies, together with what Achan had stolen, and all his possessions.

²⁶ They covered the remains with a big pile of rocks, which is still there. Then the LORD stopped being angry with

Israel. That's how the place came to be called Trouble Valley.

8¹ The LORD told Joshua: Don't be afraid, and don't be discouraged by what happened at the town of Ai. Take the army and attack again. But first, make part of the army set up an ambush on the other side of the town. I will help you defeat the king of Ai and his army, and you will capture the town and the land around it. Destroy Ai and kill its king as you did at Jericho. But you may keep the livestock and everything else you want.

² (8: 1)

³ Joshua quickly got the army ready to attack Ai. He chose thirty thousand of his best soldiers and gave them these orders: Tonight, while it is dark, march to Ai and take up a position behind the town. Get as close to the town as you can without being seen, but be ready to attack.

⁴ (8: 3)

⁵ The rest of the army will come with me and attack near the gate. When the people of Ai come out to fight, we'll run away and let them chase us. They will

think we are running from them just like the first time. But when we've let them chase us far enough away,

⁶(8: 5)

⁷you come out of hiding. The LORD our God will help you capture the town.

⁸Then set it on fire, as the LORD has told us to do. Those are your orders,

⁹now go! The thirty thousand soldiers went to a place on the west side of Ai, between Ai and Bethel, where they could hide and wait to attack. That night, Joshua stayed in camp with the rest of the army.

¹⁰Early the next morning he got his troops ready to move out, and he and the other leaders of Israel led them to Ai.

¹¹They set up camp in full view of the town, across the valley to the north.

¹²Joshua had already sent five thousand soldiers to the west side of the town to hide and wait to attack.

¹³Now all his troops were in place. Part of the army was in the camp to the north of Ai, and the others were hiding to the west, ready to make a surprise attack. That night, Joshua went into the valley.

¹⁴The king of Ai saw Joshua's army, so the king and his troops hurried out early the next morning to fight them. Joshua and his army pretended to be beaten, and they let the men of Ai chase them towards the desert. The king and his army were facing the Jordan valley as Joshua had planned. The king did not realize that some Israelite soldiers were hiding behind the town.

¹⁵(8:14)

¹⁶So he called out every man in Ai to go after Joshua's troops. They all rushed out to chase the Israelite army, and they left the town gates wide open. Not one man was left in Ai or in Bethel. Joshua let the men of Ai chase him and his army further and further away from Ai.

¹⁷(8:16)

¹⁸Finally, the LORD told Joshua, Point your sword at the town of Ai, because now I am going to help you defeat it! As soon as Joshua pointed his sword at the town,

¹⁹the soldiers who had been hiding got up and ran into the town. They captured it and set it on fire.

²⁰When Joshua and his troops saw smoke rising from the town, they knew that the other part of their army had captured it. So they turned and attacked. The men of Ai looked back and saw smoke rising from their town. But they could not escape, because the soldiers they had been chasing had suddenly turned and started fighting.

²¹ (8: 20)

²²Meanwhile, the other Israelite soldiers had come from the town and attacked the men of Ai from the rear. The Israelites captured the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua. They also chased the rest of the men of Ai into the desert and killed them. The Israelite army went back to Ai and killed everyone there.

²³ (8: 22)

²⁴ (8: 22)

²⁵Joshua kept his sword pointed at the town of Ai until every last one of Ai's twelve thousand people was dead.

²⁶ (8: 25)

²⁷But the Israelites took the animals and the other possessions of the people of Ai, because this was what the LORD had told Joshua to do.

²⁸ Joshua made sure every building in Ai was burnt to the ground. He told his men to kill the king of Ai and hang his body on a tree. Then at sunset he told the Israelites to take down the body, throw it in the gateway of the town, and cover it with a big pile of rocks. Those rocks are still there, and the town itself has never been rebuilt.

²⁹ (8: 28)

³⁰ One day, Joshua led the people of Israel to Mount Ebal, where he told some of his men, Build an altar for offering sacrifices to the LORD. And use stones that have never been cut with iron tools, because that is what Moses taught in The Book of the Law. Joshua offered sacrifices to please the LORD and to ask his blessing. Then with the Israelites still watching, he copied parts of The Book of the Law of Moses on to stones.

³¹ (8: 30)

³² (8: 30)

³³ Moses had said that everyone in Israel was to go to the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, where they were to be blessed. So everyone went there, including the foreigners, the

leaders, officials, and judges. Half of the people stood on one side of the valley, and half on the other side, with the priests from the Levi tribe standing in the middle with the sacred chest. Then in a loud voice, Joshua read the blessings and curses from The Book of the Law of Moses.

³⁴ (8: 33)

³⁵ (8: 33)

9¹ The kings west of the River Jordan heard about Joshua's victories, and so they got together and decided to attack Joshua and Israel. These kings were from the hill country and from the foothills to the west, as well as from the Mediterranean coast as far north as the Lebanon Mountains. Some of them were Hittites, others were Amorites or Canaanites, and still others were Perizzites, Hivites, or Jebusites.

² (9: 1)

³ The people of Gibeon had also heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai.

⁴ So they decided that some of their men should pretend to be messengers to Israel from a faraway country. The men put worn-out bags on their donkeys

and found some old wineskins that had cracked and had been sewn back together.

⁵Their sandals were old and patched, and their clothes were worn out. They even took along some dry and crumbly bread.

⁶Then they went to the Israelite camp at Gilgal, where they said to Joshua and the men of Israel, We have come from a country that is far from here. Please make a peace treaty with us.

⁷The Israelites replied, But perhaps you really live near us. We can't make a peace treaty with you if you live nearby. The Gibeonites said, If you make a peace treaty with us, we will be your servants. Who are you? Joshua asked. Where do you come from? They answered:

⁸(9: 7)

⁹We are your servants, and we live far from here. We came because the LORD your God is so famous. We heard what the LORD did in Egypt

¹⁰and what he did to those two Amorite kings on the other side of the Jordan: King Og of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth, and King Sihon of Heshbon.

¹¹ Our leaders and everyone who lives in our country told us to meet with you and tell you that all of us are your servants. They said to ask you to make a peace treaty with our people. They told us to be sure and take along enough food for our journey.

¹² See this dry, crumbly bread of ours? It was hot out of the oven when we packed the food on the day we left our homes.

¹³ These cracked wineskins were new when we filled them, and our clothes and sandals are worn out because we have travelled so far.

¹⁴ The Israelites tried some of the food, but they did not ask the LORD if he wanted them to make a treaty.

¹⁵ So Joshua made a peace treaty with the messengers and promised that Israel would not kill their people. Israel's leaders swore that Israel would keep this promise.

¹⁶ A couple of days later, the Israelites found out that these people actually lived in the nearby towns of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jearim. So the Israelites left the place where

they had camped and arrived at the four towns two days later.

¹⁷ (9:16)

¹⁸ But they did not attack the towns, because the Israelite leaders had sworn in the name of the LORD that they would let these people live. The Israelites complained about their leaders' decision not to attack,

¹⁹ but the leaders reminded them, We promised these people in the name of the LORD God of Israel that we would let them live, so we must not harm them. If we break our promise, God will punish us. We'll let them live, but we'll make them cut wood and carry water for our people.

²⁰ (9:19)

²¹ (9:19)

²² Joshua told some of his soldiers, I want to meet with the Gibeonite leaders. Bring them here. When the Gibeonites came, Joshua said, You live close to us. Why did you lie by claiming you lived far away?

²³ Now you are under a curse, and your people will have to send workers to cut

wood and carry water for the place of worship.

²⁴The Gibeonites answered, The LORD your God told his servant Moses that you were to kill everyone who lives here and take their land for yourselves. We were afraid you would kill us, and so we tricked you into making a peace treaty. But we agreed to be your servants,

²⁵and you are strong enough to do anything to us that you want. We just ask you to do what seems right.

²⁶Joshua did not let the Israelites kill the Gibeonites,

²⁷but he did tell the Gibeonites that they would have to be servants of the nation of Israel. They would have to cut firewood and bring it for the priests to use for burning sacrifices on the LORD's altar, wherever the LORD decided the altar would be. The Gibeonites would also have to carry water for the priests. And that is still the work of the Gibeonites.

10¹ King Adonizedek of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured and destroyed the town of Ai, and then killed its king as he had done at Jericho.

He also learnt that the Gibeonites had signed a peace treaty with Israel.

²This frightened Adonizedek and his people. They knew that Gibeon was a large town, as big as the towns that had kings, and even bigger than the town of Ai had been. And all the men of Gibeon were warriors.

³So Adonizedek sent messages to the kings of four other towns: King Hoham of Hebron, King Piram of Jarmuth, King Japhia of Lachish, and King Debir of Eglon. The messages said,

⁴The Gibeonites have signed a peace treaty with Joshua and the Israelites. Come and help me attack Gibeon!

⁵When these five Amorite kings called their armies together and attacked Gibeon,

⁶the Gibeonites sent a message to the Israelite camp at Gilgal: Joshua, please come and rescue us! The Amorite kings from the hill country have joined together and are attacking us. We are your servants, so don't let us down. Please hurry!

⁷Joshua and his army, including his best warriors, left Gilgal.

⁸Joshua, the LORD said, don't be afraid of the Amorites. They will run away when you attack, and I will help you defeat them.

⁹Joshua marched all night from Gilgal to Gibeon and made a surprise attack on the Amorite camp.

¹⁰The LORD made the enemy panic, and the Israelites started killing them right and left. They chased the Amorite troops up the road to Beth-Horon and kept on killing them, until they reached the towns of Azekah and Makkedah.

¹¹And while these troops were going down through Beth-Horon Pass, the LORD made huge hailstones fall on them all the way to Azekah. More of the enemy soldiers died from the hail than from the Israelite weapons.

¹²The LORD was helping the Israelites defeat the Amorites that day. So about midday, Joshua prayed to the LORD loud enough for the Israelites to hear: Our LORD, make the sun stop in the sky over Gibeon, and the moon stand still over Aijalon Valley. So the sun and the moon stopped and stood still until Israel defeated its enemies. This poem can be

found in The Book of Jashar. The sun stood still and didn't go down for about a whole day.

¹³(10:12)

¹⁴Never before and never since has the LORD done anything like that for someone who prayed. The LORD was really fighting for Israel.

¹⁵After the battle, Joshua and the Israelites went back to their camp at Gilgal.

¹⁶While the enemy soldiers were running from the Israelites, the five enemy kings ran away and hid in a cave near Makkedah.

¹⁷Joshua's soldiers told him, The five kings have been found in a cave near Makkedah.

¹⁸Joshua answered, Roll some big stones over the mouth of the cave and leave a few soldiers to guard it.

¹⁹But you and everyone else must keep following the enemy troops, because they will be safe if they reach their walled towns. Don't let them get away! The LORD our God is helping us get rid of them.

²⁰ So Joshua and the Israelites almost wiped out the enemy soldiers. Only a few safely reached their walled towns.

²¹ The Israelite army returned to their camp at Makkedah, where Joshua was waiting for them. No one around there dared say anything bad about the Israelites.

²² Joshua told his soldiers, Now, move the rocks from the entrance to the cave and bring those five kings to me.

²³ The soldiers opened the entrance to the cave and brought out the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon.

²⁴ After Joshua had called the army together, he forced the five kings to lie down on the ground. Then he called his officers forward and told them, You fought these kings along with me, so put your feet on their necks. The officers did,

²⁵ and Joshua continued, Don't ever be afraid or discouraged. Be brave and strong. This is what the LORD will do to all your enemies.

²⁶ Joshua killed the five kings and told his men to hang each body on a tree. Then at sunset

²⁷ he told some of his troops, Take the bodies down and throw them into the cave where the kings were found. Cover the entrance to the cave with big rocks. Joshua's troops obeyed his orders, and those rocks are still there.

²⁸ Later that day, Joshua captured Makkedah and killed its king and everyone else in the town, just as he had done at Jericho.

²⁹ Joshua and his army left Makkedah and attacked the town of Libnah.

³⁰ The LORD let them capture the town and its king, and they killed the king and everyone else, just as they had done at Jericho.

³¹ Joshua then led his army to Lachish, and they set up camp around the town. They attacked,

³² and the next day the LORD let them capture the town. They killed everyone, as they had done at Libnah.

³³ King Horam of Gezer arrived to help Lachish, but Joshua and his troops attacked and destroyed him and his army.

³⁴ From Lachish, Joshua took his troops to Eglon, where they set up camp surrounding the town. They attacked,
³⁵ captured it that same day, then killed everyone, as they had done at Lachish.

³⁶ Joshua and his army left Eglon and attacked Hebron.

³⁷ They captured the town and the nearby villages, then killed everyone, including the king. They destroyed Hebron in the same way they had destroyed Eglon.

³⁸ Joshua and the Israelite army turned and attacked Debir.

³⁹ They captured the town, and its nearby villages. Then they destroyed Debir and killed its king, together with everyone else, just as they had done with Hebron and Libnah.

⁴⁰ Joshua captured towns everywhere in the land: in the central hill country and the foothills to the west, in the Southern Desert and the region that slopes down towards the Dead Sea. Whenever he captured a town, he would kill the king and everyone else, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded.

⁴¹ Joshua wiped out towns from Kadesh-Barnea to Gaza, everywhere in the region of Goshen, and as far north as Gibeon.

⁴² The LORD fought on Israel's side, so Joshua and the Israelite army were able to capture these kings and take their land. They fought one battle after another, then they went back to their camp at Gilgal after capturing all that land.

⁴³ (10: 42)

11 ¹ King Jabin of Hazor heard about Joshua's victories, so he sent messages to many nearby kings and asked them to join him in fighting Israel. He sent these messages to King Jobab of Madon, the kings of Shimron and Achshaph,

² the kings in the northern hill country and in the valley of the River Jordan south of Lake Galilee, and the kings in the foothills and in Naphath-Dor to the west.

³ He sent messages to the Canaanite kings in the east and the west, to the Amorite, Hittite, Perizzite, and Jebusite kings in the hill country, and to the Hivite

kings in the region of Mizpah, near the foot of Mount Hermon.

⁴The kings and their armies went to Merom Pond, where they set up camp, and got ready to fight Israel. It seemed as though there were more soldiers and horses and chariots than there are grains of sand on a beach.

⁵(11:4)

⁶The LORD told Joshua: Don't let them frighten you! I'll help you defeat them, and by this time tomorrow they will be dead. When you attack, the first thing you have to do is to cripple their horses. Then after the battle is over, burn their chariots.

⁷Joshua and his army made a surprise attack against the enemy camp at Merom Pond

⁸and crippled the enemies' horses. Joshua followed the LORD's instructions, and the LORD helped Israel defeat the enemy. The Israelite army even chased enemy soldiers as far as Misrephoth-Maim to the north-west, the city of Sidon to the north, and Mizpeh Valley to the north-east. None of the enemy soldiers escaped alive. The Israelites came back

after the battle and burnt the enemy's chariots.

⁹(11:8)

¹⁰Up to this time, the king of Hazor had controlled the kingdoms that had joined together to attack Israel, so Joshua led his army back and captured Hazor. They killed its king

¹¹and everyone else, then they set the town on fire.

¹²Joshua captured all the towns where the enemy kings had ruled. These towns were built on small hills, and Joshua did not set fire to any of these towns, except Hazor. The Israelites kept the animals and everything of value from these towns, but they killed everyone who lived in them, including their kings. That's what the LORD had told his servant Moses to do, that's what Moses had told Joshua to do, and that's exactly what Joshua did.

¹³(11:12)

¹⁴(11:12)

¹⁵(11:12)

¹⁶Joshua and his army took control of the northern and southern hill country, the foothills to the west, the Southern

Desert, the whole region of Goshen, and the Jordan valley.

¹⁷They took control of the land from Mount Halak near the country of Edom in the south to Baal-Gad in Lebanon Valley at the foot of Mount Hermon in the north. Joshua and his army were at war with the kings in this region for a long time, but finally they captured and put to death the last king.

¹⁸(11:17)

¹⁹The LORD had told Moses that he wanted the towns in this region destroyed and their people killed without mercy. That's why the LORD made the people in the towns stubborn and determined to fight Israel. The only town that signed a peace treaty with Israel was the Hivite town of Gibeon. The Israelite army captured the rest of the towns in battle.

²⁰(11:19)

²¹During this same time, Joshua and his army killed the Anakim from the northern and southern hill country. They also destroyed the towns where the Anakim had lived, including Hebron, Debir, and Anab.

²²There were not any Anakim left in the regions where the Israelites lived, although there were still some in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

²³That's how Joshua captured the land, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and Joshua divided it up among the tribes. Finally, there was peace in the land.

12¹ Before Moses died, he and the people of Israel had defeated two kings east of the River Jordan. These kings had ruled the region from the gorge of the River Arnon in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, including the eastern side of the Jordan valley.

²The first king whom Moses and the Israelites defeated was an Amorite, King Sihon of Heshbon. The southern border of his kingdom ran down the middle of the Arnon gorge, taking in the town of Aroer on the northern edge of the gorge. The River Jabbok separated Sihon's kingdom from the Ammonites on the east. Then the Jabbok turned west and became his northern border, so his kingdom included the southern half of the region of Gilead.

³ Sihon also controlled the eastern side of the Jordan valley from Lake Galilee south to Beth-Jeshimoth and the Dead Sea. In addition to these regions, he ruled the town called Slopes of Mount Pisgah and the land south of there at the foot of the hill.

⁴ Next, Moses and the Israelites defeated King Og of Bashan, who lived in the town of Ashtaroth part of each year and in Edrei the rest of the year. Og was one of the last of the Rephaim.

⁵ His kingdom stretched north to Mount Hermon, east to the town of Salecah, and included the land of Bashan as far west as the borders of the kingdoms of Geshur and Maacah. He also ruled the northern half of Gilead.

⁶ Moses, the LORD's servant, had led the people of Israel in defeating Sihon and Og. Then Moses gave their land to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh.

⁷ Later, Joshua and the Israelites defeated many kings west of the River Jordan, from Baal-Gad in Lebanon Valley in the north to Mount Halak near the country of Edom in the south. This region

included the hill country and the foothills, the Jordan valley and its western slopes, and the Southern Desert. Joshua and the Israelites took this land from the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Joshua divided up the land among the tribes of Israel. The Israelites defeated the kings of the following towns west of the River Jordan:

⁸(12: 7)

⁹Jericho, Ai near Bethel, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Gezer, Debir, Geder, Hormah, Arad, Libnah, Adullam, Makkedah, Bethel, Tappuah, Hopher, Aphek, Lasharon, Madon, Hazor, Shimron-Meron, Achshaph, Taanach, Megiddo, Kedesh, Jokneam on Mount Carmel, Dor in Naphath-Dor, Goim in Galilee, and Tirzah. There were thirty-one of these kings in all.

¹⁰(12: 9)

¹¹(12: 9)

¹²(12: 9)

¹³(12: 9)

¹⁴(12: 9)

¹⁵(12: 9)

¹⁶(12: 9)

17 (12: 9)

18 (12: 9)

19 (12: 9)

20 (12: 9)

21 (12: 9)

22 (12: 9)

23 (12: 9)

24 (12: 9)

13¹ Many years later, the LORD told Joshua: Now you are very old, but there is still a lot of land that Israel has not yet taken.

²First, there is the Canaanite territory that starts at the River Shihor just east of Egypt and goes north to Ekron. The southern part of this region belongs to the Avvites and the Geshurites, and the land around Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron belongs to the five Philistine rulers. The other Canaanite territory is in the north. Its northern border starts at the town of Arah, which belongs to the Sidonians. From there, it goes to Aphek, then along the Amorite border to Hamath Pass. The eastern border starts at Hamath Pass and goes south to Baal-Gad at the foot of Mount Hermon, and its southern

boundary runs west from there to Misrephoth-Maim. This northern region includes the Lebanon Mountains and the land that belongs to the Gebalites and the Sidonians who live in the hill country from the Lebanon Mountains to Misrephoth-Maim. With my help, Israel will capture these Canaanite territories and force out the people who live there. But you must divide up the land from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea among the nine tribes and the half of Manasseh that don't have any land yet. Then each tribe will have its own land.

³ (13: 2)

⁴ (13: 2)

⁵ (13: 2)

⁶ (13: 2)

⁷ (13: 2)

⁸ Moses had already given land east of the River Jordan to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh.

⁹ This region stretched north from the town in the middle of the valley of the River Arnon, and included the town of Aroer on the northern edge of the valley. It covered the flat lands of Medeba north of Dibon,

¹⁰and took in the towns that had belonged to Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon. Some of these towns were as far east as the Ammonite border.

¹¹Geshur and Maacah were part of this region, and so was the whole territory that King Og had ruled, that is, Gilead, Mount Hermon, and all of Bashan as far east as Salecah. Og had lived in Ashtaroth part of each year, and he had lived in Edrei the rest of the year. Og had been one of the last of the Rephaim, but Moses had defeated Sihon and Og and their people and had forced them to leave their land.

¹²(13: 11)

¹³However, the Israelites did not force the people of Geshur and Maacah to leave, and they still live there among the Israelites.

¹⁴Moses did not give any land to the Levi tribe, because the LORD God of Israel had told them, Instead of land, you will receive the sacrifices offered at my altar.

¹⁵Moses gave land to each of the clans in the Reuben tribe.

¹⁶Their land started in the south at the town in the middle of the valley of the River Arnon, took in the town of Aroer on the northern edge of the valley, and went as far north as the flat lands around Medeba.

¹⁷The Amorite King Sihon had lived in Heshbon and had ruled the towns in the flat lands. Now Heshbon belonged to Reuben, and so did the following towns in the flat lands: Dibon, Bamoth-Baal, Beth-Baal-Meon, Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath, Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth-Shahar on the hill in the valley, Beth-Peor, Slopes of Mount Pisgah, and Beth-Jeshimoth. Moses defeated Sihon and killed him and the Midianite chiefs who ruled parts of his kingdom for him. Their names were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba.

¹⁸(13: 17)

¹⁹(13: 17)

²⁰(13: 17)

²¹(13: 17)

²²The Israelites also killed Balaam the son of Beor, who had been a fortune-teller.

²³ This region with its towns and villages was the land for the Reuben tribe, and the River Jordan was its western border.

²⁴ Moses also gave land to each of the clans in the Gad tribe.

²⁵ It included the town of Jazer, and in the Gilead region their territory took in the land and towns as far east as the town of Aroer just west of Rabbah. This was about half of the land that had once belonged to the Ammonites.

²⁶ The land given to Gad stretched from Heshbon in the south to Ramath-Mizpeh and Betonim in the north, and even further north to Mahanaim and Lidebor.

²⁷ Gad also received the eastern half of the Jordan valley, which had been ruled by King Sihon of Heshbon. This territory stretched as far north as Lake Galilee, and included the towns of Beth-Haram, Beth-Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon.

²⁸ These regions with their towns and villages were given to the Gad tribe.

²⁹ Moses gave land east of the River Jordan to half of the clans from the Manasseh tribe.

³⁰ Their land started at Mahanaim and took in the region that King Og of Bashan

had ruled, including Ashtaroth and Edrei, the two towns where he had lived. The villages where the Jair clan settled were part of Manasseh's land, and so was the northern half of the region of Gilead. The clans of this half of Manasseh had sixty towns in all. The Manasseh tribe is sometimes called the Machir tribe, after Manasseh's son Machir.

³¹ (13: 30)

³² That was how Moses divided up the Moab Plains to the east of Jericho on the other side of the River Jordan, so these two and a half tribes would have land of their own.

³³ But Moses did not give any land to the Levi tribe, because the LORD had promised that he would always provide for them.

14¹ Nine and a half tribes still did not have any land, although two and a half tribes had already received land east of the River Jordan. Moses had divided that land among them, and he had also said that the Levi tribe would not receive a large region like the other tribes. Instead, the people of Levi would receive towns and the nearby pastures

for their sheep, goats, and cattle. And since the descendants of Joseph had become the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, there were still nine and a half tribes that needed land. The LORD had told Moses that he would show those tribes how to divide up the land of Canaan. When the priest Eleazar, Joshua, and the leaders of the families and tribes of Israel met to divide up the land of Canaan, the LORD showed them how to do it.

² (14: 1)

³ (14: 1)

⁴ (14: 1)

⁵ (14: 1)

⁶ One day while the Israelites were still camped at Gilgal, Caleb the son of Jephunneh went to talk with Joshua. Caleb belonged to the Kenaz clan, and many other people from the Judah tribe went with Caleb. He told Joshua: You know that back in Kadesh-Barnea the LORD talked to his prophet Moses about you and me.

⁷ I was forty years old at the time Moses sent me from Kadesh-Barnea into Canaan as a spy. When I came back and

told him about the land, everything I said was true.

⁸The other spies said things that made our people afraid, but I completely trusted the LORD God.

⁹The same day I came back, Moses told me, Since you were faithful to the LORD God, I promise that the places where you went as a spy will belong to you and your descendants for ever.

¹⁰Joshua, it was forty-five years ago that the LORD told Moses to make that promise, and now I am eighty-five. Even though Israel has moved from place to place in the desert, the LORD has kept me alive all this time as he said he would.

¹¹I'm just as strong today as I was then, and I can still fight as well in battle.

¹²So I'm asking you for the hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You were there. You heard the other spies talk about that part of the hill country and the large, walled towns where the Anakim live. But perhaps the LORD will help me take their land, just as he promised.

¹³ Joshua prayed that God would help Caleb, then he gave Hebron to Caleb and his descendants.

¹⁴ And Hebron still belongs to Caleb's descendants, because he was faithful to the LORD God of Israel.

¹⁵ Hebron used to be called Arba's Town, because Arba had been one of the greatest of the Anakim. There was peace in the land.

15 ¹ The clans of the Judah tribe were given land that went south along the border of Edom, and at its furthest point south it even reached the Zin Desert.

² Judah's southern border started at the south end of the Dead Sea.

³ As it went west from there, it ran south of Scorpion Pass to Zin, and then came up from the south to Kadesh-Barnea. It continued past Hebron up to Addar, turned towards Karka,

⁴ and ran along to Azmon. After that, it followed the Egyptian Gorge and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. This was also Israel's southern border.

⁵ Judah's eastern border ran the full length of the Dead Sea. The northern

border started at the northern end of the Dead Sea.

⁶From there it went west up to Beth-Hoglah, continued north of Beth-Arabah, and went up to the Monument of Bohan, who belonged to the Reuben tribe.

⁷From there, it went to Trouble Valley and Debir, then turned north and went to Gilgal, which is on the north side of the valley across from Adummim Pass.

It continued on to Enshemesh, Enrogel,

⁸and up through Hinnom Valley on the land sloping south from Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem itself belonged to the Jebusites. Next, the border went up to the top of the mountain on the west side of Hinnom Valley and at the north end of Rephaim Valley.

⁹At the top of the mountain it turned and went to Nephtoah Spring and then to the ruins on Mount Ephron. From there, it went to Baalah, which is now called Kiriath-Jearim.

¹⁰From Baalah the northern border curved west to Mount Seir and then ran along the northern ridge of Mount Jearim, where Chesalon is. Then it went

down to Beth-Shemesh and over to Timnah.

¹¹ It continued along to the hillside north of Ekron, curved around to Shikkeron, and then went to Mount Baalah. After going to Jabneel, the border finally ended at the Mediterranean Sea,

¹² which was Judah's western border. The clans of Judah lived within these borders.

¹³ Joshua gave Caleb some land among the people of Judah, as God had told him to do. Caleb's share was Hebron, which at that time was known as Arba's Town, because Arba was the famous ancestor of the Anakim.

¹⁴ Caleb attacked Hebron and forced the three Anakim clans of Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi to leave.

¹⁵ Next, Caleb started a war with the town of Debir, which at that time was called Kiriath-Sepher.

¹⁶ He told his men, The man who captures Kiriath-Sepher can marry my daughter Achsah.

¹⁷ Caleb's nephew Othniel captured Kiriath-Sepher, and Caleb let him marry Achsah.

¹⁸ Straight after the wedding, Achsah started telling Othniel that he ought to ask her father for a field. She went to see her father, and while she was getting down from her donkey, Caleb asked her, What's bothering you?

¹⁹ She answered, I need your help. The land you gave me is in the Southern Desert, so I really need some spring-fed ponds for a water supply. Caleb gave her a couple of small ponds, named Higher Pond and Lower Pond.

²⁰ The following is a list of the towns in each region given to the Judah clans:

²¹ The first region was in the Southern Desert along the border with Edom, and it had the following twenty-nine towns with their surrounding villages: Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, Kinah, Dimonah, Aradah, Kedesh, Hazor of Ithnan, Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, Hazor-Hadattah, Kerioth-Hezron, which is also called Hazor, Amam, Shema, Moladah, Hazar-Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-Pelet, Hazar-Shual, Beersheba and its surrounding villages, Baalah, Iim, Ezem, Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, Lebaoth, Shilhim, and Enrimmon.

22 (15: 21)

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33 The second region was in the northern part of the lower foothills, and it had the following fourteen towns with their surrounding villages: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, Zanoah, En-Gannim, Tappuah, Enam, Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim.

34 (15: 33)

35 (15: 33)

36 (15: 33)

37 The third region was in the southern part of the lower foothills, and it had the following sixteen towns with their surrounding villages: Zenan, Hadashah, Migdalgad, Dilan, Mizpeh, Joktheel, Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, Cabbon,

Lahmas, Chitlish, Gederoth, Beth-Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah.

³⁸ (15: 37)

³⁹ (15: 37)

⁴⁰ (15: 37)

⁴¹ (15: 37)

⁴² The fourth region was in the central part of the lower foothills, and it had the following nine towns with their surrounding villages: Libnah, Ether, Ashan, Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah.

⁴³ (15: 42)

⁴⁴ (15: 42)

⁴⁵ The fifth region was along the Mediterranean coast, and it had the following towns with their surrounding settlements and villages: Ekron and the towns between there and the coast, Ashdod and the larger towns nearby, Gaza, the towns from Gaza to the Egyptian Gorge, and the towns along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

⁴⁶ (15: 45)

⁴⁷ (15: 45)

⁴⁸ The sixth region was in the southwestern part of the hill country, and it had the following eleven towns with

their surrounding villages: Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, Dannah, Kiriath-Sannah, which is now called Debir, Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, Goshen, Holon, and Giloh.

⁴⁹ (15: 48)

⁵⁰ (15: 48)

⁵¹ (15: 48)

⁵² The seventh region was in the south-central part of Judah's hill country, and it had the following nine towns with their surrounding villages: Arab, Dumah, Eshan, Janim, Beth-Tappuah, Aphekah, Humtah, Kiriath-Arba, which is now called Hebron, and Zior.

⁵³ (15: 52)

⁵⁴ (15: 52)

⁵⁵ The eighth region was in the south-eastern part of the hill country, and it had the following ten towns with their surrounding villages: Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah.

⁵⁶ (15: 55)

⁵⁷ (15: 55)

⁵⁸ The ninth region was in the central part of Judah's hill country, and it had the following six towns with their surrounding villages: Halhul, Beth-Zur,

Gedor, Maarath, Beth-Anoth, and Eltekon. The tenth region was in the north-central part of Judah's hill country, and it had the following eleven towns with their surrounding villages: Tekoa, Ephrath, which is also called Bethlehem, Peor, Etam, Culon, Tatam, Shoresh, Kerem, Gallim, Bether, and Manahath.

⁵⁹ (15: 58)

⁶⁰ The eleventh region was in the northern part of Judah's hill country, and it had the following two towns with their surrounding villages: Rabbah, and Kiriath-Baal, which is also called Kiriath-Jearim.

⁶¹ The twelfth region was in the desert along the Dead Sea, and it had the following six towns with their surrounding villages: Beth-Arabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, Salt Town, and En-Gedi.

⁶² (15: 61)

⁶³ The Jebusites lived in Jerusalem, and the people of the Judah tribe could not capture the city and get rid of them. That's why Jebusites still live in Jerusalem along with the people of Judah.

16¹ Ephraim and Manasseh are the two tribes descended from Joseph, and the following is a description of the land they received. The southern border of their land started at the River Jordan east of the spring at Jericho. From there it went west through the desert up to the hill country around Bethel. From Bethel it went to Luz and then to the border of the Archites in Ataroth. It continued west down to the land that belonged to the Japhlet clan, then went on to Lower Beth-Horon, Gezer, and the Mediterranean Sea.

² (16: 1)

³ (16: 1)

⁴ (16: 1)

⁵ The following is a description of the land that was divided among the clans of the Ephraim tribe. Their southern border started at Ataroth-Addar and went west to Upper Beth-Horon

⁶ and the Mediterranean Sea. Their northern border started on the east at Janoah, curved a little to the north, then came back south to Michmethath and Tappuah, where it followed the Kanah Gorge west to the Mediterranean Sea.

The eastern border started on the north near Janoah and went between Janoah on the south-west and Taanath-Shiloh on the north-east. Then it went south to Ataroth, Naarah, and on as far as the edge of the land that belonged to Jericho. At that point it turned east and went to the River Jordan. The clans of Ephraim received this region as their tribal land.

⁷ (16: 6)

⁸ (16: 6)

⁹ Ephraim also had some towns and villages that were inside Manasseh's tribal land.

¹⁰ Ephraim could not force the Canaanites out of Gezer, so there are still some Canaanites who live there among the Israelites. But now these Canaanites have to work as slaves for the Israelites.

17 ¹ Manasseh was Joseph's eldest son, and Machir was Manasseh's eldest son. Machir had a son named Gilead, and some of his descendants had already received the regions of Gilead and Bashan because they were good warriors. The other clans of the Manasseh tribe descended from

Gilead's sons Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hopher, and Shemida. The following is a description of the land they received. Hopher's son Zelophehad did not have any sons, but he did have five daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. One day the clans that were descendants of Zelophehad's five daughters went to the priest Eleazar, Joshua, and the leaders of Israel. The people of these clans said, The LORD told Moses to give us land just as he gave land to our relatives. Joshua followed the LORD's instructions and gave land to these five clans, as he had given land to the five clans that had descended from Hopher's brothers. So Manasseh's land west of the River Jordan was divided into ten parts.

² (17: 1)

³ (17: 1)

⁴ (17: 1)

⁵ (17: 1)

⁶ (17: 1)

⁷ The land of the Manasseh tribe went from its northern border with the Asher tribe south to Michmethath, which is to the east of Shechem. The southern

border started there, but curved even further south to include the people who lived around Tappuah Spring.

⁸The town of Tappuah was on Manasseh's border with Ephraim. Although the land around Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, the town itself belonged to Ephraim.

⁹Then the border went west to the Kanah Gorge and ran along the northern edge of the gorge to the Mediterranean Sea. The land south of the gorge belonged to Ephraim. And even though there were a few towns that belonged to Ephraim north of the gorge, the land north of the gorge belonged to Manasseh. The western border of Manasseh was the Mediterranean Sea, and the tribe shared a border with the Asher tribe on the north-west and with the Issachar tribe on the north-east.

¹⁰(17: 9)

¹¹Manasseh was supposed to have the following towns with their surrounding villages inside the borders of Issachar's and Asher's tribal lands: Beth-Shan, Ibleam, Endor, Taanach, Megiddo, and Dor, which is also called Naphath.

¹²But the people of Manasseh could not capture these towns, so the Canaanites kept on living in them.

¹³When the Israelites grew stronger, they made the Canaanites in these towns work as their slaves, though they never did force them to leave.

¹⁴One day the Joseph tribes came to Joshua and asked, Why didn't you give us more land? The LORD has always been kind to us, and we have too many people for this small region.

¹⁵Joshua replied, If you have so many people that you don't have enough room in the hill country of Ephraim, then go into the forest that belonged to the Perizzites and the Rephaim. Clear out the trees and make more room for yourselves there.

¹⁶Even if we do that, they answered, there still won't be enough land for us in the hill country. And we can't move down into Jezreel Valley, because the Canaanites who live in Beth-Shan and in other parts of the valley have iron chariots.

¹⁷Your tribes do have a lot of people, Joshua admitted. I'll give you more land. Your tribes are powerful,

¹⁸so you can have the rest of the hill country, but it's a forest, and you'll have to cut down the trees and clear the land. You can also have Jezreel Valley. Even though the Canaanites there are strong and have iron chariots, you can force them to leave the valley.

18¹After Israel had captured the land, they met at Shiloh and set up the sacred tent.

²There were still seven tribes without any land,

³so Joshua told the people: The Judah tribe has already settled in its land in the south, and the Joseph tribes have settled in their land in the north. The tribes of Gad, Reuben, and East Manasseh already have the land that the LORD's servant Moses gave them east of the River Jordan. And the people of Levi won't get a single large region of the land like the other tribes. Instead, they will serve the LORD as priests. But the rest of you haven't done a thing to take over any land. The LORD God who was

worshipped by your ancestors has given you the land, and now it's time to go ahead and settle there. Seven tribes still don't have any land. Each of these tribes should choose three men, and I'll send them to explore the remaining land. They will divide it into seven regions, write a description of each region, and bring these descriptions back to me. I will find out from the LORD our God what region each tribe should get.

⁴ (18: 3)

⁵ (18: 3)

⁶ (18: 3)

⁷ (18: 3)

⁸ Just before the men left camp, Joshua repeated their orders: Explore the land and write a description of it. Then come back to Shiloh, and I will find out from the LORD how to divide the land.

⁹ The men left and went across the land, dividing it into seven regions. They wrote down a description of each region, town by town, and returned to Joshua at the camp at Shiloh.

¹⁰ Joshua found out from the LORD how to divide the land, and he told the tribes what the LORD had decided.

¹¹ Benjamin was the first tribe chosen to receive land. The region for its clans lay between the Judah tribe on the south and the Joseph tribes on the north.

¹² Benjamin's northern border started at the River Jordan and went up the ridge north of Jericho, then on west into the hill country as far as the Beth-Aven Desert.

¹³ From there it went to Luz, which is now called Bethel. The border ran along the ridge south of Luz, then went to Ataroth-Orech and on as far as the mountain south of Lower Beth-Horon. At that point it turned south and became the western border. It went as far south as Kiriath-Baal, a town in Judah now called Kiriath-Jearim.

¹⁴ (18: 13)

¹⁵ Benjamin's southern border started at the edge of Kiriath-Jearim and went east to the ruins and on to Nephtoah Spring.

¹⁶ From there it went to the bottom of the hill at the northern end of Rephaim Valley. The other side of this hill faces Hinnom Valley, which is on the land that slopes south from Jerusalem. The border

went down through Hinnom Valley until it reached Enrogel.

¹⁷At Enrogel the border curved north and went to Enshemesh and on east to Geliloth, which is across the valley from Adummim Pass. Then it went down to the Monument of Bohan, who belonged to the Reuben tribe.

¹⁸The border ran along the hillside north of Beth-Arabah, then down into the Jordan valley.

¹⁹Inside the valley it went south as far as the northern hillside of Beth-Hoglah. The last section of the border went from there to the northern end of the Dead Sea, at the mouth of the River Jordan.

²⁰The River Jordan itself was Benjamin's eastern border. These were the borders of Benjamin's tribal land, where the clans of Benjamin lived.

²¹One region of Benjamin's tribal land had twelve towns with their surrounding villages. Those towns were Jericho, Beth-Hoglah, Emek-Keziz, Beth-Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, Chephar-Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba.

²²(18: 21)

²³ (18: 21)

²⁴ (18: 21)

²⁵ In the other region there were the following fourteen towns with their surrounding villages: Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, Zelah, Haeleph, Gibeah, Kiriath-Jearim, and Jerusalem, which is also called Jebusite Town. These regions are the tribal lands of Benjamin.

²⁶ (18: 25)

²⁷ (18: 25)

²⁸ (18: 25)

19¹ Simeon was the second tribe chosen to receive land, and the region for its clans was inside Judah's borders.

² In one region of Simeon's tribal land there were the following thirteen towns with their surrounding villages: Beersheba, Shema, Moladah, Hazar-Shual, Balah, Ezem, Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth-Marcaboth, Hazar-Susah, Beth-Lebath, and Sharuhem.

³ (19: 2)

⁴ (19: 2)

⁵ (19: 2)

⁶(19:2)

⁷In another region, Simeon had the following four towns with their surrounding villages: Enrimmon, Tachan, Ether, and Ashan.

⁸Simeon's land also included all the other towns and villages as far south as Baalath-Beer, which is also called Ramah of the South.

⁹Simeon's tribal land was actually inside Judah's territory. Judah had received too much land for the number of people in its tribe, so part of Judah's land was given to Simeon.

¹⁰Zebulun was the third tribe chosen to receive land. The southern border for its clans started in the west at the edge of the gorge near Jokneam. It went east to the edge of the land that belongs to the town of Dabbesheth, and continued on to Maralah and Sarid. It took in the land that belongs to Chislothtabor, then ended at Daberath. The eastern border went up to Japhia

¹¹(19:10)

¹²(19:10)

¹³and continued north to Gath-Hepher, Ethkazin, and Rimmonah, where it curved towards Neah

¹⁴and became the northern border. Then it curved south around Hannathon and went as far west as Iphtahel Valley.

¹⁵Zebulun had twelve towns with their surrounding villages. Some of these were Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Jiralah, and Bethlehem.

¹⁶This is the tribal land, and these are the towns and villages of the Zebulun clans.

¹⁷Issachar was the fourth tribe chosen to receive land. The northern border for its clans went from Mount Tabor east to the River Jordan. Their land included the following sixteen towns with their surrounding villages: Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, Debirath, Kishion, Ebez, Remeth, En-Gannim, Enhaddah, Beth-Pazzez, Tabor, Shahazumah and Beth-Shemesh.

¹⁸(19: 17)

¹⁹(19: 17)

²⁰(19: 17)

²¹(19: 17)

²²(19: 17)

²³ (19: 17)

²⁴ Asher was the fifth tribe chosen to receive land, and the region for its clans included the following towns: Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal. Asher's southern border ran from the Mediterranean Sea south-east along the River Shihor-Libnath at the foot of Mount Carmel,

²⁵ (19: 24)

²⁶ (19: 24)

²⁷ then east to Beth-Dagon. On the south-east, Asher shared a border with Zebulun along the Iphtahel Valley. On the eastern side their border ran north to Beth-Emek, went east of Cabul, and then on to Neiel,

²⁸ Abdon, Rehob, Hammon, Kanah, and as far north as the city of Sidon.

²⁹ Then it turned west to become the northern border and went to Ramah and the fortress-city of Tyre. Near Tyre it turned towards Hosah and ended at the Mediterranean Sea. Asher had a total of twenty-two towns with their surrounding villages, including Mahalab, Achzib, Acco, Aphek, and Rehob.

³⁰ (19: 29)

³¹ (19: 29)

³² Naphtali was the sixth tribe chosen to receive land. The southern border for its clans started in the west, where the tribal lands of Asher and Zebulun meet near Hukkok. From that point it ran east and south-east along the border with Zebulun as far as Aznoth-Tabor. From there the border went east to Heleph, Adami-Nekeb, Jabneel, then to the town called Oak in Zaananim, and Lakkum. The southern border ended at the River Jordan, at the edge of the town named Jehudah. Naphtali shared a border with Asher on the west.

³³ (19: 32)

³⁴ (19: 32)

³⁵ The Naphtali clans received this region as their tribal land, and it included nineteen towns with their surrounding villages. The following towns had walls around them: Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, Kedesh, Edrei, Enhazor, Iron, Migdalel, Horem, Beth-Anath, and Beth-Shemesh.

³⁶ (19: 35)

³⁷ (19: 35)

³⁸ (19: 35)

³⁹ (19: 35)

⁴⁰ Dan was the seventh tribe chosen to receive land, and the region for its clans included the following towns: Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-Shemesh, Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, Elon, Timnah, Ekron, Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, Jehud, Azor, Beneberak, Gath-Rimmon, Mejarkon, and Rakkon. Dan's tribal land went almost as far as Joppa.

⁴¹ (19: 40)

⁴² (19: 40)

⁴³ (19: 40)

⁴⁴ (19: 40)

⁴⁵ (19: 40)

⁴⁶ (19: 40)

⁴⁷ Its clans received this land and these towns with their surrounding villages. Later, when enemies forced them to leave their tribal land, they went to the town of Leshem. They attacked the town, captured it, and killed the people who lived there. Then they settled there themselves and renamed the town Dan after their ancestor.

⁴⁸ (19: 47)

⁴⁹The Israelites were still gathered in Shiloh in front of the sacred tent, when Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the family leaders of Israel finished giving out the land to the tribes. The LORD had told the people to give Joshua whatever town he wanted. So Joshua chose Timnath-Serah in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people gave it to him. Joshua went to Timnath-Serah, rebuilt it, and lived there.

⁵⁰(19:49)

⁵¹(19:49)

20¹One day the LORD told Joshua: ²When Moses was still alive, I told him to tell the Israelites about the Safe Towns. Now you tell them that it is time to set up these towns.

³If a person accidentally kills someone and the victim's relatives say it was murder, they might try to take revenge. Anyone accused of murder can run to one of the Safe Towns and be safe from the victim's relatives. The one needing protection will stand at the entrance to the town gate and explain to the town leaders what happened. Then the leaders

will bring that person in and provide a place to live in their town.

⁴ (20: 3)

⁵ One of the victim's relatives might come to the town, looking for revenge. But the town leaders must not simply hand over the person accused of murder. After all, the accused and the victim had been neighbours, not enemies.

⁶ The citizens of that Safe Town must come together and hold a trial. They may decide that the victim was killed accidentally and that the accused is not guilty of murder. Everyone found not guilty must still live in the Safe Town until the high priest dies. Then they can go back to their own towns and their homes that they had to leave behind.

⁷ The Israelites decided that the following three towns west of the River Jordan would be Safe Towns: Kedesh in Galilee in Naphtali's hill country, Shechem in Ephraim's hill country, and Kiriath-Arba in Judah's hill country. Kiriath-Arba is now called Hebron.

⁸ The Israelites had already decided on the following three towns east of the River Jordan: Bezer in the desert

flat lands of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, which was a town that belonged to Gad, and Golan in Bashan, which belonged to Manasseh.

⁹These Safe Towns were set up, so that if Israelites or even foreigners who lived in Israel accidentally killed someone, they could run to one of these towns. There they would be safe until a trial could be held, even if one of the victim's relatives came looking for revenge.

21 ¹While the Israelites were still camped at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, the family leaders of the Levi tribe went to speak to the priest Eleazar, Joshua, and the family leaders of the other Israelite tribes. The leaders of Levi said, The LORD told Moses that you have to give us towns and provide pastures for our animals.

²(21:1)

³Since the LORD had said this, the leaders of the other Israelite tribes agreed to give some of the towns and pastures from their tribal lands to Levi.

⁴The leaders asked the LORD to show them in what order the clans of Levi would be given towns, and which towns

each clan would receive. The Kohath clans were first. The descendants of Aaron, Israel's first priest, were given thirteen towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

⁵The other members of the Kohath clans received ten towns from the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and West Manasseh.

⁶The clans that were descendants of Gershon were given thirteen towns from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and East Manasseh.

⁷The clans that were descendants of Merari received twelve towns from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

⁸The LORD had told Moses that he would show the Israelites which towns and pastures to give to the clans of Levi, and he did.

⁹The descendants of Aaron from the Kohath clans of Levi were priests, and they were chosen to receive towns first. They were given thirteen towns and the pasture land around them. Nine of these towns were from the tribes of Judah and Simeon and four from Benjamin. Hebron, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Holon, Debir, Ashan, Juttah, and Beth-Shemesh

were from Judah and Simeon. Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, was earlier called Arba's Town. It had been named after Arba, the ancestor of the Anakim. Hebron's pasture lands went along with the town, but its farmlands and the villages around it had been given to Caleb. Hebron was also one of the Safe Towns for people who had accidentally killed someone. Gibeon, Geba, Anathoth, and Almon were from Benjamin.

¹⁰ (21: 9)

¹¹ (21: 9)

¹² (21: 9)

¹³ (21: 9)

¹⁴ (21: 9)

¹⁵ (21: 9)

¹⁶ (21: 9)

¹⁷ (21: 9)

¹⁸ (21: 9)

¹⁹ (21: 9)

²⁰ The rest of the Kohath clans of the Levi tribe received ten towns and the pasture land around them. Four of these towns were from the tribe of Ephraim, four from Dan, and two from West Manasseh. Shechem, Gezer, Kibzaim, and Beth-Horon were from Ephraim.

Shechem was in the hill country, and it was also one of the Safe Towns for people who had accidentally killed someone. Elteke, Gibbethon, Aijalon, and Gath-Rimmon were from Dan. Taanach and Jibleam were from West Manasseh.

²¹ (21: 20)

²² (21: 20)

²³ (21: 20)

²⁴ (21: 20)

²⁵ (21: 20)

²⁶ (21: 20)

²⁷ The clans of Levi that were descendants of Gershon received thirteen towns and the pasture land around them. Two of these towns were from the tribe of East Manasseh, four from Issachar, four from Asher, and three from Naphtali. Golan in Bashan and Beeshterah were from East Manasseh. Kishion, Daberath, Jarmuth, and En-Gannim were from Issachar. Mishal, Abdon, Helkath, and Rehob were from Asher. Kedesh in Galilee, Hammothdor, and Kartan were from Naphtali. Golan in Bashan and Kedesh in

Galilee were also Safe Towns for people who had accidentally killed someone.

²⁸ (21: 27)

²⁹ (21: 27)

³⁰ (21: 27)

³¹ (21: 27)

³² (21: 27)

³³ (21: 27)

³⁴ The rest of the Levi clans were descendants of Merari, and they received twelve towns with the pasture land around them. Four towns were from the tribe of Zebulun, four from Reuben, and four from Gad. Jokneam, Kartah, Rimmonah, and Nahalal were from Zebulun. Bezer, Jazah, Kedemoth, and Mephaath were from Reuben. Bezer was in the desert flat lands east of the River Jordan across from Jericho. Ramoth in Gilead, Mahanaim, Heshbon, and Jazer were from Gad. Bezer and Ramoth in Gilead were Safe Towns for people who had accidentally killed someone.

³⁵ (21: 34)

³⁶ (21: 34)

³⁷ (21: 34)

³⁸ (21: 34)

³⁹ (21: 34)

⁴⁰ (21: 34)

⁴¹ The people of the Levi tribe had a total of forty-eight towns within Israel, and they had pastures around each one of their towns.

⁴² (21: 41)

⁴³ The LORD gave the Israelites the land he had promised their ancestors, and they captured it and settled in it.

⁴⁴ There still were enemies around Israel, but the LORD kept his promise to let his people live in peace. And whenever the Israelites did have to go to war, no enemy could defeat them. The LORD always helped Israel win.

⁴⁵ The LORD promised to do many good things for Israel, and he kept his promise every time.

22¹ Joshua called the men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh to a meeting, and he told them:

² You have obeyed every command of the LORD your God and of his servant Moses. And you have done everything I've told you to do. It's taken a long time, but you have stayed and helped your relatives.

³ (22: 2)

⁴The LORD promised to give peace to your relatives, and that's what he has done. Now it's time for you to go back to your own homes in the land that Moses gave you east of the River Jordan.

⁵Moses taught you to love the LORD your God, to be faithful to him, and to worship and obey him with your whole heart and with all your strength. So be very careful to do everything Moses commanded.

⁶You've become rich from what you've taken from your enemies. You have big herds of cattle, lots of silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and plenty of clothes. Take everything home with you and share it with the people of your tribe. I pray that God will be kind to you. You are now free to go home. The tribes of Reuben and Gad started back to Gilead, their own land. Moses had given the land of Bashan to the East Manasseh tribe, so they started back along with Reuben and Gad. God had told Moses that these two and a half tribes should conquer Gilead and Bashan, and they had done so. Joshua had given land west of the River

Jordan to the other half of the Manasseh tribe, so they stayed at Shiloh in the land of Canaan with the rest of the Israelites.

⁷ (22: 6)

⁸ (22: 6)

⁹ (22: 6)

¹⁰The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh reached the western side of the Jordan valley and built a huge altar there beside the river. When the rest of the Israelites heard what these tribes had done,

¹¹ (22: 10)

¹²the Israelite men met at Shiloh to get ready to attack the two and a half tribes.

¹³But first they sent a priest, Phinehas the son of Eleazar, to talk with the two and a half tribes.

¹⁴Each of the tribes at Shiloh sent the leader of one of its families along with Phinehas.

¹⁵Phinehas and these leaders went to Gilead and met with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh. They said:

¹⁶All the LORD's people have gathered together and have sent us to find out why you are unfaithful to our God. You

have turned your backs on the LORD by building that altar. Why are you rebelling against him?

¹⁷ Wasn't our people's sin at Peor terrible enough for you? The LORD punished us by sending a horrible sickness that killed many of us, and we still suffer because of that sin.

¹⁸ Now you are turning your backs on the LORD again. If you don't stop rebelling against the LORD at once, he will be angry with the whole nation.

¹⁹ If you don't think your land is a fit place to serve God, then move across the Jordan and live with us in the LORD's own land, where his sacred tent is. But don't rebel against the LORD our God or against us by building another altar besides the LORD's own altar.

²⁰ Don't you remember what happened when Achan was unfaithful and took some of the things that belonged to God? This made God angry with the entire nation. Achan died because he sinned, but he also caused the death of many others.

²¹ The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh answered:

²²The LORD is the greatest God! We ask him to be our witness, because he knows whether or not we were rebellious or unfaithful when we built that altar. If we were unfaithful, then we pray that God won't rescue us today. Let us tell you why we built that altar,

²³and we ask the LORD to punish us if we are lying. We didn't build it so we could turn our backs on the LORD. We didn't even build it so we could offer animal or grain sacrifices to please the LORD or ask his blessing.

²⁴We built that altar because we were worried. Some day your descendants might tell our descendants, The LORD made the River Jordan the boundary between us Israelites and you people of Reuben and Gad. The LORD is Israel's God, but you're not part of Israel, so you can't take part in worshipping the LORD. Your descendants might say that and try to make our descendants stop worshipping and obeying the LORD.

²⁵(22: 24)

²⁶That's why we decided to build the altar. It isn't for offering sacrifices, not even sacrifices to please the LORD.

²⁷ To build another altar for offering sacrifices would be the same as turning our backs on the LORD and rebelling against him. We could never do that! No, we built the altar to remind us and you and the generations to come that we will worship the LORD. And so we will keep bringing our sacrifices to the LORD's altar, there in front of his sacred tent. Now your descendants will never be able to say to our descendants, You can't worship the LORD. But if they do say this, our descendants can answer back, Look at this altar our ancestors built! It's like the LORD's altar, but it isn't for offering sacrifices. It's here to remind us and you that we belong to the LORD, just as much as you do.

²⁸ (22: 27)

²⁹ (22: 27)

³⁰ Phinehas and the clan leaders were pleased when they heard the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh explain why they had built the altar. Then Phinehas told them, Today we know that the LORD is helping us. You have not been unfaithful to him, and this means that the LORD will not be angry with us.

³¹ (22: 30)

³² Phinehas and the clan leaders left Gilead and went back to Canaan to tell the Israelites about their meeting with the Reuben and Gad tribes.

³³ The Israelites were happy and praised God. There was no more talk about going to war and wiping out the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

³⁴ The people of Reuben and Gad named the altar A Reminder to us all that the LORD is our God.

23 ¹ The LORD let Israel live in peace with its neighbours for a long time, and Joshua lived to a ripe old age.

² One day he called a meeting of the leaders of the tribes of Israel, including the old men, the judges, and the officials. Then he told them: I am now very old.

³ You have seen how the LORD your God fought for you and helped you defeat the nations who lived in this land.

⁴ There are still some nations left, but the LORD has promised you their land. So when you attack them, he will make them run away. I have already divided their land among your tribes, as I did with the land of the nations I

defeated between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.

⁵ (23: 4)

⁶ Be sure that you carefully obey everything written in The Book of the Law of Moses and do exactly what it says.

⁷ Don't have anything to do with the nations that live around you. Don't worship their gods or pray to their idols or make promises in the names of their gods.

⁸ Be as faithful to the LORD as you have always been.

⁹ When you attacked powerful nations, the LORD made them run away, and no one has ever been able to stand up to you.

¹⁰ Any one of you can defeat a thousand enemy soldiers, because the LORD God fights for you, just as he promised.

¹¹ Be sure to love the LORD your God always.

¹² Don't ever turn your backs on him by marrying people from the nations that are left in the land. Don't even make friends with them. I tell you that if you are friendly with those nations,

the LORD won't chase them away when you attack. Instead, they'll be like a trap for your feet, a whip on your back, and thorns in your eyes. And finally, none of you will be left in this good land that the LORD has given you.

¹³(23: 12)

¹⁴I will soon die, as everyone must. But deep in your hearts you know that the LORD has kept every promise he ever made to you. Not one of them has been broken.

¹⁵Yes, when the LORD makes a promise, he does what he has promised. But when he makes a threat, he will also do what he has threatened. The LORD is our God. He gave us this wonderful land and made an agreement with us that we would worship only him. But if you worship other gods, it will make the LORD furious. He will start getting rid of you, and soon not one of you will be left in this good land that he has given you.

¹⁶(23: 15)

24¹ Joshua called the tribes of Israel together for a meeting at Shechem. He made the leaders, including the old men, the judges, and

the officials, come up and stand near the sacred tent.

²Then Joshua told everyone to listen to this message from the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors lived on the other side of the River Euphrates, and they worshipped other gods. This continued until the time of your ancestor Terah and his two sons, Abraham and Nahor.

³But I brought Abraham across the River Euphrates and led him through the land of Canaan. I blessed him by giving him Isaac, the first in a line of many descendants.

⁴Then I gave Isaac two sons, Jacob and Esau. I let Esau live in the hill country of Mount Seir, but your ancestor Jacob and his children went to live in Egypt.

⁵Later I sent Moses and his brother Aaron to help your people, and I made all those horrible things happen to the Egyptians. I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, but the Egyptians got in their chariots and on their horses and chased your ancestors, catching up with them at the Red Sea.

⁶(24:5)

⁷Your people cried to me for help, so I put a dark cloud between them and the Egyptians. Then I opened up the sea and let your people walk across on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, I commanded the sea to swallow them, and they drowned while you watched. You lived in the desert for a long time,

⁸then I brought you into the land east of the River Jordan. The Amorites were living there, and they fought you. But with my help, you defeated them, wiped them out, and took their land.

⁹King Balak decided that his nation Moab would go to war against you, so he asked Balaam to come and put a curse on you.

¹⁰But I wouldn't listen to Balaam, and I rescued you by making him bless you instead of curse you.

¹¹You crossed the River Jordan and came to Jericho. The rulers of Jericho fought you, and so did the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. I helped you defeat them all.

¹²Your enemies ran from you, but not because you had swords and bows and arrows. I made your enemies panic and run away, as I had done with the two Amorite kings east of the River Jordan.

¹³You didn't have to work for this land I gave it to you. Now you live in towns you didn't build, and you eat grapes and olives from vineyards and trees you didn't plant.

¹⁴Then Joshua told the people: Worship the LORD, obey him, and always be faithful. Get rid of the idols your ancestors worshipped when they lived on the other side of the River Euphrates and in Egypt.

¹⁵But if you don't want to worship the LORD, then choose now! Will you worship the same idols your ancestors did? Or since you're living on land that once belonged to the Amorites, perhaps you'll worship their gods. I won't. My family and I are going to worship and obey the LORD!

¹⁶The people answered: We could never worship other gods or stop worshipping the LORD.

¹⁷ The LORD is our God. We were slaves in Egypt as our ancestors had been, but we saw the LORD work miracles to set our people free and to bring us out of Egypt. Even though other nations were all around us, the LORD protected us wherever we went.

¹⁸ And when we fought the Amorites and the other nations that lived in this land, the LORD made them run away. Yes, we will worship and obey the LORD, because the LORD is our God.

¹⁹ Joshua said: The LORD is fearsome; he is the one true God, and I don't think you are able to worship and obey him in the ways he demands. You would have to be completely faithful, and if you sin or rebel, he won't let you get away with it.

²⁰ If you turn your backs on the LORD and worship the gods of other nations, the LORD will turn against you. He will make terrible things happen to you and wipe you out, even though he had been good to you before.

²¹ But the people shouted, We won't worship any other gods. We will worship and obey only the LORD!

²² Joshua said, You have heard yourselves say that you will worship and obey the LORD. Isn't that true? Yes, it's true, they answered.

²³ Joshua said, But you still have some idols, like those the other nations worship. Get rid of your idols! You must decide once and for all that you really want to obey the LORD God of Israel.

²⁴ The people said, The LORD is our God, and we will worship and obey only him.

²⁵ Joshua helped Israel make an agreement with the LORD that day at Shechem. Joshua made laws for Israel

²⁶ and wrote them down in The Book of the Law of God. Then he set up a large stone under the oak tree at the place of worship in Shechem

²⁷ and told the people, Look at this stone. It has heard everything that the LORD has said to us. Our God can call this stone as a witness if we ever reject him.

²⁸ Joshua sent everyone back to their homes.

²⁹Not long afterwards, the LORD's servant Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten.

³⁰The Israelites buried him in his own land at Timnath-Serah, north of Mount Gaash in the hill country of Ephraim.

³¹As long as Joshua lived, Israel worshipped and obeyed the LORD. There were other leaders old enough to remember everything that the LORD had done for Israel. And for as long as these men lived, Israel continued to worship and obey the LORD.

³²When the people of Israel left Egypt, they brought the bones of Joseph along with them. They took the bones to the town of Shechem and buried them in the field that Jacob had bought for one hundred pieces of silver from Hamor, the founder of Shechem. The town and the field both became part of the land belonging to the descendants of Joseph.

³³When Eleazar the priest died, he was buried in the hill country of Ephraim on a hill that belonged to his son Phinehas.

Judges

1 ¹After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked the LORD, Which of our tribes should attack the Canaanites first?

²Judah! the LORD answered. I'll help them take the land.

³The people of Judah went to their relatives, the Simeon tribe, and said, Canaanites live in the land God gave us. Help us fight them, and we will help you. Troops from Simeon came to help Judah.

⁴Together they attacked an army of ten thousand Canaanites and Perizzites at Bezek, and the LORD helped Judah defeat them. During the battle, Judah's army found out where the king of Bezek was, and they attacked there.

⁵(1: 4)

⁶Bezek tried to escape, but soldiers from Judah caught him. They cut off his thumbs and big toes,

⁷and he said, I've cut off the thumbs and big toes of seventy kings and made those kings crawl around under my table

for scraps of food. Now God is paying me back. The army of Judah took the king of Bezek along with them to Jerusalem, where he died.

⁸They attacked Jerusalem, captured it, killed everyone who lived there, and then burnt it to the ground.

⁹Judah's army fought the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, the Southern Desert, and the foothills to the west.

¹⁰After that, they attacked the Canaanites who lived at Hebron, defeating the three clans called Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai. At that time, Hebron was called Kiriath-Arba.

¹¹From Hebron, Judah's army went to attack Debir, which at that time was called Kiriath-Sepher.

¹²Caleb told his troops, The man who captures Kiriath-Sepher can marry my daughter Achsah.

¹³Caleb's nephew Othniel captured Kiriath-Sepher, so Caleb let him marry Achsah. Othniel was the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz.

¹⁴Straight after the wedding, Achsah started telling Othniel that he ought to ask her father for a field. She went to

see her father, and while she was getting down from her donkey, Caleb asked, What's bothering you?

¹⁵She answered, I need your help. The land you gave me is in the Southern Desert, so please give me some spring-fed ponds for a water supply. Caleb gave her a couple of small ponds named Higher Pond and Lower Pond.

¹⁶The people who belonged to the Kenite clan were the descendants of the father-in-law of Moses. They left Jericho with the people of Judah and settled near Arad in the Southern Desert of Judah not far from the Amalekites.

¹⁷Judah's army helped Simeon's army attack the Canaanites who lived at Zephath. They completely destroyed the town and renamed it Hormah.

¹⁸The LORD helped the army of Judah capture Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and the land near those towns. They also took the hill country. But the people who lived in the valleys had iron chariots, so Judah was not able to make them leave or to take their land.

¹⁹(1:18)

²⁰The tribe of Judah gave the town of Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had told them to do. Caleb defeated the three Anakim clans and took over the town.

²¹The Jebusites were living in Jerusalem, and the Benjamin tribe did not defeat them or capture the town. That's why Jebusites still live in Jerusalem along with the people of Benjamin.

²²The Ephraim and Manasseh tribes were getting ready to attack Bethel, which at that time was called Luz. And the LORD helped them when they sent spies to find out as much as they could about Bethel.

²³ (1: 22)

²⁴While the spies were watching the town, a man came out, and they told him, If you show us how our army can get into the town, we will make sure that you aren't harmed.

²⁵The man showed them, and the two Israelite tribes attacked Bethel, killing everyone except the man and his family. The two tribes made the man and his family leave,

²⁶so they went to the land of the Hittites, where he built a town. He named the town Luz, and that is still its name.

²⁷Canaanites lived in the towns of Beth-Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, and all the villages nearby. The Canaanites were determined to stay, and the Manasseh tribe never did get rid of them. But later on, when the Israelites grew more powerful, they made slaves of the Canaanites.

²⁸(1: 27)

²⁹The Ephraim tribe did not get rid of the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites lived there with Israelites all around them.

³⁰The Zebulun tribe did not get rid of the Canaanites who lived in Kitron and Nahalol, and the Canaanites stayed there with Israelites around them. But the people of Zebulun did force the Canaanites into slave labour.

³¹The Asher tribe did not get rid of the Canaanites who lived in Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, and Rehob, and the Asher tribe lived with Canaanites all around them.

³²(1: 31)

³³The Naphtali tribe did not get rid of the Canaanites who lived in Beth-Shemesh and Beth-Anath, but they did force the Canaanites into slave labour. The Naphtali tribe lived with Canaanites around them.

³⁴The Amorites were strong enough to keep the tribe of Dan from settling in the valleys, so Dan had to stay in the hill country.

³⁵The Amorites on Mount Heres and in Aijalon and Shaalbim were also determined to stay. Later on, as Ephraim and Manasseh grew more powerful, they forced those Amorites into slave labour.

³⁶The old Amorite-Edomite border used to go from Sela through Scorpion Pass into the hill country.

2¹ The LORD's angel went from Gilgal to Bochim and gave the Israelites this message from the LORD: I promised your ancestors that I would give this land to their families, and I brought your people here from Egypt. We made an agreement that I promised never to break,

²and you promised not to make any peace treaties with the other nations that live in the land. Besides that, you agreed to tear down the altars where they sacrifice to their idols. But you didn't keep your promise.

³And so, I'll stop helping you defeat your enemies. Instead, they will be there to trap you into worshipping their idols.

⁴The Israelites started crying loudly,
⁵and they offered sacrifices to the LORD. From then on, they called that place Crying.

⁶Joshua had been faithful to the LORD. And after Joshua sent the Israelites to take the land they had been promised, they remained faithful to the LORD until Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten. He was buried on his land in Timnath-Heres, in the hill country of Ephraim north of Mount Gaash. Even though Joshua was gone, the Israelites were faithful to the LORD during the lifetime of those men who had been leaders with Joshua and who had seen the wonderful things the LORD had done for Israel.

⁷(2: 6)

⁸(2: 6)

⁹(2: 6)

¹⁰After a while the people of Joshua's generation died, and the next generation did not know the LORD or any of the things he had done for Israel.

¹¹The LORD had brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and they had worshipped him. But now the Israelites stopped worshipping the LORD and worshipped the idols of Baal and Astarte, as well as the idols of other gods from nearby nations. The LORD was so angry

¹²(2: 11)

¹³(2: 11)

¹⁴with the Israelites that he let other nations raid Israel and steal their crops and other possessions. Enemies were everywhere, and the LORD always let them defeat Israel in battle. The LORD had warned Israel he would do this, and now the Israelites were miserable.

¹⁵(2: 14)

¹⁶From time to time, the LORD would choose special leaders known as judges. These judges would lead the Israelites into battle and defeat the enemies that made raids on them.

¹⁷In years gone by, the Israelites had been faithful to the LORD, but now they were quick to be unfaithful and to refuse even to listen to these judges. The Israelites would disobey the LORD, and instead of worshipping him, they would worship other gods.

¹⁸When enemies made life miserable for the Israelites, the LORD would feel sorry for them. He would choose a judge and help that judge rescue Israel from its enemies. The LORD would be kind to Israel as long as that judge lived.

¹⁹But afterwards, the Israelites would become even more sinful than their ancestors had been. The Israelites were stubborn they simply would not stop worshipping other gods or following the teachings of other religions.

²⁰The LORD was angry with Israel and said: The Israelites have broken the agreement I made with their ancestors. They won't obey me,

²¹so I'll stop helping them defeat their enemies. Israel still had a lot of enemies when Joshua died,

²²and I'm going to let those enemies stay. I'll use them to test Israel, because

then I can find out if Israel will worship and obey me as their ancestors did.

²³That's why the LORD had not let Joshua get rid of all those enemy nations straight away.

3¹And the LORD had another reason for letting these enemies stay. The Israelites needed to learn how to fight in war, just as their ancestors had done. Each new generation would have to learn by fighting

²(3: 1)

³the Philistines and their five rulers, as well as the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived in the Lebanon Mountains from Mount Baal-Hermon to Hamath Pass.

⁴Moses had told the Israelites what the LORD had commanded them to do, and now the LORD was using these nations to find out if Israel would obey.

⁵But they refused. And it was because of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites who lived all around them. Some of the Israelites married the people of these nations, and that's how they started worshipping foreign gods.

⁶(3: 5)

⁷The Israelites sinned against the LORD by forgetting him and worshipping idols of Baal and Astarte.

⁸This made the LORD angry, so he let Israel be defeated by King Cushan Rishathaim of northern Syria, who ruled Israel eight years and made everyone pay taxes.

⁹The Israelites begged the LORD for help, and he chose Othniel to rescue them. Othniel was the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz.

¹⁰The Spirit of the LORD took control of Othniel, and he led Israel in a war against Cushan Rishathaim. The LORD gave Othniel victory,

¹¹and Israel was at peace until Othniel died about forty years later.

¹²Once more the Israelites started disobeying the LORD. So he let them be defeated by King Eglon of Moab,

¹³who had joined forces with the Ammonites and the Amalekites to attack Israel. Eglon and his army captured Jericho.

¹⁴Then he ruled Israel for eighteen years and forced the Israelites to pay heavy taxes.

¹⁵The Israelites begged the LORD for help, and the LORD chose Ehud from the Benjamin tribe to rescue them. They put Ehud in charge of taking the taxes to King Eglon, but before Ehud went, he made a double-edged dagger. Ehud was left-handed, so he strapped the dagger to his right thigh, where it would be hidden under his robes.

¹⁶(3:15)

¹⁷Ehud and some other Israelites took the taxes to Eglon, who was a very fat man. As soon as they gave the taxes to Eglon, Ehud said it was time to go home.

¹⁸(3:17)

¹⁹Ehud went with the other Israelites as far as the statues at Gilgal. Then he turned back and went upstairs to the cool room where Eglon had his throne. Ehud said, Your Majesty, I need to talk with you in private. Eglon replied, Don't say anything yet! His officials left the room, and Eglon stood up as Ehud came closer. Yes, Ehud said, I have a message for you from God!

²⁰ (3: 19)

²¹ Ehud pulled out the dagger with his left hand and shoved it so far into Eglon's stomach

²² that even the handle was buried in his fat. Ehud left the dagger there. Then after closing and locking the doors to the room, he climbed through a window on to the porch

²³ (3: 22)

²⁴ and left. When the king's officials came back and saw that the doors were locked, they said, The king is probably inside relieving himself.

²⁵ They stood there waiting until they felt foolish, but Eglon never opened the doors. Finally, they unlocked the doors and found King Eglon lying dead on the floor.

²⁶ But by that time, Ehud had already escaped past the statues. Ehud went to the town of Seirah

²⁷ in the hill country of Ephraim and started blowing a signal on a trumpet. The Israelites came together, and he shouted, Follow me! The LORD will help us defeat the Moabites. The Israelites followed Ehud down to the Jordan valley,

and they captured the places where people cross the river on the way to Moab. They would not let anyone go across,

²⁸ (3: 27)

²⁹ and before the fighting was over, they killed about ten thousand Moabite warriors not one escaped alive.

³⁰ Moab was so badly defeated that it was a long time before they were strong enough to attack Israel again. And Israel was at peace for eighty years.

³¹ Shamgar the son of Anath was the next to rescue Israel. In one battle, he used a sharp wooden pole to kill six hundred Philistines.

4¹ After the death of Ehud, the Israelites again started disobeying the LORD.

² So the LORD let the Canaanite King Jabin of Hazor conquer Israel. Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, lived in Harosheth-Ha-Goim.

³ Jabin's army had nine hundred iron chariots, and for twenty years he made life miserable for the Israelites, until finally they begged the LORD for help.

⁴Deborah the wife of Lappidoth was a prophet and a leader of Israel during those days.

⁵She would sit under Deborah's Palm Tree between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, where Israelites would come and ask her to settle their legal cases.

⁶One day, Barak the son of Abinoam was in Kedesh in Naphtali, and Deborah sent word for him to come and talk with her. When he arrived, she said: I have a message for you from the LORD God of Israel! You are to get together an army of ten thousand men from the Naphtali and Zebulun tribes and lead them to Mount Tabor.

⁷The LORD will trick Sisera into coming out to fight you at the River Kishon. Sisera will be leading King Jabin's army as usual, and they will have their chariots, but the LORD has promised to help you defeat them.

⁸I'm not going unless you go! Barak told her.

⁹All right, I'll go! she replied. But I'm warning you that the LORD is going to let a woman defeat Sisera, and no one

will honour you for winning the battle. Deborah and Barak left for Kedesh,
¹⁰where Barak called together the troops from Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand soldiers gathered there, and Barak led them out from Kedesh. Deborah went too.

¹¹At this time, Heber of the Kenite clan was living near the village of Oak in Zaananim, not far from Kedesh. The Kenites were descendants of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, but Heber had moved and had set up his tents away from the rest of the clan.

¹²When Sisera learnt that Barak had led an army to Mount Tabor,

¹³he called his troops together and got all nine hundred iron chariots ready. Then he led his army away from Harosheth-Ha-Goim to the River Kishon.

¹⁴Deborah shouted, Barak, it's time to attack Sisera! Because today the LORD is going to help you defeat him. In fact, the LORD has already gone on ahead to fight for you. Barak led his ten thousand troops down from Mount Tabor.

¹⁵And during the battle, the LORD confused Sisera, his chariot drivers, and

his whole army. Everyone was so afraid of Barak and his army, that even Sisera jumped down from his chariot and tried to escape.

¹⁶Barak's forces went after Sisera's chariots and army as far as Harosheth-Ha-Goim. Sisera's entire army was wiped out.

¹⁷Only Sisera escaped. He ran to Heber's camp, because Heber and his family had a peace treaty with the king of Hazor. Sisera went to the tent that belonged to Jael, Heber's wife.

¹⁸She came out to greet him and said, Come in, sir! Please come on in. Don't be afraid. After they had gone inside, Sisera lay down, and Jael covered him with a blanket.

¹⁹Could I have a little water? he asked. I'm thirsty. Jael opened a leather bottle and poured him some milk, then she covered him up again.

²⁰Stand at the entrance to the tent, Sisera told her. If someone comes by and asks if anyone is inside, tell them No.

²¹Sisera was exhausted and soon fell fast asleep. Jael took a hammer and

drove a tent-peg through his head into the ground, and he died.

²²Meanwhile, Barak had been following Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. The man you're looking for is inside, she said. Come in and I'll show him to you. They went inside, and there was Sisera dead and stretched out with a tent-peg through his skull.

²³That same day the Israelites defeated the Canaanite King Jabin, and his army was no longer powerful enough to attack the Israelites.

²⁴Jabin grew weaker while the Israelites kept growing stronger, and at last the Israelites destroyed him.

5¹ After the battle was over that day, Deborah and Barak sang this song:

²We praise you, LORD! Our soldiers volunteered, ready to follow you.

³Listen, kings and rulers, while I sing for the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁴Our LORD, God of Israel, when you came from Seir, where the Edomites live, rain poured from the sky, the earth trembled, and mountains shook.

⁵(5: 4)

⁶In the time of Shamgar son of Anath, and now again in Jael's time, roads were too dangerous for caravans. Travellers had to take the back roads,

⁷and villagers couldn't work in their fields. Then Deborah took command, protecting Israel as a mother protects her children.

⁸The Israelites worshipped other gods, and the gates of their towns were then attacked. But they had no shields or spears to fight with.

⁹I praise you, LORD, and I am grateful for those leaders and soldiers who volunteered.

¹⁰Listen, everyone! Whether you ride a donkey with a padded saddle or have to walk.

¹¹Even those who carry water to the animals will tell you, The LORD has won victories, and so has Israel. Then the LORD's people marched down to the town gates

¹²and said, Deborah, let's go! Let's sing as we march. Barak, capture our enemies.

¹³The LORD's people who were left joined with their leaders and fought at my side.

¹⁴Troops came from Ephraim, where Amalekites once lived. Others came from Benjamin; officers and leaders came from Machir and Zebulun.

¹⁵The rulers of Issachar came along with Deborah, and Issachar followed Barak into the valley. But the tribe of Reuben was no help at all!

¹⁶Reuben, why did you stay among your sheep pens? Was it to listen to shepherds whistling for their sheep? No one could understand why Reuben wouldn't come.

¹⁷The people of Gilead stayed across the Jordan. Why did the tribe of Dan remain on their ships and the tribe of Asher stay along the coast near the harbours?

¹⁸But soldiers of Zebulun and Naphtali risked their lives to attack the enemy.

¹⁹Canaanite kings fought us at Taanach by the stream near Megiddo but they couldn't rob us of our silver.

²⁰From their pathways in the sky the stars fought Sisera,

²¹ and his soldiers were swept away by the ancient River Kishon. I will march on and be brave.

²² Sisera's horses galloped off, their hoofs thundering in retreat.

²³ The LORD's angel said, Put a curse on Meroz Town! Its people refused to help the LORD fight his powerful enemies.

²⁴ But honour Jael, the wife of Heber from the Kenite clan. Give more honour to her than to any other woman who lives in tents. Yes, give more honour to her than to any other woman.

²⁵ Sisera asked for water, but Jael gave him milk cream in a fine cup.

²⁶ She reached for a tent-peg and held a hammer in her right hand. And with a blow to the head, she crushed his skull.

²⁷ Sisera sank to his knees and fell dead at her feet.

²⁸ Sisera's mother looked out through her window. Why is he taking so long? she asked. Why haven't we heard his chariots coming?

²⁹ She and her wisest women gave the same answer:

³⁰ Sisera and his troops are finding treasures to bring back a woman, or

perhaps two, for each man, and beautiful dresses for those women to wear.

³¹ Our LORD, we pray that all your enemies will die like Sisera. But let everyone who loves you shine brightly like the sun at dawn.

6¹ There was peace in Israel for about forty years. Then once again the Israelites started disobeying the LORD, so he let the nation of Midian control Israel for seven years.

² The Midianites were so cruel that many Israelites ran to the mountains and hid in caves.

³ Every time the Israelites would plant crops, the Midianites invaded Israel together with the Amalekites and other eastern nations.

⁴ They rode in on their camels, set up their tents, and then let their livestock eat the crops as far as the town of Gaza. The Midianites stole food, sheep, cattle, and donkeys. Like a swarm of locusts, they could not be counted, and they ruined the land wherever they went.

⁵ (6: 4)

⁶The Midianites took almost everything that belonged to the Israelites, and the Israelites begged the LORD for help.

⁷(6:6)

⁸Then the LORD sent a prophet to them with this message: I am the LORD God of Israel, so listen to what I say. You were slaves in Egypt, but I set you free and led you out of Egypt into this land. And when nations here made life miserable for you, I rescued you and helped you get rid of them and take their land.

⁹(6:8)

¹⁰I am your God, and I told you not to worship Amorite gods, even though you are living in the land of the Amorites. But you refused to listen.

¹¹One day an angel from the LORD went to the town of Ophrah and sat down under the big tree that belonged to Joash, a member of the Abiezer clan. Joash's son Gideon was nearby, threshing grain in a shallow pit, where he could not be seen by the Midianites.

¹²The angel appeared and spoke to Gideon, The LORD is helping you, and you are a strong warrior.

¹³Gideon answered, Please don't take this wrong, but if the LORD is helping us, then why have all these awful things happened? We've heard how the LORD performed miracles and rescued our ancestors from Egypt. But those things happened long ago. Now the LORD has abandoned us to the Midianites.

¹⁴Then the LORD himself said, Gideon, you will be strong, because I am giving you the power to rescue Israel from the Midianites.

¹⁵Gideon replied, But how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest one in Manasseh, and everyone else in my family is more important than I am.

¹⁶Gideon, the LORD answered, you can rescue Israel because I am going to help you! Defeating the Midianites will be as easy as beating up one man.

¹⁷Gideon said, It's hard to believe that I'm actually talking to the LORD. Please do something so I'll know that you really are the LORD.

¹⁸And wait here until I bring you an offering. All right, I'll wait, the LORD answered.

¹⁹Gideon went home and killed a young goat, then started boiling the meat. Next, he opened a big sack of flour and made it into thin bread. When the meat was done, he put it in a basket and poured the broth into a clay cooking pot. He took the meat, the broth, and the bread and placed them under the big tree.

²⁰God's angel said, Gideon, put the meat and the bread on this rock, and pour the broth over them. Gideon did as he was told.

²¹The angel was holding a walking stick, and he touched the meat and the bread with the end of the stick. Flames jumped from the rock and burnt up the meat and the bread. When Gideon looked, the angel was gone.

²²Gideon realized that he had seen one of the LORD's angels. Oh! he moaned. Now I'm going to die.

²³Calm down! the LORD told Gideon. There's nothing to be afraid of. You're not going to die.

²⁴Gideon built an altar for worshipping the LORD and called it The LORD Calms our Fears. It still stands there in Ophrah,

a town in the territory of the Abiezer clan.

²⁵That night the LORD spoke to Gideon again: Get your father's second-best bull, the one that's seven years old. Use it to pull down the altar where your father worships Baal and cut down the sacred pole next to the altar.

²⁶Then build an altar for worshipping me on the highest part of the hill where your town is built. Use layers of stones for my altar, not just a pile of rocks. Cut up the wood from the pole, make a fire, kill the bull, and burn it as a sacrifice to me.

²⁷Gideon chose ten of his servants to help him, and they did everything God had said. But since Gideon was afraid of his family and the other people in town, he did it all at night.

²⁸When the people of the town got up the next morning, they saw that Baal's altar had been knocked over, and the sacred pole next to it had been cut down. Then they noticed the new altar covered with the remains of the sacrificed bull.

²⁹Who could have done such a thing? they asked. And they kept on asking,

until finally someone told them, Gideon the son of Joash did it.

³⁰The men of the town went to Joash and said, Your son Gideon knocked over Baal's altar and cut down the sacred pole next to it. Hand him over, so we can kill him!

³¹The crowd pushed closer and closer, but Joash replied, Are you trying to take revenge for Baal? Are you trying to rescue Baal? If you are, you will be the ones who are put to death, and it will happen before another day dawns. If Baal really is a god, let him take his own revenge on someone who tears down his altar.

³²That same day, Joash changed Gideon's name to Jerubbaal, explaining, He tore down Baal's altar, so let Baal take revenge himself.

³³All the Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern nations got together and crossed the River Jordan. Then they invaded the land of Israel and set up camp in Jezreel Valley.

³⁴The LORD's Spirit took control of Gideon, and Gideon blew a signal on a

trumpet to tell the men in the Abiezer clan to follow him.

³⁵He also sent messengers to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, telling the men of these tribes to come and join his army. Then they set out towards the enemy camp.

³⁶Gideon prayed to God, I know that you promised to help me rescue Israel, but I need proof. Tonight I'll put some wool on the stone floor of that threshing-place over there. If you really will help me rescue Israel, then tomorrow morning let there be dew on the wool, but let the stone floor be dry.

³⁷ (6: 36)

³⁸And that's just what happened. Early the next morning, Gideon got up and checked the wool. He squeezed out enough water to fill a bowl.

³⁹But Gideon prayed to God again. Don't be angry with me, Gideon said. Let me try this just one more time, so I'll really be sure you'll help me. Only this time, let the wool be dry and the stone floor be wet with dew.

⁴⁰That night, God made the stone floor wet with dew, but he kept the wool dry.

7¹ Early the next morning, Gideon and his army got up and moved their camp to Fear Spring. The Midianite camp was to the north, in the valley at the foot of Moreh Hill.

²The LORD said, Gideon, your army is too big. I can't let you win with this many soldiers. The Israelites would think that they had won the battle all by themselves and that I didn't have anything to do with it.

³So call your troops together and tell them that anyone who is really afraid can leave Mount Gilead and go home. Twenty-two thousand men returned home, leaving Gideon with only ten thousand soldiers.

⁴Gideon, the LORD said, you still have too many soldiers. Take them down to the spring and I'll test them. I'll tell you which ones can go along with you and which ones must go back home.

⁵When Gideon led his army down to the spring, the LORD told him, Watch how each man gets a drink of water. Then divide them into two groups those who lap the water like a dog and those who kneel down to drink.

⁶Three hundred men scooped up water in their hands and lapped it, and the rest knelt to get a drink.

⁷The LORD said, Gideon, your army will be made up of everyone who lapped the water from their hands. Send the others home. I'm going to rescue Israel by helping you and your army of three hundred defeat the Midianites.

⁸Then Gideon gave these orders, You three hundred men stay here. The rest of you may go home, but leave your food and trumpets with us. Gideon's army camp was on top of a hill overlooking the Midianite camp in the valley.

⁹That night, the LORD said to Gideon. Get up! Attack the Midianite camp. I am going to let you defeat them,

¹⁰but if you're still afraid, you and your servant Purah should sneak down to their camp.

¹¹When you hear what the Midianites are saying, you'll be brave enough to attack. Gideon and Purah worked their way to the edge of the enemy camp, where soldiers were on guard duty.

¹²The camp was huge. The Midianites, Amalekites, and other eastern nations

covered the valley like a swarm of locusts. And it would be easier to count the grains of sand on a beach than to count their camels.

¹³Gideon overheard one enemy guard telling another, I had a dream about a flat loaf of barley bread that came tumbling into our camp. It hit the headquarters tent, and the tent tipped over and fell down.

¹⁴The other soldier answered, Your dream must have been about Gideon, the Israelite commander. It means God will let him and his army defeat the Midianite army and everyone else in our camp.

¹⁵As soon as Gideon heard about the dream and what it meant, he bowed down to praise God. Then he went back to the Israelite camp and shouted, Let's go! The LORD is going to let us defeat the Midianite army.

¹⁶Gideon divided his little army into three groups of one hundred men, and he gave each soldier a trumpet and a large clay jar with a burning torch inside.

¹⁷Gideon said, When we get to the enemy camp, spread out and surround

it. Then wait for me to blow a signal on my trumpet. As soon as you hear it, blow your trumpets and shout, Fight for the LORD! Fight for Gideon!

¹⁸(7:17)

¹⁹Gideon and his group reached the edge of the enemy camp a few hours after dark, just after the new guards had come on duty. Gideon and his soldiers blew their trumpets and smashed the clay jars that were hiding the torches.

²⁰The rest of Gideon's soldiers blew the trumpets they were holding in their right hands. Then they smashed the jars and held the burning torches in their left hands. Everyone shouted, Fight with your swords for the LORD and for Gideon!

²¹The enemy soldiers started yelling and tried to run away. Gideon's troops stayed in their positions surrounding the camp

²²and blew their trumpets again. As they did, the LORD made the enemy soldiers pull out their swords and start fighting each other. The enemy army tried to escape from the camp. They ran to Acacia Tree Town, towards Zeredah,

and as far as the edge of the land that belonged to the town of Abel-Meholah near Tabbath.

²³Gideon sent word for more Israelite soldiers to come from the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and both halves of Manasseh to help fight the Midianites.

²⁴He also sent messengers to tell all the men who lived in the hill country of Ephraim, Come and help us fight the Midianites! Put guards at every spring, stream, and well, as far as Beth-Barah before the Midianites can get to them. And guard the River Jordan. Troops from Ephraim did exactly what Gideon had asked,

²⁵and they even helped chase the Midianites on the east side of the River Jordan. These troops captured Raven and Wolf, the two Midianite leaders. They killed Raven at a large rock that has come to be known as Raven Rock, and they killed Wolf near a wine-pit that has come to be called Wolf Wine-pit. The men of Ephraim brought the heads of the two Midianite leaders to Gideon.

8¹ But the men were really upset with Gideon and complained, When you

went to war with Midian, you didn't ask us to help! Why did you treat us like that?

²Gideon answered: Don't be upset! Even though you came later, you were able to do much more than I did. It's just like the grape harvest: the grapes your tribe doesn't even bother to pick are better than the best grapes my family can grow.

³Besides, God chose you to capture Raven and Wolf. I didn't do a thing compared to you. By the time Gideon had finished talking, the men of Ephraim had calmed down and were no longer angry with him.

⁴After Gideon and his three hundred troops had chased the Midianites as far as the River Jordan, they were exhausted.

⁵The town of Succoth was nearby, so he went there and asked, Please give my troops some food. They are worn out, but we have to keep chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, the two Midianite kings.

⁶The town leaders of Succoth answered, Why should we feed your army? We

don't know if you really will defeat Zebah and Zalmunna.

⁷ Just wait! Gideon said. After the LORD helps me defeat them, I'm coming back here. I'll make a whip out of thorns and rip the flesh from your bones.

⁸ After leaving Succoth, Gideon went to Penuel and asked the leaders there for some food. But he got the same answer as he had got at Succoth.

⁹ I'll come back safe and sound, Gideon said, but when I do, I'm going to tear down your tower!

¹⁰ Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with an army of fifteen thousand troops. They were all that was left of the army of the eastern nations, because one hundred and twenty thousand of their warriors had been killed in the battle.

¹¹ Gideon reached the enemy camp by going east along Nomad Road past Nobah and Jogbehah. He made a surprise attack,

¹² and the enemy panicked. Zebah and Zalmunna tried to escape, but Gideon chased and captured them.

¹³After the battle, Gideon set out for home. As he was going through Heres Pass,

¹⁴he caught a young man who lived in Succoth. Gideon asked him who the town officials of Succoth were, and the young man wrote down seventy-seven names.

¹⁵Gideon went to the town officials and said, Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. Remember how you made fun of me? You said, We don't know if you really will defeat those two Midianite kings. So why should we feed your worn-out army?

¹⁶Gideon made a whip from thorn plants and used it to beat the town officials.

¹⁷Afterwards he went to Penuel, where he tore down the tower and killed all the town officials there.

¹⁸Then Gideon said, Zebah and Zalmunna, tell me about the men you killed at Tabor. They were a lot like you, the two kings answered. They were dignified, almost like royalty.

¹⁹They were my very own brothers! Gideon said. I swear by the living LORD

that if you had let them live, I would let you live.

²⁰Gideon turned to Jether, his eldest son. Kill them! Gideon said. But Jether was young, and he was too afraid even to pull out his sword.

²¹What's the matter, Gideon? Zebah and Zalmunna asked. Do it yourself, if you're not too much of a coward! Gideon jumped up and killed them both. Then he took the fine gold ornaments from the necks of their camels.

²²After the battle with the Midianites, the Israelites said, Gideon, you rescued us! Now we want you to be our king. Then after your death, your son and then your grandson will rule.

²³No, Gideon replied, I won't be your king, and my son won't be king either. Only the LORD is your ruler.

²⁴But I will ask you to do one thing: give me all the earrings you took from the enemy. The enemy soldiers had been Ishmaelites, and they wore gold earrings.

²⁵The Israelite soldiers replied, Of course we will give you the earrings.

Then they spread out a robe on the ground and tossed the earrings on it.

²⁶The total weight of this gold was nearly twenty kilogrammes. In addition, there was the gold from the camels' ornaments and from the beautiful jewellery worn by the Midianite kings. Gideon also took their purple robes.

²⁷Gideon returned to his home in Ophrah and had the gold made into a statue, which the Israelites soon started worshipping. They became unfaithful to God, and even Gideon and his family were trapped into worshipping the statue. The Midianites had been defeated so badly that they were no longer strong enough to attack Israel. And so Israel was at peace for the remaining forty years of Gideon's life.

²⁸(8: 27)

²⁹(8: 27)

³⁰Gideon had many wives and seventy sons.

³¹He even had a wife who lived at Shechem. They had a son, and Gideon named him Abimelech.

³²Gideon lived to be an old man. And when he died, he was buried in the

family tomb in his home town of Ophrah, which belonged to the Abiezer clan.

³³ Soon after Gideon's death, the Israelites turned their backs on God again. They set up idols of Baal and worshipped Baal Berith as their god.

³⁴ The Israelites forgot that the LORD was their God, and that he had rescued them from the enemies who lived around them.

³⁵ Besides all that, the Israelites were unkind to Gideon's family, even though Gideon had done so much for Israel.

9¹ Abimelech the son of Gideon went to Shechem. While there, he met with his mother's relatives

² and told them to say to the leaders of Shechem, Do you think it would be good to have all seventy of Gideon's sons ruling us? Wouldn't you rather have just one man as king? Abimelech would make a good king, and he's related to us.

³ Abimelech's uncles talked it over with the leaders of Shechem who agreed, Yes, it would be better for one of our relatives to be king.

⁴ Then they gave Abimelech seventy pieces of silver from the temple of their

god Baal Berith. Abimelech used the silver to hire a gang of rough soldiers who would do anything for money.

⁵Abimelech and his soldiers went to his father's home in Ophrah and brought out Gideon's other sons to a large rock, where they murdered all seventy. Gideon's youngest son Jotham hid from the soldiers, but he was the only one who escaped.

⁶The leaders of Shechem, including the priests and the military officers, met at the tree next to the sacred rock in Shechem to crown Abimelech king.

⁷Jotham heard what they were doing. So he climbed to the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted down to the people who were there at the meeting: Leaders of Shechem, listen to me, and perhaps God will listen to you.

⁸Once the trees searched for someone to be king; they asked the olive tree, Will you be our king?

⁹But the olive tree replied, My oil brings honour to people and gods. I won't stop making oil, just so my branches can wave above the other trees.

¹⁰Then they asked the fig tree, Will you be our king?

¹¹But the fig tree replied, I won't stop growing my delicious fruit, just so my branches can wave above the other trees.

¹²Next they asked the grape vine, Will you be our king?

¹³But the grape vine replied, My wine brings cheer to people and gods. I won't stop making wine, just so my branches can wave above the other trees.

¹⁴Finally, they went to the thorn bush and asked, Will you be our king?

¹⁵The thorn bush replied, If you really want me to be your king, then come into my shade and I will protect you. But if you're deceiving me, I'll start a fire that will spread out and destroy the cedars of Lebanon. After Jotham had finished telling this story, he said:

¹⁶My father Gideon risked his life for you when he fought to rescue you from the Midianites. Did you reward Gideon by being kind to his family? No, you did not! You attacked his family and killed all seventy of his sons on that rock. And was it right to make Abimelech your

king? He's merely the son of my father's slave girl. But just because he's your relative, you made him king of Shechem.

¹⁷ (9:16)

¹⁸ (9:16)

¹⁹ So, you leaders of Shechem, if you treated Gideon and his family the way you should have, then I hope you and Abimelech will make each other very happy.

²⁰ But if it was wrong to treat Gideon and his family the way you did, then I pray that Abimelech will destroy you with fire, and I pray that you will do the same to him.

²¹ Jotham ran off and went to live in the town of Beer, where he could be safe from his brother Abimelech.

²² Abimelech had been a military commander of Israel for three years,

²³ when God decided to punish him and the leaders of Shechem for killing Gideon's seventy sons. So God turned the leaders of Shechem against Abimelech.

²⁴ (9:23)

²⁵ Then they sent some men to hide on the hilltops and watch for Abimelech

and his troops, while they sent others to rob everyone who went by on the road. But Abimelech found out what they were doing.

²⁶One day, Gaal son of Ebed went to live in Shechem. His brothers moved there too, and soon the leaders of Shechem started trusting him.

²⁷The time came for the grape harvest, and the people of Shechem went into their vineyards and picked the grapes. They put the grapes in their wine-pits and walked on them to squeeze out the juice in order to make wine. Then they went into the temple of their god and threw a big party. There was a lot of eating and drinking, and before long they were cursing Abimelech.

²⁸Gaal said: Hamor was the founder of Shechem, and one of his descendants should be our ruler. But Abimelech's father was Gideon, so Abimelech isn't really one of us. He shouldn't be our king, and we shouldn't have to obey him or Zebul, who rules Shechem for him.

²⁹If I were the ruler of Shechem, I'd get rid of that Abimelech. I'd tell him,

Get yourself an even bigger army, and we will still defeat you.

³⁰Zebul was angry when he found out what Gaal had said.

³¹And so he sent some messengers to Abimelech. But they had to pretend to be doing something else, or they would not have been allowed to leave Shechem. Zebul told the messengers to say: Gaal the son of Ebed has come to Shechem along with his brothers, and they have persuaded the people to let Gaal rule Shechem instead of you.

³²This is what I think you should do. Lead your army here during the night and hide in the fields.

³³Get up the next morning at sunrise and rush out of your hiding places to attack the town. Gaal and his followers will come out to fight you, but you will easily defeat them.

³⁴So one night, Abimelech led his soldiers to Shechem. He divided them into four groups, and they all hid near the town.

³⁵The next morning, Gaal went out and stood in the opening of the town gate.

Abimelech and his soldiers left their hiding places,

³⁶and Gaal saw them. Zebul was standing there with Gaal, and Gaal remarked, Zebul, that looks like a crowd of people coming down from the mountaintops. No, Zebul answered, it's just the shadows of the mountains. It only looks like people moving.

³⁷But Zebul, look over there, Gaal said. There's a crowd coming down from the sacred mountain, and another group is coming along the road from the tree where people talk with the spirits of the dead.

³⁸Then Zebul replied, What good is all your boasting now? You were the one who said Abimelech shouldn't be the ruler of Shechem. Out there is the army that you made fun of. So go out and fight them!

³⁹Gaal and the leaders of Shechem went out and fought Abimelech.

⁴⁰Soon the people of Shechem turned and ran back into the town. However, Abimelech and his troops were close behind and killed many of them along the way.

⁴¹ Abimelech stayed at Arumah, and Zebul forced Gaal and his brothers out of Shechem.

⁴² The next morning, the people of Shechem were getting ready to work in their fields as usual, but someone told Abimelech about it.

⁴³ Abimelech divided his army into three groups and set up an ambush in the fields near Shechem. When the people came out of the town, he and his army rushed out from their hiding places and attacked.

⁴⁴ Abimelech and the troops with him ran to the town gate and took control of it, while two other groups attacked and killed the people who were in the fields.

⁴⁵ He and his troops fought in Shechem all day, until they had killed everyone in town. Then he and his men tore down the houses and buildings and scattered salt everywhere.

⁴⁶ Earlier that day, the leaders of the temple of El Berith at Shechem had heard about the attack. So they went into the temple fortress,

⁴⁷ but Abimelech found out where they were.

⁴⁸He led his troops to Mount Zalmon, where he took an axe and chopped off a tree branch. He lifted the branch on to his shoulder and shouted, Hurry! Cut off a branch just as I did.

⁴⁹When they all had branches, they followed Abimelech back to Shechem. They piled the branches against the fortress and set them on fire, burning down the fortress and killing about one thousand men and women.

⁵⁰After destroying Shechem, Abimelech went to Thebez. He surrounded the town and captured it.

⁵¹But there was a tall fortress in the middle of the town, and the town leaders and everyone else went inside. Then they barred the gates and went up to the flat roof.

⁵²Abimelech and his army rushed to the fortress and tried to force their way inside. Abimelech himself was about to set the heavy wooden doors on fire,

⁵³when a woman on the roof dropped a large rock on his head and cracked his skull.

⁵⁴The soldier who carried his weapons was nearby, and Abimelech told him,

Take out your sword and kill me. I don't want people to say that I was killed by a woman! So the soldier ran his sword through Abimelech.

⁵⁵ And when the Israelite soldiers saw that their leader was dead, they went back home.

⁵⁶ That's how God punished Abimelech for killing his brothers and bringing shame on his father's family.

⁵⁷ God also punished the people of Shechem for helping Abimelech. Everything happened just as Jotham's curse said it would.

10¹ Tola was the next person to rescue Israel. He belonged to the Issachar tribe, but he lived in Shamir, a town in the hill country of Ephraim. His father was Puah, and his grandfather was Dodo.

² Tola was a leader of Israel for twenty-three years, then he died and was buried in Shamir.

³ The next leader of Israel was Jair, who lived in Gilead. He was a leader for twenty-two years.

⁴ He had thirty sons, and each son had his own mule and was in charge of one

town in Gilead. Those thirty towns are still called The Settlements of Jair.

⁵When he died, he was buried in the town of Kamon.

⁶Before long, the Israelites began disobeying the LORD by worshipping Baal, Astarte, and gods from Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia.

⁷The LORD was angry with Israel and decided to let Philistia and Ammon conquer them.

⁸So the same year that Jair died, Israel's army was crushed by these two nations. For eighteen years, Ammon was cruel to the Israelites who lived in Gilead, the region east of the River Jordan that had once belonged to the Amorites.

⁹Then the Ammonites began crossing the Jordan and attacking the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. Life was miserable for the Israelites.

¹⁰They begged the LORD for help and confessed, We were unfaithful to you, our LORD. We stopped worshipping you and started worshipping idols of Baal.

¹¹The LORD answered: In the past when you came crying to me for help, I rescued you. At one time or another

I've rescued you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites.

¹²(10:11)

¹³But I'm not going to rescue you any more! You've left me and gone off to worship other gods. If you're in such big trouble, go and cry to them for help!

¹⁴(10:13)

¹⁵We have been unfaithful, the Israelites admitted. If we must be punished, do it yourself, but please rescue us from the Ammonites.

¹⁶Then the Israelites got rid of the idols of the foreign gods, and they began worshipping only the LORD. Finally, there came a time when the LORD could no longer stand to see them suffer.

¹⁷The rulers of Ammon called their soldiers together and led them to Gilead, where they set up camp. The Israelites gathered at Mizpah and set up camp there.

¹⁸The leaders of Gilead asked each other, Who can lead an attack on the Ammonites? Then they agreed, If we can

find someone who can lead the attack, we'll make him the ruler of Gilead.

11 ¹The leaders of the Gilead clan decided to ask a brave warrior named Jephthah son of Gilead to lead the attack against the Ammonites. Even though Jephthah belonged to the Gilead clan, he had earlier been forced to leave the region where they had lived. Jephthah was the son of a prostitute, but his half-brothers were the sons of his father's wife. One day his half-brothers told him, You don't really belong to our family, so you can't have any of the family property. Then they forced Jephthah to leave home. Jephthah went to the country of Tob, where he was joined by a number of men who would do anything for money. So the leaders of Gilead went to Jephthah and said,

² (11: 1)

³ (11: 1)

⁴ (11: 1)

⁵ (11: 1)

⁶Please come back to Gilead! If you lead our army, we will be able to fight off the Ammonites.

⁷ Didn't you hate me? Jephthah replied. Weren't you the ones who forced me to leave my family? You're coming to me now, just because you're in trouble.

⁸ But we do want you to come back, the leaders said. And if you lead us in battle against the Ammonites, we will make you the ruler of Gilead.

⁹ All right, Jephthah said. If I go back with you and the LORD lets me defeat the Ammonites, will you really make me your ruler?

¹⁰ You have our word, the leaders answered. And the LORD is a witness to what we have said.

¹¹ So Jephthah went back to Mizpah with the leaders of Gilead. The people of Gilead gathered at the place of worship and made Jephthah their ruler. Jephthah also made promises to them.

¹² After the ceremony, Jephthah sent messengers to say to the king of Ammon, Are you trying to start a war? You have invaded my country, and I want to know why!

¹³ The king of Ammon replied, Tell Jephthah that the land really belongs to me, all the way from the River Arnon

in the south, to the River Jabbok in the north, and west to the River Jordan. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they stole it. Tell Jephthah to return it to me, and there won't be any war.

¹⁴Jephthah sent the messengers back to the king of Ammon,

¹⁵and they told him that Jephthah had said: Israel hasn't taken any territory from Moab or Ammon.

¹⁶When the Israelites came from Egypt, they travelled in the desert to the Red Sea and then to Kadesh.

¹⁷They sent messengers to the king of Edom and said, Please, let us go through your country. But the king of Edom refused. They also sent messengers to the king of Moab, but he wouldn't let them cross his country either. And so the Israelites stayed at Kadesh.

¹⁸A little later, the Israelites set out into the desert, going east of Edom and Moab, and camping on the eastern side of the gorge of the River Arnon. The Arnon is the eastern border of Moab, and since the Israelites didn't cross it, they didn't even set foot in Moab.

¹⁹The Israelites sent messengers to the Amorite King Sihon of Heshbon. Please, they said, let our people go through your country to get to our own land.

²⁰Sihon didn't think the Israelites could be trusted, so he called his army together. They set up camp at Jahaz, then they attacked the Israelite camp.

²¹But the LORD God helped Israel defeat Sihon and his army. Israel took over all of the Amorite land where Sihon's people had lived,

²²from the River Arnon in the south to the River Jabbok in the north, and from the desert in the east to the River Jordan in the west.

²³The messengers also told the king of Ammon that Jephthah had said: The LORD God of Israel helped his nation get rid of the Amorites and take their land. Now do you think you're going to take over that same territory?

²⁴If Chemosh your god takes over a country and gives it to you, don't you have a right to it? And if the LORD takes over a country and gives it to us, the land is ours!

²⁵ Are you better than Balak the son of Zippor? He was the king of Moab, but he didn't quarrel with Israel or start a war with us.

²⁶ For three hundred years, Israelites have been living in Heshbon and Aroer and the nearby villages, and in the towns along the Arnon gorge. If the land really belonged to you Ammonites, you wouldn't have waited until now to try to get it back.

²⁷ I haven't done anything to you, but it's certainly wrong of you to start a war. I pray that the LORD will show whether Israel or Ammon is in the right.

²⁸ But the king of Ammon paid no attention to Jephthah's message.

²⁹ Then the LORD's Spirit took control of Jephthah, and Jephthah went through Gilead and Manasseh, raising an army. Finally, he arrived at Mizpah in Gilead, where

³⁰ he promised the LORD, If you will let me defeat the Ammonites

³¹ and come home safely, I will sacrifice to you whoever comes out to meet me first.

³²From Mizpah, Jephthah attacked the Ammonites, and the LORD helped him defeat them.

³³Jephthah and his army destroyed the twenty towns between Aroer and Minnith, and others as far as Abel-Keramim. After that, the Ammonites could not invade Israel any more.

³⁴When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, the first one to meet him was his daughter. She was playing a tambourine and dancing to celebrate his victory, and she was his only child.

³⁵Oh! Jephthah cried. Then he tore his clothes in sorrow and said to his daughter, I made a sacred promise to the LORD, and I must keep it. Your coming out to meet me has broken my heart.

³⁶Father, she said, you made a sacred promise to the LORD, and he let you defeat the Ammonites. Now, you must do what you promised, even if it means I must die.

³⁷But first, please let me spend two months, wandering in the hill country with my friends. We will cry together, because I can never get married and have children.

³⁸Yes, you may have two months, Jephthah said. She and some other girls left, and for two months they wandered in the hill country, crying because she could never get married and have children.

³⁹Then she went back to her father. He did what he had promised, and she never got married. That's why

⁴⁰every year, Israelite girls walk around for four days, weeping for Jephthah's daughter.

12¹The men of the Ephraim tribe got together an army and went across the River Jordan to Zaphon to meet with Jephthah. They said, Why did you go to war with the Ammonites without asking us to help? Just for that, we're going to burn down your house with you inside!

²But I did ask for your help, Jephthah answered. That was back when the people of Gilead and I were having trouble with the Ammonites, and you wouldn't do a thing to help us.

³So when we realized you weren't coming, we risked our lives and attacked the Ammonites. And the LORD let us

defeat them. There's no reason for you to come here today to attack me.

⁴But the men from Ephraim said, You people of Gilead are nothing more than refugees from Ephraim. You even live on land that belongs to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. So Jephthah called together the army of Gilead, then they attacked and defeated the army from Ephraim.

⁵The army of Gilead also posted guards at all the places where the soldiers from Ephraim could cross the River Jordan to return to their own land. Whenever one of the men from Ephraim would try to cross the river, the guards would say, Are you from Ephraim? No, the man would answer, I'm not from Ephraim.

⁶The guards would then tell them to say Shibboleth, because they knew that people of Ephraim could say Sibboleth, but not Shibboleth. If the man said Sibboleth, the guards would grab him and kill him there. Altogether, forty-two thousand men from Ephraim were killed in the battle and at the Jordan.

⁷ Jephthah was a leader of Israel for six years, before he died and was buried in his home town Mizpah in Gilead.

⁸ Ibzan, the next leader of Israel, came from Bethlehem.

⁹ He had thirty daughters and thirty sons, and he let them all marry outside his clan. Ibzan was a leader for seven years,

¹⁰ before he died and was buried in Bethlehem.

¹¹ Elon from the Zebulun tribe was the next leader of Israel. He was a leader for ten years,

¹² before he died and was buried in Aijalon that belonged to the Zebulun tribe.

¹³ Abdon the son of Hillel was the next leader of Israel. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, and each one of them had his own donkey. Abdon was a leader for eight years, before he died and was buried in his home town of Pirathon, which is in the part of the hill country of Ephraim where Amalekites used to live.

¹⁴ (12: 13)

¹⁵ (12: 13)

13¹ Once again the Israelites started disobeying the LORD. So he let the Philistines take control of Israel for forty years.

² Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was not able to have children,

³ but one day an angel from the LORD appeared to her and said: You have never been able to have any children, but very soon you will be pregnant and have a son. He will belong to God from the day he is born, so his hair must never be cut. And even before he is born, you must not drink any wine or beer or eat any food forbidden by God's laws. Your son will begin to set Israel free from the Philistines.

⁴ (13: 3)

⁵ (13: 3)

⁶ She went to Manoah and said, A prophet who looked like an angel of God came and talked to me. I was so frightened, that I didn't even ask where he was from. He didn't tell me his name,

⁷ but he did say that I'm going to have a baby boy. I'm not supposed to drink any wine or beer or eat any food forbidden

by God's laws. Our son will belong to God for as long as he lives.

⁸Then Manoah prayed, Our LORD, please send that prophet again and let him tell us what to do for the son we are going to have.

⁹God answered Manoah's prayer, and the angel went back to Manoah's wife while she was resting in the fields. Manoah wasn't there at the time,

¹⁰so she found him and said, That same man is here again! He's the one I saw the other day.

¹¹Manoah went with his wife and asked the man, Are you the one who spoke to my wife? Yes, I am, he answered.

¹²Manoah then asked, When your promise comes true, what rules must he obey and what will be his work?

¹³Your wife must be careful to do everything I told her, the LORD's angel answered.

¹⁴She must not eat or drink anything made from grapes. She must not drink wine or beer or eat anything forbidden by God's laws. I told her exactly what to do.

¹⁵Please, Manoah said, stay here with us for just a little while, and we'll prepare a young goat for you to eat.

¹⁶Manoah didn't realize that he was really talking to one of the LORD's angels. The angel answered, I can stay for a little while, although I won't eat any of your food. But if you would like to offer the goat as a sacrifice to the LORD, that would be fine.

¹⁷Manoah said, Tell us your name, so we can honour you after our son is born.

¹⁸No, the angel replied. You don't need to know my name. And if you did, you couldn't understand it.

¹⁹So Manoah took a young goat over to a large rock he had chosen for an altar, and he built a fire on the rock. Then he killed the goat, and offered it with some grain as a sacrifice to the LORD. But then an amazing thing happened.

²⁰The fire blazed up towards the sky, and the LORD's angel went up towards heaven in the fire. Manoah and his wife bowed down low when they saw what happened.

²¹ The angel was gone, but Manoah and his wife realized that he was one of the LORD's angels.

²² Manoah said, We have seen an angel. Now we're going to die.

²³ The LORD isn't going to kill us, Manoah's wife responded. The LORD accepted our sacrifice and grain offering, and he let us see something amazing. Besides, he told us that we're going to have a son.

²⁴ Later, Manoah's wife did give birth to a son, and she named him Samson. As the boy grew, the LORD blessed him.

²⁵ Then, while Samson was staying at Dan's Camp between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, the Spirit of the LORD took control of him.

14¹ One day, Samson went to Timnah, where he saw a Philistine woman.

² When he got back home, he told his parents, I saw a Philistine woman in Timnah, and I want to marry her. Get her for me!

³ His parents answered, There are a lot of women in our clan and even more in the rest of Israel. Those Philistines are

pagans. Why would you want to marry one of their women? She looks good to me, Samson answered. Get her for me!

⁴At that time, the Philistines were in control of Israel, and the LORD wanted to stir up trouble for them. That's why he made Samson desire that woman.

⁵As Samson and his parents reached the vineyards near Timnah, a fierce young lion suddenly roared and attacked Samson.

⁶But the LORD's Spirit took control of Samson, and with his bare hands he tore the lion apart, as though it had been a young goat. His parents didn't know what he had done, and he didn't tell them.

⁷When they got to Timnah, Samson talked to the woman, and he was sure that she was the one for him.

⁸Later, Samson returned to Timnah for the wedding. And when he came near the place where the lion had attacked, he left the road to see what was left of the lion. He was surprised to see that bees were living in the lion's skeleton, and that they had made some honey.

⁹He scooped up the honey in his hands and ate some of it as he walked along. When he got back to his parents, he gave them some of the honey, and they ate it too. But he didn't tell them he had found the honey in the skeleton of a lion.

¹⁰While Samson's father went to make the final arrangements with the bride and her family, Samson threw a big party, as grooms usually did.

¹¹When the Philistines saw what Samson was like, they told thirty of their young men to stay with him at the party.

¹²Samson told the thirty young men, This party will last for seven days. Let's make a bet: I'll tell you a riddle, and if you can tell me the right answer before the party is over, I'll give each one of you a shirt and a full change of clothing.

¹³But if you can't tell me the answer, then each of you will have to give me a shirt and a full change of clothing. It's a bet! the Philistines said. Tell us the riddle.

¹⁴Samson said: Once so strong and mighty now so sweet and tasty! Three days went by, and the Philistine young

men had not come up with the right answer.

¹⁵Finally, on the seventh day of the party they went to Samson's bride and said, You had better trick your husband into telling you the answer to his riddle. Have you invited us here just to rob us? If you don't find out the answer, we will burn you and your family to death.

¹⁶Samson's bride went to him and started crying in his arms. You must really hate me, she sobbed. If you loved me at all, you would have told me the answer to your riddle. But I haven't even told my parents the answer! Samson replied. Why should I tell you?

¹⁷For the entire seven days of the party, she had been whining and trying to get the answer from him. But that seventh day she put so much pressure on Samson that he finally gave in and told her the answer. She went straight to the young men and told them.

¹⁸Before sunset that day, the men of the town went to Samson with this answer: A lion is the strongest honey is the sweetest! Samson replied, This

answer you have given me doubtless came from my bride-to-be.

¹⁹Then the LORD's Spirit took control of Samson. He went to Ashkelon, where he killed thirty men and took their clothing. Samson then gave it to the thirty young men at Timnah and stormed back home to his own family.

²⁰The father of the bride made Samson's wife marry one of the thirty young men who had been at Samson's party.

15 ¹Later, during the wheat harvest, Samson went to visit the young woman he thought was still his wife. He brought along a young goat as a gift and said to her father, I want to go into my wife's bedroom. You can't do that, he replied.

²When you left the way you did, I thought you were divorcing her. So I arranged for her to marry one of the young men who were at your party. But my younger daughter is even prettier, and you can have her as your wife.

³This time, Samson answered, I have a good reason for really hurting some Philistines.

⁴Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them together in pairs with oil-soaked rags around their tails.

⁵Then Samson took the foxes into the Philistine wheat fields that were ready to be harvested. He set the rags on fire and let the foxes go. The wheat fields went up in flames, and so did the stacks of wheat that had already been cut. Even the Philistine vineyards and olive orchards burnt.

⁶Some of the Philistines started asking around, Who could have done such a thing? It was Samson, someone told them. He married the daughter of that man in Timnah, but then the man gave Samson's wife to one of the men at the wedding. The Philistine leaders went to Timnah and burnt to death Samson's wife and her father.

⁷When Samson found out what they had done, he went to them and said, You killed them! And I won't rest until I get even with you.

⁸Then Samson started hacking them to pieces with his sword. Samson left

Philistia and went to live in the cave at Etam Rock.

⁹But it wasn't long before the Philistines invaded Judah and set up a huge army camp at Jawbone.

¹⁰The people of Judah asked, Why have you invaded our land? The Philistines answered, We've come to get Samson. We're going to do the same things to him that he did to our people.

¹¹Three thousand men from Judah went to the cave at Etam Rock and said to Samson, Don't you know that the Philistines rule us, and they will punish us for what you did? I was only getting even with them, Samson replied. They did the same things to me first.

¹²We came here to tie you up and turn you over to them, said the men of Judah. I won't put up a fight, Samson answered, but you have to promise not to hurt me yourselves.

¹³We promise, the men said. We will only tie you up and turn you over to the Philistines. We won't kill you. Then they tied up his hands and arms with two brand-new ropes and led him away from Etam Rock. When the Philistines

saw that Samson was being brought to their camp at Jawbone, they started shouting and ran towards him. But the LORD's Spirit took control of Samson, and Samson broke the ropes, as though they were pieces of burnt cloth.

¹⁴(15: 13)

¹⁵Samson glanced around and spotted the jawbone of a donkey. The jawbone had not yet dried out, so it was still hard and heavy. Samson grabbed it and started hitting Philistineshe killed a thousand of them!

¹⁶After the fighting was over, he made up this poem about what he had done to the Philistines: I used a donkey's jawbone to kill a thousand men; I beat them with this jawbone over and over again.

¹⁷Samson tossed the jawbone on the ground and decided to call the place Jawbone Hill. It is still called that today.

¹⁸Samson was so thirsty that he prayed, Our LORD, you helped me win a battle against a whole army. Please don't let me die of thirst now. Those heathen Philistines will carry off my dead body.

¹⁹Samson was tired and weary, but God sent water gushing from a rock. Samson drank some and felt strong again. Samson named the place Caller Spring, because he had called out to God for help. The spring is still there at Jawbone.

²⁰Samson was a leader of Israel for twenty years, but the Philistines were still the rulers of Israel.

16¹One day while Samson was in Gaza, he saw a prostitute and went to her house to spend the night.

²The people who lived in Gaza found out he was there, and they decided to kill him at sunrise. So they went to the city gate and waited all night in the guardrooms on each side of the gate.

³But Samson got up in the middle of the night and went to the town gate. He pulled the gate doors and doorposts out of the wall and put them on his shoulders. Then he carried them all the way to the top of the hill that overlooks Hebron, where he set the doors down, still closed and locked.

⁴Some time later, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in Sorek Valley.

⁵The Philistine rulers went to Delilah and said, Trick Samson into telling you what makes him so strong and what can make him weak. Then we can tie him up so he can't get away. If you find out his secret, we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.

⁶The next time Samson was at Delilah's house, she asked, Samson, what makes you so strong? How can I tie you up so you can't get away? Come on, you can tell me.

⁷Samson answered, If someone ties me up with seven new bowstrings that have never been dried, it will make me just as weak as anyone else.

⁸The Philistine rulers gave seven new bowstrings to Delilah. They also told some of their soldiers to go to Delilah's house and hide in the room where Samson and Delilah were. If the bowstrings made Samson weak, they would be able to capture him. Delilah tied up Samson with the bowstrings and shouted, Samson, the Philistines

are attacking! Samson snapped the bowstrings, as though they were pieces of scorched string. The Philistines had not found out why Samson was so strong.

⁹(16:8)

¹⁰You lied and made me look like a fool, Delilah said. Now tell me. How can I really tie you up?

¹¹Samson answered, Use some new ropes. If I'm tied up with ropes that have never been used, I'll be just as weak as anyone else.

¹²Delilah got new ropes and again some Philistines hid in the room. Then she tied up Samson's arms and shouted, Samson, the Philistines are attacking! Samson snapped the ropes as if they were threads.

¹³You're still lying and making a fool of me, Delilah said. Tell me how I can tie you up! My hair is in seven braids, Samson replied. If you weave my braids into the threads on a loom and nail the loom to a wall, then I will be as weak as anyone else.

¹⁴While Samson was asleep, Delilah wove his braids into the threads on a

loom and nailed the loom to a wall. Then she shouted, Samson, the Philistines are attacking! Samson woke up and pulled the loom free from its posts in the ground and from the nails in the wall. Then he pulled his hair free from the woven cloth.

¹⁵Samson, Delilah said, you claim to love me, but you don't mean it! You've made me look like a fool three times now, and you still haven't told me why you are so strong.

¹⁶Delilah started nagging and pestering him day after day, until he couldn't stand it any longer.

¹⁷Finally, Samson told her the truth. I have belonged to God ever since I was born, so my hair has never been cut. If it were ever cut off, my strength would leave me, and I would be as weak as anyone else.

¹⁸Delilah realized that he was telling the truth. So she sent someone to tell the Philistine rulers, Come to my house one more time. Samson has finally told me the truth. The Philistine rulers went to Delilah's house, and they brought along the silver they had promised her.

¹⁹Delilah had lulled Samson to sleep with his head resting in her lap. She signalled to one of the Philistine men as she began cutting off Samson's seven braids. And by the time she had finished, Samson's strength was gone. Delilah tied him up

²⁰and shouted, Samson, the Philistines are attacking! Samson woke up and thought, I'll break loose and escape, just as I always do. He did not realize that the LORD had stopped helping him.

²¹The Philistines grabbed Samson and put out his eyes. They took him to the prison in Gaza and chained him up. Then they put him to work, turning a millstone to grind grain.

²²But they didn't cut his hair any more, so it started growing back.

²³The Philistine rulers threw a big party and sacrificed a lot of animals to their god Dagon. The rulers said: Samson was our enemy, but our god Dagon helped us capture him!

²⁴Everyone there was having a good time, and they shouted, Bring out Samson he's still good for a few more laughs! The rulers had Samson brought

from the prison, and when the people saw him, this is how they praised their god: Samson ruined our crops and killed our people. He was our enemy, but our god helped us capture him. They made fun of Samson for a while, then they told him to stand near the columns that supported the roof.

²⁵ (16: 24)

²⁶ A young man was leading Samson by the hand, and Samson said to him, I need to lean against something. Take me over to the columns that hold up the roof.

²⁷ The Philistine rulers were celebrating in a temple packed with people and with three thousand more on the flat roof. They had all been watching Samson and making fun of him.

²⁸ Samson prayed, Please remember me, LORD God. The Philistines put out my eyes, but make me strong one last time, so I can take revenge for at least one of my eyes!

²⁹ Samson was standing between the two middle columns that held up the roof. He felt around and found one

column with his right hand, and the other with his left hand.

³⁰Then he shouted, Let me die with the Philistines! He pushed against the columns as hard as he could, and the temple collapsed with the Philistine rulers and everyone else still inside. Samson killed more Philistines when he died than he had killed during his entire life.

³¹His brothers and the rest of his family went to Gaza and took his body back home. They buried him in his father's tomb, which was between Zorah and Eshtaol. Samson was a leader of Israel for twenty years.

17 ¹Micah belonged to the Ephraim tribe and lived in the hill country.

²One day he told his mother, Do you remember those eleven hundred pieces of silver that were stolen from you? I was there when you put a curse on whoever stole them. Well, I'm the one who did it. His mother answered, I pray that the LORD will bless you, my son.

³Micah returned the silver to his mother, and she said, I give this silver to the LORD, so my son can use it to make

an idol. Turning to her son, she said, Micah, now the silver belongs to you. But Micah handed it back to his mother. She took two hundred pieces of the silver and gave them to a silver worker, who made them into an idol. They kept the idol in Micah's house.

⁴ (17: 3)

⁵ He had a shrine for worshipping God there at his home, and he had made some idols and a sacred priestly apron. Micah chose one of his own sons to be the priest for his shrine.

⁶ This was before kings ruled Israel, so all the Israelites did whatever they thought was right.

⁷ One day a young Levite came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim. He had been staying with one of the clans of Judah in Bethlehem, but he had left Bethlehem to find a new place to live where he could be a priest.

⁸ (17: 7)

⁹ Where are you from? Micah asked. I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, the man answered, and I'm on my way to find a new place to live.

¹⁰ Micah said, Why don't you stay here with me? You can be my priest and tell me what God wants me to do. Every year I'll give you ten pieces of silver and one complete set of clothes, and I'll provide all your food. The young man went for a walk,

¹¹ then he agreed to stay with Micah and be his priest. He lived in Micah's house, and Micah treated him like one of his own sons.

¹² (17: 11)

¹³ Micah said, I have a Levite as my own priest. Now I know that the LORD will be kind to me.

18¹ These things happened before kings ruled Israel. About this time, the tribe of Dan was looking for a place to live. The other tribes had land, but the people of Dan did not really have any to call their own.

² The tribe chose five warriors to represent their clans and told them, Go and find some land where we can live. The warriors left the area of Zorah and Eshtaol and went into the hill country of Ephraim. One night they stayed at Micah's house,

³because they heard the young Levite talking, and they knew from his accent that he was from the south. They asked him, What are you doing here? Who brought you here?

⁴The Levite replied, Micah hired me as his priest. Then he told them how well Micah had treated him.

⁵Please talk to God for us, the men said. Ask God if we will be successful in what we are trying to do.

⁶Don't worry, answered the priest. The LORD is pleased with what you are doing.

⁷The five men left and went to the town of Laish, whose people were from Sidon, but Sidon was too far away to protect them. Even though their town had no walls, the people thought they were safe from attack. So they had not asked anyone else for protection, which meant that the tribe of Dan could easily take over Laish.

⁸The five men went back to Zorah and Eshtaol, where their relatives asked, Did you find any land?

⁹Let's go! the five men said. We saw some very good land with enough room

for all of us, and it has everything we will ever need. What are you waiting for? Let's attack and take it. You'll find that the people think they're safe, but God is giving the land to us.

¹⁰(18: 9)

¹¹Six hundred men from the tribe of Dan strapped on their weapons and left Zorah and Eshtaol with their families.

¹²One night they camped near Kiriath-Jearim in the territory of Judah, and that's why the place just west of Kiriath-Jearim is still known as Dan's Camp.

¹³Then they went into the hill country of Ephraim. When they came close to Micah's house,

¹⁴the five men who had been spies asked the other warriors, Did you know that someone in this village has several idols and a sacred priestly apron? What do you think we should do about it?

¹⁵The six hundred warriors left the road and went to the house on Micah's property where the young Levite priest lived. They stood at the gate and greeted the priest. Meanwhile, the five men who had been there before went into Micah's

house and took the sacred priestly apron and the idols. Hey! the priest shouted.

What do you think you're doing?

¹⁶(18: 15)

¹⁷(18: 15)

¹⁸(18: 15)

¹⁹Quiet! the men said. Keep your mouth shut and listen. Why don't you come with us and be our priest, so you can tell us what God wants us to do? You could stay here and be a priest for one man's family, but wouldn't you rather be the priest for a clan or even a whole tribe of Israel?

²⁰The priest really liked that idea. So he took the apron and the idols and joined the others

²¹from the tribe of Dan. Then they turned and left, after putting their children, their cattle, and the rest of their other possessions in front.

²²They had travelled for some time, before Micah asked his neighbours to help him get his things back. He and his men caught up with the people of Dan

²³and shouted for them to stop. They turned to face him and asked, What's wrong? Why did you bring all these men?

²⁴ Micah answered, You know what's wrong. You stole the gods I made, and you took my priest. I don't have anything left.

²⁵ We don't want to hear any more about it, the people of Dan said. And if you make us angry, you'll only get yourself and your family killed.

²⁶ After saying this, they turned and left. Micah realized there was no way he could win a fight with them, and so he went back home.

²⁷ The tribe of Dan took Micah's priest and the things Micah had made, and headed for Laish, which was in a valley controlled by the town of Beth-Rehob. Laish was defenceless, because it had no walls and was too far from Sidon for the Sidonians to help defend it. The leaders of Laish had not even asked nearby towns to help them in case of an attack. The warriors from Dan made a surprise attack on Laish, killing everyone and burning it down. Then they rebuilt the town and settled there themselves.

²⁸ (18: 27)

²⁹ But they named it Dan, after one of Israel's sons, who was the ancestor of their tribe.

³⁰ Even though the place of worship was in Shiloh, the people of Dan set up the idol Micah had made. They worshipped the idol, and the Levite was their priest. His name was Jonathan, and he was a descendant of Gershom the son of Moses. His descendants served as priests for the tribe of Dan, until the people of Israel were taken away as prisoners by their enemies.

³¹ (18: 30)

19¹ Before kings ruled Israel, a Levite was living deep in the hill country of the Ephraim tribe. He married a woman from Bethlehem in Judah,

² but she was unfaithful and went back to live with her family in Bethlehem.

Four months later

³ her husband decided to try and talk her into coming back. So he went to Bethlehem, taking along a servant and two donkeys. He talked with his wife, and she invited him into her family's home. Her father was glad to see him

⁴ and did not want him to leave. So the man stayed three days, eating and drinking with his father-in-law.

⁵ When everyone got up on the fourth day, the Levite started getting ready to go home. But his father-in-law said, Don't leave until you have a bite to eat. You'll need strength for your journey.

⁶ The two men sat down together and ate a big meal. Come on, the man's father-in-law said. Stay tonight and have a good time.

⁷ The Levite tried to leave, but his father-in-law insisted, and he spent one more night.

⁸ On the fifth day, the man got up early to leave, but his wife's father said, You need to keep up your strength! Why don't you leave straight after lunch? So the two of them started eating.

⁹ Finally, the Levite got up from the meal, so he and his wife and servant could leave. Look, his father-in-law said, it's already late afternoon, and if you leave now, you won't get very far before dark. Stay with us one more night and enjoy yourself. Then you can get up early tomorrow morning and start home.

¹⁰But the Levite decided not to spend the night there again. He had the saddles put on his two donkeys, then he and his wife and servant travelled as far as Jebus, which is now called Jerusalem.

¹¹It was beginning to get dark, and the man's servant said, Let's stop and spend the night in this town where the Jebusites live.

¹²No, the Levite answered. They aren't Israelites, and I refuse to spend the night there. We'll stop for the night at Gibeah,

¹³because we can make it to Gibeah or perhaps even to Ramah before dark.

¹⁴They walked on and reached Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin just after sunset.

¹⁵They left the road and went into Gibeah. But the Levite couldn't find a house where anyone would let them spend the night, and they sat down in the open area just inside the town gates.

¹⁶Soon an old man came in through the gates on his way home from working in the fields. Most of the people who lived in Gibeah belonged to the tribe of

Benjamin, but this man was originally from the hill country of Ephraim.

¹⁷He noticed that the Levite was just in town to spend the night. Where are you going? the old man asked. Where did you come from?

¹⁸We've come from Bethlehem in Judah, the Levite answered. We went there on a visit. Now we're going to the place where the LORD is worshipped, and later we will return to our home in the hill country of Ephraim. But no one here will let us spend the night in their home.

¹⁹We brought food for our donkeys and bread and wine for ourselves, so we don't need anything except a place to sleep.

²⁰The old man said, You are welcome to spend the night in my home and to be my guest, but don't stay out here!

²¹The old man brought them into his house and fed their donkeys. Then he and his guests washed their feet and began eating and drinking.

²²They were having a good time, when some worthless men of that town surrounded the house and started

banging on the door and shouting, A man came to your house tonight. Send him out, so we can have sex with him!

²³The old man went outside and said, My friends, please don't commit such a horrible crime against a man who is a guest in my house.

²⁴Let me send out my daughter instead. She's a virgin. And I'll even send out the man's wife. You can rape them or do whatever else you want, but please don't do such a horrible thing to this man.

²⁵The men refused to listen, so the Levite grabbed his wife and shoved her outside. The men raped her and abused her all night long. Finally, they let her go just before sunrise,

²⁶and it was almost daybreak when she went back to the house where her husband was staying. She collapsed at the door and lay there until sunrise.

²⁷About that time, her husband woke up and got ready to leave. He opened the door and went outside, where he found his wife lying at the door with her hands on the doorstep.

²⁸Get up! he said. It's time to leave. But his wife didn't move. He lifted her body on to his donkey and left.

²⁹When he got home, he took a butcher's knife and cut her body into twelve pieces. Then he told some messengers, Take one piece to each tribe of Israel

³⁰and ask everyone if anything like this has ever happened since Israel left Egypt. Tell them to think about it, talk it over, and tell us what should be done. Everyone who saw a piece of the body said, This is horrible! Nothing like this has ever happened since the day Israel left Egypt.

20¹The Israelites called a meeting of the nation. And since they were God's people, the meeting was held at the place of worship in Mizpah. Men who could serve as soldiers came from everywhere in Israel from Dan in the north, Beersheba in the south, and Gilead east of the River Jordan. Four hundred thousand of them came to Mizpah, and they each felt the same about what those men from the tribe of Benjamin had done. News about the

meeting at Mizpah reached the tribe of Benjamin. As soon as the leaders of the tribes of Israel took their places, the Israelites said, How could such a horrible thing happen?

² (20: 1)

³ (20: 1)

⁴ The husband of the murdered woman answered: My wife and I went into the town of Gibeah in Benjamin to spend the night.

⁵ Later that night, the men of Gibeah surrounded the house. They wanted to kill me, but instead they raped and killed my wife.

⁶ It was a terrible thing for Israelites to do! So I cut up her body and sent pieces everywhere in Israel.

⁷ You are the people of Israel, and you must decide today what to do about the men of Gibeah.

⁸ The whole army was in agreement, and they said, None of us will go home.

⁹ We'll send one tenth of the men from each tribe to get food for the army. And we'll ask God who should attack Gibeah, because those men deserve

to be punished for committing such a horrible crime in Israel.

¹⁰(20: 9)

¹¹Everyone agreed that Gibeah had to be punished.

¹²The tribes of Israel sent messengers to every town and village in Benjamin. And wherever the messengers went, they said, How could those worthless men in Gibeah do such a disgusting thing?

¹³We can't allow such a terrible crime to go unpunished in Israel! Hand the men over to us, and we will put them to death. But the people of Benjamin refused to listen to the other Israelites.

¹⁴Men from towns all over Benjamin's territory went to Gibeah and got ready to fight Israel.

¹⁵The Benjamin tribe had twenty-six thousand soldiers, not counting the seven hundred who were Gibeah's best warriors.

¹⁶In this army there were seven hundred left-handed experts who could sling a stone at a target the size of a hair and hit it every time.

¹⁷ The other Israelite tribes organized their army and found they had four hundred thousand experienced soldiers.

¹⁸ So they went to the place of worship at Bethel and asked God, Which tribe should be the first to attack the people of Benjamin? Judah, the LORD answered.

¹⁹ The next morning the Israelite army moved its camp to a place near Gibeah.

²⁰ Then they left their camp and got into position to attack the army of Benjamin.

²¹ Benjamin's soldiers came out of Gibeah and attacked, and when the day was over, twenty-two thousand Israelite soldiers lay dead on the ground.

²² The people of Israel went to the place of worship and cried until sunset. Then they asked the LORD, Should we attack the people of Benjamin again, even though they are our relatives? Yes, the LORD replied, attack them again! The Israelite soldiers encouraged each other to be brave and to fight hard. Then the next day they went back to Gibeah and took up the same positions as they had before.

²³ (20: 22)

²⁴ (20: 22)

²⁵ That same day, Benjamin's soldiers came out of Gibeah and attacked, leaving another eighteen thousand Israelite soldiers dead on the battlefield.

²⁶ The people of Israel went to the place of worship at Bethel, where the sacred chest was being kept. They sat on the ground, crying and not eating for the rest of the day. Then about sunset, they offered sacrifices to please the LORD and to ask his blessing. Phinehas the priest then prayed, Our LORD, the people of Benjamin are our relatives. Should we stop fighting or attack them again? Attack! the LORD answered. Tomorrow I will let you defeat them.

²⁷ (20: 26)

²⁸ (20: 26)

²⁹ The Israelites surrounded Gibeah, but stayed where they could not be seen.

³⁰ Then the next day, they took the same positions as twice before,

³¹ but this time they had a different plan. They said, When the men of Benjamin attack, we will run off and let them chase us away from the town and into the country roads. The soldiers of Benjamin attacked the Israelite army

and started pushing it back from the town. They killed about thirty Israelites in the fields and along the road between Gibeah and Bethel. The men of Benjamin were thinking, We're mowing them down like we did before. The Israelites were running away, but they headed for Baal-Tamar, where they regrouped. They had set an ambush, and they were sure it would work. Ten thousand of Israel's best soldiers had been hiding west of Gibeah, and as soon as the men of Benjamin chased the Israelites into the countryside, these ten thousand soldiers made a surprise attack on the town gates. They dashed in and captured Gibeah, killing everyone there. Then they set the town on fire, because the smoke would be the signal for the other Israelite soldiers to turn and attack the soldiers of Benjamin. The fighting had been so heavy around the soldiers of Benjamin, that they did not know the trouble they were in. But then they looked back and saw clouds of smoke rising from the town. They looked in front and saw the soldiers of Israel turning to attack. This terrified them, because they realized that

something horrible was happening. And it was horrible over twenty-five thousand soldiers of Benjamin died that day, and those who were left alive knew that the LORD had given Israel the victory.

³² (20: 31)

³³ (20: 31)

³⁴ (20: 31)

³⁵ (20: 31)

³⁶ (20: 31)

³⁷ (20: 31)

³⁸ (20: 31)

³⁹ (20: 31)

⁴⁰ (20: 31)

⁴¹ (20: 31)

⁴² The men of Benjamin headed down the road towards the desert, trying to escape from the Israelites. But the Israelites stayed just behind them, keeping up their attack. Men even came out of the nearby towns to help kill the men of Benjamin,

⁴³ who were having to fight on all sides. The Israelite soldiers never let up their attack. They chased and killed the warriors of Benjamin as far as a place directly east of Gibeah,

⁴⁴until eighteen thousand of these warriors lay dead.

⁴⁵Some other warriors of Benjamin turned and ran down the road towards Rimmon Rock in the desert. The Israelites killed five thousand of them on the road, then chased the rest until they had killed two thousand more.

⁴⁶Twenty-five thousand soldiers of Benjamin died that day, all of them experienced warriors.

⁴⁷Only six hundred of them finally made it into the desert to Rimmon Rock, where they stayed for four months.

⁴⁸The Israelites turned back and went to every town in Benjamin's territory, killing all the people and animals, and setting the towns on fire.

21 ¹When the Israelites had met at Mizpah before the war with Benjamin, they had made this sacred promise: None of us will ever let our daughters marry any man from Benjamin.

²After the war with Benjamin, the Israelites went to the place of worship at Bethel and sat there until sunset. They cried loudly and bitterly

³and prayed, Our LORD, you are the God of Israel. Why did you let this happen? Now one of our tribes is almost gone.

⁴Early the next morning, the Israelites built an altar and offered sacrifices to please the LORD and to ask his blessing.

⁵Then they asked each other, Did any of the tribes of Israel fail to come to the place of worship? We made a sacred promise that anyone who didn't come to the meeting at Mizpah would be put to death.

⁶The Israelites were sad about what had happened to the Benjamin tribe, and they said, One of our tribes was almost wiped out.

⁷Only a few men of Benjamin weren't killed in the war. We need to get wives for them, so the tribe won't completely disappear. But how can we do that, after promising in the LORD's name that we wouldn't let them marry any of our daughters?

⁸Again the Israelites asked, Did any of the tribes stay away from the meeting at Mizpah? After asking around, they

discovered that no one had come from Jabesh in Gilead.

⁹ (21:8)

¹⁰ So they sent twelve thousand warriors with these orders: Attack Jabesh in Gilead and kill everyone, except the women who have never been married.

¹¹ (21:10)

¹² The warriors attacked Jabesh in Gilead, and returned to their camp in Canaan with four hundred young women.

¹³ The Israelites met and sent messengers to the men of Benjamin at Rimmon Rock, telling them that the Israelites were willing to make peace with them.

¹⁴ So the men of Benjamin came back from Rimmon Rock, and the Israelites let them marry the young women from Jabesh. But there weren't enough women.

¹⁵ The Israelites were very sad, because the LORD had almost wiped out one of their tribes.

¹⁶ Then their national leaders said: All the women of the Benjamin tribe were

killed. How can we get wives for the men of Benjamin who are left?

¹⁷If they don't have children, one of the Israelite tribes will die out.

¹⁸But we can't let the men of Benjamin marry any of our daughters. We made a sacred promise not to do that, and if we break our promise, we will be under our own curse.

¹⁹Then someone suggested, What about the LORD's Festival that takes place each year in Shiloh? It's held north of Bethel, south of Lebonah, and just east of the road that goes from Bethel to Shechem.

²⁰The leaders told the men of Benjamin who still did not have wives: Go to Shiloh and hide in the vineyards near the festival.

²¹Wait there for the young women of Shiloh to come out and perform their dances. Then rush out and grab one of the young women, then take her home as your wife.

²²If the fathers or brothers of these women complain about this, we'll say, Be kind enough to let those men keep your daughter. After all, we couldn't

get enough wives for all the men of Benjamin in the battle at Jabesh. And because you didn't give them permission to marry your daughters, you won't be under the curse we earlier agreed on.

²³The men of Benjamin went to Shiloh and hid in the vineyards. The young women soon started dancing, and each man grabbed one of them and carried her off. Then the men of Benjamin went back to their own land and rebuilt their towns and started living in them again.

²⁴Afterwards, the rest of the Israelites returned to their homes and families.

²⁵In those days Israel wasn't ruled by a king, and everyone did what they thought was right.

Ruth

1 ¹ Before Israel was ruled by kings, Elimelech from the tribe of Ephrath lived in the town of Bethlehem. His wife was named Naomi, and their two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. But when their crops failed, they moved to the country of Moab. And while they were there,

² (1: 1)

³ Elimelech died, leaving Naomi with only her two sons.

⁴ Later, Naomi's sons married Moabite women. One was named Orpah and the other Ruth. About ten years later,

⁵ Mahlon and Chilion also died. Now Naomi had no husband or sons.

⁶ When Naomi heard that the LORD had given his people a good harvest, she and her two daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab and go to Judah. As they were on their way there,

⁷ (1: 6)

⁸ Naomi said to them, Don't you want to go back home to your own mothers? You were kind to my husband and sons, and

you have always been kind to me. I pray that the LORD will be just as kind to you.

⁹May he give each of you another husband and a home of your own. Naomi kissed them. They cried

¹⁰and said, We want to go with you and live among your people.

¹¹But she replied, My daughters, why don't you return home? What good will it do you to go with me? Do you think I could have more sons for you to marry?

¹²You must go back home, because I am too old to marry again. Even if I got married tonight and later had more sons,

¹³would you wait for them to become old enough to marry? No, my daughters! Life is harder for me than it is for you, because the LORD has turned against me.

¹⁴They cried again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth held on to her.

¹⁵Naomi then said to Ruth, Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods! Why don't you go with her?

¹⁶Ruth answered, Please don't tell me to leave you and return home! I will go

where you go, I will live where you live; your people will be my people, your God will be my God.

¹⁷I will die where you die and be buried beside you. May the LORD punish me if we are ever separated, even by death!

¹⁸When Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped urging her to go back.

¹⁹They reached Bethlehem, and the whole town was excited to see them. The women who lived there asked, Can this really be Naomi?

²⁰Then she told them, Don't call me Naomi any longer! Call me Mara, because God has made my life bitter.

²¹I had everything when I left, but the LORD has brought me back with nothing. How can you still call me Naomi, when God has turned against me and made my life so hard?

²²The barley harvest was just beginning when Naomi and Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law, arrived in Bethlehem.

2¹One day, Ruth said to Naomi, Let me see if I can find someone who will let me pick up the grain left in the fields by the harvest workers. Naomi

answered, Go ahead, my daughter. So straight away, Ruth went out to pick up grain in a field owned by Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's husband Elimelech, as well as a rich and important man.

² (2: 1)

³ (2: 1)

⁴ When Boaz left Bethlehem and went out to his field, he said to the harvest workers, The LORD bless you! They replied, And may the LORD bless you!

⁵ Then Boaz asked the man in charge of the harvest workers, Who is that young woman?

⁶ The man answered, She is the one who came back from Moab with Naomi.

⁷ She asked if she could pick up grain left by the harvest workers, and she has been working all morning without a moment's rest.

⁸ Boaz went over to Ruth and said, I think it would be best for you not to pick up grain in anyone else's field. Stay here with the women

⁹ and follow along behind them, as they gather up what the men have cut. I have warned the men not to bother you, and

whenever you are thirsty, you can drink from the water jars they have filled.

¹⁰Ruth bowed down to the ground and said, You know I come from another country. Why are you so good to me?

¹¹Boaz answered, I've heard how you've helped your mother-in-law ever since your husband died. You even left your own father and mother to come and live in a foreign land among people you don't know.

¹²I pray that the LORD God of Israel will reward you for what you have done. And now that you have come to him for protection, I pray that he will bless you.

¹³Ruth replied, Sir, it's good of you to speak kindly to me and make me feel so welcome. I'm not even one of your servants.

¹⁴At mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, Come, eat with us. Have some bread and dip it in the sauce. Straight away she sat down with the workers, and Boaz handed her some roasted grain. Ruth ate all she wanted and had some left over.

¹⁵When Ruth got up to start picking up grain, Boaz told his men, Don't stop her,

even if she picks up grain from where it is stacked.

¹⁶Be sure to pull out some stalks of grain from the bundles and leave them on the ground for her. And don't speak harshly to her!

¹⁷Ruth worked in the field until evening. Then after she had pounded the grain off the stalks, she had a large basket full of grain.

¹⁸She took the grain to town and showed Naomi how much she had picked up. Ruth also gave her the food left over from her lunch.

¹⁹Naomi said, Where did you work today? Whose field was it? God bless the man who treated you so well! Then Ruth told her that she had worked in the field of a man named Boaz.

²⁰The LORD bless Boaz! Naomi replied. He has shown that he is still loyal to the living and to the dead. Boaz is a close relative, one of those who is supposed to look after us.

²¹Ruth told her, Boaz even said I could stay in the field with his workers until they had finished gathering all his grain.

²²Naomi replied, My daughter, it's good that you can pick up grain beside the women who work in his field. Who knows what might happen to you in someone else's field!

²³And so, Ruth stayed close to the women, while picking up grain in his field. Ruth worked in the fields until the barley and wheat were harvested. And all this time she lived with Naomi.

3¹One day, Naomi said to Ruth: It's time I found you a husband, who will give you a home and take care of you.

²You have been picking up grain beside the women who work for Boaz, and you know he is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be threshing the grain.

³Now take a bath and put on some perfume, then dress in your best clothes. Go where he is working, but don't let him see you until he has finished eating and drinking.

⁴Watch where he goes to spend the night, then when he is asleep, lift the cover and lie down at his feet. He will tell you what to do.

⁵Ruth answered, I'll do whatever you say.

⁶She went out to the place where Boaz was working and did what Naomi had told her.

⁷After Boaz finished eating and drinking and was feeling happy, he went over and fell asleep near the pile of grain. Ruth slipped over quietly. She lifted the cover and lay down near his feet.

⁸In the middle of the night, Boaz suddenly woke up and was shocked to see a woman lying at his feet.

⁹Who are you? he asked. Sir, I am Ruth, she answered, and you are the relative who is supposed to take care of me. So spread the edge of your cover over me.

¹⁰Boaz replied: The LORD bless you! This shows how truly loyal you are to your family. You could have looked for a younger man, either rich or poor, but you didn't.

¹¹Don't worry, I'll do what you have asked. You are respected by everyone in town.

¹²It's true that I am one of the relatives who is supposed to take care of you, but there is someone who is an even closer relative.

¹³ Stay here until morning, then I will find out if he is willing to look after you. If he isn't, I promise by the living God to do it myself. Now go back to sleep until morning.

¹⁴ Ruth lay down again, but she got up before daylight, because Boaz did not want anyone to know she had been there.

¹⁵ Then he told her to spread out her cape. And he filled it with a lot of grain and placed it on her shoulder. When Ruth got back to town,

¹⁶ Naomi asked her what had happened, and Ruth told her everything.

¹⁷ She also said, Boaz gave me this grain, because he didn't want me to come back without something for you.

¹⁸ Naomi replied, Just be patient and don't worry about what will happen. He won't rest until everything is settled today!

4¹ Meanwhile, Boaz had gone to the meeting place at the town gate and was sitting there when the other close relative came by. So Boaz invited him to come over and sit down, and he did.

²Then Boaz got ten of the town leaders and also asked them to sit down. After they had sat down,

³he said to the man: Naomi has come back from Moab and is selling the land that belonged to her husband Elimelech.

⁴I am telling you about this, since you are his closest relative and have the right to buy the property. If you want it, you can buy it now. These ten men and the others standing here can be witnesses. But if you don't want the property, let me know, because I am next in line. The man replied, I will buy it!

⁵If you do buy it from Naomi, Boaz told him, you must also marry Ruth. Then if you have a son by her, the property will stay in the family of Ruth's first husband.

⁶The man answered, If that's the case, I don't want to buy it! That would make problems with the property I already own. You may buy it yourself, because I cannot.

⁷To make a sale legal in those days, one person would take off a sandal and give it to the other.

⁸So after the man had agreed to let Boaz buy the property, he took off one of his sandals and handed it to Boaz.

⁹Boaz told the town leaders and everyone else: All of you are witnesses that today I have bought from Naomi the property that belonged to Elimelech and his two sons, Chilion and Mahlon.

¹⁰You are also witnesses that I have agreed to marry Mahlon's widow Ruth, the Moabite woman. This will keep the property in his family's name, and he will be remembered in this town.

¹¹The town leaders and the others standing there said: We are witnesses to this. And we pray that the LORD will give your wife many children, just as he did Leah and Rachel, the wives of Jacob. May you be a rich man in the tribe of Ephrath and an important man in Bethlehem.

¹²May the children you have by this young woman make your family as famous as the family of Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah.

¹³Boaz married Ruth, and the LORD blessed her with a son.

¹⁴After his birth, the women said to Naomi: Praise the LORD! Today he has

given you a grandson to take care of you. We pray that the boy will grow up to be famous everywhere in Israel.

¹⁵He will make you happy and take care of you in your old age, because he is the son of your daughter-in-law. And she loves you more than seven sons of your own would love you.

¹⁶Naomi loved the boy and took good care of him.

¹⁷The neighbourhood women named him Obed, but they called him Naomi's Boy. When Obed grew up he had a son named Jesse, who later became the father of King David.

¹⁸Here is a list of the ancestors of David: Jesse, Obed, Boaz, Salmon, Nahshon, Amminadab, Ram, Hezron, and Perez.

¹⁹(4: 18)

²⁰(4: 18)

²¹(4: 18)

²²(4: 18)

1 Samuel

1 ¹Elkanah lived in Ramah, a town in the hill country of Ephraim. His great-great-grandfather was Zuph, so Elkanah was a member of the Zuph clan of the Ephraim tribe. Elkanah's father was Jeroham, his grandfather was Elihu, and his great-grandfather was Tohu.

²Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Although Peninnah had children, Hannah did not have any.

³Once a year Elkanah travelled from his home town to Shiloh, where he worshipped the LORD All-Powerful and offered sacrifices. Eli was the LORD's priest there, and his two sons Hophni and Phinehas served with him as priests.

⁴Whenever Elkanah offered a sacrifice, he gave some of the meat to Peninnah and some to each of her sons and daughters.

⁵But he gave Hannah even more, because he loved Hannah very much, even though the LORD had kept her from having children of her own.

⁶Peninnah liked to make Hannah feel miserable about not having any children,
⁷especially when the family went to the house of the LORD each year. One day, Elkanah was there offering a sacrifice, when Hannah began crying and refused to eat.

⁸So Elkanah asked, Hannah, why are you crying? Why won't you eat? Why do you feel so bad? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?

⁹When the sacrifice had been offered, and they had eaten the meal, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli was sitting in his chair near the door to the place of worship.

¹⁰Hannah was brokenhearted and was crying as she prayed,

¹¹LORD All-Powerful, I am your servant, but I am so miserable! Please let me have a son. I will give him to you for as long as he lives, and his hair will never be cut.

¹²Hannah prayed silently to the LORD for a long time. But her lips were moving, and Eli thought she was drunk.

¹³(1:12)

¹⁴How long are you going to stay drunk? he asked. Sober up!

¹⁵Sir, please don't think I'm no good! Hannah answered. I'm not drunk, and I haven't been drinking. But I do feel miserable and terribly upset. I've been praying all this time, telling the LORD about my problems.

¹⁶(1:15)

¹⁷Eli replied, You may go home now and stop worrying. I'm sure the God of Israel will answer your prayer.

¹⁸Sir, thank you for being so kind to me, Hannah said. Then she left, and after eating something, she felt much better.

¹⁹Elkanah and his family got up early the next morning and worshipped the LORD. Then they went back home to Ramah. Later the LORD blessed Elkanah and Hannah

²⁰with a son. She named him Samuel because she had asked the LORD for him.

²¹The next time Elkanah and his family went to offer their yearly sacrifice, he took along a gift that he had promised to give to the LORD.

²² But Hannah stayed at home, because she had told Elkanah, Samuel and I won't go until he's old enough for me to stop nursing him. Then I'll give him to the LORD, and he can stay there at Shiloh for the rest of his life.

²³ You know what's best, Elkanah said. Stay here until it's time to stop nursing him. I'm sure the LORD will help you do what you have promised. Hannah did not go to Shiloh until she stopped nursing Samuel.

²⁴ When it was the time of year to go to Shiloh again, Hannah and Elkanah took Samuel to the LORD's house. They brought along a three-year-old bull, a sack containing about nine kilogrammes of flour, and a clay jar full of wine. Hannah and Elkanah offered the bull as a sacrifice, then brought the little boy to Eli.

²⁵ (1: 24)

²⁶ Sir, Hannah said, a few years ago I stood here beside you and asked the LORD

²⁷ to give me a child. Here he is! The LORD gave me just what I asked for.

²⁸Now I am giving him to the LORD, and he will be the LORD's servant for as long as he lives. Elkanah worshipped the LORD there at Shiloh, and

2¹Hannah prayed: You make me strong and happy, LORD. You rescued me. Now I can be glad and laugh at my enemies.

²No other god is like you. We're safer with you than on a high mountain.

³I can tell those proud people, Stop your boasting! Nothing is hidden from the LORD, and he judges what we do.

⁴Our LORD, you break the bows of warriors, but you give strength to everyone who stumbles.

⁵People who once had plenty to eat must now hire themselves out for only a piece of bread. But you give the hungry more than enough to eat. A woman did not have a child, and you gave her seven, but a woman who had many was left with none.

⁶You take away life, and you give life. You send people down to the world of the dead and bring them back again.

⁷ Our LORD, you are the one who makes us rich or poor. You put some in high positions and bring disgrace on others.

⁸ You lift the poor and homeless out of the rubbish dump and give them places of honour in royal palaces. You set the world on foundations, and they belong to you.

⁹ You protect your loyal people, but everyone who is evil will die in darkness. We cannot win a victory by our own strength.

¹⁰ Our LORD, those who attack you will be broken in pieces when you fight back with thunder from heaven. You will judge the whole earth and give power and strength to your chosen king.

¹¹ Elkanah and Hannah went back home to Ramah, but the boy Samuel stayed to help Eli serve the LORD.

¹² Eli's sons were priests, but they were dishonest and refused to obey the LORD. So, while people were boiling the meat from their sacrifices, these priests would send over a servant with a large, three-pronged fork.

¹³ (2: 12)

¹⁴The servant would stick the fork into the cooking pot, and whatever meat came out on the fork was taken back to the priests. That is how these two priests treated every Israelite who came to offer sacrifices in Shiloh.

¹⁵Sometimes, when people were offering sacrifices, the servant would come over, even before the fat had been cut off and sacrificed to the LORD. Then the servant would tell them, The priest doesn't want his meat boiled! Give him some raw meat that he can roast!

¹⁶Usually the people answered, Take what you want. But first, let us sacrifice the fat to the LORD. No, the servant would reply. If you don't give it to me now, I'll take it by force.

¹⁷Eli's sons did not show any respect for the sacrifices that the people offered. This was a terrible sin, and it made the LORD very angry.

¹⁸The boy Samuel served the LORD and wore a special linen garment

¹⁹and the clothes his mother made for him. She would bring new clothes every year, when she and her husband came to offer sacrifices at Shiloh.

²⁰Eli would always bless Elkanah and his wife and say, Samuel was born in answer to your prayers. Now you have given him to the LORD. I pray that the LORD will bless you with more children to take his place. After Eli had blessed them, Elkanah and Hannah would return home.

²¹The LORD was kind to Hannah, and she had three more sons and two daughters. But Samuel grew up at the LORD's house in Shiloh.

²²Eli was now very old, and he heard what his sons were doing to the people of Israel.

²³Why are you doing these awful things? he asked them. I've been hearing nothing but complaints about you from all the LORD's people.

²⁴(2: 23)

²⁵If you harm another person, God can help make things right between the two of you. But if you commit a crime against the LORD, no one can help you! But the LORD had already decided to kill them. So he kept them from listening to their father.

²⁶Each day the LORD and his people liked Samuel more and more.

²⁷One day a prophet came to Eli and gave him this message from the LORD: When your ancestors were slaves of the king of Egypt, I came and showed them who I am.

²⁸Out of all the tribes of Israel, I chose your family to be my priests. I wanted them to offer sacrifices and burn incense to me and to find out from me what I want my people to do. I commanded everyone to bring their sacrifices here where I live, and I allowed you and your family to keep those that were not offered to me on the altar. But you honour your sons instead of me! You don't respect the sacrifices and offerings that are brought to me, and you've all got fat from eating the best parts.

²⁹(2: 28)

³⁰I am the LORD, the God of Israel. I promised to let your family serve me as priests for ever, but now I tell you that I cannot do this any longer! I honour anyone who honours me, but I put a curse on anyone who hates me.

³¹ The time will come when I will kill you and everyone else in your family. Not one of you will live to an old age.

³² Your family will have a lot of trouble. I will be kind to Israel, but everyone in your family will die young.

³³ If I let anyone from your family be a priest, his life will be full of sadness and sorrow. But most of the men in your family will die a violent death!

³⁴ To prove to you that I will do these things, your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will die on the same day.

³⁵ I have chosen someone else to be my priest, someone who will be faithful and obey me. I will always let his family serve as priests and help my chosen king.

³⁶ But if anyone is left from your family, he will come to my priest and beg for money or a little bread. He may even say to my priest, Please let me be a priest, so I will at least have something to eat.

3¹ Samuel served the LORD by helping Eli the priest, who was by that time almost blind. In those days, the LORD hardly ever spoke directly to people, and he did not appear to them in dreams

very often. But one night, Eli was asleep in his room,

²(3:1)

³and Samuel was sleeping on a mat near the sacred chest in the LORD's house. They had not been asleep very long

⁴when the LORD called out Samuel's name. Here I am! Samuel answered.

⁵Then he ran to Eli and said, Here I am. What do you want? I didn't call you, Eli answered. Go back to bed. Samuel went back.

⁶Again the LORD called out Samuel's name. Samuel got up and went to Eli. Here I am, he said. What do you want? Eli told him, Son, I didn't call you. Go back to sleep.

⁷The LORD had not spoken to Samuel before, and Samuel did not recognize the voice.

⁸When the LORD called out his name for the third time, Samuel went to Eli again and said, Here I am. What do you want? Eli finally realized that it was the LORD who was speaking to Samuel.

⁹So he said, Go back and lie down! If someone speaks to you again, answer,

I'm listening, LORD. What do you want me to do? Once again Samuel went back and lay down.

¹⁰The LORD then stood beside Samuel and called out as he had done before, Samuel! Samuel! I'm listening, Samuel answered. What do you want me to do?

¹¹The LORD said: Samuel, I am going to do something in Israel that will shock everyone who hears about it!

¹²I will punish Eli and his family, just as I promised.

¹³He knew that his sons refused to respect me, and he let them get away with it, even though I said I would punish his family for ever.

¹⁴I warned Eli that sacrifices or offerings could never make things right! His family has done too many disgusting things.

¹⁵The next morning, Samuel got up and opened the doors to the LORD's house. He was afraid to tell Eli what the LORD had said.

¹⁶But Eli told him, Samuel, my boy, come here! Here I am, Samuel answered.

¹⁷Eli said, What did God say to you? Tell me everything. I pray that God will punish you terribly if you don't tell me every word he said!

¹⁸Samuel told Eli everything. Then Eli said, He is the LORD, and he will do what's right.

¹⁹As Samuel grew up, the LORD helped him and made everything Samuel said come true.

²⁰From the town of Dan in the north to the town of Beersheba in the south, everyone in the country knew that Samuel was truly the LORD's prophet.

²¹The LORD often appeared to Samuel at Shiloh and told him what to say.

4¹Then Samuel would speak to the whole nation of Israel. One day the Israelites went out to fight the Philistines. They set up camp near Ebenezer, and the Philistines camped at Aphek.

²The Philistines made a fierce attack. They defeated the Israelites and killed about four thousand of them.

³The Israelite army returned to their camp, and the leaders said, Why did the LORD let us lose to the Philistines today?

Let's get the sacred chest where the LORD's agreement with Israel is kept. Then the LORD will help us and rescue us from our enemies.

⁴The army sent some soldiers to bring back the sacred chest from Shiloh, because the LORD All-Powerful has his throne on the winged creatures on top of the chest. As Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas,

⁵brought the chest into camp, the army cheered so loudly that the ground shook.

⁶The Philistines heard the noise and said, What are those Hebrews shouting about? When the Philistines learnt that the sacred chest had been brought into the camp,

⁷they were scared to death and said: The gods have come into their camp. Now we're in real trouble! Nothing like this has ever happened to us before.

⁸We're in big trouble! Who can save us from these powerful gods? They're the same gods who made all those horrible things happen to the Egyptians in the desert.

⁹Philistines, be brave and fight hard! If you don't, those Hebrews will rule us,

just as we've been ruling them. Fight and don't be afraid.

¹⁰The Philistines did fight. They killed thirty thousand Israelite soldiers, and all the rest ran off to their homes.

¹¹Hophni and Phinehas were killed, and the sacred chest was captured.

¹²That same day a soldier from the tribe of Benjamin ran from the battlefield to Shiloh. He had torn his clothes and put earth on his head to show his sorrow.

¹³He went into town and told the news about the battle, and everyone started crying. Eli was afraid that something might happen to the sacred chest. So he was sitting on his chair beside the road, just waiting.

¹⁴He was ninety-eight years old and blind, but he could hear everyone crying, and he asked, What's all that noise? The soldier hurried over and told Eli,

¹⁵(4:14)

¹⁶I escaped from the fighting today and ran here. Young man, what happened? Eli asked.

¹⁷Israel ran away from the Philistines, the soldier answered. Many of our people were killed, including your two sons,

Hophni and Phinehas. But worst of all, the sacred chest was captured.

¹⁸Eli was still sitting on a chair beside the wall of the town gate. And when the man said that the Philistines had taken the sacred chest, Eli fell backwards. He was a very heavy old man, and the fall broke his neck and killed him. He had been a leader of Israel for forty years.

¹⁹The wife of Phinehas was about to give birth. And soon after she heard that the sacred chest had been captured and that her husband and his father had died, her baby came. The birth was very hard,

²⁰and she was dying. But the women taking care of her said, Don't be afraid it's a boy! She didn't pay any attention to them.

²¹Instead she kept thinking about losing her husband and her father-in-law. So she said, My son will be named Ichabod, because the glory of Israel left our country when the sacred chest was captured.

²²(4: 21)

5¹ The Philistines took the sacred chest from near Ebenezer to the town of Ashdod.

² They brought it into the temple of their god Dagon and put it next to the statue of Dagon, which they worshipped.

³ When the people of Ashdod got up early the next morning, they found the statue lying face down on the floor in front of the sacred chest. They put the statue back where it belonged.

⁴ But early the next morning, it had fallen over again and was lying face down on the floor in front of the chest. The body of the statue was still in one piece, but its head and both hands had broken off and were lying on the stone floor in the doorway.

⁵ This is the reason the priests and everyone else step over that part of the doorway when they enter the temple of Dagon in Ashdod.

⁶ The LORD caused a lot of trouble for the people of Ashdod and their neighbours. He made sores break out all over their bodies, and everyone was in a panic.

⁷ Finally, they said, The God of Israel did this. He is the one who caused all this trouble for us and our god Dagon. We've got to get rid of this chest.

⁸ The people of Ashdod called all the Philistine rulers to Ashdod, and they asked them, What can we do with the sacred chest that belongs to the God of Israel? Send it to Gath, the rulers answered. But after they took it there,

⁹ the LORD made sores break out on everyone in town. The people of Gath were frightened,

¹⁰ so they sent the sacred chest to Ekron. But before they could take it through the town gates, the people of Ekron started screaming, They've brought the sacred chest that belongs to the God of Israel! It will kill us and our families too!

¹¹ The people of Ekron called for another meeting of the Philistine rulers and told them, Send this chest back where it belongs. Then it won't kill us. Everyone was in a panic, because God was causing a lot of people to die,

¹²and those who had survived were suffering from the sores. They all cried to their gods for help.

6¹After the sacred chest had been in Philistia for seven months,

²the Philistines called in their priests and fortune-tellers, and asked, What should we do with this sacred chest? Tell us how to send it back where it belongs!

³Don't send it back without a gift, the priests and fortune-tellers answered. Send along something to Israel's God to make up for taking the chest in the first place. Then you will be healed, and you will find out why the LORD was causing you so much trouble.

⁴What should we send? the Philistines asked. The priests and fortune-tellers answered: There are five Philistine rulers, and they all have the same disease that you have.

⁵So make five gold models of the sores and five gold models of the rats that are wiping out your crops. If you honour the God of Israel with this gift, perhaps he will stop causing trouble for you and your gods and your crops.

⁶Don't be like the Egyptians and their king. They were stubborn, but when Israel's God had finished with them, they had to let Israel go.

⁷Get a new cart and two cows that have young calves and that have never pulled a cart. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take the calves back to their barn.

⁸Then put the chest on the cart. Put the gold rats and sores into a bag and put it on the cart next to the chest. Then send it on its way.

⁹Watch to see if the chest goes on up the road to the Israelite town of Beth-Shemesh. If it goes back to its own country, you will know that it was the LORD who made us suffer so badly. But if the chest doesn't go back to its own country, then the LORD had nothing to do with the disease that hit us; it was simply bad luck.

¹⁰The Philistines followed their advice. They hitched up the two cows to the cart, but they kept their calves in a barn.

¹¹Then they put the chest on the cart, along with the bag that had the gold rats and sores in it.

¹²The cows went straight up the road towards Beth-Shemesh, mooing as they went. The Philistine rulers followed them until they got close to Beth-Shemesh.

¹³The people of Beth-Shemesh were harvesting their wheat in the valley. When they looked up and saw the chest, they were so happy that they stopped working and started celebrating.

¹⁴The cows left the road and pulled the cart into a field that belonged to Joshua from Beth-Shemesh, and they stopped beside a huge rock. Some men from the tribe of Levi were there. So they took the chest off the cart and placed it on the rock, and then they did the same thing with the bag of gold rats and sores. A few other people chopped up the cart and made a fire. They killed the cows and burnt them as sacrifices to the LORD. After that, they offered more sacrifices.

¹⁵(6:14)

¹⁶When the five rulers of the Philistines saw what had happened, they went back to Ekron that same day.

¹⁷That is how the Philistines sent gifts to the LORD to make up for taking the

sacred chest. They sent five gold sores, one each for their towns of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

¹⁸They also sent one gold rat for each walled town and for every village that the five Philistine rulers controlled. The huge stone where the Levites set the chest is still there in Joshua's field as a reminder of what happened.

¹⁹Some of the men of Beth-Shemesh looked inside the sacred chest, and the LORD God killed seventy of them. This made the people of Beth-Shemesh very sad,

²⁰and they started saying, No other God is like the LORD! Who can go near him and still live? We'll have to send the chest away from here. But where can we send it?

²¹They sent messengers to tell the people of Kiriath-Jearim, The Philistines have sent back the sacred chest. Why don't you take it and keep it there with you?

7¹The people of Kiriath-Jearim got the chest and took it to Abinadab's house, which was on a hill in their town.

They chose his son Eleazar to take care of it,

²and it stayed there for twenty years. During this time everyone in Israel was very sad and begged the LORD for help.

³One day, Samuel told all the people of Israel, If you really want to turn back to the LORD, then prove it. Get rid of your foreign idols, including the ones of the goddess Astarte. Turn to the LORD with all your heart and worship only him. Then he will rescue you from the Philistines.

⁴The people got rid of their idols of Baal and Astarte and began worshipping only the LORD.

⁵Then Samuel said, Tell everyone in Israel to meet together at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you.

⁶The Israelites met together at Mizpah with Samuel as their leader. They drew water from the well and poured it out as an offering to the LORD. On that same day they went without eating to show their sorrow, and they confessed they had been unfaithful to the LORD.

⁷When the Philistine rulers found out about the meeting at Mizpah, they sent

an army there to attack the people of Israel. The Israelites were afraid when they heard that the Philistines were coming.

⁸Don't stop praying! they told Samuel. Ask the LORD our God to rescue us.

⁹Samuel begged the LORD to rescue Israel, then he sacrificed a young lamb to the LORD. Samuel had not even finished offering the sacrifice when the Philistines started to attack. But the LORD answered his prayer and made thunder crash all around them. The Philistines panicked and ran away.

¹⁰(7:9)

¹¹The men of Israel left Mizpah and went after them as far as the hillside below Beth-Car, killing every enemy soldier they caught.

¹²The Philistines were so badly beaten that it was quite a while before they attacked Israel again. After the battle, Samuel set up a monument between Mizpah and the rocky cliffs. He named it Help Monument to remind Israel how much the LORD had helped them. For as long as Samuel lived, the LORD helped Israel fight the Philistines.

¹³(7:12)

¹⁴The Israelites were even able to recapture their towns and territory between Ekron and Gath. Israel was also at peace with the Amorites.

¹⁵Samuel was a leader in Israel all his life.

¹⁶Every year he would go around to the towns of Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah where he served as judge for the people.

¹⁷Then he would go back to his home in Ramah and do the same thing there. He also had an altar built for the LORD at Ramah.

8¹Samuel had two sons. The elder one was Joel, and the younger one was Abijah. When Samuel was getting old, he let them be leaders at Beersheba.

²(8:1)

³But they were not like their father. They were dishonest and accepted bribes to give unfair decisions.

⁴One day the nation's leaders came to Samuel at Ramah

⁵and said, You are an old man. You set a good example for your sons, but they haven't followed it. Now we want a king

to be our leader, just like all the other nations. Choose one for us!

⁶Samuel was upset to hear the leaders say they wanted a king, so he prayed about it.

⁷The LORD answered: Samuel, do everything they want you to do. I am really the one they have rejected as their king.

⁸Ever since the day I rescued my people from Egypt, they have turned from me to worship idols. Now they are turning away from you.

⁹Do everything they ask, but warn them and tell them how a king will treat them.

¹⁰Samuel told the people who were asking for a king what the LORD had said:

¹¹If you have a king, this is how he will treat you. He will force your sons to join his army. Some of them will ride in his chariots, some will serve in the cavalry, and others will run ahead of his own chariot.

¹²Some of them will be officers in charge of a thousand soldiers, and others will be in charge of fifty. Still others will

have to farm the king's land and harvest his crops, or make weapons and parts for his chariots.

¹³Your daughters will have to make perfume or do his cooking and baking.

¹⁴The king will take your best fields, as well as your vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his own officials.

¹⁵He will also take a tenth of your grain and grapes and give it to his officers and officials.

¹⁶The king will take your slaves and your best young men and your donkeys and make them do his work.

¹⁷He will also take a tenth of your sheep and goats. You will become the king's slaves,

¹⁸and you will finally cry out for the LORD to save you from the king you wanted. But the LORD won't answer your prayers.

¹⁹The people would not listen to Samuel. No! they said. We want to be like other nations. We want a king to rule us and lead us in battle.

²⁰(8: 19)

²¹ Samuel listened to them and then told the LORD exactly what they had said.

²² Do what they want, the LORD answered. Give them a king. Samuel told the people to go back to their homes.

9¹ Kish was a wealthy man who belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. His father was Abiel, his grandfather was Zeror, his great-grandfather was Becorath, and his great-great-grandfather was Aphiah.

² Kish had a son named Saul, who was better looking and more than a head taller than anyone else in all Israel.

³ Kish owned some donkeys, but they had run off. So he told Saul, Take one of the servants and go and look for the donkeys.

⁴ Saul and the servant went through the hill country of Ephraim and the territory of Shalishah, but they could not find the donkeys. Then they went through the territories of Shaalim and Benjamin, but still there was no sign of the donkeys.

⁵ Finally they came to the territory where the clan of Zuph lived. Let's go back home, Saul told his servant. If we

don't go back soon, my father will stop worrying about the donkeys and start worrying about us!

⁶Wait! the servant answered. There's a man of God who lives in a town near here. He's amazing! Everything he says comes true. Let's talk to him. Perhaps he can tell us where to look.

⁷Saul said, How can we talk to the prophet when I don't have anything to give him? We don't even have any bread left in our sacks. What can we give him?

⁸I have a small piece of silver, the servant answered. We can give him that, and then he will tell us where to look for the donkeys.

⁹Great! Saul replied. Let's go to the man who can see visions! He said this because in those days God would answer questions by giving visions to prophets. Saul and his servant went to the town where the prophet lived.

¹⁰(9:9)

¹¹As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some young women coming out to get water, and the two men said to them, We're looking for the man who can see visions. Is he in town?

¹²Yes, he is, they replied. He's in town today because there's going to be a sacrifice and a sacred meal at the place of worship. In fact, he's just ahead of you. Hurry

¹³and you should find him just inside the town gate. He's on his way out to the place of worship to eat with the invited guests. They can't start eating until he blesses the sacrifice. If you go now, you should find him.

¹⁴They went to the town, and just as they were going through the gate, Samuel was coming out on his way to the place of worship.

¹⁵The day before Saul came, the LORD had told Samuel,

¹⁶I've seen how my people are suffering, and I've heard their call for help. About this time tomorrow I'll send you a man from the tribe of Benjamin, who will rescue my people from the Philistines. I want you to pour olive oil on his head to show that he will be their leader.

¹⁷Samuel looked at Saul, and the LORD told Samuel, This is the man I told you about. He's the one who will rule Israel.

¹⁸Saul went over to Samuel in the gateway and said, A man who can see visions lives here in town. Could you tell me the way to his house?

¹⁹I am the one who sees visions! Samuel answered. Go on up to the place of worship. You will eat with me today, and in the morning I'll answer your questions.

²⁰Don't worry about your donkeys that ran off three days ago. They've already been found. Everything of value in Israel now belongs to you and your family.

²¹Why are you telling me this? Saul asked. I'm from Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, and my clan is the least important in the tribe.

²²Samuel took Saul and his servant into the dining room at the place of worship. About thirty people were there for the dinner, but Samuel gave Saul and his servant the places of honour.

²³Then Samuel told the cook, I gave you the best piece of meat and told you to set it aside. Bring it here now. The cook brought the meat over and set it down in front of Saul. This is for you, Samuel told him. Go ahead and eat it. I

had this piece saved especially for you, and I invited these guests to eat with you. After Saul and Samuel had finished eating,

²⁴ (9: 23)

²⁵ they went down from the place of worship and back into town. A bed was set up for Saul on the flat roof of Samuel's house,

²⁶ and Saul slept there. About sunrise the next morning, Samuel called up to Saul on the roof, Time to get up! I'll help you get started on your way. Saul got up. He and Samuel left together

²⁷ and had almost reached the edge of town when Samuel stopped and said, Tell your servant to go on. Stay here with me for a few minutes, and I'll tell you what God has told me. After the servant had gone,

10¹ Samuel took a small jar of olive oil and poured it on Saul's head. Then he kissed Saul and told him: The LORD has chosen you to be the leader and ruler of his people.

² When you leave me today, you'll meet two men near Rachel's tomb at Zelzah in the territory of Benjamin. They'll tell

you, The donkeys you've been looking for have been found. Your father has forgotten about them, and now he's worrying about you! He's wondering how he can find you.

³Go on from there until you reach the big oak tree at Tabor, where you'll meet three men on their way to worship God at Bethel. One of them will be leading three young goats, another will be carrying three round loaves of bread, and the last one will be carrying a clay jar of wine.

⁴After they greet you, they'll give you two loaves of bread.

⁵Next, go to Gibeah, where the Philistines have an army camp. As you're going into the town, you'll meet a group of prophets coming down from the place of worship. They'll be going along prophesying while others are walking in front of them, playing small harps, small drums, and flutes.

⁶The Spirit of the LORD will suddenly take control of you. You'll become a different person and start prophesying along with them.

⁷After these things happen, do whatever you think is right! God will help you.

⁸Then you should go to Gilgal. I'll come a little later, so wait for me. It may even take a week for me to get there, but when I come, I'll offer sacrifices and offerings to the LORD. I'll also tell you what to do next.

⁹As Saul turned around to leave Samuel, God made Saul feel like a different person. That same day, everything happened just as Samuel had said.

¹⁰When Saul arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him. The Spirit of God suddenly took control of him, and there in the middle of the group he began prophesying.

¹¹Some people who had known Saul for a long time saw that he was speaking and behaving like a prophet. They said to each other, What's happened? How can Saul be a prophet?

¹²Why not? one of them answered. Saul has as much right to be a prophet as anyone else! That's why everyone

started saying, How can Saul be a prophet?

¹³After Saul stopped prophesying, he went to the place of worship.

¹⁴Later, Saul's uncle asked him, Where have you been? Saul answered, Looking for the donkeys. We couldn't find them, so we went to talk with Samuel.

¹⁵And what did he tell you? Saul's uncle asked.

¹⁶Saul answered, He told us the donkeys had been found. But Saul didn't mention that Samuel had chosen him to be king.

¹⁷Samuel sent messengers to tell the Israelites to come to Mizpah and meet with the LORD.

¹⁸When everyone had arrived, Samuel said: The LORD God of Israel told me to remind you that he had rescued you from the Egyptians and from the other nations that abused you.

¹⁹God has rescued you from your troubles and hard times. But you have rejected your God and have asked for a king. Now each tribe and clan must come near the place of worship so the LORD can choose a king.

²⁰Samuel brought each tribe, one after the other, to the altar, and the LORD chose the Benjamin tribe.

²¹Next, Samuel brought each clan of Benjamin there, and the LORD chose the Matri clan. Finally, Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was nowhere to be found.

²²The people prayed, Our LORD, is Saul here? Yes, the LORD answered, he is hiding behind the baggage.

²³The people ran and got Saul and brought him into the middle of the crowd. He was more than a head taller than anyone else.

²⁴Look closely at the man the LORD has chosen! Samuel told the crowd. There is no one like him! The crowd shouted, Long live the king!

²⁵Samuel explained the rights and duties of a king and wrote them all in a book. He put the book in a temple building at one of the places where the LORD was worshipped. Then Samuel sent everyone home.

²⁶God had encouraged some young men to become followers of Saul, and

when he returned to his home town of Gibeah, they went with him.

²⁷ But some worthless fools said, How can someone like Saul rescue us from our enemies? They did not want Saul to be their king, and so they didn't bring him any gifts. But Saul kept calm.

11 ¹ About this time, King Nahash of Ammon came with his army and surrounded the town of Jabesh in Gilead. The people who lived there told Nahash, If you will sign a peace treaty with us, you can be our ruler, and we will pay taxes to you.

² Nahash answered, Certainly, I'll sign a treaty! But not before I insult Israel by putting out the right eye of every man who lives in Jabesh.

³ The town leaders said, Give us seven days so we can send messengers everywhere in Israel to ask for help. If no one comes here to save us, we will surrender to you.

⁴ Some of the messengers went to Gibeah, Saul's home town. They told what was happening at Jabesh, and everyone in Gibeah started crying.

⁵Just then, Saul came in from the fields, walking behind his oxen. Why is everyone crying? Saul asked. They told him what the men from Jabesh had said.

⁶Then the Spirit of God suddenly took control of Saul and made him furious.

⁷Saul killed two of his oxen, cut them up in pieces, and gave the pieces to the messengers. He told them to show the pieces to everyone in Israel and say, Saul and Samuel are getting an army together. Come and join them. If you don't, this is what will happen to your oxen! The LORD made the people of Israel terribly afraid. So all the men came together

⁸at Bezek. Saul had them organized and counted. There were three hundred thousand from Israel and thirty thousand from Judah.

⁹Saul and his officers sent the messengers back to Jabesh with this promise: We will rescue you tomorrow afternoon. The messengers went back to the people at Jabesh and told them that they were going to be rescued. Everyone was encouraged!

¹⁰So they told the Ammonites, We will surrender to you tomorrow, and then you can do whatever you want to.

¹¹The next day, Saul divided his army into three groups and attacked before daylight. They started killing Ammonites and kept it up until afternoon. A few Ammonites managed to escape, but they were scattered far from each other.

¹²The Israelite soldiers went to Samuel and demanded, Where are the men who said they didn't want Saul to be king? Bring them to us, and we will put them to death!

¹³No you won't! Saul told them. The LORD rescued Israel today, and no one will be put to death.

¹⁴Come on! Samuel said. Let's go to Gilgal and make an agreement that Saul will continue to be our king.

¹⁵Everyone went to the place of worship at Gilgal, where they agreed that Saul would be their king. Saul and the people sacrificed animals to ask for the LORD's blessing, and they had a big celebration.

12¹ Samuel told the Israelites: I have given you a king, just as you asked.

²You have seen how I have led you ever since I was a young man. I'm already old. My hair is grey, and my own sons are grown up. Now you must see how well your king will lead you.

³Let me ask this. Have I ever taken anyone's ox or donkey or forced you to give me anything? Have I ever hurt anyone or taken a bribe to give an unfair decision? Answer me so the LORD and his chosen king can hear you. And if I have done any of these things, I will give it all back.

⁴No, the Israelites answered. You've never cheated us in any way!

⁵Samuel said, The LORD and his chosen king are witnesses to what you have said. That's true, they replied.

⁶Then Samuel told them: The LORD brought your ancestors out of Egypt and chose Moses and Aaron to be your leaders.

⁷Now the LORD will be your judge. So stand here and listen, while I remind you how often the LORD has saved you and your ancestors from your enemies.

⁸After Jacob went to Egypt, your ancestors cried out to the LORD for help,

and he sent Moses and Aaron. They led your ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in this land.

⁹But your ancestors forgot the LORD, so he let them be defeated by the Philistines, the king of Moab, and Sisera, the commander of Hazor's army.

¹⁰Again your ancestors cried out to the LORD for help. They said, We have sinned! We stopped worshipping you, our LORD, and started worshipping Baal and Astarte. But now, if you rescue us from our enemies, we will worship you.

¹¹The LORD sent Gideon, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel to rescue you from your enemies, and you didn't have to worry about being attacked.

¹²Then you saw that King Nahash of Ammon was going to attack you. And even though the LORD your God is your king, you told me, This time it's different. We want a king to rule us!

¹³You asked for a king, and you chose one. Now he stands here where all of you can see him. But it was really the LORD who made him your king.

¹⁴If you and your king want to be followers of the LORD, you must worship

him and do what he says. Don't be stubborn!

¹⁵If you're stubborn and refuse to obey the LORD, he will turn against you and your king.

¹⁶Just stand here and watch the LORD show his mighty power.

¹⁷Isn't this the dry season? I'm going to ask the LORD to send a thunderstorm. When you see it, you will realize how wrong you were to ask for a king.

¹⁸Samuel prayed, and that same day the LORD sent a thunderstorm. Everyone was afraid of the LORD and of Samuel.

¹⁹They told Samuel, Please, pray to the LORD your God for us! We don't want to die. We have sinned many times in the past, and we were very wrong to ask for a king.

²⁰Samuel answered: Even though what you did was wrong, you don't need to be afraid. But you must always follow the LORD and worship him with all your heart.

²¹Don't worship idols! They don't have any power, and they can't help you or save you when you're in trouble.

²² But the LORD has chosen you to be his own people. He will always take care of you so that everyone will know how great he is.

²³ I would be disobeying the LORD if I stopped praying for you! I will always teach you how to live right.

²⁴ You also must obey the LORD you must worship him with all your heart and remember the great things he has done for you.

²⁵ But if you and your king do evil, the LORD will wipe you out.

13¹ Saul was a young man when he became king, and he ruled Israel for two years.

² Then he chose three thousand men from Israel to be full-time soldiers and sent everyone else home. Two thousand of these troops stayed with him in the hills around Michmash and Bethel. The other thousand were stationed with Jonathan at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin.

³ Jonathan led an attack on the Philistine army camp at Geba. The Philistine camp was destroyed, but the other Philistines heard what had happened. Then Saul

told his messengers, Go to every village in the country. Give a signal with the trumpet, and when the people come together, tell them what has happened.

⁴The messengers then said to the people of Israel, Saul has destroyed the Philistine army camp at Geba. Now the Philistines really hate Israel, so every town and village must send men to join Saul's army at Gilgal.

⁵The Philistines called their army together to fight Israel. They had three thousand chariots, six thousand cavalry, and as many foot soldiers as there are grains of sand on the beach. They went to Michmash and set up camp there east of Beth-Aven.

⁶The Israelite army realized that they were outnumbered and were going to lose the battle. Some of the Israelite men hid in caves or in clumps of bushes, and some ran to places where they could hide among large rocks. Others hid in tombs or in deep dry pits.

⁷Still others went to Gad and Gilead on the other side of the River Jordan. Saul stayed at Gilgal. His soldiers were shaking with fear,

⁸and they were starting to run off and leave him. Saul waited there seven days, just as Samuel had ordered him to do, but Samuel did not come.

⁹Finally, Saul commanded, Bring me some animals, so we can offer sacrifices to please the LORD and ask for his help. Saul killed one of the animals,

¹⁰and just as he was placing it on the altar, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to welcome him.

¹¹What have you done? Samuel asked. Saul answered, My soldiers were leaving in all directions, and you didn't come when you were supposed to. The Philistines were gathering at Michmash,

¹²and I was worried that they would attack me here at Gilgal. I hadn't offered a sacrifice to ask for the LORD's help, so I forced myself to offer a sacrifice on the altar fire.

¹³That was stupid! Samuel said. You didn't obey the LORD your God. If you had obeyed him, someone from your family would always have been king of Israel.

¹⁴But no, you disobeyed, and so the LORD won't choose anyone else from

your family to be king. In fact, he has already chosen the one he wants to be the next leader of his people.

¹⁵Then Samuel left Gilgal. Part of Saul's army had not deserted him, and he led them to Gibeah in Benjamin to join his other troops. Then he counted them and found that he still had six hundred men.

¹⁶Saul, Jonathan, and their army set up camp at Geba in Benjamin. The Philistine army was camped at Michmash.

¹⁷Each day they sent out patrols to attack and rob villages and then destroy them. One patrol would go north along the road to Ophrah in the region of Shual.

¹⁸Another patrol would go west along the road to Beth-Horon. A third patrol would go east towards the desert on the road to the ridge that overlooks Zeboim Valley.

¹⁹The Philistines would not allow any Israelites to learn how to make iron tools. If we allowed that, they said, those worthless Israelites would make swords and spears.

²⁰Whenever the Israelites wanted to get an iron point put on a cattle prod,

they had to go to the Philistines. Even if they wanted to sharpen plough-blades, picks, axes, sickles, and pitchforks they still had to go to them. And the Philistines charged high prices.

²¹ (13: 20)

²² So, whenever the Israelite soldiers had to go into battle, none of them had a sword or a spear except Saul and his son Jonathan.

²³ The Philistines moved their camp to the pass at Michmash,

14¹ and Saul was in Geba with his six hundred men. Saul's own tent was set up under a fruit tree by the threshing place at the edge of town. Ahijah was serving as priest, and one of his jobs was to get answers from the LORD for Saul. Ahijah's father was Ahitub, and his father's brother was Ichabod. Ahijah's grandfather was Phinehas, and his great-grandfather Eli had been the LORD's priest at Shiloh. One day, Jonathan told the soldier who carried his weapons that he wanted to attack the Philistine camp on the other side of the valley. So they slipped out of the Israelite camp without anyone

knowing it. Jonathan didn't even tell his father he was leaving.

²(14: 1)

³(14: 1)

⁴Jonathan decided to get to the Philistine camp by going through the pass that led between Shiny Cliff and Michmash to the north and Thorn Bush Cliff and Geba to the south.

⁵(14: 4)

⁶Jonathan and the soldier who carried his weapons talked as they went towards the Philistine camp. It's just the two of us against all those godless men, Jonathan said. But the LORD can help a few soldiers win a battle just as easily as he can help a whole army. Perhaps the LORD will help us win this battle.

⁷Do whatever you want, the soldier answered. I'll be with you.

⁸This is what we will do, Jonathan said. We will go across and let them see us.

⁹If they agree to come down the hill and fight where we are, then we won't climb up to their camp.

¹⁰But we will go if they tell us to come up the hill and fight. That will mean the LORD is going to help us win.

¹¹ Jonathan and the soldier stood at the bottom of the hill where the Philistines could see them. The Philistines said, Look! Those worthless Israelites have crawled out of the holes where they've been hiding. Then they yelled down to Jonathan and the soldier, Come up here, and we will teach you a thing or two! Jonathan turned to the soldier and said, Follow me! The LORD is going to let us win.

¹²(14: 11)

¹³ Jonathan crawled up the hillside with the soldier following him. When they got to the top, Jonathan killed the Philistines who attacked from the front, and the soldier killed those who attacked from behind.

¹⁴ Before they had gone thirty metres, they had killed about twenty Philistines.

¹⁵ The whole Philistine army panicked those in camp, those on guard duty, those in the fields, and those on raiding patrols. All of them were afraid and confused. Then God sent an earthquake, and the ground began to tremble.

¹⁶Saul's lookouts at Geba saw that the Philistine army was running in every direction, like melted wax.

¹⁷Saul told his officers, Call the roll and find out who left our camp. When they had finished, they found out that Jonathan and the soldier who carried his weapons were missing.

¹⁸At that time, Ahijah was serving as priest for the army of Israel, and Saul told him, Come over here! Let's ask God what we should do.

¹⁹Just as Saul finished saying this, he could see that the Philistine army camp was getting more and more confused, and he said, Ahijah, never mind!

²⁰Saul quickly called his army together, then led them to the Philistine camp. By this time the Philistines were so confused that they were killing each other.

²¹There were also some hired soldiers in the Philistine camp, who now switched to Israel's side and fought for Saul and Jonathan.

²²Many Israelites had been hiding in the hill country of Ephraim. And when they heard that the Philistines were

running away, they came out of hiding and joined in chasing the Philistines.

²³ So the LORD helped Israel win the battle that day. Saul had earlier told his soldiers, I want to get even with those Philistines by sunset. If any of you eat before then, you will be under a curse! So he made them swear not to eat. By the time the fighting moved past Beth-Aven, the Israelite troops were weak from hunger.

²⁴ (14: 23)

²⁵ The army and the people who lived nearby had gone into a forest, and they came to a place where honey was dripping on the ground. But no one ate any of it, because they were afraid of being put under the curse.

²⁶ (14: 25)

²⁷ Jonathan did not know about Saul's warning to the soldiers. So he dipped the end of his walking stick in the honey and ate some with his fingers. He felt stronger and more alert.

²⁸ Then a soldier told him, Your father swore that anyone who ate food today would be put under a curse, and we

agreed not to eat. That's why we're so weak.

²⁹Jonathan said, My father has caused you a lot of trouble. Look at me! I had only a little of this honey, but already I feel strong and alert.

³⁰I wish you had eaten some of the food the Philistines left behind. We would have been able to kill a lot more of them.

³¹By evening the Israelite army was exhausted from killing Philistines all the way from Michmash to Aijalon.

³²They grabbed the food they had captured from the Philistines and started eating. They even killed sheep and cows and calves right on the ground and ate the meat without draining the blood.

³³Someone told Saul, Look! The army is disobeying the LORD by eating meat before the blood drains out. You're right, Saul answered. They are being unfaithful to the LORD! Hurry! Roll a big rock over here.

³⁴Then tell everyone in camp to bring their cattle and lambs to me. They can kill the animals on this rock, then eat the meat. That way no one will disobey the LORD by eating meat with blood still in

it. That night the soldiers brought their cattle over to the big rock and killed them there.

³⁵ It was the first altar Saul had built for offering sacrifices to the LORD.

³⁶ Saul said, Let's attack the Philistines again while it's still dark. We can fight them all night. Let's kill them and take everything they own! The people answered, We will do whatever you want. Wait! Ahijah the priest said. Let's ask God what we should do.

³⁷ Saul asked God, Should I attack the Philistines? Will you help us win? This time God did not answer.

³⁸ Saul called his army officers together and said, We have to find out what sin has kept God from answering.

³⁹ I swear by the living LORD that whoever sinned must die, even if it turns out to be my own son Jonathan. No one said a word.

⁴⁰ Saul told his army, You stand on that side of the priest, and Jonathan and I will stand on the other side. Everyone agreed.

⁴¹ Then Saul prayed, Our LORD, God of Israel, why haven't you answered me

today? Please show us who sinned. Was it my son Jonathan and I, or was it your people Israel? The answer came back that Jonathan or Saul had sinned, not the army.

⁴²Saul told Ahijah, Now ask the LORD to decide between Jonathan and me. The answer came back that Jonathan had sinned.

⁴³Jonathan, Saul exclaimed, tell me what you did! I dipped the end of my walking stick in some honey and ate a little. Now you say I have to die!

⁴⁴Yes, Jonathan. I swear to God that you must die.

⁴⁵No! the soldiers shouted. God helped Jonathan win the battle for us. We won't let you kill him. We swear to the LORD that we won't let you kill him or even lay a hand on him! So the army kept Saul from killing Jonathan.

⁴⁶Saul stopped hunting down the Philistines, and they went home.

⁴⁷When Saul became king, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the kings of Zobah, the Philistines, and the Amalekites had all been robbing the Israelites. Saul fought back against these

enemies and stopped them from robbing Israel. He was a brave commander and always won his battles.

⁴⁸ (14: 47)

⁴⁹ Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. They had three sons: Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua. They also had two daughters: the elder one was Merab, and the younger one was Michal. Abner, Saul's cousin, was the commander of the army. Saul's father Kish and Abner's father Ner were sons of Abiel.

⁵⁰ (14: 49)

⁵¹ (14: 49)

⁵² Saul was at war with the Philistines for as long as he lived. Whenever he found a good warrior or a brave man, Saul made him join his army.

15¹ One day, Samuel told Saul: The LORD made me choose you to be king of his people, Israel. Now listen to this message from the LORD:

² When the Israelites were on their way out of Egypt, the nation of Amalek attacked them. I am the LORD All-Powerful, and now I am going to make Amalek pay!

³Go and attack the Amalekites! Destroy them and all their possessions. Don't have any pity. Kill their men, women, children, and even their babies. Slaughter their cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys.

⁴Saul sent messengers who told every town and village to send men to join the army at Telaim. There were two hundred and ten thousand troops in all, and ten thousand of these were from Judah. Saul organized them,

⁵then led them to a valley near one of the towns in Amalek, where they got ready to make a surprise attack.

⁶Some Kenites lived nearby, and Saul told them, Your people were kind to our nation when we left Egypt, and I don't want you to get killed when I wipe out the Amalekites. Leave here and stay away from them. The Kenites left,

⁷and Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah to Shur, which is just east of Egypt.

⁸Every Amalekite was killed except King Agag.

⁹Saul and his army let Agag live, and they also spared the best sheep

and cattle. They didn't want to destroy anything of value, so they only killed the animals that were worthless or weak.

¹⁰The LORD told Samuel,

¹¹Saul has stopped obeying me, and I'm sorry that I made him king. Samuel was angry, and he cried out in prayer to the LORD all night.

¹²Early the next morning he went to talk with Saul. Someone told him, Saul went to Carmel, where he had a monument built so everyone would remember his victory. Then he left for Gilgal.

¹³Samuel finally caught up with Saul, and Saul told him, I hope the LORD will bless you! I have done what the LORD told me.

¹⁴Then why, Samuel asked, do I hear sheep and cattle?

¹⁵The army took them from the Amalekites, Saul explained. They kept the best sheep and cattle, so they could sacrifice them to the LORD your God. But we destroyed everything else.

¹⁶Stop! Samuel said. Let me tell you what the LORD told me last night. All right, Saul answered.

¹⁷ Samuel continued, You may not think you're very important, but the LORD chose you to be king, and you are in charge of the tribes of Israel.

¹⁸ When the LORD sent you on this mission, he told you to wipe out those worthless Amalekites.

¹⁹ Why didn't you listen to the LORD? Why did you keep the animals and make him angry?

²⁰ But I did listen to the LORD! Saul answered. He sent me on a mission, and I went. I captured King Agag and destroyed his nation.

²¹ All the animals were going to be destroyed anyway. That's why the army brought the best sheep and cattle to Gilgal as sacrifices to the LORD your God.

²² Tell me, Samuel said. Does the LORD really want sacrifices and offerings? No! He doesn't want your sacrifices. He wants you to obey him.

²³ Rebelling against God or disobeying him because you are proud is just as bad as worshipping idols or asking them for advice. You refused to do what God told

you, so God has decided that you can't be king.

²⁴I have sinned, Saul admitted. I disobeyed both you and the LORD. I was afraid of the army, and I listened to them instead.

²⁵Please forgive me and come back with me so I can worship the LORD.

²⁶No! Samuel replied, You disobeyed the LORD, and I won't go back with you. Now the LORD has said that you can't be king of Israel any longer.

²⁷As Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed the edge of Samuel's robe. It tore!

²⁸Samuel said, The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel away from you today, and he will give it to someone who is better than you.

²⁹Besides, the eternal God of Israel isn't a human being. He doesn't tell lies or change his mind.

³⁰Saul said, I did sin, but please honour me in front of the leaders of the army and the people of Israel. Come back with me, so I can worship the LORD your God.

³¹Samuel followed Saul back, and Saul worshipped the LORD.

³²Then Samuel shouted, Bring me King Agag of Amalek! Agag came in chains, and he was saying to himself, Surely they won't kill me now.

³³But Samuel said, Agag, you have snatched children from their mothers' arms and killed them. Now your mother will be without children. Then Samuel chopped Agag to pieces at the place of worship in Gilgal.

³⁴Samuel went home to Ramah, and Saul returned to his home in Gibeah.

³⁵Even though Samuel felt sad about Saul, Samuel never saw him again. The LORD was sorry he had made Saul the king of Israel.

16¹One day he said, Samuel, I've rejected Saul, and I refuse to let him be king any longer. Stop feeling sad about him. Put some olive oil in a small container and go and visit a man named Jesse, who lives in Bethlehem. I've chosen one of his sons to be my king.

²Samuel answered, If I do that, Saul will find out and have me killed. Take a calf with you, the LORD replied. Tell everyone that you've come to offer it as a sacrifice to me,

³ then invite Jesse to the sacrifice. When I show you which one of his sons I have chosen, pour the olive oil on his head.

⁴ Samuel did what the LORD told him and went to Bethlehem. The town leaders went to meet him, but they were terribly afraid and asked, Is this a friendly visit?

⁵ Yes, it is! Samuel answered. I've come to offer a sacrifice to the LORD. Get yourselves ready to take part in the sacrifice and come with me. Samuel also invited Jesse and his sons to come to the sacrifice, and he got them ready to take part.

⁶ When Jesse and his sons arrived, Samuel noticed Jesse's eldest son, Eliab. He must be the one the LORD has chosen, Samuel said to himself.

⁷ But the LORD told him, Samuel, don't think Eliab is the one just because he's tall and handsome. He isn't the one I've chosen. People judge others by what they look like, but I judge people by what is in their hearts.

⁸ Jesse told his son Abinadab to go over to Samuel, but Samuel said, No, the LORD hasn't chosen him.

⁹ Next, Jesse sent his son Shammah to him, and Samuel said, The LORD hasn't chosen him either.

¹⁰ Jesse sent all seven of his sons over to Samuel. Finally, Samuel said, Jesse, the LORD hasn't chosen any of these young men.

¹¹ Do you have any more sons? Yes, Jesse answered. My youngest son David is out taking care of the sheep. Send for him! Samuel said. We won't start the ceremony until he gets here.

¹² Jesse sent for David. He was a healthy, good-looking boy with a sparkle in his eyes. As soon as David came, the LORD told Samuel, He's the one! Get up and pour the olive oil on his head.

¹³ Samuel poured the oil on David's head while his brothers watched. At that moment, the Spirit of the LORD took control of David and stayed with him from then on. Samuel returned home to Ramah.

¹⁴The Spirit of the LORD had left Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD was terrifying him.

¹⁵It's an evil spirit from God that's frightening you, Saul's officials told him.

¹⁶Your Majesty, let us go and look for someone who is good at playing the harp. He can play for you whenever the evil spirit from God bothers you, and you'll feel better.

¹⁷All right, Saul answered. Find me someone who is good at playing the harp and bring him here.

¹⁸A man named Jesse who lives in Bethlehem has a son who can play the harp, one official said. He's a brave warrior, he's good-looking, he can speak well, and the LORD is with him.

¹⁹Saul sent a message to Jesse: Tell your son David to leave your sheep and come here to me.

²⁰Jesse loaded a donkey with bread and a goatskin full of wine, then he told David to take the donkey and a young goat to Saul.

²¹David went to Saul and started working for him. Saul liked him so much

that he put David in charge of carrying his weapons.

²²Not long after this, Saul sent another message to Jesse: I really like David. Please let him stay with me.

²³Whenever the evil spirit from God bothered Saul, David would play his harp. Saul would relax and feel better, and the evil spirit would go away.

17 ¹The Philistines got ready for war and brought their troops together to attack the town of Socoh in Judah. They set up camp at Ephes-Dammim, between Socoh and Azekah.

²King Saul and the Israelite army set up camp on a hill overlooking Elah Valley, and they got ready to fight the Philistine army that was on a hill on the other side of the valley.

³(17: 2)

⁴The Philistine army had a hero named Goliath who was from the town of Gath and was about three metres tall.

⁵He wore a bronze helmet and had bronze armour to protect his chest and legs. The chest armour alone weighed about fifty-seven kilogrammes. He

carried a bronze sword strapped on his back,

⁶(17:5)

⁷and his spear was so big that the iron spearhead alone weighed about seven kilogrammes. A soldier always walked in front of Goliath to carry his shield.

⁸Goliath went out and shouted to the army of Israel: Why are you lining up for battle? I'm the best soldier in our army, and all of you are in Saul's army. Choose your best soldier to come out and fight me!

⁹If he can kill me, our people will be your slaves. But if I kill him, your people will be our slaves.

¹⁰Here and now I challenge Israel's whole army! Choose someone to fight me!

¹¹Saul and his men heard what Goliath said, but they were so frightened of Goliath that they couldn't do a thing.

¹²David's father Jesse was an old man, who belonged to the Ephrath clan and lived in Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons:

¹³the eldest was Eliab, the next was Abinadab, and Shammah was the third.

The three of them had gone off to fight in Saul's army. David was Jesse's youngest son.

¹⁴ (17:13)

¹⁵ He took care of his father's sheep, and he went back and forth between Bethlehem and Saul's camp.

¹⁶ Goliath came out and gave his challenge every morning and every evening for forty days.

¹⁷ One day, Jesse told David, Hurry and take this sack of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread to your brothers at the army camp.

¹⁸ And here are ten large chunks of cheese to take to their commanding officer. Find out how your brothers are doing and bring back something that shows that they're all right.

¹⁹ They're with Saul's army, fighting the Philistines in Elah Valley.

²⁰ David obeyed his father. He got up early the next morning and left someone else in charge of the sheep; then he loaded the supplies and started off. He reached the army camp just as the soldiers were taking their places and shouting the battle cry.

²¹ The army of Israel and the Philistine army stood there facing each other.

²² David left his things with the man in charge of supplies and ran up to the battle line to ask his brothers if they were well.

²³ While David was talking with them, Goliath came out from the line of Philistines and started boasting as usual. David heard him.

²⁴ When the Israelite soldiers saw Goliath, they were scared and ran off.

²⁵ They said to each other, Look how he keeps coming out to insult us. The king is offering a big reward to the man who kills Goliath. That man will even get to marry the king's daughter, and no one in his family will ever have to pay taxes again.

²⁶ David asked some soldiers standing nearby, What will a man get for killing this Philistine and stopping him from insulting our people? Who does that worthless Philistine think he is? He's making fun of the army of the living God!

²⁷ The soldiers told David what the king would give the man who killed Goliath.

²⁸David's eldest brother Eliab heard him talking with the soldiers. Eliab was angry with him and said, What are you doing here, anyway? Who's taking care of that little flock of sheep out in the desert? You spoilt brat! You came here just to watch the fighting, didn't you?

²⁹Now what have I done? David answered. Can't I even ask a question?

³⁰Then he turned and asked another soldier the same thing he had asked the others, and he got the same answer.

³¹Some soldiers overheard David talking, so they told Saul what David had said. Saul sent for David, and David came.

³²Your Majesty, he said, this Philistine shouldn't turn us into cowards. I'll go out and fight him myself!

³³You don't have a chance against him, Saul replied. You're only a boy, and he's been a soldier all his life.

³⁴But David told him: Your Majesty, I take care of my father's sheep. And when one of them is dragged off by a lion or a bear,

³⁵I go after it and beat the wild animal until it lets the sheep go. If the wild

animal turns and attacks me, I grab it by the throat and kill it.

³⁶Sir, I have killed lions and bears that way, and I can kill this worthless Philistine. He shouldn't have made fun of the army of the living God!

³⁷The LORD has rescued me from the claws of lions and bears, and he will keep me safe from the hands of this Philistine. All right, Saul answered, go ahead and fight him. And I hope the LORD will help you.

³⁸Saul had his own military clothes and armour put on David, and he gave David a bronze helmet to wear.

³⁹David strapped on a sword and tried to walk around, but he was not used to wearing those things. I can't move with all this stuff on, David said. I'm just not used to it. David took off the armour

⁴⁰and picked up his shepherd's stick. He went out to a stream and picked up five smooth stones and put them in his leather bag. Then with his sling in his hand, he went straight towards Goliath.

⁴¹Goliath came towards David, walking behind the soldier who was carrying his shield.

⁴²When Goliath saw that David was just a healthy, good-looking boy, he made fun of him.

⁴³Do you think I'm a dog? Goliath asked. Is that why you've come after me with a stick? He cursed David in the name of the Philistine gods

⁴⁴and shouted, Come on! When I'm finished with you, I'll feed you to the birds and wild animals!

⁴⁵David answered: You've come out to fight me with a sword and a spear and a dagger. But I've come out to fight you in the name of the LORD All-Powerful. He is the God of Israel's army, and you have insulted him too!

⁴⁶Today the LORD will help me defeat you. I'll knock you down and cut off your head, and I'll feed the bodies of the other Philistine soldiers to the birds and wild animals. Then the whole world will know that Israel has a real God.

⁴⁷Everybody here will see that the LORD doesn't need swords or spears to save his people. The LORD always wins his battles, and he will help us defeat you.

⁴⁸When Goliath started forward, David ran towards him.

⁴⁹He put a stone in his sling and swung the sling around by its straps. When he let go of one strap, the stone flew out and hit Goliath on the forehead. It cracked his skull, and he fell face down on the ground.

⁵⁰David defeated Goliath with a sling and a stone. He killed him without even using a sword.

⁵¹David ran over and pulled out Goliath's sword. Then he used it to cut off Goliath's head. When the Philistines saw what had happened to their hero, they started running away.

⁵²But the soldiers of Israel and Judah let out a battle cry and went after them as far as Gath and Ekron. The bodies of the Philistines were scattered all along the road from Shaaraim to Gath and Ekron.

⁵³When the Israelite army returned from chasing the Philistines, they took what they wanted from the enemy camp.

⁵⁴David took Goliath's head to Jerusalem, but he kept Goliath's weapons in his own tent.

⁵⁵ After King Saul had watched David go out to fight Goliath, Saul turned to the commander of his army and said, Abner, who is that young man? Your Majesty, Abner answered, I swear by your life that I don't know.

⁵⁶ Then find out! Saul told him.

⁵⁷ When David came back from fighting Goliath, he was still carrying Goliath's head. Abner took David to Saul,

⁵⁸ and Saul asked, Who are you? I am David the son of Jesse, a loyal Israelite from Bethlehem.

18¹ David and Saul finished talking, and soon David and Jonathan became best friends. Jonathan thought as much of David as he did of himself.

² From that time on, Saul kept David in his service and would not let David go back to his own family.

³ Jonathan liked David so much that they promised they would always be loyal friends.

⁴ Jonathan took off the robe that he was wearing and gave it to David. He also gave him his military clothes, his sword, his bow and arrows, and his belt.

⁵ David was a success in everything that Saul sent him to do, and Saul made him a high officer in his army. That pleased everyone, including Saul's other officers.

⁶ David had killed Goliath, the battle was over, and the Israelite army set out for home. As the army went along, women came out of each Israelite town to welcome King Saul. They were singing happy songs and dancing to the music of tambourines and harps.

⁷ They sang: Saul has killed a thousand enemies; David has killed ten thousand enemies!

⁸ This song made Saul very angry, and he thought, They are saying that David has killed ten times more enemies than I ever did. Next they will want to make him king.

⁹ Saul never again trusted David.

¹⁰ The next day the LORD let an evil spirit take control of Saul, and he began acting like a mad man inside his house. David came to play the harp for Saul as usual, but this time Saul had a spear in his hand.

¹¹ Saul thought, I'll pin David to the wall. He threw the spear at David twice,

but David dodged and got away both times.

¹²Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was helping David and was no longer helping him.

¹³Saul put David in charge of a thousand soldiers and sent him out to fight.

¹⁴The LORD helped David, and he and his soldiers always won their battles.

¹⁵This made Saul even more afraid of David.

¹⁶But everyone else in Judah and Israel was loyal to David, because he led the army in battle.

¹⁷One day, Saul told David, If you'll be brave and fight the LORD's battles for me, I'll let you marry my eldest daughter Merab. But Saul was really thinking, I don't want to kill David myself, so I'll let the Philistines do it for me.

¹⁸David answered, How could I possibly marry your daughter? I'm not very important, and neither is my family.

¹⁹But when the time came for David to marry Saul's daughter Merab, Saul told her to marry Adriel from the town of Meholah.

²⁰ Saul had another daughter. Her name was Michal, and Saul found out that she was in love with David. This made Saul happy,

²¹ and he thought, I'll tell David he can marry Michal, but I'll set it up so that the Philistines will kill him. He told David, I'm going to give you a second chance to marry one of my daughters.

²² Saul ordered his officials to speak to David in private, so they went to David and said, Look, the king likes you, and all his officials are loyal to you. Why not ask the king if you can marry his daughter Michal? I'm not rich or famous enough to marry princess Michal! David answered.

²³ (18: 22)

²⁴ The officials went back to Saul and told him exactly what David had said.

²⁵ Saul was hoping that the Philistines would kill David, and he told his officials to tell David, The king doesn't want any silver or gold. He only wants to get even with his enemies. All you have to do is to bring back proof that you have killed a hundred Philistines!

²⁶ The officials told David, and David wanted to marry the princess. King Saul

had set a time limit, and before it ran out,

²⁷ David and his men left and killed two hundred Philistines. He brought back the proof and showed it to Saul, so he could marry Michal. Saul agreed to let David marry Michal.

²⁸ Saul knew that she loved David, and he also realized that the LORD was helping David.

²⁹ But knowing those things made Saul even more afraid of David, and he was David's enemy for the rest of his life.

³⁰ The Philistine rulers kept coming to fight Israel, but whenever David fought them, he won. He was famous because he won more battles against the Philistines than any of Saul's other officers.

19¹ One day, Saul told his son Jonathan and his officers to kill David. But Jonathan liked David a lot,

² and he warned David, My father is trying to have you killed, so be very careful. Hide in a field tomorrow morning, and I'll bring him there. Then I'll talk to him about you, and if I find out anything, I'll let you know.

³ (19: 2)

⁴The next morning, Jonathan reminded Saul about the many good things David had done for him. Then he said, Why do you want to kill David? He hasn't done anything to you. He has served in your army and has always done what's best for you. He even risked his life to kill Goliath. The LORD helped Israel win a great victory that day, and it made you happy.

⁵ (19: 4)

⁶Saul agreed and promised, I swear by the living LORD that I won't have David killed!

⁷Jonathan called to David and told him what Saul had said. Then he brought David to Saul, and David served in Saul's army just as he had done before.

⁸The next time there was a war with the Philistines, David fought hard and forced them to retreat.

⁹One night, David was in Saul's home, playing the harp for him. Saul was sitting there, holding a spear, when an evil spirit from the LORD took control of him. Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but David dodged, and it stuck in

the wall. David ran out of the house and escaped.

¹⁰(19: 9)

¹¹Saul sent guards to watch David's house all night and then to kill him in the morning. Michal, David's wife, told him, If you don't escape tonight, they'll kill you tomorrow!

¹²She helped David go through a window and climb down to the ground. As David ran off,

¹³Michal put a statue in his bed. She put goat hair on its head and dressed it in some of David's clothes.

¹⁴The next morning, Saul sent guards to arrest David. But Michal told them, David is sick.

¹⁵Saul sent the guards back and told them, Get David out of his bed and bring him to me, so I can have him killed.

¹⁶When the guards went in, all they found in the bed was the statue with the goat hair on its head.

¹⁷Why have you tricked me this way? Saul asked Michal. You helped my enemy get away! She answered, He said he would kill me if I didn't help him escape!

¹⁸ Meanwhile, David went to Samuel at Ramah and told him what Saul had done. Then Samuel and David went to Prophets Village and stayed there.

¹⁹ Someone told Saul, David is at Prophets Village in Ramah.

²⁰ Saul sent a few soldiers to bring David back. They went to Ramah and found Samuel in charge of a group of prophets who were all prophesying. Then the Spirit of God took control of the soldiers and they started prophesying too.

²¹ When Saul heard what had happened, he sent another group of soldiers, but they prophesied the same way. He sent a third group of soldiers, but the same thing happened to them.

²² Finally, Saul left for Ramah himself. He went as far as the deep pit at the town of Secu, and he asked, Where are Samuel and David? At Prophets Village in Ramah, the people answered.

²³ Saul left for Ramah. But as he walked along, the Spirit of God took control of him, and he started prophesying. Then, when he reached Prophets Village,

²⁴ he stripped off his clothes and prophesied in front of Samuel. He dropped to the ground and lay there naked all day and night. That's how the saying started, Is Saul now a prophet?

20¹ David escaped from Prophets Village. Then he ran to see Jonathan and asked, Why does your father Saul want to kill me? What have I done wrong?

² My father can't be trying to kill you! He never does anything without telling me about it. Why would he hide this from me? It can't be true!

³ Jonathan, I swear it's true! But your father knows how much you like me, and he didn't want to break your heart. That's why he didn't tell you. I swear by the living LORD and by your own life that I'm only one step ahead of death.

⁴ Then Jonathan said, Tell me what to do, and I'll do it.

⁵ David answered: Tomorrow is the New Moon Festival, and I'm supposed to have dinner with your father. But instead, I'll hide in a field until the evening of the next day.

⁶If Saul wonders where I am, tell him, David asked me to let him go to his home town of Bethlehem, so he could take part in a sacrifice his family makes there every year.

⁷If your father says it's all right, then I'm safe. But if he gets angry, you'll know he wants to harm me.

⁸Be kind to me. After all, it was your idea to promise the LORD that we would always be loyal friends. If I've done anything wrong, kill me yourself, but don't hand me over to your father.

⁹Don't worry, Jonathan said. If I find out that my father wants to kill you, I'll certainly let you know.

¹⁰How will you do that? David asked.

¹¹Let's go out to this field, and I'll tell you, Jonathan answered. When they got there,

¹²Jonathan said: I swear by the LORD God of Israel, that two days from now I'll know what my father is planning. Of course I'll let you know if he's friendly towards you.

¹³But if he wants to harm you, I promise to tell you and help you escape. And I ask the LORD to punish me

severely if I don't keep my promise. I pray that the LORD will bless you, just as he used to bless my father.

¹⁴Some day the LORD will wipe out all your enemies. Then if I'm still alive, please be as kind to me as the LORD has been. But if I'm dead, be kind to my family.

¹⁵(20:14)

¹⁶Jonathan and David made an agreement that even David's descendants would have to keep. Then Jonathan said, I pray that the LORD will take revenge on your descendants if they break our promise.

¹⁷Jonathan thought as much of David as he did of himself, so he asked David to promise once more that he would be a loyal friend.

¹⁸After this Jonathan said: Tomorrow is the New Moon Festival, and people will wonder where you are, because your place will be empty.

¹⁹By the day after tomorrow, everyone will think you've been gone a long time. Then go to the place where you hid before and stay beside Going-Away Rock.

²⁰ I'll shoot three arrows at a target off to the side of the rock,

²¹ and send my servant to find the arrows. You'll know if it's safe to come out by what I tell him. If it is safe, I swear by the living LORD that I'll say, The arrows are on this side of you! Pick them up!

²² But if it isn't safe, I'll say to the boy, The arrows are further away! This will mean that the LORD wants you to leave, and you must go.

²³ But he will always watch us to make sure that we keep the promise we made to each other.

²⁴ So David hid there in the field. During the New Moon Festival, Saul sat down to eat

²⁵ by the wall, just as he always did. Jonathan sat across from him, and Abner sat next to him. But David's place was empty.

²⁶ Saul didn't say anything that day, because he was thinking, Something must have happened to make David unfit to be at the Festival. Yes, something must have happened.

²⁷ The day after the New Moon Festival, when David's place was still empty, Saul asked Jonathan, Why hasn't that son of Jesse come to eat with us? He wasn't here yesterday, and he still isn't here today!

²⁸ Jonathan answered, The reason David hasn't come to eat with you is that he begged me to let him go to Bethlehem. He said, Please let me go. My family is offering a sacrifice, and my brother told me I have to be there. Do me this favour and let me slip away to see my brothers.

²⁹ (20: 28)

³⁰ Saul was furious with Jonathan and yelled, You're no son of mine, you traitor! I know you've chosen to be loyal to that son of Jesse. You should be ashamed of yourself! And your own mother should be ashamed that you were ever born.

³¹ You'll never be safe, and your kingdom will be in danger as long as that son of Jesse is alive. Turn him over to me now! He deserves to die!

³² Why do you want to kill David? Jonathan asked. What has he done?

³³ Saul threw his spear at Jonathan and tried to kill him. Then Jonathan was sure that his father really did want to kill David.

³⁴ Jonathan was angry that his father had insulted David so terribly. He got up, left the table, and didn't eat anything all that day.

³⁵ In the morning, Jonathan went out to the field to meet David. He took a servant boy along

³⁶ and told him, When I shoot the arrows, you run and find them for me. The boy started running, and Jonathan shot an arrow so that it would go beyond him.

³⁷ When the boy got near the place where the arrow had landed, Jonathan shouted, Isn't the arrow on past you?

³⁸ Jonathan shouted to him again, Hurry up! Don't stop! The boy picked up the arrows and brought them back to Jonathan,

³⁹ but he had no idea about what was going on. Only Jonathan and David knew.

⁴⁰Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and told him, Take these back into town.

⁴¹After the boy had gone, David got up from beside the mound and bowed very low three times. Then he and Jonathan kissed each other and cried, but David cried louder.

⁴²Jonathan said, Take care of yourself. And remember, we have each asked the LORD to watch and make sure that we and our descendants keep our promise for ever. David left and Jonathan went back to town.

21 ¹David went to see Ahimelech, a priest who lived in the town of Nob. Ahimelech was trembling with fear as he came out to meet David. Why are you alone? Ahimelech asked. Why isn't anyone else with you?

²I'm on a mission for King Saul, David answered. He ordered me not to tell anyone what the mission is all about, so I told my soldiers to stay somewhere else.

³Do you have any food you can give me? Could you spare five loaves of bread?

⁴The only bread I have is the sacred bread, the priest told David. You can have it if your soldiers didn't sleep with women last night.

⁵Of course we didn't sleep with women, David answered. I never let my men do that when we're on a mission. They have to be acceptable to worship God even when we're on an ordinary mission, and today we're on a special mission.

⁶The only bread the priest had was the sacred bread that he had taken from the place of worship after putting out the fresh loaves. So he gave it to David.

⁷It so happened that one of Saul's officers was there, worshipping the LORD that day. His name was Doeg the Edomite, and he was the strongest of Saul's shepherds.

⁸David asked Ahimelech, Do you have a spear or a sword? I had to leave so quickly on this mission for the king that I didn't bring along my sword or any other weapons.

⁹The priest answered, The only sword here is the one that belonged to Goliath the Philistine. You were the one who killed him in Elah Valley, and so you

can take his sword if you want to. It's wrapped in a cloth behind the statue. It's the best sword there is, David said. I'll take it!

¹⁰David kept on running from Saul that day until he came to Gath, where he met with King Achish.

¹¹The officers of King Achish were also there, and they asked Achish, Isn't David a king back in his own country? Don't the Israelites dance and sing, Saul has killed a thousand enemies; David has killed ten thousand enemies?

¹²David thought about what they were saying, and it made him afraid of Achish.

¹³So in front of everyone, he pretended to be insane. He acted confused and scratched on the doors of the town gate, while drooling in his beard.

¹⁴Look at him! Achish said to his officers. You can see he's mad. Why did you bring him to me?

¹⁵I have enough mad people without your bringing another one here. Keep him away from my palace!

22¹When David escaped from the town of Gath, he went to Adullam Cave. His brothers and the rest of his

family found out where he was, and they followed him there.

²A lot of other people joined him too. Some were in trouble, others were angry or in debt, and David was soon the leader of four hundred men.

³David left Adullam Cave and went to the town of Mizpeh in Moab, where he talked with the king of Moab. Please, David said, let my father and mother stay with you until I find out what God will do with me.

⁴So he brought his parents to the king of Moab, and they stayed with him while David was in hiding.

⁵One day the prophet Gad told David, Don't stay here! Go back to Judah. David then left and went to Hereth Forest.

⁶Saul was sitting under a small tree on top of the hill at Gibeah when he heard that David and his men had been seen. Saul was holding his spear, and his officers were standing in front of him.

⁷He told them: Listen to me! You belong to the Benjamin tribe, so if that son of Jesse ever becomes king, he won't give you fields or vineyards. He won't make

you officers in charge of thousands or hundreds as I have done.

⁸But you're all plotting against me! Not one of you told me that my own son Jonathan had made an agreement with him. Not one of you cared enough to tell me that Jonathan had helped one of my officers rebel. Now that son of Jesse is trying to ambush me.

⁹Doeg the Edomite was standing with the other officers and spoke up, When I was in the town of Nob, I saw that son of Jesse. He was visiting the priest Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

¹⁰Ahimelech talked to the LORD for him, then gave him food and the sword that had belonged to Goliath the Philistine.

¹¹Saul sent a message to Ahimelech and his whole family of priests at Nob, ordering them to come to him. When they came,

¹²Saul told them, Listen to me, you son of Ahitub. Certainly, Your Majesty, Ahimelech answered.

¹³Saul demanded, Why did you plot against me with that son of Jesse? You helped him rebel against me by giving

him food and a sword, and by talking with God for him. Now he's trying to ambush me!

¹⁴Your Majesty, none of your officers is more loyal than David! Ahimelech replied. He's your son-in-law and the captain of your bodyguard. Everyone in your family respects him.

¹⁵This isn't the first time I've talked with God for David, and it's never made you angry before! Please don't accuse me or my family like this. I have no idea what's going on!

¹⁶Ahimelech, Saul said, you and your whole family are going to die.

¹⁷Saul shouted to his bodyguards, These priests of the LORD helped David! They knew he was running away, but they didn't tell me. Kill them! But the king's officers would not attack the priests of the LORD.

¹⁸Saul turned to Doeg, who was from Edom, and said, Kill the priests! On that same day, Doeg killed eighty-five priests.

¹⁹Then he attacked the town of Nob, where the priests had lived, and he killed everyone there men, women, children,

and babies. He even killed their cattle, donkeys, and sheep.

²⁰ Ahimelech's son Abiathar was the only one who escaped. He ran to David

²¹ and told him, Saul has murdered the priests at Nob!

²² David answered, That day when I saw Doeg, I knew he would tell Saul! Your family died because of me.

²³ Stay here. Isn't the same person trying to kill both of us? Don't worry! You'll be safe here with me.

23¹ One day some people told David, The Philistines keep attacking the town of Keilah and stealing grain from the threshing place.

² David asked the LORD, Should I attack these Philistines? Yes, the LORD answered. Attack them and rescue Keilah.

³ But David's men said, Look, even here in Judah we're afraid of the Philistines. We will be terrified if we try to fight them at Keilah!

⁴ David asked the LORD about it again. Leave at once, the LORD answered. I will give you victory over the Philistines at Keilah.

⁵ David and his men went there and fiercely attacked the Philistines. They killed many of them, then led away their cattle, and rescued the people of Keilah.

⁶ Meanwhile, Saul heard that David was in Keilah. God has let me catch David, Saul said. David is trapped inside a walled town where the gates can be locked. Saul decided to go there and surround the town, in order to trap David and his men. He sent messengers who told the towns and villages, Send men to serve in Saul's army! By this time, Abiathar had joined David in Keilah and had brought along everything he needed to get answers from God.

⁷ (23: 6)

⁸ (23: 6)

⁹ David heard about Saul's plan to capture him, and he told Abiathar, Let's ask God what we should do.

¹⁰ David prayed, LORD God of Israel, I was told that Saul is planning to come here. What should I do? Suppose he threatens to destroy the town because of me.

¹¹ Would the leaders of Keilah turn me over to Saul? Or is he really coming?

Please tell me, LORD. Yes, he will come, the LORD answered.

¹²David asked, Would the leaders of Keilah hand me and my soldiers over to Saul? Yes, they would, the LORD answered.

¹³David and his six hundred men got out of there fast and started moving from place to place. Saul heard that David had left Keilah, and he decided not to go after him.

¹⁴David stayed in hide-outs in the hill country of Ziph Desert. Saul kept searching, but God never let Saul catch him.

¹⁵One time, David was at Horesh in Ziph Desert. He was afraid because Saul had come to the area to kill him.

¹⁶But Jonathan went to see David, and God helped him encourage David.

¹⁷Don't be afraid, Jonathan said. My father Saul will never get his hands on you. In fact, you're going to be the next king of Israel, and I'll be your highest official. Even my father knows it's true.

¹⁸They both promised the LORD that they would always be loyal to each other.

Then Jonathan went home, but David stayed at Horesh.

¹⁹Some people from the town of Ziph went to Saul at Gibeah and said, Your Majesty, David has a hide-out not far from us! It's near Horesh, somewhere on Mount Hachilah south of Jeshimon.

²⁰If you come, we will help you catch him.

²¹Saul told them: You've done me a big favour, and I pray that the LORD will bless you.

²²Now please do just a little more for me. Find out exactly where David is, as well as where he goes, and who has seen him there. I've been told that he's very cunning.

²³Find out where all his hiding places are and come back when you're sure. Then I'll go with you. If he is still in the area, or anywhere among the clans of Judah, I'll find him.

²⁴The people from Ziph went back ahead of Saul, and they found out that David and his men were still south of Jeshimon in the Maon Desert.

²⁵Saul and his army set out to find David. But David heard that Saul was

coming, and he went to a place called The Rock, one of his hide-outs in Maon Desert. Saul found out where David was and started closing in on him.

²⁶Saul was going around a hill on one side, and David and his men were on the other side, trying to get away. Saul and his soldiers were just about to capture David and his men,

²⁷when a messenger came to Saul and said, Come quickly! The Philistines are attacking Israel and taking everything.

²⁸Saul stopped going after David and went back to fight the Philistines. That's why the place is called Escape Rock.

²⁹David left and went to live in the hide-outs at En-Gedi.

24¹When Saul got back from fighting off the Philistines, he heard that David was in the desert around En-Gedi.

²Saul led three thousand of Israel's best soldiers out to look for David and his men near Wild Goat Rocks at En-Gedi.

³There were some sheep pens along the side of the road, and one of them was built around the entrance to a cave. Saul went into the cave to relieve

himself. David and his men were hiding at the back of the cave.

⁴They whispered to David, The LORD told you he was going to let you defeat your enemies and do whatever you want with them. This must be the day the LORD was talking about. David sneaked over and cut off a small piece of Saul's robe, but Saul didn't notice a thing.

⁵Afterwards, David was sorry that he had even done that,

⁶and he told his men, Stop talking foolishly. We're not going to attack Saul. He's my king, and I pray that the LORD will keep me from doing anything to harm his chosen king. Saul left the cave and started down the road.

⁷ (24: 6)

⁸Soon, David also got up and left the cave. Your Majesty! he shouted from a distance. Saul turned around to look. David bowed down very low

⁹and said: Your Majesty, why do you listen to people who say that I'm trying to harm you?

¹⁰You can see for yourself that the LORD gave me the chance to catch you in the cave today. Some of my men

wanted to kill you, but I wouldn't let them do it. I told them, I will not harm the LORD's chosen king!

¹¹Your Majesty, look at what I'm holding. You can see that it's a piece of your robe. If I could cut off a piece of your robe, I could have killed you. But I let you live, and that should prove I'm not trying to harm you or to rebel. I haven't done anything to you, and yet you keep trying to ambush and kill me.

¹²I'll let the LORD decide which one of us has done right. I pray that the LORD will punish you for what you're doing to me, but I won't do anything to you.

¹³An old proverb says, Only evil people do evil things, and so I won't harm you.

¹⁴Why should the king of Israel be out chasing me, anyway? I'm as worthless as a dead dog or a flea.

¹⁵I pray that the LORD will help me escape and show that I am in the right.

¹⁶David, my son is that you? Saul asked. Then he started crying

¹⁷and said: David, you're a better person than I am. You treated me with kindness, even though I've been cruel to you.

¹⁸You've told me how you were kind enough not to kill me when the LORD gave you the chance.

¹⁹If you really were my enemy, you wouldn't have let me leave here alive. I pray that the LORD will give you a big reward for what you did today.

²⁰I realize now that you will be the next king, and a powerful king at that.

²¹Promise me with the LORD as your witness, that you won't wipe out my descendants. Let them live to keep my family name alive.

²²So David promised, and Saul went home. David and his men returned to their hide-out.

25¹ Samuel died, and people from all over Israel gathered to mourn for him when he was buried at his home in Ramah. Meanwhile, David moved his camp to Paran Desert.

²Nabal was a very rich man who lived in Maon. He owned three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, which he kept at Carmel. His wife Abigail was sensible and beautiful, but he was from the Caleb clan and was rough and mean.

³(25: 2)

⁴One day, Nabal was in Carmel, while his servants cut the wool from his sheep. David was in the desert when he heard about it.

⁵So he sent ten men to Carmel with this message for Nabal: I hope that you and your family are healthy and that all is going well for you.

⁶(25:5)

⁷I've heard that you are cutting the wool from your sheep. When your shepherds were with us in Carmel, we didn't harm them, and nothing was ever stolen from them.

⁸Ask your shepherds, and they'll tell you the same thing. My servants are your servants, and you are like a father to me. This is a day for celebrating, so please be kind and share some of your food with us.

⁹David's men went to Nabal and gave him David's message, then they waited for Nabal's answer.

¹⁰This is what he said: Who does this David think he is? That son of Jesse is just one more slave on the run from his master, and there are too many of them these days.

¹¹ What makes you think I would take my bread, my water, and the meat that I've had cooked for my own servants and give it to you? Besides, I'm not sure that David sent you!

¹² The men returned to their camp and told David everything Nabal had said.

¹³ Everybody get your swords! David ordered. They all strapped on their swords. Two hundred men stayed behind to guard the camp, but the other four hundred followed David.

¹⁴ Meanwhile, one of Nabal's servants told Abigail: David's men were often nearby while we were taking care of the sheep in the fields. They were very good to us, they never hurt us, and nothing was ever stolen from us while they were nearby. With them around day or night, we were as safe as we would have been inside a walled city. David sent some messengers from the desert to wish our master well, but he shouted insults at them.

¹⁵ (25: 14)

¹⁶ (25: 14)

¹⁷ He's a bully who won't listen to anyone. Isn't there something you can

do? Please think of something! Or else our master and his family and everyone who works for him are all doomed.

¹⁸Abigail quickly got together two hundred loaves of bread, two large clay jars of wine, the meat from five sheep, a large sack of roasted grain, a hundred handfuls of raisins, and two hundred handfuls of dried figs. She loaded all the food on donkeys

¹⁹and told her servants, Take this on ahead, and I'll catch up with you. She didn't tell her husband Nabal what she was doing.

²⁰Abigail was riding her donkey on the path that led around the hillside, when suddenly she met David and his men heading straight at her.

²¹David had just been saying, I wasted my time guarding Nabal's things in the desert and keeping them from being stolen! I was good to him, and now he pays me back with insults.

²²I swear that by morning, there won't be a man or boy left from his family or his servants' families. I pray that God will punish me if I don't do it!

²³ Abigail quickly got off her donkey and bowed down in front of David.

²⁴ Then she said: Sir, please let me explain!

²⁵ Don't pay any attention to that good-for-nothing Nabal. His name means fool, and it really fits him! I didn't see the men you sent,

²⁶ but please take this gift of food that I've brought and share it with your followers. The LORD has kept you from taking revenge and from killing innocent people. But I hope your enemies and anyone else who wants to harm you will end up like Nabal. I swear this by the living LORD and by your life.

²⁷ (25: 26)

²⁸ Please forgive me if I say a little more. The LORD will always protect you and your family, because you fight for him. I pray that you won't ever do anything evil as long as you live.

²⁹ The LORD your God will keep you safe when your enemies try to kill you. But he will snatch away their lives quicker than you can throw a stone from a sling.

³⁰ The LORD has promised to do many good things for you, even to make you

the ruler of Israel. The LORD will keep his promises to you,

³¹ and now your conscience will be clear, because you won't be guilty of taking revenge and killing innocent people. When the LORD does all those good things for you, please remember me.

³² David told her: I praise the LORD God of Israel! He must have sent you to meet me today.

³³ And you should also be praised. Your good sense kept me from taking revenge and killing innocent people.

³⁴ If you hadn't come to meet me so quickly, every man and boy in Nabal's family and in his servants' families would have been killed by morning. I swear by the living LORD God of Israel who protected you that this is the truth.

³⁵ David accepted the food Abigail had brought. Don't worry, he said. You can go home now. I'll do what you asked.

³⁶ Abigail went back home and found Nabal throwing a party fit for a king. He was very drunk and feeling good, so she didn't tell him anything that night.

³⁷ But when he sobered up the next morning, Abigail told him everything that

had happened. Nabal had a heart attack, and he lay in bed as still as a stone.

³⁸Ten days later, the LORD took his life.

³⁹David heard that Nabal had died. I praise the LORD! David said. He has judged Nabal guilty for insulting me. The LORD kept me from doing anything wrong, and he made sure that Nabal hurt only himself with his own evil. Abigail was still at Carmel. So David sent messengers to ask her if she would marry him.

⁴⁰ (25: 39)

⁴¹ She bowed down and said, I would willingly be David's slave and wash his servants' feet.

⁴² Abigail quickly got ready and went back with David's messengers. She rode on her donkey, while five of her servant women walked beside her. She and David were married as soon as she arrived.

⁴³ David had earlier married Ahinoam from the town of Jezreel, so both she and Abigail were now David's wives.

⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Saul had arranged for Michal to marry Palti the son of Laish, who came from the town of Gallim.

26¹ Once again, some people from Ziph went to Gibeah to talk with Saul. David has a hide-out on Mount Hachilah near Jeshimon out in the desert, they told him.

² Saul took three thousand of Israel's best soldiers and went to look for David there in Ziph Desert.

³ Saul set up camp on Mount Hachilah, which is across the road from Jeshimon. But David was hiding out in the desert. When David heard that Saul was following him,

⁴ he sent some spies to find out if it was true.

⁵ Then he sneaked up to Saul's camp. He noticed that Saul and his army commander Abner the son of Ner were sleeping in the middle of the camp, with soldiers sleeping all around them.

⁶ David asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Joab's brother Abishai, Which one of you will go with me into Saul's camp? I will! Abishai answered.

⁷ That same night, David and Abishai crept into the camp. Saul was sleeping, and his spear was stuck in the ground not far from his head. Abner and the

soldiers were sound asleep all around him.

⁸Abishai whispered, This time God has let you get your hands on your enemy! I'll pin him to the ground with one thrust of his own spear.

⁹Don't kill him! David whispered back. The LORD will punish anyone who kills his chosen king.

¹⁰As surely as the LORD lives, the LORD will kill Saul, or Saul will die a natural death or be killed in battle.

¹¹But I pray that the LORD will keep me from harming his chosen king. Let's grab his spear and his water jar and get out of here!

¹²David took the spear and the water jar, then left the camp. None of Saul's soldiers knew what had happened or even woke up the LORD had made all of them fall sound asleep.

¹³David and Abishai crossed the valley and went to the top of the next hill, where they were at a safe distance.

¹⁴Abner! David shouted towards Saul's army. Can you hear me? Abner shouted back. Who dares disturb the king?

¹⁵Abner, what kind of a man are you? David replied. Aren't you supposed to be the best soldier in Israel? Then why didn't you protect your king? Anyone who went into your camp could have killed him tonight.

¹⁶You're a complete failure! I swear by the living LORD that you and your men deserve to die for not protecting the LORD's chosen king. Look and see if you can find the king's spear and the water jar that were near his head.

¹⁷Saul could tell it was David's voice, and he called out, David, my son! Is that you? Yes it is, Your Majesty.

¹⁸Why are you after me? Have I done something wrong, or have I committed a crime?

¹⁹Please listen to what I have to say. If the LORD has turned you against me, perhaps a sacrifice will make him change his mind. But if some people have turned you against me, I hope the LORD will punish them! They have forced me to leave the land that belongs to the LORD and have told me to worship foreign gods.

²⁰ Don't let me die in a land far away from the LORD. I'm no more important than a flea! Why should the king of Israel hunt me down as if I were a bird in the mountains?

²¹ David, you had the chance to kill me today. But you didn't. I was very wrong about you. It was a terrible mistake for me to try to kill you. I've acted like a fool, but I'll never try to harm you again. You're like a son to me, so please come back.

²² Your Majesty, here's your spear! Let one of your soldiers come and get it.

²³ The LORD put you in my power today, but you are his chosen king and I wouldn't harm you. The LORD rewards people who are faithful and live right.

²⁴ I saved your life today, and I pray that the LORD will protect me and keep me safe.

²⁵ David, my son, I pray that the Lord will bless you and make you successful! Saul went back home. David also left,

27 ¹ but he thought to himself, One of these days, Saul is going to kill me. The only way to escape from him is to go to Philistia. Then I'll be outside

Israel, and Saul will give up trying to catch me.

²David and his six hundred men went across the border to stay in Gath with King Achish the son of Maoch. His men brought their families with them. David brought his wife Ahinoam whose home town was Jezreel, and he also brought his wife Abigail who had been married to Nabal from Carmel.

³(27: 2)

⁴When Saul found out that David had run off to Gath, he stopped trying to catch him.

⁵One day, David was talking with Achish and said, If you are happy with me, then let me live in one of the towns in the countryside. I'm not important enough to live here with you in the royal city.

⁶Achish gave David the town of Ziklag that same day, and Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.

⁷David was in Philistia for a year and four months.

⁸The Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites lived in the area from Telam

to Shur and on as far as Egypt, and David often attacked their towns.

⁹Whenever David and his men attacked a town, they took the sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and the clothing, and killed everyone who lived there. After he returned from a raid, David always went to see Achish,

¹⁰who would ask, Where did you attack today? David would answer, Oh, we attacked some desert town that belonged to the Judah tribe. Sometimes David would say, Oh, we attacked a town in the desert where the Jerahmeel clan lives or We attacked a town in the desert where the Kenites live.

¹¹That's why David killed everyone in the towns he attacked. He thought, If I let any of them live, they might come to Gath and tell what I've really been doing. David made these raids all the time he was in Philistia.

¹²But Achish trusted David and thought, David's people must be furious with him. From now on he will have to take orders from me.

28¹ Samuel had died some time earlier, and people from all over

Israel had attended his funeral in his home town of Ramah. Meanwhile, Saul had been trying to get rid of everyone who spoke with the spirits of the dead. But one day the Philistines brought their soldiers together to attack Israel. Achish told David, Of course, you know that you and your men must fight as part of our Philistine army. David answered, That will give you a chance to see for yourself just how well we can fight! In that case, Achish said, you and your men will always be my bodyguards.

² (28: 1)

³ (28: 1)

⁴ The Philistines went to Shunem and set up camp. Saul called the army of Israel together, and they set up their camp in Gilboa.

⁵ Saul took one look at the Philistine army and started shaking with fear.

⁶ So he asked the LORD what to do. But the LORD would not answer, either in a dream or by a priest or a prophet.

⁷ Then Saul told his officers, Find me a woman who can talk to the spirits of the dead. I'll go to her and find out what's going to happen. His servants told him,

There's a woman at Endor who can talk to spirits of the dead.

⁸That night, Saul put on different clothing so nobody would recognize him. Then he and two of his men went to the woman, and asked, Will you bring up the ghost of someone for us?

⁹The woman said, Why are you trying to trick me and get me killed? You know King Saul has got rid of everyone who talks to the spirits of the dead!

¹⁰Saul replied, I swear by the living LORD that nothing will happen to you because of this.

¹¹Who do you want me to bring up? she asked. Bring up the ghost of Samuel, he answered.

¹²When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed. Then she turned to Saul and said, You've tricked me! You're the king!

¹³Don't be afraid, Saul replied. Just tell me what you see. She answered, I see a spirit rising up out of the ground.

¹⁴What does it look like? It looks like an old man wearing a robe. Saul knew it was Samuel, so he bowed down low.

¹⁵Why are you bothering me by bringing me up like this? Samuel asked.

I'm terribly worried, Saul answered. The Philistines are about to attack me. God has turned his back on me and won't answer any more by prophets or by dreams. What should I do?

¹⁶Samuel said: If the LORD has turned away from you and is now your enemy, don't ask me what to do.

¹⁷I've already told you: the LORD has sworn to take the kingdom from you and give it to David. And that's just what he's doing!

¹⁸When the LORD was angry with the Amalekites, he told you to destroy them, but you didn't do it. That's why the LORD is doing this to you.

¹⁹Tomorrow the LORD will let the Philistines defeat Israel's army, then you and your sons will join me down here in the world of the dead.

²⁰At once, Saul collapsed and lay stretched out on the floor, terrified at what Samuel had said. He was weak because he had not eaten anything since the day before.

²¹The woman came over to Saul, and when she saw that he was completely terrified, she said, Your Majesty, I

listened to you and risked my life to do what you asked.

²²Now please listen to me. Let me get you a little something to eat. It will give you strength for your walk back to camp.

²³No, I won't eat! But his officers and the woman kept on urging Saul, until he finally agreed. He got up off the floor and sat on the bed.

²⁴Straight away the woman killed a calf that she had been fattening up. She cooked part of the meat and baked some thin bread.

²⁵Then she served the food to Saul and his officers, who ate and left before daylight.

29¹The Philistines had brought their whole army to Aphek, while Israel's army was camping near Jezreel Spring.

²The Philistine rulers and their troops were marching past the Philistine army commanders in groups of a hundred and a thousand. When David and his men marched by at the end with Achish, the commanders said, What are these worthless Israelites doing here? They are David's men, Achish answered. David

used to be one of Saul's officers, but he left Saul and joined my army a long time ago. I've never had even one complaint about him.

³ (29: 2)

⁴The Philistine army commanders were angry and shouted: Send David back to the town you gave him. We won't have him going into the battle with us. He could turn and fight against us! Saul would take David back as an officer if David brought him the heads of our soldiers.

⁵The Israelites even dance and sing, Saul has killed a thousand enemies; David has killed ten thousand enemies!

⁶Achish called David over and said: I swear by the living LORD that you've been honest with me, and I want you to fight by my side. I don't think you've done anything wrong from the day you joined me until this very moment. But the other Philistine rulers don't want you to come along.

⁷Go back home and try not to upset them.

⁸But what have I done? David asked. Do you know of anything I've ever done

that would keep me from fighting the enemies of my king?

⁹Achish said: I believe that you're as good as an angel of God, but our army commanders have decided that you can't fight in this battle.

¹⁰You and your troops will have to go back to the town I gave you. Get up and leave tomorrow morning as soon as it's light. I am pleased with you, so don't let any of this bother you.

¹¹David and his men got up early in the morning and headed back towards Philistia, while the Philistines left for Jezreel.

30¹ It took David and his men three days to reach Ziklag. But while they had been away, the Amalekites had been raiding in the desert around there. They had attacked Ziklag, burnt it to the ground,

²and had taken away the women and children.

³When David and his men came to Ziklag, they saw the burnt-out ruins and learnt that their families had been taken captive.

⁴They started crying and kept it up until they were too weak to cry any more.

⁵David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, had been taken captive with everyone else.

⁶David was desperate. His soldiers were so upset over what had happened to their sons and daughters that they were thinking about stoning David to death. But he felt the LORD God giving him strength,

⁷and he said to the priest, Abiathar, let's ask God what to do. Abiathar brought everything he needed to get answers from God, and he went over to David.

⁸Then David asked the LORD, Should I go after the people who raided our town? Can I catch up with them? Go after them, the LORD answered. You will catch up with them, and you will rescue your families.

⁹David led his six hundred men to Besor Gorge, but two hundred of them were too tired to go across. So they stayed behind, while David and the other four hundred men crossed the gorge.

¹⁰(30: 9)

¹¹ Some of David's men found an Egyptian out in a field and took him to David. They gave the Egyptian some bread, and he ate it. Then they gave him a drink of water,

¹² some dried figs, and two handfuls of raisins. This was the first time in three days he had tasted food or water. Now he felt much better.

¹³ Who is your master? David asked. And where do you come from? I'm from Egypt, the young man answered. I'm the servant of an Amalekite, but he left me here three days ago because I was sick.

¹⁴ We had attacked some towns in the desert where the Cherethites live, in the area that belongs to Judah, and in the desert where the Caleb clan lives. And we burnt down Ziklag.

¹⁵ Will you take me to those Amalekites? David asked. Yes, I will, if you promise with God as a witness that you won't kill me or hand me over to my master.

¹⁶ He led David to the Amalekites. They were eating and drinking everywhere, celebrating because of what they had taken from Philistia and Judah.

¹⁷ David attacked just before sunrise the next day and fought until sunset. Four hundred Amalekites rode away on camels, but they were the only ones who escaped.

¹⁸ David rescued his two wives and everyone else the Amalekites had taken from Ziklag.

¹⁹ No one was missing young or old, sons or daughters. David brought back everything that had been stolen,

²⁰ including their livestock. David also took the sheep and cattle that the Amalekites had with them, but he kept these separate from the others. Everyone agreed that these would be David's reward.

²¹ On the way back, David went to the two hundred men he had left at Besor Gorge, because they had been too tired to keep up with him. They came towards David and the people who were with him. When David was close enough, he greeted the two hundred men and asked how they were doing.

²² Some of David's men were good-for-nothings, and they said, Those men didn't go with us to the battle, so they

don't get any of the things we took back from the Amalekites. Let them take their wives and children and go!

²³But David said: My friends, don't be so greedy with what the LORD has given us! The LORD protected us and gave us victory over the people who attacked.

²⁴Who would pay attention to you, anyway? Soldiers who stay behind to guard the camp get as much as those who go into battle.

²⁵David made this a law for Israel, and it has been the same ever since.

²⁶David went back to Ziklag with everything they had taken from the Amalekites. He sent some of these things as gifts to his friends who were leaders of Judah, and he told them, We took these things from the LORD's enemies. Please accept them as a gift.

²⁷This is a list of the towns where David sent gifts: Bethel, Ramoth in the Southern Desert, Jattir, Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa, Racal, the towns belonging to the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites, Hormah, Bor-Ashan, Athach, and Hebron. He also sent gifts to the

other towns where he and his men had travelled.

²⁸ (30: 27)

²⁹ (30: 27)

³⁰ (30: 27)

³¹ (30: 27)

31 ¹ Meanwhile, the Philistines were fighting Israel at Mount Gilboa. Israel's soldiers ran from the Philistines, and many of them were killed.

² The Philistines closed in on Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua.

³ The fighting was fierce around Saul, and he was badly wounded by enemy arrows.

⁴ Saul told the soldier who carried his weapons, Kill me with your sword! I don't want those worthless Philistines to torture me and make fun of me. But the soldier was afraid to kill him. Saul then took out his own sword; he stuck the blade into his stomach, and fell on it.

⁵ When the soldier knew that Saul was dead, he killed himself in the same way.

⁶ Saul was dead, his three sons were dead, and the soldier who carried his

weapons was dead. They and all his soldiers died on that same day.

⁷The Israelites on the other side of Jezreel Valley and the other side of the Jordan learnt that Saul and his sons were dead. They saw that the Israelite army had run away. So they ran away too, and the Philistines moved into the towns the Israelites had left behind.

⁸The day after the battle, when the Philistines returned to the battlefield to take the weapons of the dead Israelite soldiers, they found Saul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa.

⁹The Philistines cut off Saul's head and pulled off his armour. Then they put his armour in the temple of the goddess Astarte, and they nailed his body to the city wall of Beth-Shan. They also sent messengers everywhere in Philistia to spread the good news in the temples of their idols and among their people.

¹⁰(31: 9)

¹¹The people who lived in Jabesh in Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul's body.

¹²So one night, some brave men from Jabesh went to Beth-Shan. They took

down the bodies of Saul and his sons, then brought them back to Jabesh and burnt them.

¹³They buried the bones under a small tree in Jabesh, and for seven days, they went without eating to show their sorrow.

2 Samuel

1 ¹ Saul was dead. Meanwhile, David had defeated the Amalekites and returned to Ziklag.

² Three days later, a soldier came from Saul's army. His clothes were torn, and earth was on his head. He went to David and knelt down in front of him.

³ David asked, Where did you come from? The man answered, From Israel's army. I barely escaped with my life.

⁴ Who won the battle? David asked. The man said, Our army turned and ran, but many were wounded and died. Even King Saul and his son Jonathan are dead.

⁵ David asked, How do you know Saul and Jonathan are dead?

⁶ The young man replied: I was on Mount Gilboa and saw King Saul leaning on his spear. The enemy's war chariots and cavalry were closing in on him.

⁷ When he turned round and saw me, he called me over. I went and asked what he wanted.

⁸Saul asked me, Who are you? An Amalekite, I answered.

⁹Then he said, Kill me! I'm dying, and I'm in terrible pain.

¹⁰So I killed him. I knew he was too badly wounded to live much longer. Then I took his crown and his arm-band, and I brought them to you, Your Majesty. Here they are.

¹¹Straight away, David and his soldiers tore their clothes in sorrow.

¹²They cried all day long and would not eat anything. Everyone was sad because Saul, his son Jonathan, and many of the LORD's people had been killed in the battle.

¹³David asked the young man, Where is your home? The man replied, My father is an Amalekite, but we live in Israel.

¹⁴David said to him, Why weren't you afraid to kill the LORD's chosen king? And you even told what you did. It's your own fault that you're going to die! Then David told one of his soldiers, Come here and kill this man!

¹⁵(1:14)

¹⁶(1:14)

¹⁷ David sang a song in memory of Saul and Jonathan,

¹⁸ and he ordered his men to teach the song to everyone in Judah. He called it The Song of the Bow, and it can be found in The Book of Jashar. This is the song:

¹⁹ Israel, your famous hero lies dead on the hills, and your mighty warriors have fallen!

²⁰ Don't tell it in Gath or spread the news in the streets of Ashkelon. The godless Philistine women will be happy and jump for joy.

²¹ Don't let dew or rain fall on the hills of Gilboa. Don't let its fields grow offerings for God. There the warriors' shields were smeared with mud, and Saul's own shield was left unpolished.

²² The arrows of Jonathan struck, and warriors died. The sword of Saul cut the enemy apart.

²³ It was easy to love Saul and Jonathan. Together in life, together in death, they were faster than eagles and stronger than lions.

²⁴ Women of Israel, cry for Saul. He brought you fine red cloth and jewellery made of gold.

²⁵ Our warriors have fallen in the heat of battle, and Jonathan lies dead on the hills of Gilboa.

²⁶ Jonathan, I miss you most! I loved you like a brother. You were truly loyal to me, more faithful than a wife to her husband.

²⁷ Our warriors have fallen, and their weapons are destroyed.

2¹ Later, David asked the LORD, Should I go back to one of the towns of Judah? The LORD answered, Yes. David asked, Which town should I go to? Go to Hebron, the LORD replied.

² David went to Hebron with his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail. Ahinoam was from Jezreel, and Abigail was the widow of Nabal from Carmel.

³ David also took his men and their families to live in the villages near Hebron.

⁴ The people of Judah met with David at Hebron and poured olive oil on his head to show that he was their new king. Then they told David, The people from Jabesh in Gilead buried Saul.

⁵David sent messengers to tell them: The LORD bless you! You were kind enough to bury Saul your ruler,

⁶and I pray that the LORD will be kind and faithful to you. I will be your friend because of what you have done.

⁷Saul is dead, but the tribe of Judah has made me their king. So be strong and have courage.

⁸Abner the son of Ner had been the general of Saul's army. He took Saul's son Ishbosheth across the River Jordan to Mahanaim

⁹and made him king of Israel, including the areas of Gilead, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin.

¹⁰Ishbosheth was forty years old at the time, and he ruled for two years. But the tribe of Judah made David their king,

¹¹and he ruled from Hebron for seven and a half years.

¹²One day, Abner and the soldiers of Ishbosheth left Mahanaim and went to Gibeon.

¹³Meanwhile, Joab the son of Zeruah was leading David's soldiers, and the two groups met at the pool in Gibeon. Abner and his men sat down on one side

of the pool, while Joab and his men sat on the other side.

¹⁴Abner yelled to Joab, Let's get some of our best soldiers to stand up and fight each other! Joab agreed,

¹⁵and twelve of Ishbosheth's men from the tribe of Benjamin got up to fight twelve of David's men.

¹⁶They grabbed each other by the hair and stabbed each other in the side with their daggers. They all died there! That's why the place in Gibeon is called Field of Daggers.

¹⁷Then everyone started fighting. Both sides fought very hard, but David's soldiers defeated Abner and the soldiers of Israel.

¹⁸Zeruiah's three sons were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel could run as fast as a deer in an open field,

¹⁹and he ran straight after Abner, without looking to the right or to the left.

²⁰When Abner turned and saw him, he said, Is that you, Asahel? Asahel answered, Yes it is.

²¹Abner said, There are soldiers all around. Stop chasing me and fight one of them! Kill him and take his clothes

and weapons for yourself. But Asahel refused to stop.

²²Abner said, If you don't turn back, I'll have to kill you! Then I could never face your brother Joab again.

²³But Asahel would not turn back, so Abner struck him in the stomach with the back end of his spear. The spear went all the way through and came out of his back. Asahel fell down and died. Everyone who saw Asahel lying dead just stopped and stood still.

²⁴But Joab and Abishai went after Abner. Finally, about sunset, they came to the hill of Ammah, not far from Giah on the road to Gibeon Desert.

²⁵Abner brought the men of Benjamin together in one group on top of a hill, and they got ready to fight.

²⁶Abner shouted to Joab, Aren't we ever going to stop killing each other? Don't you know that the longer we keep on doing this, the worse it's going to be when it's all over? When are you going to order your men to stop chasing their own relatives?

²⁷Joab shouted back, I swear by the living God, if you hadn't spoken, my

men would have chased their relatives all night!

²⁸ Joab took his trumpet and blew the signal for his soldiers to stop chasing the soldiers of Israel. Straight away, the fighting stopped.

²⁹ Abner and his troops marched through the Jordan valley all that night. Then they crossed the river and marched all morning until they arrived back at Mahanaim.

³⁰ As soon as Joab stopped chasing Abner, he got David's troops together and counted them. There were nineteen missing besides Asahel.

³¹ But David's soldiers had killed 360 of Abner's men from the tribe of Benjamin.

³² Joab and his troops carried Asahel's body to Bethlehem and buried him in the family burial place. Then they marched all night and reached Hebron before sunrise.

3¹ This battle was the beginning of a long war between the followers of Saul and the followers of David. Saul's power grew weaker, but David's grew stronger.

²Several of David's sons were born while he was living in Hebron. His eldest son was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam from Jezreel. David's second son was Chileab, whose mother was Abigail, who had been married to Nabal from Carmel. Absalom was the third. His mother was Maacah, the daughter of King Talmi of Geshur. The fourth was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. The fifth was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital. The sixth was Ithream, whose mother was Eglah, another one of David's wives.

³(3: 2)

⁴(3: 2)

⁵(3: 2)

⁶As the war went on between the families of David and Saul, Abner was gaining more power than ever in Saul's family.

⁷He had even slept with a wife of Saul by the name of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah. But Saul's son Ishbosheth told Abner, You shouldn't have slept with one of my father's wives!

⁸Abner was very angry at what Ishbosheth had said, and he told

Ishbosheth: Am I some kind of worthless dog from Judah? I've always been loyal to your father's family and to his relatives and friends. I haven't turned you over to David. And yet you talk to me as if I've committed a crime with this woman.

⁹I ask God to punish me if I don't help David get what the LORD promised him!

¹⁰God said that he wouldn't let anyone in Saul's family ever be king again and that David would be king instead. He also said that David would rule both Israel and Judah, all the way from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south.

¹¹Ishbosheth was so afraid of Abner that he could not even answer.

¹²Abner sent some of his men to David with this message: You should be the ruler of the whole nation. If you make an agreement with me, I will persuade everyone in Israel to make you their king.

¹³David sent this message back: Good! I'll make an agreement with you. But before I will even talk with you about it, you must get Saul's daughter Michal back for me.

¹⁴David sent a few of his officials to Ishbosheth to give him this message: Give me back my wife Michal! I killed a hundred Philistines so I could marry her.

¹⁵Ishbosheth sent some of his men to take Michal away from her new husband, Paltiel the son of Laish.

¹⁶Paltiel followed Michal and the men all the way to Bahurim, crying as he walked. But he went back home after Abner ordered him to leave.

¹⁷Abner talked with the leaders of the tribes of Israel and told them, You've wanted to make David your king for a long time now.

¹⁸So do it! After all, God said he would use his servant David to rescue his people Israel from their enemies, especially from the Philistines.

¹⁹Finally, Abner talked with the tribe of Benjamin. Then he left for Hebron to tell David everything that the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of the people of Israel wanted to do.

²⁰Abner took twenty soldiers with him, and when they got to Hebron, David gave a big feast for them.

²¹ After the feast, Abner said, Your Majesty, let me leave now and bring Israel here to make an agreement with you. You'll be king of the whole nation, just as you've been wanting. David told Abner he could leave, and he left without causing any trouble.

²² Soon after Abner had left Hebron, Joab and some of David's soldiers came back, bringing a lot of things they had taken from an enemy village.

²³ Just after they arrived, someone told Joab, Abner visited the king, and the king let him go. Abner even left without causing any trouble.

²⁴ Joab went to David and said, What have you done? Abner came to you, and you let him go. Now he's long gone!

²⁵ You know Abner he came to trick you. He wants to find out how strong your army is and to know everything you're doing.

²⁶ Joab left David, then he sent some messengers to catch up with Abner. They brought him back from the well at Sirah, but David did not know anything about it.

²⁷ When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab pretended he wanted to talk privately with him. So he took Abner into one of the small rooms that were part of the town gate and stabbed him in the stomach. Joab killed him because Abner had killed Joab's brother Asahel.

²⁸ David heard how Joab had killed Abner, and he said, I swear to the LORD that I am completely innocent of Abner's death!

²⁹ Joab and his family are the guilty ones. I pray that Joab's family will always be sick with sores and other skin diseases. May they all be cowards, and may they die in war or starve to death.

³⁰ Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

³¹ David told Joab and everyone with him, Show your sorrow by tearing your clothes and wearing sackcloth! Walk in front of Abner's body and cry! David walked behind the stretcher on which Abner's body was being carried.

³² Abner was buried in Hebron, while David and everyone else stood at the tomb and cried loudly.

³³Then the king sang a funeral song about Abner: Abner, why should you have died like an outlaw?

³⁴No one tied your hands or chained your feet, yet you died as a victim of murderers. Everyone started crying again.

³⁵Then they brought some food to David and told him he would feel better if he had something to eat. It was still daytime, and David said, I swear to God that I'll not take a bite of bread or anything else until sunset!

³⁶Everyone noticed what David did, and they liked it, just as they always liked what he did.

³⁷Now the people of Judah and Israel were certain that David had nothing to do with killing Abner.

³⁸David said to his officials, Don't you realize that today one of Israel's great leaders has died?

³⁹I am the chosen king, but Joab and Abishai have more power than I do. So God will have to pay them back for the evil thing they did.

4¹ Ishbosheth felt like giving up after he heard that Abner had died in Hebron. Everyone in Israel was terrified.

² Ishbosheth had put the two brothers Baanah and Rechab in charge of the soldiers who raided enemy villages. Rimmon was their father, and they were from the town of Beeroth, which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

³ The people who used to live in Beeroth had run away to Gittaim, and they still live there.

⁴ Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth, who had not been able to walk since he was five years old. It happened when someone from Jezreel told his nurse that Saul and Jonathan had died. She hurried off with the boy in her arms, but he fell and injured his legs.

⁵ One day about midday, Rechab and Baanah went to Ishbosheth's house. It was a hot day, and he was resting

⁶ in his bedroom. The two brothers went into the house, pretending to get some flour. But once they were inside, they stabbed Ishbosheth in the stomach and killed him. Then they cut off his head and took it with them. Rechab and Baanah

walked through the Jordan valley all night long.

⁷(4: 6)

⁸Finally they turned west and went to Hebron. They went in to see David and told him, Your Majesty, here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of your enemy Saul who tried to kill you! The LORD has let you get even with Saul and his family.

⁹David answered: I swear that only the LORD rescues me when I'm in trouble!

¹⁰When a man came to Ziklag and told me that Saul was dead, he thought he deserved a reward for bringing good news. But I grabbed him and killed him.

¹¹You evil men have done something much worse than he did. You've killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed. I'll make you pay for that. I'll wipe you from the face of the earth!

¹²Then David said to his troops, Kill these two brothers! Cut off their hands and feet and hang their bodies by the pool in Hebron. But bury Ishbosheth's head in Abner's tomb near Hebron. And they did.

5¹ Israel's leaders met with David at Hebron and said, We are your relatives.

² Even when Saul was king, you led our nation in battle. And the LORD promised that some day you would rule Israel and take care of us like a shepherd.

³ During the meeting, David made an agreement with the leaders and asked the LORD to be their witness. Then the leaders poured olive oil on David's head to show that he was now the king of Israel.

⁴ David was thirty years old when he became king, and he ruled for forty years.

⁵ He lived in Hebron for the first seven and a half years and ruled only Judah. Then he moved to Jerusalem, where he ruled both Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

⁶ The Jebusites lived in Jerusalem, and David led his army there to attack them. The Jebusites did not think he could get in, so they told him, You can't get in here! We could drive you away, even if we couldn't see or walk!

⁷ David told his troops, You will have to go up through the water tunnel to get those Jebusites. I hate people like them who can't walk or see. That's why there is still a rule that says, Only people who can walk and see are allowed in the temple. David captured the fortress on Mount Zion, then he moved there and named it David's City. He had the city rebuilt, starting with the landfill to the east.

⁸ (5: 7)

⁹ (5: 7)

¹⁰ David became a great and strong ruler, because the LORD All-Powerful was on his side.

¹¹ King Hiram of Tyre sent some officials to David. Carpenters and stone workers came with them, and they brought cedar logs so they could build David a palace.

¹² David knew that the LORD had made him king of Israel and that he had made him a powerful ruler for the good of his people.

¹³ After David left Hebron and moved to Jerusalem, he married many women from Jerusalem, and he had a lot of children.

¹⁴ His sons who were born there were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

¹⁵ Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,

¹⁶ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

¹⁷ The Philistines heard that David was now king of Israel, and they came into the hill country to try and capture him. But David found out and went into his fortress.

¹⁸ So the Philistines camped in Rephaim Valley.

¹⁹ David asked the LORD, Should I attack the Philistines? Will you let me win? The LORD told David, Attack! I will let you win.

²⁰ David attacked the Philistines and defeated them. Then he said, I watched the LORD break through my enemies like a mighty flood. So he named the place The Lord Broke Through.

²¹ David and his troops also carried away the idols that the Philistines had left behind.

²² Some time later, the Philistines came back into the hill country and camped in Rephaim Valley.

²³ David asked the LORD what he should do, and the LORD answered:

Don't attack them from the front. Circle around behind and attack from among the balsam trees.

²⁴Wait until you hear a sound like troops marching through the tops of the trees. Then attack quickly! That sound will mean I have marched out ahead of you to fight the Philistine army.

²⁵David obeyed the LORD and defeated the Philistines. He even chased them all the way from Geba to the entrance to Gezer.

6¹ David brought together thirty thousand of Israel's best soldiers and ²led them to Baalah in Judah, which was also called Kiriath-Jearim. They were going there to get the sacred chest and bring it back to Jerusalem. The throne of the LORD All-Powerful is above the winged creatures on top of this chest, and he is worshipped there.

³They put the sacred chest on a new ox cart and started bringing it down the hill from Abinadab's house. Abinadab's sons Uzzah and Ahio were guiding the ox cart, ⁴with Ahio walking in front of it.

⁵Some of the people of Israel were playing music on small harps and

other stringed instruments, and on tambourines, castanets, and cymbals. David and the others were happy, and they danced for the LORD with all their might.

⁶But when they came to Nacon's threshing-floor, the oxen stumbled, so Uzzah reached out and took hold of the sacred chest.

⁷The LORD God was very angry with Uzzah for doing this, and he killed Uzzah there beside the chest.

⁸David got angry with God for killing Uzzah. He named that place Bursting Out Against Uzzah, and that's what it's still called.

⁹David was afraid of the LORD and thought, Should I really take the sacred chest to my city?

¹⁰He decided not to take it there. Instead, he turned off the road and took it to the home of Obed Edom, who was from Gath.

¹¹The chest stayed there for three months, and the LORD greatly blessed Obed Edom, his family, and everything he owned. Then someone told King David, The LORD has done this because

the sacred chest is in Obed Edom's house. Straight away, David went to Obed Edom's house to get the chest and bring it to David's City. Everyone was celebrating.

¹²(6:11)

¹³The people carrying the chest walked six steps, then David sacrificed an ox and a choice cow.

¹⁴He was dancing for the LORD with all his might, but he wore only a linen cloth.

¹⁵He and everyone else were celebrating by shouting and blowing horns while the chest was being carried along.

¹⁶Saul's daughter Michal looked out of her window and watched the chest being brought into David's City. But when she saw David jumping and dancing for the LORD, she was disgusted.

¹⁷They put the chest inside a tent that David had set up for it. David worshipped the LORD by sacrificing animals and burning them on an altar,

¹⁸then he blessed the people in the name of the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁹He gave all the men and women in the crowd a small loaf of bread, some

meat, and a handful of raisins, and everyone went home.

²⁰David went home so he could ask the LORD to bless his family. But Saul's daughter Michal went out and started yelling at him. You were really great today! she said. You acted like a dirty old man, dancing around half-naked in front of your servants' slave-girls.

²¹David told her, The LORD didn't choose your father or anyone else in your family to be the leader of his people. The LORD chose me, and I was celebrating in honour of him.

²²I'll show you just how great I can be! I'll even be disgusting to myself. But those slave-girls you talked about will still honour me!

²³Michal never had any children.

7¹ King David moved into his new palace, and the LORD let his kingdom be at peace.

²Then one day, as David was talking with Nathan the prophet, David said, Look around! I live in a palace made of cedar, but the sacred chest has to stay in a tent.

³ Nathan replied, The LORD is with you, so do what you want!

⁴ That night, the LORD told Nathan

⁵ to go to David and give him this message: David, you are my servant, so listen to what I say. Why should you build a temple for me?

⁶ I didn't live in a temple when I brought my people out of Egypt, and I don't live in one now. A tent has always been my home wherever I have gone with them.

⁷ I chose leaders and told them to be like shepherds for my people Israel. But did I ever say anything to even one of them about building a cedar temple for me?

⁸ David, this is what I, the LORD All-Powerful, say to you. I brought you in from the fields where you took care of sheep, and I made you the leader of my people.

⁹ Wherever you went, I helped you and destroyed your enemies right in front of your eyes. I have made you one of the most famous people in the world.

¹⁰ I have given my people Israel a land of their own where they can live in peace, and they won't have to tremble

with fear any more. Evil nations won't bother them, as they did

¹¹ when I let judges rule my people. And I have kept your enemies from attacking you. Now I promise that you and your descendants will be kings.

¹² I'll choose one of your sons to be king when you reach the end of your life and are buried in the tomb of your ancestors. I'll make him a strong ruler,

¹³ and no one will be able to take his kingdom away from him. He will be the one to build a temple for me.

¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I'll see that he is corrected, just as children are corrected by their parents.

¹⁵ But I will never put an end to my agreement with him, as I put an end to my agreement with Saul, who was king before you.

¹⁶ I will make sure that one of your descendants will always be king.

¹⁷ Nathan told David exactly what he had heard in the vision.

¹⁸ David went into the tent he had set up for the sacred chest. Then he sat there and prayed: LORD All-Powerful,

my family and I don't deserve what you have already done for us,

¹⁹and yet you have promised to do even more. Is this the way you usually treat people?

²⁰I am your servant, and you know my thoughts, so there is nothing more that I need to say.

²¹You have done this wonderful thing, and you have let me know about it, because you wanted to keep your promise.

²²LORD All-Powerful, you are greater than all others. No one is like you, and you alone are God. Everything we have heard about you is true.

²³And there is no other nation on earth like Israel, the nation you rescued from slavery in Egypt to be your own. You became famous by using great and wonderful miracles to force other nations and their gods out of your land, so your people could live here.

²⁴You have chosen Israel to be your people for ever, and you have become their God.

²⁵And now, LORD God, please do what you have promised me and my descendants.

²⁶Then you will be famous for ever, and everyone will say, The LORD God All-Powerful rules Israel, and David's descendants are his chosen kings.

²⁷After all, you really are Israel's God, the LORD All-Powerful. You've told me that you will let my descendants be kings. That's why I have the courage to pray to you like this, even though I am only your servant.

²⁸LORD All-Powerful, you are God. You have promised me some very good things, and you can be trusted to do what you promise.

²⁹Please bless my descendants and let them always be your chosen kings. You have already promised, and I'm sure that you will bless my family for ever.

8¹Later, David attacked and badly defeated the Philistines. Israel was now free from their control.

²David also defeated the Moabites. Then he made their soldiers lie down on the ground, and he measured them off with a rope. He would measure off

two lengths of the rope and have those men killed, then he would measure off one length and let those men live. The people of Moab had to accept David as their ruler and pay taxes to him.

³David set out for the River Euphrates to build a monument there. On his way, he defeated the king of Zobah, whose name was Hadadezer the son of Rehob.

⁴In the battle, David captured seventeen hundred cavalry and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He also captured war chariots, but he destroyed all but one hundred of them.

⁵When troops from the Aramean kingdom of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, David killed twenty thousand of them.

⁶He left some of his soldiers in Damascus, and the Arameans had to accept David as their ruler and pay taxes to him. Everywhere David went, the LORD helped him win battles.

⁷Hadadezer's officers had carried their arrows in gold cases hung over their shoulders, but David took these cases and brought them to Jerusalem.

⁸He also took a lot of bronze from the cities of Betah and Berothai, which had belonged to Hadadezer.

⁹King Toi of Hamath and King Hadadezer had been enemies. So when Toi heard that David had attacked and defeated Hadadezer's whole army, he sent his son Joram to praise and congratulate David. Joram also brought him gifts made of silver, gold, and bronze.

¹⁰(8: 9)

¹¹David gave these to the LORD, just as he had done with the silver and gold that he had captured from

¹²Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and from King Hadadezer of Zobah.

¹³David fought the Edomite army in Salt Valley and killed eighteen thousand of their soldiers. When he returned, he built a monument.

¹⁴David left soldiers all through Edom, and the people of Edom had to accept him as their ruler. Wherever David went, the LORD helped him.

¹⁵David ruled all Israel with fairness and justice.

¹⁶Joab the son of Zeruiah was the commander in chief of the army. Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud kept the government records.

¹⁷Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abiathar the son of Ahimelech, were the priests. Seraiah was the secretary.

¹⁸Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's bodyguard. David's sons were priests.

9¹One day, David thought, I wonder if any of Saul's family are still alive. If they are, I will be kind to them, because I made a promise to Jonathan.

²David called in Ziba, one of the servants of Saul's family. David said, So you are Ziba. Yes, Your Majesty, I am.

³David asked, Are any of Saul's family still alive? If there are, I want to be kind to them. Ziba answered, One of Jonathan's sons is still alive, but he can't walk.

⁴Where is he? David asked. Ziba replied, He lives in Lo-Debar with Machir the son of Ammiel.

⁵David sent some servants to bring Jonathan's son from Lo-Debar. His name was Mephibosheth, and he was the

grandson of Saul. He came to David and knelt down. David asked, Are you Mephibosheth? Yes, I am, Your Majesty.

⁶(9: 5)

⁷David said, Don't be afraid. I'll be kind to you because Jonathan was your father. I'm going to give you back the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul. Besides that, you will always eat with me at my table.

⁸Mephibosheth knelt down again and said, Why should you care about me? I'm worth no more than a dead dog.

⁹David called in Ziba, Saul's chief servant, and told him, Since Mephibosheth is Saul's grandson, I've given him back everything that belonged to your master Saul and his family.

¹⁰You and your fifteen sons and twenty servants will work for Mephibosheth. You will farm his land and bring in his crops, so that Saul's family and servants will have food. But Mephibosheth will always eat with me at my table.

¹¹Ziba replied, Your Majesty, I will do exactly what you tell me to do. So Ziba's family and servants worked for Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was lame,

but he lived in Jerusalem and ate at David's table, just like one of David's own sons. And he had a young son of his own, named Mica.

¹²(9: 11)

¹³(9: 11)

10¹ Some time later, King Nahash of Ammon died, and his son Hanun became king.

² David said, Nahash was kind to me, and I will be kind to his son. So he sent some officials to the country of Ammon to tell Hanun how sorry he was that his father had died.

³ But Hanun's officials told him, Do you really believe David is honouring your father by sending these people to comfort you? He probably sent them to spy on our city, so he can destroy it.

⁴ Hanun arrested David's officials and had their beards shaved off on one side of their faces. He had their robes cut off just below the waist, and then he sent them away.

⁵ They were terribly ashamed. When David found out what had happened to his officials, he sent a message and told

them, Stay in Jericho until your beards grow back. Then you can come home.

⁶The Ammonites realized that they had made David very angry, so they hired more foreign soldiers. Twenty thousand of them were foot soldiers from the Aramean cities of Beth-Rehob and Zobah, one thousand were from the king of Maacah, and twelve thousand were from the region of Tob.

⁷David heard what they had done, and he sent out Joab with all his well-trained soldiers.

⁸The Ammonite troops came out and got ready to fight in front of the gate to their city. The Arameans from Zobah and Rehob and the soldiers from Tob and Maacah formed a separate group in the nearby fields.

⁹Joab saw that he had to fight in front and behind at the same time, and he picked some of the best Israelite soldiers to fight the Arameans.

¹⁰He put his brother Abishai in command of the rest of the army and made them fight the Ammonites.

¹¹Joab told his brother, If the Arameans are too much for me to handle, you can

come and help me. If the Ammonites are too strong for you, I'll come and help you.

¹²Be brave and fight hard to protect our people and the cities of our God. I pray that the LORD will do whatever pleases him.

¹³Joab and his soldiers attacked the Arameans, and the Arameans ran from them.

¹⁴When the Ammonite soldiers saw that the Arameans had run away, they ran from Abishai's soldiers and went back into their own city. Joab stopped fighting the Ammonites and returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁵The Arameans realized they had lost the battle, so they brought all their troops together again.

¹⁶Hadadezer sent messengers to call in the Arameans who were on the other side of the River Euphrates. Then Shobach, the commander of Hadadezer's army, led them to the town of Helam.

¹⁷David found out what the Arameans were doing, and he brought Israel's whole army together. They crossed the

River Jordan and went to Helam, where the Arameans were ready to meet them.

¹⁸The Arameans attacked, but then they ran from Israel. David killed seven hundred chariot drivers and forty thousand cavalry. He also killed Shobach, their commander.

¹⁹When the kings who had been under Hadadezer's rule saw that Israel had beaten them, they made peace with Israel and accepted David as their ruler. The Arameans were afraid to help Ammon any more.

11 ¹It was now spring, the time when kings go to war. David sent out the whole Israelite army under the command of Joab and his officers. They destroyed the Ammonite army and surrounded the capital city of Rabbah, but David stayed in Jerusalem.

²Late one afternoon, David got up from a nap and was walking around on the flat roof of his palace. A beautiful young woman was down below in her courtyard, bathing as her religion required. David happened to see her, and he sent one of his servants to find out who she was. The servant came back and told David, Her

name is Bathsheba. She is the daughter of Eliam, and she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David sent some messengers to bring her to his palace. She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she returned home.

³ (11:2)

⁴ (11:2)

⁵ But later, when she found out that she was going to have a baby, she sent someone to David with this message: I'm pregnant!

⁶ David sent a message to Joab: Send Uriah the Hittite to me. Joab sent Uriah ⁷ to David's palace, and David asked him, Is Joab well? How is the army doing? And how about the war?

⁸ Then David told Uriah, Go home and clean up. Uriah left the king's palace, and David had dinner sent to Uriah's house.

⁹ But Uriah didn't go home. Instead, he slept outside the entrance to the royal palace, where the king's guards slept.

¹⁰ Someone told David that Uriah had not gone home. So the next morning David asked him, Why didn't you go home? Haven't you been away for a long time?

¹¹ Uriah answered, The sacred chest and the armies of Israel and Judah are camping out somewhere in the fields with our commander Joab and his officers and troops. Do you really think I would go home to eat and drink and sleep with my wife? I swear by your life that I would not!

¹² Then David said, Stay here in Jerusalem today, and I will send you back tomorrow. Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day. Then the next day,

¹³ David invited him for dinner. Uriah ate with David and drank so much that he got drunk, but he still did not go home. He went out and slept on his mat near the palace guards.

¹⁴ Early the next morning, David wrote a letter and told Uriah to deliver it to Joab.

¹⁵ The letter said: Put Uriah on the front line where the fighting is the worst. Then pull the troops back from him, so that he will be wounded and die.

¹⁶ Joab had been carefully watching the city of Rabbah, and he put Uriah in a place where he knew there were some of the enemy's best soldiers.

¹⁷ When the men of the city came out, they fought and killed some of David's soldiers. Uriah the Hittite was one of them.

¹⁸ Joab sent a messenger to tell David everything that was happening in the war.

¹⁹ He gave the messenger these orders: When you finish telling the king everything that has happened,

²⁰ he may get angry and ask, Why did you go so near the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?

²¹ Don't you know how Abimelech the son of Gideon was killed at Thebez? Didn't a woman kill him by dropping a large rock from the top of the city wall? Why did you go so close to the city walls? Then you tell him, One of your soldiers who was killed was Uriah the Hittite.

²² The messenger went to David and reported everything Joab had told him.

²³ He added, The enemy chased us from the wall and out into the open fields. But we pushed them back as far as the city gate.

²⁴ Then they shot arrows at us from the top of the wall. Some of your soldiers were killed, and one of them was Uriah the Hittite.

²⁵ David replied, Tell Joab to cheer up and not to be upset about what happened. You never know who will be killed in a war. Tell him to strengthen his attack against the city and break through its walls.

²⁶ When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

²⁷ Then after the time for mourning was over, David sent someone to bring her to the palace. She became David's wife, and they had a son. The LORD was angry at what David had done,

12¹ and he sent Nathan the prophet to tell this story to David: A rich man and a poor man lived in the same town.

² The rich man owned a lot of sheep and cattle,

³ but the poor man had only one little lamb that he had bought and raised. The lamb became a pet for him and his children. He even let it eat from his plate

and drink from his cup and sleep on his lap. The lamb was like one of his own children.

⁴One day someone came to visit the rich man, but the rich man didn't want to kill any of his own sheep or cattle and serve it to the visitor. So he stole the poor man's little lamb and served it instead.

⁵David was furious with the rich man and said to Nathan, I swear by the living LORD that the man who did this deserves to die!

⁶And because he didn't have any pity on the poor man, he will have to pay four times what the lamb was worth.

⁷Then Nathan told David: You are that rich man! Now listen to what the LORD God of Israel says to you: I chose you to be the king of Israel. I kept you safe from Saul

⁸and even gave you his house and his wives. I let you rule Israel and Judah, and if that had not been enough, I would have given you much more.

⁹Why did you disobey me and do such a horrible thing? You murdered Uriah the

Hittite by letting the Ammonites kill him, so you could take his wife.

¹⁰Because you wouldn't obey me and took Uriah's wife for yourself, your family will never live in peace.

¹¹Someone from your own family will cause you a lot of trouble, and I will take your wives and give them to another man before your very eyes. He will go to bed with them while everyone looks on.

¹²What you did was in secret, but I will do this in the open for everyone in Israel to see.

¹³David said, I have disobeyed the LORD. Yes, you have! Nathan answered. You showed you didn't care what the LORD wanted. He has forgiven you, and you won't die. But your newborn son will.

¹⁴(12: 13)

¹⁵Then Nathan went back home. The LORD made David's young son very sick.

¹⁶So David went without eating to show his sorrow, and he begged God to make the boy well. David would not sleep on his bed, but spent each night lying on the floor.

¹⁷ His officials stood beside him and tried to talk him into getting up. But he would not get up or eat with them.

¹⁸ After the child had been sick for seven days, he died, but the officials were afraid to tell David. They said to each other, Even when the boy was alive, David wouldn't listen to us. How can we tell him his son is dead? He might do something terrible!

¹⁹ David noticed his servants whispering, and he knew the boy was dead. Has my son died? he asked his servants. Yes, he has, they answered.

²⁰ David got up off the floor; he took a bath, combed his hair, and dressed. He went into the LORD's tent and worshipped, then he went back home. David asked for something to eat, and when his servants brought him some food, he ate it.

²¹ His officials said, What are you doing? You went without eating and cried for your son while he was alive! But now that he's dead, you're up and eating.

²² David answered: While he was still alive, I went without food and cried because there was still hope. I said to

myself, Who knows? Perhaps the LORD will have pity on me and let the child live.

²³ But now that he's dead, why should I go without eating? I can't bring him back! Some day I will join him in death, but he can't return to me.

²⁴ David comforted his wife Bathsheba and slept with her. Later on, she gave birth to another son and named him Solomon. The LORD loved Solomon

²⁵ and sent Nathan the prophet to tell David, The LORD will call him Jedidiah.

²⁶ Meanwhile, Joab had been in the country of Ammon, attacking the city of Rabbah. He captured the royal fortress

²⁷ and sent a messenger to tell David: I have attacked Rabbah and captured the fortress guarding the city water supply.

²⁸ Call the rest of the army together. Then surround the city, and capture it yourself. If you don't, everyone will remember that I captured the city.

²⁹ David called the rest of the army together and attacked Rabbah. He captured the city

³⁰ and took the crown from the statue of their god Milcom. The crown was

made of about thirty-five kilogrammes of gold, and there was a valuable jewel on it. David put the jewel on his own crown. He also carried off everything else of value.

³¹ David made the people of Rabbah tear down the city walls with iron picks and axes, and then he put them to work making bricks. He did the same thing with all the other Ammonite cities. David went back to Jerusalem, and the people of Israel returned to their homes.

13 ¹ David had a beautiful daughter named Tamar, who was the sister of Absalom. She was also the half-sister of Amnon, who fell in love with her.

² But Tamar was a virgin, and Amnon could not think of a way to be alone with her. He was so upset about it that he made himself sick.

³ Amnon had a friend named Jonadab, who was the son of David's brother Shimeah. Jonadab always knew how to get what he wanted,

⁴ and he said to Amnon, What's the matter? You're the king's son! You shouldn't have to go around feeling sorry for yourself every morning. Amnon

said, I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.

⁵Jonadab told him, Lie down on your bed and pretend to be sick. When your father comes to see you, ask him to send Tamar, so you can watch her cook something for you. Then she can serve you the food.

⁶So Amnon went to bed and pretended to be sick. When the king came to see him, Amnon said, Please, ask Tamar to come over. She can make some special bread while I watch, and then she can serve me the bread.

⁷David told Tamar, Go over to Amnon's house and prepare him some food.

⁸When she got there, he was lying in bed. She mixed the dough, made the loaves, and baked them while he watched.

⁹Then she took the bread out of the pan and put it on his plate, but he refused to eat it. Amnon said, Send the servants out of the house. After they had gone,

¹⁰he said to Tamar, Serve the food in my bedroom. Tamar picked up the bread that she had made and brought it into Amnon's bedroom.

¹¹ But as she was taking it over to him, he grabbed her and said, Come to bed with me!

¹² She answered, No! Please don't force me! This sort of thing isn't done in Israel. It's too disgusting!

¹³ Think of me. I'll be disgraced for ever! And think of yourself. Everyone in Israel will say you're nothing but a load of rubbish! Just ask the king, and he will let you marry me.

¹⁴ But Amnon would not listen to what she said. He was stronger than she was, so he overpowered her and raped her.

¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her even more than he had loved her before. So he told her, Get up and get out!

¹⁶ She said, Don't send me away! That would be worse than what you have already done. But Amnon would not listen.

¹⁷ He called in his servant and said, Throw this woman out and lock the door!

¹⁸ The servant made her leave, and he locked the door behind her. The king's unmarried daughters used to wear long robes with sleeves.

¹⁹Tamar tore the robe she was wearing and put ashes on her head. Then she covered her face with her hands and cried loudly as she walked away.

²⁰Tamar's brother Absalom said to her, How could Amnon have done such a terrible thing to you! But since he's your brother, don't tell anyone what happened. Just try not to think about it. Tamar soon moved into Absalom's house, but she was always sad and lonely.

²¹When David heard what had happened to Tamar, he was very angry. But Amnon was his eldest son and also his favourite, and David would not do anything to make Amnon unhappy.

²²Absalom treated Amnon as though nothing had happened, but he hated Amnon for what he had done to his sister Tamar.

²³Two years later, Absalom's servants were cutting wool from his sheep in Baal-Hazor near the town of Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons to be there.

²⁴ Then he went to David and said, My servants are cutting the wool from my sheep. Please come and join us!

²⁵ David answered, No, my son, we won't go. It would be too expensive for you. Absalom tried to get him to change his mind, but David did not want to go. He only said that he hoped they would have a good time.

²⁶ Absalom said, If you won't go, at least let my brother Amnon come with us. David asked, Why should he go with you?

²⁷ But Absalom kept on insisting, and finally David let Amnon and all his other sons go with Absalom. Absalom prepared a banquet fit for a king.

²⁸ But he told his servants, Keep an eye on Amnon. When he gets a little drunk from the wine and is feeling good, I'll give the signal. Then kill him! I've commanded you to do it, so don't be afraid. Be strong and brave.

²⁹ Absalom's servants killed Amnon, just as Absalom had told them. The rest of the king's sons quickly rode away on their mules to escape from Absalom.

³⁰While they were on their way to Jerusalem, someone told David, Absalom has killed all your sons! Not even one is left.

³¹David got up, and in his sorrow he tore his clothes and lay down on the ground. His servants remained standing, but they tore their clothes too.

³²Then David's nephew Jonadab said, Your Majesty, not all your sons were killed! Only Amnon is dead. On the day that Amnon raped Tamar, Absalom decided to kill him.

³³Don't worry about the report that all your sons were killed. Only Amnon is dead,

³⁴and Absalom has run away. One of the guards noticed a lot of people coming along the hillside on the road to Horonaim. He went and told the king, I saw some men coming along Horonaim Road.

³⁵Jonadab said, Your Majesty, look! Here come your sons now, just as I told you.

³⁶No sooner had he said it, than David's sons came in. They were weeping out

loud, and David and all his officials cried just as loudly.

³⁷ David was sad for a long time because Amnon was dead. Absalom had run away to Geshur, where he stayed for three years with King Talmi the son of Ammihud.

³⁸ (13: 37)

³⁹ David still felt so sad over the loss of Amnon that he wanted to take his army there and capture Absalom.

14 ¹ Joab knew that David couldn't stop thinking about Absalom, ² and he sent someone to bring in the wise woman who lived in Tekoa. Joab told her, Put on funeral clothes and don't use any make-up. Go to the king and pretend you have spent a long time mourning the death of a loved one. Then he told her what to say.

³ (14: 2)

⁴ The woman from Tekoa went to David. She bowed very low and said, Your Majesty, please help me!

⁵ David asked, What's the matter? She replied: My husband is dead, and I'm a widow.

⁶I had two sons, but they got into a fight out in a field where there was no one to pull them apart, and one of them killed the other.

⁷Now all my relatives have come to me and said, Hand over your son! We're going to put him to death for killing his brother. But what they really want is to get rid of him, so they can take over our land. Please don't let them put out my only flame of hope! There won't be anyone left on this earth to carry on my husband's name.

⁸Go home, David told her. I'll take care of this matter for you.

⁹The woman said, I hope your decision doesn't cause any problems for you. But if it does, you can blame me.

¹⁰He said, If anyone gives you any trouble, bring them to me, and it won't happen again!

¹¹Please, she replied, swear by the LORD your God that no one will be allowed to kill my son! He said, I swear by the living LORD that no one will touch even a hair on his head!

¹²Then she asked, Your Majesty, may I say something? Yes, he answered.

¹³The woman said: Haven't you been hurting God's people? Your own son had to leave the country. And when you judged in my favour, it was the same as admitting that you should have let him come back.

¹⁴We each must die and disappear like water poured out on the ground. But God doesn't take our lives. Instead, he finds ways of bringing us back when we run away.

¹⁵Your Majesty, I came here to tell you about my problem, because I was afraid of what someone might do to me. I decided to come to you, because I thought you could help.

¹⁶In fact, I knew that you would listen and save my son and me from those who want to take the land that God gave us.

¹⁷I can rest easy now that you have given your decision. You know the difference between right and wrong just like an angel of God, and I pray that the LORD your God will be with you.

¹⁸Then David said to the woman, Now I'm going to ask you a question, and don't try to hide the truth! The woman replied, Please go ahead, Your Majesty.

¹⁹David asked, Did Joab put you up to this? The woman answered, Your Majesty, I swear by your life that no one can hide the truth from you. Yes, Joab did tell me what to say,

²⁰but only to show you the other side of this problem. You must be as wise as the angel of God to know everything that goes on in this country.

²¹David turned to Joab and said, It seems that I have already given my decision. Go and bring Absalom back.

²²Joab bowed very low and said, Your Majesty, I thank you for giving your permission. It shows that you approve of me.

²³Joab went to Geshur to get Absalom. But when they came back to Jerusalem,

²⁴David told Joab, I don't want to see my son Absalom. Tell him to stay away from me. So Absalom went to his own house without seeing his father.

²⁵No one in all Israel was as handsome and well-built as Absalom.

²⁶He got his hair cut once a year, and when the hair was weighed, it came to over two kilogrammes.

²⁷ Absalom had three sons. He also had a daughter named Tamar, who grew up to be very beautiful.

²⁸ Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years without seeing his father.

²⁹ He wanted Joab to talk to David for him. So one day he sent a message asking Joab to come over, but Joab refused. Absalom sent another message, but Joab still refused.

³⁰ Finally, Absalom told his servants, Joab's barley field is next to mine. Go and set it on fire! And they did.

³¹ Joab went to Absalom's house and demanded, Why did your servants set my field on fire?

³² Absalom answered, You didn't pay any attention when I sent for you. I want you to ask my father why he told me to come back from Geshur. I was better off there. I want to see my father now! If I'm guilty, let him kill me.

³³ Joab went to David and told him what Absalom had said. David sent for Absalom, and Absalom came. He bowed very low, and David leaned over and kissed him.

15¹ Some time later, Absalom got himself a chariot with horses to pull it, and he had fifty men to run in front.

² He would get up early each morning and wait by the side of the road that led to the city gate. Anyone who had a complaint to bring to King David would have to go that way, and Absalom would ask each of them, Where are you from? If they said, I'm from a tribe in the north,

³ Absalom would say, You deserve to win your case. But the king doesn't have anyone to hear complaints like yours.

⁴ I wish someone would make me the judge around here! I would be fair to everyone.

⁵ Whenever anyone would come to Absalom and start bowing down, he would reach out and hug and kiss them.

⁶ That's how he treated everyone from Israel who brought a complaint to the king. Soon everyone in Israel liked Absalom better than they liked David.

⁷ Four years later, Absalom said to David, Please, let me go to Hebron. I have to keep a promise that I made to the LORD,

⁸when I was living with the Arameans in Geshur. I promised that if the LORD would bring me back to live in Jerusalem, I would worship him in Hebron.

⁹David gave his permission, and Absalom went to Hebron.

¹⁰He took two hundred men from Jerusalem with him, but they had no idea what he was going to do. Absalom offered sacrifices in Hebron and sent someone to Gilo to tell David's adviser Ahithophel to come. More and more people were joining Absalom and supporting his plot. Meanwhile, Absalom had secretly sent some messengers to the northern tribes of Israel. The messengers told everyone, When you hear the sound of the trumpets, you must shout, Absalom now rules as king in Hebron!

¹¹ (15: 10)

¹² (15: 10)

¹³A messenger came and told David, Everyone in Israel is on Absalom's side!

¹⁴David's officials were in Jerusalem with him, and he told them, Let's get out of here! We'll have to leave soon, or none of us will escape from Absalom.

Hurry! If he moves fast, he could catch us while we're still here. Then he will kill us and everyone else in the city.

¹⁵The officials said, Your Majesty, we'll do whatever you say.

¹⁶David left behind ten of his wives to take care of the palace, but the rest of his family and his officials and soldiers went with him. They stopped at the last house at the edge of the city.

¹⁷ (15: 16)

¹⁸Then David stood there and watched while his regular troops and his bodyguards marched past. The last group was the six hundred soldiers who had followed him from Gath. Their commander was Ittai.

¹⁹David spoke to Ittai and said, You're a foreigner from the town of Gath. You don't have to leave with us. Go back and join the new king!

²⁰You haven't been with me very long, so why should you have to follow me, when I don't even know where I'm going? Take your soldiers and go back. I pray that the Lord will be kind and faithful to you.

²¹ I Ittai answered, Your Majesty, just as surely as you and the LORD live, I will go where you go, no matter if it costs me my life.

²² Then come on! David said. So I Ittai and all his men and their families walked on past David.

²³ The people of Jerusalem were crying and moaning as David and everyone with him passed by. He led them across Kidron Valley and along the road towards the desert.

²⁴ Zadok and Abiathar the priests were there along with several men from the tribe of Levi who were carrying the sacred chest. They set the chest down, and left it there until David and his followers had gone out of the city.

²⁵ Then David said: Zadok, take the sacred chest back to Jerusalem. If the LORD is pleased with me, he will bring me back and let me see it and his tent again.

²⁶ But if he says he isn't pleased with me, then let him do what he knows is best.

²⁷ Zadok, you are a good judge of things, so return to the city and don't

cause any trouble. Take your son Ahimaaz with you. Abiathar and his son Jonathan will also go back.

²⁸I'll wait at the river crossing in the desert until I hear from you.

²⁹Zadok and Abiathar took the sacred chest back into Jerusalem and stayed there.

³⁰David went on up the slope of the Mount of Olives. He was barefoot and crying, and he covered his head to show his sorrow. Everyone with him was crying, and they covered their heads too.

³¹Someone told David, Ahithophel is helping Absalom plot against you! David said, Please, LORD, keep Ahithophel's plans from working!

³²When David reached the top of the Mount of Olives, he met Hushai the Archite at a place of worship. Hushai's robe was torn, and dust was on his head.

³³David told him: If you come with me, you might slow us down.

³⁴Go back into the city and tell Absalom, Your Majesty, I am your servant. I will serve you now, just as I served your father in the past. Hushai,

if you do that, you can help me ruin Ahithophel's plans.

³⁵Zadok and Abiathar the priests will be there with you, and you can tell them everything you hear in the palace.

³⁶Then they can send their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan to tell me what you've heard.

³⁷David's adviser Hushai slipped back into Jerusalem, just about the same time that Absalom was coming in.

16¹ David had started down the other side of the Mount of Olives, when he was met by Ziba, the chief servant of Mephibosheth. Ziba had two donkeys that were carrying two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred handfuls of raisins, a hundred figs, and some wine.

²What's all this? David asked. Ziba said, The donkeys are for your family to ride. The bread and fruit are for the people to eat, and the wine is for them to drink in the desert when they are tired out.

³And where is Mephibosheth? David asked. Ziba answered, He stayed in Jerusalem, because he thinks the people

of Israel want him to rule the kingdom of his grandfather Saul.

⁴David then told him, Everything that used to belong to Mephibosheth is now yours. Ziba said, Your Majesty, I am your humble servant, and I hope you will be pleased with me.

⁵David was near the town of Bahurim when a man came out and started cursing him. The man was Shimei the son of Gera, and he was one of Saul's distant relatives.

⁶He threw stones at David, at his soldiers, and at everyone else, including the bodyguards who walked on each side of David.

⁷Shimei was yelling at David, Get out of here, you murderer! You good-for-nothing,

⁸the LORD is paying you back for killing so many in Saul's family. You stole his kingdom, but now the LORD has given it to your son Absalom. You're a murderer, and that's why you're in such big trouble!

⁹Abishai said, Your Majesty, this man is as useless as a dead dog! He shouldn't be allowed to curse you. Let me go over and chop off his head.

¹⁰David replied, What will I ever do with you and your brother Joab? If Shimei is cursing me because the LORD has told him to, then who are you to tell him to stop?

¹¹Then David said to Abishai and all his soldiers: My own son is trying to kill me! Why shouldn't this man from the tribe of Benjamin want me dead even more? Let him curse all he wants. Perhaps the LORD did tell him to curse me.

¹²But if the LORD hears these curses and sees the trouble I'm in, perhaps he will have pity on me instead.

¹³David and the others went on down the road. Shimei went along the hillside by the road, cursing and throwing stones and earth at them.

¹⁴When David and those with him came to the River Jordan, they were tired out. But after they rested, they felt much better.

¹⁵By this time, Absalom, Ahithophel, and the others had reached Jerusalem.

¹⁶David's friend Hushai came to Absalom and said, Long live the king! Long live the king!

¹⁷ But Absalom asked Hushai, Is this how you show loyalty to your friend David? Why didn't you go with him?

¹⁸ Hushai answered, The LORD and the people of Israel have chosen you to be king. I can't leave. I have to stay and serve the one they've chosen.

¹⁹ Besides, it seems right for me to serve you, just as I served your father.

²⁰ Absalom turned to Ahithophel and said, Give us your advice! What should we do?

²¹ Ahithophel answered, Some of your father's wives were left here to take care of the palace. You should have sex with them. Then everyone will find out that you have publicly disgraced your father. This will make you and your followers even more powerful.

²² Absalom had a tent set up on the flat roof of the palace, and everyone watched as he went into the tent with his father's wives.

²³ Ahithophel gave such good advice in those days that both Absalom and David thought it came straight from God.

17 ¹ Ahithophel said to Absalom: Let me choose twelve thousand men and attack David tonight,
² while he is tired and discouraged. He will panic, and everyone with him will run away. I won't kill anyone except David,
³ since he's the one you want to get rid of. Then I'll bring the whole nation back to you like a bride coming home to her husband. This way there won't be a civil war.

⁴ Absalom and all the leaders of the tribes of Israel agreed that Ahithophel had a good plan.

⁵ Then Absalom said, Bring in Hushai the Archite. Let's hear what he has to say.

⁶ Hushai came in, and Absalom told him what Ahithophel had planned. Then Absalom said, Should we do what he says? And if we shouldn't, can you come up with anything better?

⁷ Hushai said: This time Ahithophel's advice isn't so good.

⁸ You know that your father and his followers are real warriors. Now they are as fierce as a mother bear whose cubs have just been killed. Besides, your

father has a lot of experience in fighting wars, and he won't be spending the night with the others.

⁹He has probably already found a hiding place in a cave or somewhere else. As soon as anyone hears that some of your soldiers have been killed, everyone will think your whole army has been destroyed.

¹⁰Then even those who are as brave as a lion will lose their courage. All Israel knows what a great warrior your father is and what brave soldiers he has.

¹¹My advice is to gather all the fighting men of Israel from the town of Dan in the north down to the town of Beersheba in the south. You will have more soldiers than there are grains of sand on the seashore. Absalom, you should lead them yourself,

¹²and we will all go to fight David wherever he is. We will fall on him just as dew falls and covers the ground. He and all his soldiers will die!

¹³If they go into a walled town, we will put ropes around that town and drag it into the river. We won't leave even one small piece of a stone.

¹⁴ Absalom and the others liked Hushai's plan better than Ahithophel's plan. This was because the LORD had decided to keep Ahithophel's plan from working and to cause trouble for Absalom.

¹⁵ Straight away, Hushai went to Zadok and Abiathar. He told them what advice Ahithophel had given to Absalom and to the leaders of Israel. He also told them about the advice he had given.

¹⁶ Then he said, Hurry! Send someone to warn David not to spend the night on this side of the river. He must get across the river, so he and the others won't be wiped out!

¹⁷ Jonathan and Ahimaaz had been waiting at Rogel Spring because they did not want to be seen in Jerusalem. A servant girl went to the spring and gave them the message for David.

¹⁸ But a young man saw them and went to tell Absalom. So Jonathan and Ahimaaz left and hurried to the house of a man who lived in Bahurim. Then they climbed down into a well in the courtyard.

¹⁹The man's wife put the cover on the well and poured grain on top of it, so the well could not be seen.

²⁰Absalom's soldiers came to the woman and demanded, Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan? The woman answered, They went across the stream. The soldiers went off to look for the two men. But when they did not find the men, they went back to Jerusalem.

²¹After the soldiers had gone, Jonathan and Ahimaaz climbed out of the well. They went to David and said, Hurry! Get ready to cross the river! Then they told him about Ahithophel's plan.

²²David and the others got ready and started crossing the River Jordan. By sunrise all of them were on the other side.

²³When Ahithophel saw that Absalom and the leaders of Israel were not going to follow his advice, he saddled his donkey and rode back to his home in Gilo. He told his family and servants what to do. Then he hanged himself, and they buried him in his family's burial place.

²⁴ David went to the town of Mahanaim, and Absalom crossed the River Jordan with the army of Israel.

²⁵ Absalom put Amasa in Joab's place as commander of the army. Amasa's father was Ithra from the family of Ishmael, and his mother was Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and the sister of Joab's mother Zeruah.

²⁶ The Israelites under Absalom's command set up camp in the region of Gilead.

²⁷ After David came to the town of Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash came from Rabbah in Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel came from Lo-Debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite came from Rogelim.

²⁸ Here is a list of what they brought: sleeping mats, blankets, bowls, pottery jars, wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, honey, yoghurt, sheep, and cheese. They brought the food for David and the others because they knew that everyone would be hungry, tired, and thirsty from being out in the desert.

²⁹ (17: 28)

18¹ David divided his soldiers into groups of a hundred and groups of a thousand. Then he chose officers to be in command of each group.

² He sent out one-third of his army under the command of Joab, another third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, and the rest under the command of Ittai from Gath. He told the soldiers, I'm going into battle with you.

³ But the soldiers said, No, don't go into battle with us! It won't matter to our enemies if they make us all run away, or even if they kill half of us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. It would be better for you to stay in town and send help if we need it.

⁴ David said, All right, if you think I should. Then in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, he said, Joab! Abishai! Ittai! For my sake, be sure that Absalom comes back unharmed. David stood beside the town gate as his army marched past in groups of a hundred and in groups of a thousand. The war with Israel took place in Ephraim Forest.

⁵ (18: 4)

⁶ (18: 4)

⁷ Battles were being fought all over the forest, and David's soldiers were winning. Twenty thousand soldiers were killed that day, and more of them died from the dangers of the forest than from the fighting itself.

⁸ (18: 7)

⁹ Absalom was riding his mule under a huge tree when his head caught in the branches. The mule ran off and left Absalom hanging in mid-air. Some of David's soldiers happened to pass by,

¹⁰ and one of them went and told Joab, I saw Absalom hanging in a tree!

¹¹ Joab said, You saw Absalom? Why didn't you kill him? I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a special belt.

¹² The man answered, Even if you paid me a thousand pieces of silver here and now, I still wouldn't touch the king's son. We all heard King David tell you and Abishai and Ittai not to harm Absalom.

¹³ He always finds out what's going on. I would have been risking my life to kill Absalom, because you would have let me take the blame.

¹⁴Joab said, I'm not going to waste any more time on you! Absalom was still alive, so Joab took three spears and stuck them through Absalom's chest.

¹⁵Ten of Joab's bodyguards came over and finished him off.

¹⁶Then Joab blew a trumpet to signal his troops to stop chasing Israel's soldiers.

¹⁷They threw Absalom's body into a deep pit in the forest and put a big pile of rocks over it. Meanwhile, the people of Israel had all run back to their own homes.

¹⁸When Absalom was alive, he had set up a stone monument for himself in King's Valley. He explained, I don't have any sons to keep my name alive. He called it Absalom's Monument, and that is the name it still has today.

¹⁹Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, Joab, let me run and tell King David that the LORD has rescued him from his enemies.

²⁰Joab answered, You're not the one to tell the king that his son is dead. You can take him a message some other time, but not today.

²¹ Someone from Ethiopia was standing there, and Joab told him, Go and tell the king what you have seen. The man knelt down in front of Joab and then got up and started running.

²² Ahimaaz spoke to Joab again, No matter what happens, I still want to run. And besides, the Ethiopian has already left. Joab said, Why should you run? You won't get a reward for the news you have!

²³ I'll run no matter what! Ahimaaz insisted. All right then, run! Joab said. Ahimaaz took the road through the Jordan Valley and outran the Ethiopian.

²⁴ Meanwhile, David was sitting between the inner and outer gates in the city wall. One of his soldiers was watching from the roof of the gate-tower. He saw a man running towards the town

²⁵ and shouted down to tell David. David answered, If he's alone, he must have some news. The runner was getting closer,

²⁶ when the soldier saw someone else running. He shouted down to the gate, Look! There's another runner! David said, He must have some news too.

²⁷ The soldier on the roof shouted, The first one runs just like Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. This time David said, He's a good man. He must have some good news.

²⁸ Ahimaaz called out, We won! We won! Then he bowed low to David and said, Your Majesty, praise the LORD your God! He has given you victory over your enemies.

²⁹ Is my son Absalom all right? David asked. Ahimaaz said, When Joab sent your personal servant and me, I saw a noisy crowd. But I don't know what it was all about.

³⁰ David told him, Stand over there and wait. Ahimaaz went over and stood there.

³¹ The Ethiopian came and said, Your Majesty, today I have good news! The LORD has rescued you from all your enemies!

³² Is my son Absalom all right? David asked. The Ethiopian replied, I wish that all Your Majesty's enemies and everyone who tries to harm you would end up like him!

³³ David started trembling. Then he went up to the room above the city gate to cry. As he went, he kept saying, My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! I wish I could have died instead of you! Absalom, my son, my son!

19¹ Someone told Joab, The king is crying because Absalom is dead.

² David's army found out he was crying because his son had died, and their day of victory suddenly turned into a day of sadness.

³ The troops were sneaking into Mahanaim, just as if they had run away from a battle and were ashamed.

⁴ David held his hands over his face and kept on crying loudly, My son, Absalom! Absalom, my son, my son!

⁵ Joab went to the house where David was staying and told him: You've made your soldiers ashamed! Not only did they save your life, they saved your sons and daughters and wives as well.

⁶ You're more loyal to your enemies than to your friends. What you've done today has shown your officers and soldiers that they don't mean a thing to you. You would be happy if Absalom

was still alive, even if the rest of us were dead.

⁷ Now get up! Go out there and thank them for what they did. If you don't, I swear by the LORD that you won't even have one man left on your side tomorrow morning. You may have had a lot of troubles in the past, but this will be the worst thing that has ever happened to you!

⁸ David got up and went to the town gate and sat down. When the people heard that he was sitting there, they came to see him. After Israel's soldiers had all returned home,

⁹ everyone in Israel started arguing. They were saying to each other, King David rescued us from the Philistines and from our other enemies. But then we chose Absalom to be our new leader, and David had to leave the country to get away. Absalom died in battle, so why hasn't something been done to bring David back?

¹⁰ (19: 9)

¹¹ When David found out what they were saying, he sent a message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. It said:

Say to the leaders of Judah, Why are you the last tribe to think about bringing King David back home?

¹²He is your brother, your own relative! Why haven't you done anything to bring him back?

¹³And tell Amasa, You're my nephew, and with God as a witness, I swear I'll make you commander of my army instead of Joab.

¹⁴Soon the tribe of Judah again became followers of David, and they sent him this message: Come back, and bring your soldiers with you.

¹⁵David started back and had gone as far as the River Jordan when he met the people of Judah. They had gathered at Gilgal and had come to help him cross the river.

¹⁶Shimei the son of Gera was there with them. He had hurried from Bahurim to meet David. Shimei was from the tribe of Benjamin, and

¹⁷a thousand others from Benjamin had come with him. Ziba, the chief servant of Saul's family, also came to the River Jordan. He and his fifteen sons and

twenty servants waded across to meet David.

¹⁸Then they brought David's family and servants back across the river, and they did everything he wanted them to do. Shimei crossed the River Jordan and bowed down in front of David.

¹⁹He said, Your Majesty, I beg you not to punish me! Please, forget what I did when you were leaving Jerusalem. Don't even think about it.

²⁰I know I was wrong. That's why I wanted to be the first one from the northern tribes to meet you.

²¹But Abishai shouted, You should be killed for cursing the LORD's chosen king!

²²David said, Abishai, whatever will I do with you and your brother Joab? Is it your job to tell me who has done wrong? I've been made king of all Israel today, and no one will be put to death!

²³Then David promised Shimei that he would not be killed.

²⁴Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul, also came to meet David. He had missed David so much that he had not taken a

bath or trimmed his beard or washed his clothes the whole time David was gone.

²⁵After they had gone back to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth came to see David, who asked him, Why didn't you go with me?

²⁶He answered, Your Majesty, you know I can't walk. I told my servant to saddle a donkey for me so I could go with you. But my servant left without me, and

²⁷then he lied about me. You're as wise as an angel of God, so do what you think is right.

²⁸After all, you could have killed my whole family and me. But instead, you let me eat at your own table. Your Majesty, what more could I ask?

²⁹David answered, You've said enough! I've decided to divide the property between you and Ziba.

³⁰Mephibosheth replied, He can have it all! I'm just glad you've come home safely.

³¹Barzillai came from Rogelim in Gilead to meet David at the River Jordan and go across with him.

³² Barzillai was eighty years old. He was very rich and had sent food to David in Mahanaim.

³³ David said to him, Cross the river and go to Jerusalem with me. I will take care of you.

³⁴ Barzillai answered: Your Majesty, why should I go to Jerusalem? I don't have much longer to live.

³⁵ I'm already eighty years old, and my body is almost numb. I can't taste my food or hear the sound of singing, and I would be nothing but a burden.

³⁶ I'll cross the river with you, but I'll only go a little way on the other side. You don't have to be so kind to me.

³⁷ Just let me return to my home town, where I can some day be buried near my father and mother. My servant Chimham can go with you, and you can treat him as your own.

³⁸ David said, I'll take Chimham with me, and whatever you ask me to do for him, I'll do. And if there's anything else you want, I'll also do that.

³⁹ David's soldiers went on across the river, while he stayed behind to say

goodbye to Barzillai and to wish him well. Barzillai returned home, but

⁴⁰Chimham crossed the river with David. All of Judah's army and half of Israel's army were there to help David cross the river.

⁴¹The soldiers from Israel came to him and said, Why did our relatives from Judah sneak you and your family and your soldiers across the Jordan?

⁴²The people of Judah answered, Why are you so angry? We are the king's relatives. He didn't give us any food, and we didn't take anything for ourselves!

⁴³Those from Israel said, King David belongs to us ten times more than he belongs to you. Why didn't you think we were good enough to help you? After all, we were the first ones to think of bringing him back! The people of Judah spoke more harshly than the people of Israel.

20¹A troublemaker from the tribe of Benjamin was there. His name was Sheba the son of Bichri, and he blew a trumpet to get everyone's attention. Then he said, People of Israel, David the

son of Jesse doesn't belong to us! Let's go home.

²So they stopped following David and went off with Sheba. But the people of Judah stayed close to David all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

³David had left ten of his wives in Jerusalem to take care of his palace. But when he came back, he had them taken to another house, and he placed soldiers there to guard them. He gave them whatever they needed, but he never slept with any of them again. They had to live there for the rest of their lives as if they were widows.

⁴David said to Amasa, Three days from now I want you and all of Judah's army to be here!

⁵Amasa started bringing the army together, but it was taking him more than three days.

⁶So David said to Abishai, Sheba will hurt us more than Absalom ever did. Take my best soldiers and go after him. We don't want him to take over any walled cities and get away from us.

⁷Abishai left Jerusalem to try and capture Sheba. He took along Joab and

his soldiers, as well as David's bodyguard and best troops.

⁸They had gone as far as the big rock at Gibeon when Amasa caught up with them. Joab had a dagger strapped around his waist over his military uniform, but it fell out as he started towards Amasa.

⁹Joab said, Amasa, my cousin, how are you? Then Joab took hold of Amasa's beard with his right hand, so that he could greet him with a kiss.

¹⁰Amasa did not see the dagger in Joab's other hand. Joab stuck it in Amasa's stomach, and his insides spilt out on the ground. Joab only struck him once, but Amasa was dying. Joab and his brother Abishai went off to chase Sheba.

¹¹One of Joab's soldiers stood by Amasa and shouted, If any of you like Joab, and if you are for David, then follow Joab!

¹²Amasa was still rolling in his own blood in the middle of the road. The soldier who had shouted noticed that everyone who passed by would stop, so he dragged Amasa off the road and covered him with a blanket.

¹³After this, no one else stopped. They all walked straight past him on their way to help Joab capture Sheba.

¹⁴Sheba had gone through all the tribes of Israel when he came to the town of Abel Beth-Maacah. All his best soldiers met him there and followed him into the town.

¹⁵Joab and his troops came and surrounded Abel, so that no one could go in or come out. They made an earth ramp up to the town wall and then started to use a battering ram to knock the wall down.

¹⁶A wise woman shouted from the top of the wall, Listen to me! Listen to me! I have to talk to Joab! Tell him to come here!

¹⁷When he came, the woman said, Are you Joab? Yes, I am, he answered. She said, Please, listen to what I have to say. All right, he said. I'll listen.

¹⁸She said, Long ago people used to say, If you want good advice, go to the town of Abel to get it. The answers they got here were all that was needed to settle any problem.

¹⁹We are Israelites, and we want peace! You can trust us. Why are you trying to destroy a town that's like a mother in Israel? Why do you want to wipe out the LORD's people?

²⁰Joab answered, No, no! I'm not trying to wipe you out or destroy your town!

²¹That's not it at all. There's a man in your town from the hill country of Ephraim. His name is Sheba, and he is the leader of a rebellion against King David. Turn him over to me, and we will leave your town alone. The woman told Joab, We will throw his head over the wall.

²²She went to the people of the town and talked them into doing it. They cut off Sheba's head and threw it to Joab. Joab blew a signal on his trumpet, and the soldiers returned to their homes. Joab went back to David in Jerusalem.

²³Joab was the commander of Israel's entire army. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of David's bodyguard.

²⁴Adoram was in charge of the slave-labour force. Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud kept government records.

²⁵ Sheva was the secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests.

²⁶ Ira from Jair was David's priest.

21 ¹ While David was king, there were three years in a row when the nation of Israel could not grow enough food. So David asked the LORD for help, and the LORD answered, Saul and his family are guilty of murder, because he had the Gibeonites killed.

² The Gibeonites were not Israelites; they were descendants of the Amorites. The people of Israel had promised not to kill them, but Saul had tried to kill them because he wanted Israel and Judah to control all the land. David called the Gibeonites to him, and he talked with them.

³ He said, What can I do to make up for what Saul did, so that you'll ask the LORD to be kind to his people again?

⁴ The Gibeonites answered, Silver and gold from Saul and his family are not enough. On the other hand, we don't have the right to put any Israelite to death. David said, I'll do whatever you ask.

⁵They replied, Saul tried to kill all our people so that none of us would be left in the land of Israel.

⁶Give us seven of his descendants. We will hang these men near the place where the LORD is worshipped in Gibeah, the home town of Saul, the LORD's chosen king. I'll give them to you, David said.

⁷David had made a promise to Jonathan with the LORD as his witness, so he spared Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul.

⁸But Saul and Rizpah the daughter of Aiah had two sons named Armoni and Mephibosheth. Saul's daughter Merab had five sons whose father was Adriel the son of Barzillai from Meholah. David took Rizpah's two sons and Merab's five sons and

⁹turned them over to the Gibeonites, who hanged all seven of them on the mountain near the place where the LORD was worshipped. This happened right at the beginning of the barley harvest.

¹⁰Rizpah spread out some sackcloth on a nearby rock. She wouldn't let the birds land on the bodies during the day, and

she kept the wild animals away at night. She stayed there from the beginning of the harvest until it started to rain.

¹¹ Earlier the Philistines had killed Saul and Jonathan on Mount Gilboa and had hung their bodies in the town square at Beth-Shan. The people of Jabesh in Gilead had secretly taken the bodies away, but David found out what Saul's wife Rizpah had done, and he went to the leaders of Jabesh to get the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan.

¹² (21:11)

¹³ David had their bones taken to the land of Benjamin and buried in a side room in Saul's family burial place. Then he gave orders for the bones of the men who had been hanged to be buried there. It was done, and God answered prayers to bless the land.

¹⁴ (21:13)

¹⁵ One time David got very tired when he and his soldiers were fighting the Philistines.

¹⁶ One of the Philistine warriors was Ishbibenob, who was a descendant of the Rephaim, and he tried to kill David. Ishbibenob was armed with a new sword,

and his bronze spearhead alone weighed about three and a half kilogrammes.

¹⁷ But Abishai came to the rescue and killed the Philistine. David's soldiers told him, We can't let you risk your life in battle any more! You give light to our nation, and we want that flame to keep burning.

¹⁸ There was another battle with the Philistines at Gob, where Sibbecai from Hushah killed a descendant of the Rephaim named Saph.

¹⁹ There was still another battle with the Philistines at Gob. A soldier named Elhanan killed Goliath from Gath, whose spear shaft was like a weaver's beam. Elhanan's father was Jari from Bethlehem.

²⁰ There was another war, this time in Gath. One of the enemy soldiers was a descendant of the Rephaim. He was as big as a giant and had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

²¹ But when he made fun of Israel, David's nephew Jonathan killed him. Jonathan was the son of David's brother Shimei.

²²David and his soldiers killed these four men who were descendants of the Rephaim from Gath.

22¹David sang a song to the LORD after the LORD had rescued him from his enemies, especially Saul. These are the words to David's song:

²Our LORD and our God, you are my mighty rock, my fortress, my protector.

³You are the rock where I am safe. You are my shield, my powerful weapon, and my place of shelter. You rescue me and keep me from being hurt.

⁴I praise you, our LORD! I prayed to you, and you rescued me from my enemies.

⁵Death, like ocean waves, surrounded me, and I was almost swallowed by its flooding waters.

⁶Ropes from the world of the dead had coiled around me, and death had set a trap in my path.

⁷I was in terrible trouble when I called out to you, but from your temple you heard me and answered my prayer.

⁸Earth shook and shivered! The columns supporting the sky rocked back and forth. You were angry

⁹and breathed out smoke. Scorching heat and fiery flames spewed from your mouth.

¹⁰You opened the heavens like curtains, and you came down with storm clouds under your feet.

¹¹You rode on the backs of flying creatures. You appeared with the wind as wings.

¹²Darkness was your tent! Thunderclouds filled the sky, hiding you from sight.

¹³Fiery coals lit up the sky in front of you.

¹⁴LORD Most High, your voice thundered from the heavens.

¹⁵You scattered your enemies with arrows of lightning.

¹⁶You roared at the sea, and its deepest channels could be seen. You snorted, and the earth shook to its foundations.

¹⁷You reached down from heaven, and you lifted me from deep in the ocean.

¹⁸You rescued me from enemies who were hateful and too powerful for me.

¹⁹On the day disaster struck, they came and attacked, but you defended me.

²⁰When I was fenced in, you freed and rescued me because you love me.

²¹You are good to me, LORD, because I do right, and you reward me because I am innocent.

²²I do what you want and never turn to do evil.

²³I keep your laws in mind and never turn away from your teachings.

²⁴I obey you completely and guard against sin.

²⁵You have been good to me because I do right; you have rewarded me for being innocent by your standards.

²⁶You are always loyal to your loyal people, and you are faithful to the faithful.

²⁷With all who are sincere you are sincere, but you treat the unfaithful as their deeds deserve.

²⁸You rescue the humble, but you look for ways to put down the proud.

²⁹Our LORD and God, you are my lamp. You turn darkness to light.

³⁰You help me defeat armies and capture cities.

³¹ Your way is perfect, LORD, and your word is correct. You are a shield for those who run to you for help.

³² You alone are God! Only you are a mighty rock.

³³ You are my strong fortress, and you set me free.

³⁴ You make my feet run as fast as those of a deer, and you help me stand on the mountains.

³⁵ You teach my hands to fight and my arms to use a bow of bronze.

³⁶ You alone are my shield, and by coming to help me, you have made me famous.

³⁷ You clear the way for me, and now I won't stumble.

³⁸ I kept chasing my enemies until I caught them and destroyed them.

³⁹ I destroyed them! I stuck my sword through my enemies, and they were crushed under my feet.

⁴⁰ You helped me win victories and forced my attackers to fall victim to me.

⁴¹ You made my enemies run, and I killed them.

⁴²They cried out for help, but no one saved them; they called out to you, but there was no answer.

⁴³I ground them to dust, and I squashed them like mud in the streets.

⁴⁴You rescued me from my stubborn people and made me the leader of foreign nations, who are now my slaves.

⁴⁵They obey and come crawling.

⁴⁶They have lost all courage and from their fortresses they come trembling.

⁴⁷You are the living LORD! I will praise you! You are a mighty rock. I will honour you for keeping me safe.

⁴⁸You took revenge for me, and you put nations in my power.

⁴⁹You protected me from violent enemies, and you made me much greater than all of them.

⁵⁰I will praise you, LORD, and I will honour you among the nations.

⁵¹You give glorious victories to your chosen king. Your faithful love for David and for his descendants will never end.

23¹ These are the last words of David the son of Jesse. The God of Jacob chose David and made him a great king. The Mighty God of Israel

loved him. When God told him to speak, David said:

²The Spirit of the LORD has told me what to say.

³Our Mighty Rock, the God of Jacob, told me, A ruler who obeys God and does right

⁴is like the sunrise on a cloudless day, or like rain that sparkles on the grass.

⁵I have ruled this way, and God will never break his promise to me. God's promise is complete and unchanging; he will always help me and give me what I hope for.

⁶But evil people are pulled up like thorn bushes. They are not dug up by hand,

⁷but with a sharp spear and are burnt on the spot.

⁸These are the names of David's warriors: Ishbosheth the son of Hachmon was the leader of the Three Warriors. In one battle, he killed eight hundred men with his spear.

⁹The next one of the Three Warriors was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite. One time when the Philistines were at war with Israel, he and David dared the

Philistines to fight them. Every one of the Israelite soldiers turned and ran,¹⁰ except Eleazar. He killed Philistines until his hand was cramped, and he couldn't let go of his sword. When Eleazar finished, all the Israelite troops had to do was come back and take the enemies' weapons and armour. The LORD gave Israel a great victory that day.

¹¹Next was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. One time the Philistines brought their army together to destroy a crop of peas growing in a field near Lehi. The rest of Israel's soldiers ran away from the Philistines,

¹²but Shammah stood in the middle of the field and killed the Philistines. The crops were saved, and the LORD gave Israel a great victory.

¹³One year at harvest time, the Three Warriors went to meet David at Adullam Cave. The Philistine army had set up camp in Rephaim Valley

¹⁴and had taken over Bethlehem. David was in his fortress,

¹⁵and he was very thirsty. He said, I wish I had a drink from the well by the gate at Bethlehem.

¹⁶The Three Warriors sneaked into the Philistine camp and got some water from the well near Bethlehem's gate. But after they brought the water back to David, he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out as a sacrifice

¹⁷and said to the LORD, I can't drink this water! It's like the blood of these men who risked their lives to get it for me. The Three Warriors did these brave deeds.

¹⁸Joab's brother Abishai was the leader of the Thirty Warriors, and in one battle he killed three hundred men with his spear. He was as famous as the Three Warriors

¹⁹and certainly just as famous as the rest of the Thirty Warriors. He was the commander of the Thirty Warriors, but he still did not become one of the Three Warriors.

²⁰Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a brave man from Kabzeel who did some amazing things. He killed two of Moab's

best fighters, and on a snowy day he went down into a pit and killed a lion.

²¹ Another time, he killed an Egyptian, as big as a giant. The Egyptian was armed with a spear, but Benaiah only had a club. Benaiah grabbed the spear from the Egyptian and killed him with it.

²² Benaiah did these things. He never became one of the Three Warriors, but he was just as famous as they were and certainly just as famous as the rest of the Thirty Warriors. David made him the leader of his bodyguard.

²³ (23: 22)

²⁴ Some of the Thirty Warriors were: Asahel the brother of Joab Elhanan the son of Dodo from Bethlehem Shammah from Harod Erika from Harod Helez the Paltite Ira the son of Ikkesh from Tekoa Abiezer from Anathoth Mebunnai the Hushathite Zalmon the Ahohite Maharai from Netophah Heleb the son of Baanah from Netophah Ittai the son of Ribai from Gibeah of the tribe of Benjamin Benaiah from Pirathon Hiddai from the streams on Mount Gaash Abialbon from Beth-Arabah Azmaveth from Bahurim Eliahba from Shaalbon Jashen Jonathan

the son of Shammah the Hararite Ahiam
 the son of Sharar the Hararite Eliphelet
 the son of Ahasbai from Maacah Eliam
 the son of Ahithophel from Gilo Hezro
 from Carmel Paarai the Arbite Igal the
 son of Nathan from Zobah Bani the
 Gadite Zelek from Ammon Naharai from
 Beeroth, who carried the weapons of
 Joab the son of Zeruah Ira the Ithrite
 Gareb the Ithrite Uriah the Hittite There
 were thirty-seven in all.

²⁵ (23: 24)

²⁶ (23: 24)

²⁷ (23: 24)

²⁸ (23: 24)

²⁹ (23: 24)

³⁰ (23: 24)

³¹ (23: 24)

³² (23: 24)

³³ (23: 24)

³⁴ (23: 24)

³⁵ (23: 24)

³⁶ (23: 24)

³⁷ (23: 24)

³⁸ (23: 24)

³⁹ (23: 24)

24¹ The LORD was angry with Israel
 again, and he made David think it

would be a good idea to count the people in Israel and Judah.

²So David told Joab and the army officers, Go to every tribe in Israel, from the town of Dan in the north all the way south to Beersheba, and count everyone who can serve in the army. I want to know how many there are.

³Joab answered, I hope the LORD your God will give you a hundred times more soldiers than you already have. I hope you will live to see that day! But why do you want to do a thing like this?

⁴But when David refused to change his mind, Joab and the army officers went out and started counting the people.

⁵They crossed the River Jordan and began with Aroer and the town in the middle of the river valley. From there they went towards Gad and on as far as Jazer.

⁶They went to Gilead and to Kadesh in Syria. Then they went to Dan, Ijon, and on towards Sidon.

⁷They came to the fortress of Tyre, then went through every town of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Finally, they went

to Beersheba in the Southern Desert of Judah.

⁸After they had gone through the whole land, they went back to Jerusalem. It had taken them nine months and twenty days.

⁹Joab came and told David, In Israel there are eight hundred thousand who can serve in the army, and in Judah there are five hundred thousand.

¹⁰After David had everyone counted, he felt guilty and told the LORD, What I did was stupid and terribly wrong. LORD, please forgive me.

¹¹Before David even got up the next morning, the LORD had told David's prophet Gad

¹²to take a message to David. Gad went to David and told him: You must choose one of three ways for the LORD to punish you: will there be seven years when the land won't grow enough food for your people? Or will your enemies chase you and make you run from them for three months? Or will there be three days of horrible disease in your land? Think about it and decide, because I

have to give your answer to God, who sent me.

¹³ (24: 12)

¹⁴ David was really frightened and said, It's a terrible choice to make! But the LORD is kind, and I'd rather be punished by him than by anyone else.

¹⁵ So that morning, the LORD sent an angel to spread a horrible disease everywhere in Israel, from Dan to Beersheba. And before it was over, seventy thousand people had died. When the angel was about to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD felt sorry for all the suffering he had caused and told the angel, That's enough! Don't touch them. This happened at the threshing place that belonged to Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁶ (24: 15)

¹⁷ David saw the angel killing everyone and told the LORD, These people are like sheep with me as their shepherd. I have sinned terribly, but they have done nothing wrong. Please, punish me and my family instead of them!

¹⁸ That same day the prophet Gad came and told David, Go to the threshing place

that belongs to Araunah and build an altar there for the LORD. So David went.

¹⁹ (24: 18)

²⁰ Araunah looked and saw David and his soldiers coming up towards him. He went over to David, bowed down low,

²¹ and said, Your Majesty! Why have you come to see me? David answered, I've come to buy your threshing place. I have to build the LORD an altar here, so this disease will stop killing the people.

²² Araunah said, Take whatever you want and offer your sacrifice. Here are some oxen for the sacrifice. You can use the threshing-boards and the wooden yokes for the fire.

²³ Take them they're yours! I hope the LORD your God will be pleased with you.

²⁴ But David answered, No! I have to pay you what they're worth. I can't offer the LORD my God a sacrifice that I got for nothing. So David bought the threshing place and the oxen for fifty pieces of silver.

²⁵ Then he built an altar for the LORD. He sacrificed animals and burnt them on the altar. The LORD answered the

prayers of the people, and no one else died from the terrible disease.

1 Kings

1 ¹ King David was now an old man, and he always felt cold, even under a lot of blankets.

² His officials said, Your Majesty, we will look for a young woman to take care of you. She can lie down beside you and keep you warm.

³ They looked everywhere in Israel until they found a very beautiful young woman named Abishag, who lived in the town of Shunem. They brought her to David, and she took care of him. But David did not have sex with her.

⁴ (1: 3)

⁵ Adonijah was the son of David and Haggith. He was Absalom's younger brother and was very handsome. One day, Adonijah started boasting, I'm going to make myself king! So he got some chariots and horses, and he hired fifty men as bodyguards. David did not want to hurt his feelings, so he never asked Adonijah why he was doing these things.

⁶ (1: 5)

⁷ Adonijah met with Joab the son of Zeruah and Abiathar the priest and asked them if they would help him become king. Both of them agreed to help.

⁸ But Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David's bodyguards all refused.

⁹ Adonijah invited his brothers and David's officials from Judah to go with him to Crawling Rock near Rogel Spring, where he sacrificed some sheep, cattle, and fat calves.

¹⁰ But he did not invite Nathan, Benaiah, David's bodyguards, or his own brother Solomon.

¹¹ When Nathan heard what had happened, he asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother: Have you heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has made himself king? But David doesn't know a thing about it.

¹² You and your son Solomon will be killed, unless you do what I tell you.

¹³ Go and say to David, You promised me that Solomon would be the next king. So why is Adonijah now king?

¹⁴While you are still talking to David, I'll come in and tell him that everything you said is true.

¹⁵Meanwhile, David was in his bedroom where Abishag was taking care of him because he was so old. Bathsheba went in

¹⁶and bowed down. What can I do for you? David asked.

¹⁷Bathsheba answered: Your Majesty, you promised me in the name of the LORD your God that my son Solomon would be the next king.

¹⁸But Adonijah has already been made king, and you didn't know anything about it.

¹⁹He sacrificed a lot of cattle, calves, and sheep. And he invited Abiathar the priest, Joab your army commander, and all your sons to be there, except Solomon, your loyal servant.

²⁰Your Majesty, everyone in Israel is waiting for you to announce who will be the next king.

²¹If you don't, they will say that Solomon and I have rebelled. They will treat us like criminals and kill us as soon as you die.

²² Just then, Nathan the prophet arrived.

²³ Someone told David that he was there, and Nathan came in. He bowed with his face to the ground

²⁴ and said: Your Majesty, did you say that Adonijah would be king?

²⁵ Earlier today, he sacrificed a lot of cattle, calves, and sheep. He invited the army commanders, Abiathar, and all your sons to be there. Now they are eating and drinking and shouting, Long live King Adonijah!

²⁶ But he didn't invite me or Zadok the priest or Benaiah or Solomon.

²⁷ Did you say they could do this without telling the rest of us who would be the next king?

²⁸ David said, Tell Bathsheba to come here. She came and stood in front of him.

²⁹ Then he said, The living LORD God of Israel has kept me safe. And so today, I will keep the promise I made to you in his name: Solomon will be the next king!

³⁰ (1: 29)

³¹ Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground and said, Your Majesty, I pray that you will live a long time!

³² Then David said, Tell Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah to come here. When they arrived,

³³ he told them: Take along some of my officials and let Solomon ride my own mule to Gihon Spring.

³⁴ When you get there, Zadok and Nathan will make Solomon the new king of Israel. Then after the ceremony is over, make someone blow a trumpet and tell everyone to shout, Long live King Solomon!

³⁵ Bring him back here, and he will take my place as king. He is the one I have chosen to rule Israel and Judah.

³⁶ Benaiah answered, We will do it, Your Majesty. I pray that the LORD your God will let it happen.

³⁷ The LORD has always watched over you, and I pray that he will now watch over Solomon. May the LORD help Solomon to be an even greater king than you.

³⁸ Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah left and took along the two groups of David's

special bodyguards. Solomon rode on David's mule as they led him to Gihon Spring.

³⁹Zadok the priest brought some olive oil from the sacred tent and poured it on Solomon's head to show that he was now king. A trumpet was blown and everyone shouted, Long live King Solomon!

⁴⁰Then they played flutes and celebrated as they followed Solomon back to Jerusalem. They made so much noise that the ground shook.

⁴¹Adonijah and his guests had almost finished eating when they heard the noise. Joab also heard the trumpet and asked, What's all that noise about in the city?

⁴²Just then, Jonathan son of Abiathar came running up. Come in, Adonijah said. An important man like you must have some good news.

⁴³Jonathan answered: No, I haven't! David has just announced that Solomon will be king.

⁴⁴Solomon rode David's own mule to Gihon Spring, and Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and David's special bodyguards went with him. When they got there,

Zadok and Nathan made Solomon king. Then everyone celebrated all the way back to Jerusalem. That's the noise you hear in the city.

⁴⁵ (1: 44)

⁴⁶ Solomon is now king.

⁴⁷ And listen to this! David's officials told him, We pray that your God will help Solomon to be an even greater king! David was in his bed at the time, but he bowed

⁴⁸ and prayed, I praise you, LORD God of Israel. You have made my son Solomon king and have let me live to see it.

⁴⁹ Adonijah's guests shook with fear when they heard this news, and they left as fast as they could.

⁵⁰ Adonijah himself was afraid of what Solomon might do to him, so he ran to the sacred tent and grabbed hold of the corners of the altar for protection.

⁵¹ Someone told Solomon, Adonijah is afraid of you and is holding on to the corners of the altar. He wants you to promise that you won't kill him.

⁵²Solomon answered, If Adonijah doesn't cause any trouble, I won't hurt him. But if he does, I'll have him killed.

⁵³Then he sent someone to the altar to get Adonijah. After Adonijah came and bowed down, Solomon said, Adonijah, go home.

2¹ Not long before David died, he told Solomon:

²My son, I will soon die, as everyone must. But I want you to be strong and brave.

³Do what the LORD your God commands and follow his teachings. Obey everything written in the Law of Moses. Then you will be a success, no matter what you do or where you go.

⁴You and your descendants must always faithfully obey the LORD. If you do, he will keep the solemn promise he made to me that someone from our family will always be king of Israel.

⁵Solomon, don't forget what Joab did to me by killing Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether, the two commanders of Israel's army. He killed them as if they were his enemies in a war, but he did it when there was no

war. He is guilty, and now it's up to you to punish him

⁶in the way you think best. Whatever you do, don't let him die peacefully in his old age.

⁷The sons of Barzillai from Gilead helped me when I was running from your brother Absalom. Be kind to them and let them eat at your table.

⁸Be sure to do something about Shimei son of Gera from Bahurim in the territory of Benjamin. He cursed and insulted me the day I went to Mahanaim. But later, when he came to meet me at the River Jordan, I promised that I wouldn't kill him.

⁹Now you must punish him. He's an old man, but you're wise enough to know that you must have him killed.

¹⁰David was king of Israel forty years. He ruled seven years from Hebron and thirty-three years from Jerusalem. Then he died and was buried in Jerusalem.

¹¹ (2:10)

¹²His son Solomon became king and took control of David's kingdom.

¹³One day, Adonijah went to see Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and she asked, Is this a friendly visit? Yes.

¹⁴I just want to talk with you. All right, she told him, go ahead.

¹⁵You know that I was king for a little while, Adonijah replied. And everyone in Israel accepted me as their ruler. But the LORD wanted my brother to be king, so now things have changed.

¹⁶Would you do me a favour? What do you want? Bathsheba asked.

¹⁷Please ask Solomon to let me marry Abishag. He won't say no to you.

¹⁸All right, she said. I'll ask him.

¹⁹When Bathsheba went to see Solomon, he stood up to meet her, then bowed low. He sat back down and had another throne brought in, so his mother could sit at his right side.

²⁰Bathsheba sat down and then asked, Would you do me a small favour? Solomon replied, Mother, just tell me what you want, and I will do it.

²¹Allow your brother Adonijah to marry Abishag, she answered.

²²Solomon said: What? Let my elder brother marry Abishag? You may as well

ask me to let him rule the kingdom!
And why don't you ask such favours for
Abiathar and Joab?

²³I swear in the name of the LORD that
Adonijah will die because he asked for
this! If he doesn't, I pray that God will
severely punish me.

²⁴The LORD made me king in my
father's place and promised that the
kings of Israel would come from my
family. Yes, I swear by the living LORD
that Adonijah will die today.

²⁵Benaiah, Solomon shouted, go and
kill Adonijah. So Adonijah died.

²⁶Solomon sent for Abiathar the priest
and said: Abiathar, go back home to
Anathoth! You ought to be killed too,
but I won't do it now. When my father
David was king, you were in charge of
the sacred chest, and you went through
a lot of hard times with my father.

²⁷But I won't let you be a priest of the
LORD any more. And so the promise that
the LORD had made at Shiloh about the
family of Eli came true.

²⁸Joab had not helped Absalom try
to become king, but he had helped
Adonijah. So when Joab learnt that

Adonijah had been killed, he ran to the sacred tent and grabbed hold of the corners of the altar for protection.

²⁹When Solomon heard about this, he sent someone to ask Joab, Why did you run to the altar? Joab sent back his answer, I was afraid of you, and I ran to the LORD for protection. Then Solomon shouted, Benaiah, go and kill Joab!

³⁰Benaiah went to the sacred tent and yelled, Joab, the king orders you to come out! No! Joab answered. Kill me right here. Benaiah went back and told Solomon what Joab had said.

³¹Solomon replied: Do what Joab said. Kill him and bury him! Then my family and I won't be responsible for what he did to Abner the commander of Israel's army and to Amasa the commander of Judah's army. He killed those innocent men without my father knowing about it. Both of them were better men than Joab. Now the LORD will make him pay for those murders.

³²(2: 31)

³³Joab's family will always suffer because of what he did, but the LORD

will always bless David's family and his kingdom with peace.

³⁴ Benaiah went back and killed Joab. His body was taken away and buried near his home in the desert.

³⁵ Solomon put Benaiah in Joab's place as army commander, and he put Zadok in Abiathar's place as priest.

³⁶ Solomon sent for Shimei and said, Build a house here in Jerusalem and live in it. But whatever you do, don't leave the city!

³⁷ If you ever cross Kidron Valley and leave Jerusalem, you will be killed. And it will be your own fault.

³⁸ That's fair, Your Majesty, Shimei answered. I'll do that. So Shimei lived in Jerusalem from then on.

³⁹ About three years later, two of Shimei's servants ran off to King Achish in Gath. When Shimei found out where they were,

⁴⁰ he saddled his donkey and went after them. He found them and brought them back to Jerusalem.

⁴¹ Someone told Solomon that Shimei had gone to Gath and was back.

⁴²Solomon sent for him and said: Shimei, you promised in the name of the LORD that you would never leave Jerusalem. I warned you that you would die if you did. You agreed that this was fair, didn't you?

⁴³You have disobeyed me and have broken the promise you made to the LORD.

⁴⁴I know you remember all the cruel things you did to my father David. Now the LORD is going to punish you for what you did.

⁴⁵But the LORD will bless me and make my father's kingdom strong for ever.

⁴⁶Benaiah, Solomon shouted, kill Shimei. So Shimei died. Solomon was now in complete control of his kingdom.

3¹ Solomon signed a treaty with the king of Egypt and married his daughter. She lived in the older part of Jerusalem until the palace, the LORD's temple, and the wall around Jerusalem were completed.

²At that time, there was no temple for worshipping the LORD, and everyone offered sacrifices at the local shrines.

³Solomon loved the LORD and followed his father David's instructions, but Solomon also offered sacrifices and burnt incense at the shrines.

⁴The most important shrine was in Gibeon, and Solomon had offered more than a thousand sacrifices on that altar.

⁵One night while Solomon was in Gibeon, the LORD God appeared to him in a dream and said, Solomon, ask for anything you want, and I will give it to you.

⁶Solomon answered: My father David, your servant, was honest and did what you commanded. You were always loyal to him, and you gave him a son who is now king.

⁷LORD God, I'm your servant, and you've made me king in my father's place. But I'm very young and know so little about being a leader.

⁸And now I must rule your chosen people, even though there are too many of them to count.

⁹Please make me wise and teach me the difference between right and wrong. Then I will know how to rule your people.

If you don't, there is no way I could rule this great nation of yours.

¹⁰God said: Solomon, I'm pleased that you asked for this. You could have asked to live a long time or to be rich. Or you could have asked for your enemies to be destroyed. Instead, you asked for wisdom to make right decisions.

¹¹ (3: 10)

¹²So I'll make you wiser than anyone who has ever lived or ever will live.

¹³I'll also give you what you didn't ask for. You'll be rich and respected as long as you live, and you'll be greater than any other king.

¹⁴If you obey me and follow my commands, as your father David did, I'll let you live a long time.

¹⁵Solomon woke up and realized that God had spoken to him in the dream. He went back to Jerusalem and stood in front of the sacred chest, where he offered sacrifices to please the Lord and sacrifices to ask his blessing. Then Solomon gave a feast for his officials.

¹⁶One day two women came to King Solomon,

¹⁷ and one of them said: Your Majesty, this woman and I live in the same house. Not long ago my baby was born at home,

¹⁸ and three days later her baby was born. Nobody else was there with us.

¹⁹ One night while we were all asleep, she rolled over on her baby, and he died.

²⁰ Then while I was still asleep, she got up and took my son out of my bed. She put him in her bed, then she put her dead baby next to me.

²¹ In the morning when I got up to feed my son, I saw that he was dead. But when I looked at him in the light, I knew he wasn't my son.

²² No! the other woman shouted. He was your son. My baby is alive! The dead baby is yours, the first woman yelled. Mine is alive! They argued back and forth in front of Solomon,

²³ until finally he said, Both of you say this live baby is yours.

²⁴ Someone bring me a sword. A sword was brought, and Solomon ordered,

²⁵ Cut the baby in half! That way each of you can have part of him.

²⁶ Please don't kill my son, the baby's mother screamed. Your Majesty, I love

him very much, but give him to her. Just don't kill him. The other woman shouted, Go ahead and cut him in half. Then neither of us will have the baby.

²⁷ Solomon said, Don't kill the baby. Then he pointed to the first woman, She is his real mother. Give the baby to her.

²⁸ Everyone in Israel was amazed when they heard how Solomon had made his decision. They realized that God had given him wisdom to judge fairly.

4¹ Here is a list of Solomon's highest officials while he was king of Israel: Azariah son of Zadok was the priest; Elihoreph and Ahijah sons of Shisha were the secretaries; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud kept the government records; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the army commander; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; Azariah son of Nathan was in charge of the regional officers; Zabud son of Nathan was a priest and the king's adviser; Ahishar was the prime minister; Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the forced labour.

² (4: 1)

³ (4: 1)

⁴ (4: 1)

⁵(4:1)

⁶(4:1)

⁷Solomon chose twelve regional officers, who took turns bringing food for him and his household. Each officer provided food from his region for one month of the year.

⁸These were the twelve officers: The son of Hur was in charge of the hill country of Ephraim.

⁹The son of Deker was in charge of the towns of Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-Shemesh, and Elon-Beth-Hanan.

¹⁰The son of Hessed was in charge of the towns of Arubboth and Socoh, and the region of Hepher.

¹¹The son of Abinadab was in charge of Naphath-Dor and was married to Solomon's daughter Taphath.

¹²Baana son of Ahilud was in charge of the towns of Taanach and Megiddo. He was also in charge of the whole region of Beth-Shan near the town of Zarethan, south of Jezreel from Beth-Shan to Abel-Meholah to the other side of Jokmeam.

¹³The son of Geber was in charge of the town of Ramoth in Gilead and the

villages in Gilead belonging to the family of Jair, a descendant of Manasseh. He was also in charge of the region of Argob in Bashan, which had sixty walled towns with bronze bars on their gates.

¹⁴Ahinadab son of Iddo was in charge of the territory of Mahanaim.

¹⁵Ahimaaz was in charge of the territory of Naphtali and was married to Solomon's daughter Basemath.

¹⁶Baana son of Hushai was in charge of the territory of Asher and the town of Bealoth.

¹⁷Jehoshaphat son of Paruah was in charge of the territory of Issachar.

¹⁸Shimei son of Ela was in charge of the territory of Benjamin.

¹⁹Geber son of Uri was in charge of Gilead, where King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan had lived. And one officer was in charge of the territory of Judah.

²⁰There were so many people living in Judah and Israel while Solomon was king that they seemed like grains of sand on a beach. Everyone had enough to eat and drink, and they were happy.

²¹ Solomon ruled every kingdom between the River Euphrates and the land of the Philistines down to Egypt. These kingdoms paid him taxes as long as he lived.

²² Every day, Solomon needed five thousand litres of fine flour, ten thousand litres of coarsely-ground flour,

²³ ten grain-fed cattle, twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, as well as deer, gazelles, and geese.

²⁴ Solomon ruled the whole region west of the River Euphrates, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and he was at peace with all the countries around him.

²⁵ Everyone living in Israel, from the town of Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south, was safe as long as Solomon lived. Each family sat undisturbed beneath its own grape vines and fig trees.

²⁶ Solomon had forty thousand stalls of chariot horses and twelve thousand chariot soldiers.

²⁷ Each of the twelve regional officers brought food to Solomon and his household for one month of the year. They provided everything he needed,

²⁸as well as barley and straw for the horses.

²⁹Solomon was brilliant. God had blessed him with insight and understanding.

³⁰He was wiser than anyone else in the world, including the wisest people of the east and of Egypt. He was even wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Mahol's three sons, Heman, Calcol, and Darda. Solomon became famous in every country around Judah and Israel.

³¹ (4: 30)

³²Solomon wrote three thousand wise sayings and composed more than a thousand songs.

³³He could talk about all kinds of plants, from large trees to small bushes, and he taught about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish.

³⁴Kings all over the world heard about Solomon's wisdom and sent people to listen to him teach.

5¹ King Hiram of Tyre had always been friends with Solomon's father David. When Hiram learnt that Solomon was king, he sent some of his officials to meet with Solomon.

²Solomon sent a message back to Hiram:

³Remember how my father David wanted to build a temple where the LORD his God could be worshipped? But enemies kept attacking my father's kingdom, and he never had the chance.

⁴Now, thanks to the LORD God, there is peace in my kingdom and no trouble or threat of war anywhere.

⁵The LORD God promised my father that when his son became king, he would build a temple for worshipping the LORD. So I've decided to do that.

⁶I'd like you to send your workers to cut down cedar trees in Lebanon for me. I will pay them whatever you say and will even make my workers help them. We both know that your workers are more experienced than anyone else at cutting timber.

⁷Hiram was so happy when he heard Solomon's request that he said, I am grateful that the Lord gave David such a wise son to be king of that great nation!

⁸Then he sent back his answer: I received your message and will give you all the cedar and pine logs you need.

⁹My workers will carry them down from Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea. They will tie the logs together and float them along the coast to wherever you want them. Then they will untie the logs, and your workers can take them from there. To pay for the logs, you can provide the grain I need for my household.

¹⁰Hiram gave Solomon all the cedar and pine logs he needed.

¹¹In return, Solomon gave Hiram two thousand tonnes of wheat and four hundred thousand litres of pure olive oil each year.

¹²The LORD kept his promise and made Solomon wise. Hiram and Solomon signed a treaty and never went to war against each other.

¹³Solomon ordered thirty thousand people from all over Israel to cut logs for the temple,

¹⁴and he put Adoniram in charge of these workers. Solomon divided them into three groups of ten thousand. Each group worked one month in Lebanon and had two months off at home.

¹⁵He also had eighty thousand workers to cut stone in the hill country of Israel,

seventy thousand workers to carry the stones,

¹⁶and over three thousand assistants to keep track of the work and to supervise the workers.

¹⁷He ordered the workers to cut and shape large blocks of good stone for the foundation of the temple.

¹⁸Solomon's and Hiram's men worked with men from the city of Gebal, and together they got the stones and logs ready for the temple.

6¹Solomon's workers started building the temple during Ziv, the second month of the year. It had been four years since Solomon became king of Israel, and four hundred and eighty years since the people of Israel left Egypt.

²The inside of the LORD's temple was twenty-seven metres long, nine metres wide, and thirteen and a half metres high.

³A four-and-a-half-metre porch went all the way across the front of the temple.

⁴The windows were narrow on the outside but wide on the inside.

⁵Along the sides and back of the temple, there were three levels of

storage rooms. The rooms on the bottom level were just over two metres wide, the rooms on the middle level were over two and a half metres wide, and those on the top level were just over three metres wide. There were ledges on the outside of the temple that supported the beams of the storage rooms, so that nothing was built into the temple walls.

⁶(6: 5)

⁷Solomon did not want the noise of hammers and axes to be heard at the place where the temple was being built. So he made the workers shape the blocks of stone at the quarry.

⁸The entrance to the bottom storage rooms was on the south side of the building, and stairs to the other rooms were also there.

⁹The roof of the temple was made out of beams and cedar boards. The workers finished building the outside of the temple.

¹⁰Storage rooms just over two metres high were all around the temple, and they were attached to the temple by cedar beams.

¹¹The LORD told Solomon:

¹²If you obey my commands and do what I say, I will keep the promise I made to your father David. I will live among my people Israel in this temple you are building, and I will not desert them.

¹³(6: 12)

¹⁴So Solomon's workers finished building the temple.

¹⁵The floor of the temple was made out of pine, and the walls were lined with cedar from floor to ceiling.

¹⁶The most holy place was in the back of the temple, and it was nine metres square. Cedar boards standing from floor to ceiling separated it from the rest of the temple.

¹⁷The temple's main room was eighteen metres long, and it was in front of the most holy place.

¹⁸The inside walls were lined with cedar to hide the stones, and the cedar was decorated with carvings of gourds and flowers.

¹⁹The sacred chest was kept in the most holy place.

²⁰This room was nine metres long, nine metres wide, and nine metres high,

and it was lined with pure gold. There were also gold chains across the front of the most holy place. The inside of the temple, as well as the cedar altar in the most holy place, was covered with gold.

²¹ (6: 20)

²² (6: 20)

²³ Solomon had two statues of winged creatures made from olive wood to put in the most holy place. Each creature was four and a half metres tall

²⁴ and four and a half metres across.

They had two wings, and the wings were just over two metres long.

²⁵ (6: 24)

²⁶ (6: 24)

²⁷ Solomon put them next to each other in the most holy place. Their wings were spread out and reached across the room.

²⁸ The creatures were also covered with gold.

²⁹ The walls of the two rooms were decorated with carvings of palm trees, flowers, and winged creatures.

³⁰ Even the floor was covered with gold.

³¹ The two doors to the most holy place were made out of olive wood and were decorated with carvings of palm trees,

flowers, and winged creatures. The doors and the carvings were covered with gold. The door frame came to a point at the top.

³² (6: 31)

³³ The two doors to the main room of the temple were made out of pine, and each one had two sections so they could fold open. The door frame was shaped like a rectangle and was made out of olive wood.

³⁴ (6: 33)

³⁵ The doors were covered with gold and were decorated with carvings of palm trees, flowers, and winged creatures.

³⁶ The inner courtyard of the temple had walls made out of three layers of cut stones with one layer of cedar beams.

³⁷ Work began on the temple during Ziv, the second month of the year, four years after Solomon became king of Israel.

³⁸ Seven years later the workers finished building it during Bul, the eighth month of the year. It was built exactly as it had been planned.

7¹ Solomon's palace took thirteen years to build.

²Forest Hall was the largest room in the palace. It was forty-four metres long, twenty-two metres wide, and thirteen and a half metres high, and was lined with cedar from Lebanon. It had four rows of cedar pillars, fifteen in a row, and they held up forty-five cedar beams. The ceiling was covered with cedar.

³(7: 2)

⁴Three rows of windows on each side faced each other,

⁵and there were three doors on each side near the front of the hall.

⁶Pillar Hall was twenty-two metres long and thirteen and a half metres wide. A covered porch supported by pillars went all the way across the front of the hall.

⁷Solomon's throne was in Justice Hall, where he judged cases. This hall was completely lined with cedar.

⁸The section of the palace where Solomon lived was behind Justice Hall and looked exactly like it. He had a similar place built for his wife, the daughter of the king of Egypt.

⁹From the foundation all the way to the top, these buildings and the courtyard were made out of the best stones

carefully cut to size, then smoothed on every side with saws.

¹⁰The foundation stones were huge, good stonessome of them four and a half metres long and others three and a half metres long.

¹¹The cedar beams and other stones that had been cut to size were on top of these foundation stones.

¹²The walls around the palace courtyard were made out of three layers of cut stones with one layer of cedar beams, just like the front porch and the inner courtyard of the temple.

¹³Hiram was a skilled bronze worker from the city of Tyre. His father was now dead, but he also had been a bronze worker from Tyre, and his mother was from the tribe of Naphtali. King Solomon asked Hiram to come to Jerusalem and make the bronze furnishings to use for worship in the LORD's temple, and he agreed to do it.

¹⁴(7:13)

¹⁵Hiram made two bronze columns eight metres tall and almost two metres across.

¹⁶For the top of each column, he also made a bronze cap just over two metres high.

¹⁷The caps were decorated with seven rows of designs that looked like chains,

¹⁸with two rows of designs that looked like pomegranates.

¹⁹The caps for the columns of the porch were almost two metres high and were shaped like lilies.

²⁰The chain designs on the caps were just above the rounded tops of the two columns, and there were two hundred pomegranates in rows around each cap.

²¹Hiram placed the two columns on each side of the main door of the temple. The column on the south side was called Jachin, and the one on the north was called Boaz.

²²The lily-shaped caps were on top of the columns. This completed the work on the columns.

²³Hiram also made a large bowl called the Sea. It was just over two metres deep, about four and a half metres across, and thirteen and a half metres around.

²⁴Two rows of bronze gourds were around the outer edge of the bowl, ten gourds to about every forty-five centimetres.

²⁵The bowl itself sat on top of twelve bronze bulls with three bulls facing outwards in each of four directions.

²⁶The sides of the bowl were seventy-five millimetres thick, and its rim was like a cup that curved outwards like flower petals. The bowl held about forty thousand litres.

²⁷Hiram made ten moveable bronze stands, each one over a metre high, almost two metres long, and almost two metres wide.

²⁸The sides were made with panels attached to frames decorated with flower designs. The panels themselves were decorated with figures of lions, bulls, and winged creatures.

²⁹(7: 28)

³⁰Each stand had four bronze wheels and axles and a round frame sixty-eight centimetres across, held up by four supports forty-five centimetres high. A small bowl rested in the frame. The supports were decorated with flower

designs, and the frame with carvings. The side panels of the stands were square,

³¹ (7: 30)

³² and the wheels and axles were underneath them. The wheels were about sixty-eight centimetres high

³³ and looked like chariot wheels. The axles, rims, spokes, and hubs were made out of bronze.

³⁴ Around the top of each stand was a twenty-two-centimetre strip, and there were four braces attached to the corners of each stand. The panels and the supports were attached to the stands,

³⁵ (7: 34)

³⁶ and the stands were decorated with flower designs and figures of lions, palm trees, and winged creatures.

³⁷ Hiram made the ten bronze stands from the same mould, so they were exactly the same size and shape.

³⁸ Hiram also made ten small bronze bowls, one for each stand. The bowls were almost two metres across and could hold about eight hundred litres.

³⁹ He put five stands on the south side of the temple, five stands on the

north side, and the large bowl at the south-east corner of the temple.

⁴⁰Hiram made pans for hot ashes, and also shovels and sprinkling bowls. This is a list of the bronze items that Hiram made for the LORD's temple:

⁴¹two columns; two bowl-shaped caps for the tops of the columns; two chain designs on the caps;

⁴²four hundred pomegranates for the chain designs;

⁴³ten moveable stands; ten small bowls for the stands;

⁴⁴a large bowl; twelve bulls that held up the bowl;

⁴⁵pans for hot ashes, and also shovels and sprinkling bowls. Hiram made these bronze things for Solomon

⁴⁶near the River Jordan between Succoth and Zarethan by pouring melted bronze into clay moulds.

⁴⁷There were so many bronze things that Solomon never bothered to weigh them, and no one ever knew how much bronze was used.

⁴⁸Solomon gave orders to make the following temple furnishings out of gold:

the altar; the table that held the sacred loaves of bread;

⁴⁹ten lampstands that went in front of the most holy place; flower designs; lamps and tongs;

⁵⁰cups, lamp snuffers, and small sprinkling bowls; dishes for incense; fire pans; and the hinges for the doors to the most holy place and the main room of the temple.

⁵¹After the LORD's temple was finished, Solomon put into its storage rooms everything that his father David had dedicated to the LORD, including the gold and the silver.

8¹The sacred chest had been kept on Mount Zion, also known as the city of David. But Solomon decided to have the chest moved to the temple while everyone was in Jerusalem, celebrating the Festival of Shelters during Ethanim, the seventh month of the year. Solomon called together the important leaders of Israel.

²(8:1)

³Then the priests and the Levites carried to the temple the sacred chest,

the sacred tent, and the objects used for worship.

⁴ (8: 3)

⁵ Solomon and a crowd of people walked in front of the chest, and along the way they sacrificed more sheep and cattle than could be counted.

⁶ The priests carried the chest into the most holy place and put it under the winged creatures,

⁷ whose wings covered the chest and the poles used for carrying it.

⁸ The poles were so long that they could be seen from just outside the most holy place, but not from anywhere else. And they stayed there from then on.

⁹ The only things kept in the chest were the two flat stones Moses had put there when the LORD made his agreement with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, after bringing them out of Egypt.

¹⁰ Suddenly a cloud filled the temple as the priests were leaving the most holy place.

¹¹ The Lord's glory was in the cloud, and the light from it was so bright that the priests could not stay inside to do their work.

¹²Then Solomon prayed: Our LORD, you said that you would live in a dark cloud.

¹³Now I have built a glorious temple where you can live for ever.

¹⁴Solomon turned towards the people standing there. Then he blessed them

¹⁵and said: Praise the LORD God of Israel! Long ago he brought his people out of Egypt. He later kept his promise to make my father David the king of Israel. The Lord also said that he had not chosen the city where his temple would be built.

¹⁶(8: 15)

¹⁷So when David wanted to build a temple for the LORD God of Israel,

¹⁸the LORD said, It's good that you want to build a temple where I can be worshipped.

¹⁹But you're not the one to do it. Your son will build a temple to honour me.

²⁰The LORD has done what he promised. I am the king of Israel like my father, and I've built a temple for the LORD our God.

²¹I've also made a place in the temple for the sacred chest. And in that chest

are the two flat stones on which is written the solemn agreement the LORD made with our ancestors when he led them out of Egypt.

²²Solomon stood facing the altar with everyone standing behind him. Then he lifted his arms towards heaven

²³and prayed: LORD God of Israel, no other god in heaven or on earth is like you! You never forget the agreement you made with your people, and you are loyal to anyone who faithfully obeys your teachings.

²⁴My father David was your servant, and today you have kept every promise you made to him.

²⁵LORD God of Israel, you promised my father that someone from his family would always be king of Israel, if they do their best to obey you, just as he did.

²⁶Please keep this promise you made to your servant David.

²⁷There's not enough room in all of heaven for you, LORD God. How could you possibly live on earth in this temple I have built?

²⁸But I ask you to answer my prayer.

²⁹This is the temple where you have chosen to be worshipped. Please watch over it day and night and listen when I turn towards it and pray.

³⁰I am your servant, and the people of Israel belong to you. So whenever any of us look towards this temple and pray, answer from your home in heaven and forgive our sins.

³¹Suppose someone accuses a person of a crime, and the accused has to stand in front of the altar in your temple and say, I swear I am innocent!

³²Listen from heaven and decide who is right. Then punish the guilty person and let the innocent one go free.

³³Suppose your people Israel sin against you, and then an enemy defeats them. If they come to this temple and beg for forgiveness,

³⁴listen from your home in heaven. Forgive them and bring them back to the land you gave their ancestors.

³⁵Suppose your people sin against you, and you punish them by holding back the rain. If they turn towards this temple and pray in your name and stop sinning,

³⁶listen from your home in heaven and forgive them. The people of Israel are your servants, so teach them to live right. And please send rain on the land you promised them for ever.

³⁷Sometimes the crops may dry up or rot or be eaten by locusts or grasshoppers, and your people will be starving. Sometimes enemies may surround their towns, or your people will become sick with deadly diseases.

³⁸Listen when anyone in Israel truly feels sorry and sincerely prays with arms lifted towards your temple.

³⁹You know what is in everyone's heart. So from your home in heaven answer their prayers, according to the way they live and what is in their hearts.

⁴⁰Then your people will worship and obey you for as long as they live in the land you gave their ancestors.

⁴¹Foreigners will hear about you and your mighty power, and some of them will come to live among your people Israel. If any of them pray towards this temple,

⁴²(8: 41)

⁴³listen from your home in heaven and answer their prayers. Then everyone on earth will worship you, just like your people Israel, and they will know that I have built this temple to honour you.

⁴⁴Our LORD, sometimes you will order your people to attack their enemies. Then your people will turn towards this temple I have built for you in your chosen city, and they will pray to you.

⁴⁵Answer their prayers from heaven and give them victory.

⁴⁶Everyone sins. But when your people sin against you, suppose you get angry enough to let their enemies drag them away to foreign countries.

⁴⁷Later, they may feel sorry for what they did and ask your forgiveness. Answer them when they pray towards this temple I have built for you in your chosen city, here in this land you gave their ancestors. From your home in heaven, listen to their sincere prayers and do what they ask.

⁴⁸(8: 47)

⁴⁹(8: 47)

⁵⁰Forgive your people no matter how much they have sinned against you.

Make the enemies who defeated them be kind to them.

⁵¹ Remember, they are the people you chose and rescued from Egypt that was like a blazing fire to them.

⁵² I am your servant, and the people of Israel belong to you. So listen when any of us pray and cry out for your help.

⁵³ When you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, you told your servant Moses to say to them, From all people on earth, the LORD God has chosen you to be his very own.

⁵⁴ When Solomon finished his prayer at the altar, he was kneeling with his arms lifted towards heaven. He stood up,

⁵⁵ turned towards the people, blessed them, and said loudly:

⁵⁶ Praise the LORD! He has kept his promise and given us peace. Every good thing he promised to his servant Moses has happened.

⁵⁷ The LORD our God was with our ancestors to help them, and I pray that he will be with us and never abandon us.

⁵⁸ May the LORD help us obey him and follow all the laws and teachings he gave our ancestors.

⁵⁹I pray that the LORD our God will remember my prayer day and night. May he help everyone in Israel each day, in whatever way we need it.

⁶⁰Then every nation will know that the LORD is the only true God.

⁶¹Obey the LORD our God and follow his commands with all your heart, just as you are doing today.

⁶²Solomon and the people dedicated the temple to the LORD by offering twenty-two thousand cattle and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep as sacrifices to ask the LORD's blessing.

⁶³ (8: 62)

⁶⁴On that day, Solomon dedicated the courtyard in front of the temple and made it acceptable for worship. He offered the sacrifices there because the bronze altar in front of the temple was too small.

⁶⁵Solomon and the huge crowd celebrated the Festival of Shelters at the temple for seven days. There were people from as far away as the Egyptian Gorge in the south and Lebo-Hamath in the north.

⁶⁶Then on the eighth day, he sent everyone home. They said goodbye and left, very happy, because of all the good things the LORD had done for his servant David and his people Israel.

9¹The LORD's temple and Solomon's palace were now finished, and Solomon had built everything he wanted.

²Some time later the LORD appeared to him again in a dream, just as he had done at Gibeon.

³The LORD said: I heard your prayer and what you asked me to do. This temple you have built is where I will be worshipped for ever. It belongs to me, and I will never stop watching over it.

⁴You must obey me, as your father David did, and be honest and fair. Obey my laws and teachings,

⁵and I will keep my promise to David that someone from your family will always be king of Israel.

⁶But if you or any of your descendants disobey my commands or start worshipping foreign gods,

⁷I will no longer let my people Israel live in this land I gave them. I will desert this temple where I said I would be

worshipped. Then people everywhere will think this nation is only a joke and will make fun of it.

⁸This temple will become a pile of rocks! Everyone who walks by will be shocked, and they will ask, Why did the LORD do such a terrible thing to his people and to this temple?

⁹Then they will answer, We know why the LORD did this. The people of Israel rejected the LORD their God, who rescued their ancestors from Egypt, and they started worshipping other gods.

¹⁰It took twenty years for the LORD's temple and Solomon's palace to be built.

¹¹Later, Solomon gave King Hiram of Tyre twenty towns in the region of Galilee to repay him for the cedar, pine, and gold he had given Solomon.

¹²When Hiram went to see the towns, he did not like them.

¹³He said, Solomon, my friend, are these the kind of towns you want to give me? So Hiram called the region Cabul because he thought it was worthless.

¹⁴He sent Solomon only five thousand kilogrammes of gold in return.

¹⁵After Solomon's workers had finished the temple and the palace, he ordered them to fill in the land on the east side of Jerusalem, to build a wall around the city, and to rebuild the towns of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

¹⁶Earlier, the king of Egypt had captured the town of Gezer; he burnt it to the ground and killed the Canaanite people living there. Then he gave it to his daughter as a wedding present when she married Solomon.

¹⁷So Solomon had the town rebuilt. Solomon made his workers rebuild Lower Beth-Horon,

¹⁸Baalath, and Tamar in the desert of Judah.

¹⁹They also built towns where he could keep his supplies and his chariots and horses. Solomon made them build whatever he wanted in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and anywhere in his kingdom.

²⁰Solomon did not force the Israelites to do his work. They were his soldiers, officials, leaders, commanders, chariot captains, and chariot drivers. But he did make slaves of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites who

were living in Israel. These were the descendants of those foreigners the Israelites could not destroy, and they remained Israel's slaves.

²¹ (9: 20)

²² (9: 20)

²³ Solomon appointed five hundred and fifty officers to be in charge of his workers and to watch over his building projects.

²⁴ Solomon's wife, the daughter of the king of Egypt, moved from the older part of Jerusalem to her new palace. Then Solomon had the land on the east side of Jerusalem filled in.

²⁵ Three times a year, Solomon burnt incense and offered sacrifices to the LORD on the altar he had built. Solomon had now finished building the LORD's temple.

²⁶ He also had a lot of ships at Ezion-Geber, a town in Edom near Eloth on the Red Sea.

²⁷ King Hiram let some of his experienced sailors go to the country of Ophir with Solomon's own sailors, and they brought back about fourteen

thousand kilogrammes of gold for Solomon.

²⁸(9: 27)

10¹The Queen of Sheba heard how famous Solomon was, so she went to Jerusalem to test him with difficult questions.

²She took along several of her officials, and she loaded her camels with gifts of spices, jewels, and gold. When she arrived, she and Solomon talked about everything she could think of.

³He answered every question, no matter how difficult it was.

⁴The Queen was amazed at Solomon's wisdom. She was breathless when she saw his palace, the food on his table, his officials, his servants in their uniforms, the people who served his food, and the sacrifices he offered at the LORD's temple.

⁵(10: 4)

⁶She said: Solomon, in my own country I had heard about your wisdom and all you've done.

⁷But I didn't believe it until I saw it with my own eyes! And there's so much

I didn't hear about. You are wiser and richer than I was told.

⁸Your wives and officials are lucky to be here where they can listen to the wise things you say.

⁹I praise the LORD your God. He is pleased with you and has made you king of Israel. The LORD loves Israel, so he has given them a king who will rule fairly and honestly.

¹⁰The Queen of Sheba gave Solomon more than four thousand kilogrammes of gold, many jewels, and more spices than anyone had ever brought into Israel.

¹¹In return, Solomon gave her the gifts he would have given any other ruler, but he also gave her everything else she wanted. Then she and her officials went back to their own country. King Hiram's ships brought gold, juniper wood, and jewels from the country of Ophir. Solomon used the wood to make steps for the temple and palace, and harps and other stringed instruments for the musicians. It was the best juniper wood anyone in Israel had ever seen.

¹²(10: 11)

¹³(10: 11)

¹⁴ Solomon received almost twenty-three thousand kilogrammes of gold a year.

¹⁵ The merchants and traders, as well as the kings of Arabia and rulers from Israel, also gave him gold.

¹⁶ Solomon made two hundred gold shields and used almost seven kilogrammes of gold for each one.

¹⁷ He also made three hundred smaller gold shields, using almost two kilogrammes for each one, and he put the shields in his palace in Forest Hall.

¹⁸ His throne was made of ivory and covered with pure gold.

¹⁹ The back of the throne was rounded at the top, and it had arm rests on each side. There was a statue of a lion on both sides of the throne, and there was a statue of a lion at both ends of each of the six steps leading up to the throne. No other throne in the world was like Solomon's.

²⁰ (10: 19)

²¹ Since silver was almost worthless in those days, everything was made of gold, even the cups and dishes used in Forest Hall.

²² Solomon had a lot of seagoing ships. Every three years he sent them out with Hiram's ships to bring back gold, silver, and ivory, as well as monkeys and peacocks.

²³ He was the richest and wisest king in the world.

²⁴ People from every nation wanted to hear the wisdom God had given him.

²⁵ Year after year people came and brought gifts of silver and gold, as well as clothes, weapons, spices, horses, or mules.

²⁶ Solomon had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses that he kept in Jerusalem and other towns.

²⁷ While he was king, there was silver everywhere in Jerusalem, and cedar was as common as ordinary sycamore trees in the foothills.

²⁸ Solomon's merchants bought his horses and chariots in the regions of Musri and Kue. They paid about six hundred pieces of silver for a chariot and a hundred and fifty pieces of silver for a horse. They also sold horses and chariots to the Hittite and Syrian kings.

²⁹ (10: 28)

11 ¹The LORD did not want the Israelites to worship foreign gods, so he had warned them not to marry anyone who was not from Israel. Solomon loved his wife, the daughter of the king of Egypt. But he also loved some women from Moab, Ammon, and Edom, and others from Sidon and the land of the Hittites.

² (11: 1)

³Seven hundred of his wives were daughters of kings, but he also married three hundred other women. As Solomon got older, some of his wives led him to worship their gods. He wasn't like his father David, who had worshipped only the LORD God.

⁴ (11: 3)

⁵Solomon also worshipped Astarte the goddess of Sidon, and Milcom the disgusting god of Ammon.

⁶Solomon's father had obeyed the LORD with all his heart, but Solomon disobeyed and did what the LORD hated.

⁷Solomon built shrines on a hill east of Jerusalem to worship Chemosh the

disgusting god of Moab, and Molech the disgusting god of Ammon.

⁸In fact, he built a shrine for each of his foreign wives, so all of them could burn incense and offer sacrifices to their own gods.

⁹The LORD God of Israel had appeared to Solomon twice and warned him not to worship foreign gods. But Solomon disobeyed and did it anyway. This made the LORD very angry,

¹⁰(11: 9)

¹¹and he said to Solomon: You did what you wanted and not what I told you to do. Now I'm going to take your kingdom from you and give it to one of your officials.

¹²But because David was your father, you will remain king as long as you live. I will wait until your son becomes king, then I will take the kingdom from him.

¹³When I do, I will still let him rule one tribe, because I have not forgotten that David was my servant and Jerusalem is my city.

¹⁴Hadad was from the royal family of Edom, and here is how the LORD made him Solomon's enemy:

¹⁵Some time earlier, when David conquered the nation of Edom, Joab his army commander went there to bury those who had died in battle. Joab and his soldiers stayed in Edom six months, and during that time they killed every man and boy who lived there.

¹⁶(11:15)

¹⁷Hadad was a boy at the time, but he escaped to Midian with some of his father's officials. At Paran some other men joined them, and they went to the king of Egypt. The king liked Hadad and gave him food, some land, and a house, and even let him marry the sister of Queen Tahpenes.

¹⁸(11:17)

¹⁹(11:17)

²⁰Hadad and his wife had a son named Genubath, and the queen let the boy grow up in the palace with her own children.

²¹When Hadad heard that David and Joab were dead, he said to the king, Your Majesty, please let me go back to my own country.

²²Why? asked the king. Do you want something I haven't given you? No, I just want to go home.

²³Here is how God made Rezon son of Eliada an enemy of Solomon: Rezon had run away from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah.

²⁴He formed his own small army and became its leader after David had defeated Hadadezer's troops. Then Rezon and his army went to Damascus, where he became the ruler of Syria and an enemy of Israel. Both Hadad and Rezon were enemies of Israel while Solomon was king, and they caused him a lot of trouble.

²⁵(11: 24)

²⁶Jeroboam was from the town of Zeredah in Ephraim. His father Nebat had died, but his mother Zeruah was still alive. Jeroboam was one of Solomon's officials, but even he rebelled against Solomon.

²⁷Here is how it happened: While Solomon's workers were filling in the land on the east side of Jerusalem and repairing the city walls,

²⁸ Solomon noticed that Jeroboam was a hard worker. So he put Jeroboam in charge of the work force from Manasseh and Ephraim.

²⁹ One day when Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, he met Ahijah, a prophet from Shiloh. No one else was anywhere around. Suddenly, Ahijah took off his new coat and ripped it into twelve pieces.

³⁰ (11: 29)

³¹ Then he said: Jeroboam, take ten pieces of this coat and listen to what the LORD God of Israel says to you. Jeroboam, I am the LORD God, and I am about to take Solomon's kingdom from him and give you ten tribes to rule.

³² But Solomon will still rule one tribe, since he is the son of David my servant, and Jerusalem is my chosen city.

³³ Solomon and the Israelites are not like their ancestor David. They will not listen to me, obey me, or do what is right. They have turned from me to worship Astarte the goddess of Sidon, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of Ammon.

³⁴ Solomon is David's son, and David was my chosen leader, who did what I

commanded. So I will let Solomon be king until he dies.

³⁵Then I will give you ten tribes to rule,

³⁶but Solomon's son will still rule one tribe. This way, my servant David will always have a descendant ruling in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to be worshipped.

³⁷You will be king of Israel and will rule every nation you want.

³⁸I'll help you if you obey me. And if you do what I say, as my servant David did, I will always let someone from your family rule in Israel, just as someone from David's family will always rule in Judah. The nation of Israel will be yours.

³⁹I will punish the descendants of David, but not for ever.

⁴⁰When Solomon learnt what the LORD had told Jeroboam, Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam. But he escaped to King Shishak of Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.

⁴¹Everything else Solomon did while he was king is written in the book about him and his wisdom.

⁴²After he had ruled forty years from Jerusalem,

⁴³ he died and was buried there in the city of his father David. His son Rehoboam then became king.

12¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem where everyone was waiting to crown him king.

² Jeroboam son of Nebat heard what was happening, and he stayed in Egypt, where he had gone to hide from Solomon.

³ But the people from the northern tribes of Israel sent for him. Then together they went to Rehoboam and said,

⁴ Your father Solomon forced us to work very hard. But if you make our work easier, we will serve you and do whatever you ask.

⁵ Give me three days to think about it, Rehoboam replied, then come back for my answer. So the people left.

⁶ Rehoboam went to some leaders who had been his father's senior officials, and he asked them, What should I tell these people?

⁷ They answered, If you want them to serve and obey you, then you should do

what they ask today. Tell them you will make their work easier.

⁸But Rehoboam refused their advice and went to the younger men who had grown up with him and were now his officials.

⁹He asked, What do you think I should say to these people who asked me to make their work easier?

¹⁰His younger advisers said: Here's what we think you should say to them: Compared to me, my father was weak.

¹¹He made you work hard, but I'll make you work even harder. He punished you with whips, but I'll use whips with pieces of sharp metal!

¹²Three days later, Jeroboam and the others came back.

¹³Rehoboam ignored the advice of the older advisers.

¹⁴He spoke bluntly and told them exactly what his own advisers had suggested: My father made you work hard, but I'll make you work even harder. He punished you with whips, but I'll use whips with pieces of sharp metal!

¹⁵When the people realized that Rehoboam would not listen to them, they

shouted: We don't have to be loyal to David's family. We can do what we want. Come on, people of Israel, let's go home! Rehoboam can rule his own people. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labour, and Rehoboam sent him to talk to the people. But they stoned him to death. Then Rehoboam ran to his chariot and hurried back to Jerusalem. So the people from the northern tribes of Israel went home, leaving Rehoboam to rule only the people from the towns in Judah. Ever since that day, the people of Israel have opposed David's family in Judah. All this happened just as the LORD's prophet Ahijah had told Jeroboam.

¹⁶ (12: 15)

¹⁷ (12: 15)

¹⁸ (12: 15)

¹⁹ (12: 15)

²⁰ When the Israelites heard that Jeroboam was back, they called everyone together. Then they sent for Jeroboam and made him king of Israel. Only the people from the tribe of Judah remained loyal to David's family.

²¹ After Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem, he decided to attack Israel

and take control of the whole country. So he called together one hundred and eighty thousand soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

²² Meanwhile, God told Shemaiah the prophet

²³ to give Rehoboam and everyone from Judah and Benjamin this warning:

²⁴ Don't go to war against the people from Israel they are your relatives. Go home! I am the LORD, and I made these things happen. Rehoboam and his army obeyed the LORD and went home.

²⁵ Jeroboam rebuilt Shechem in Ephraim and made it a stronger town, then he moved there. He also fortified the town of Penuel.

²⁶ One day, Jeroboam started thinking, Everyone in Israel still goes to the temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the LORD. What if they become loyal to David's family again? They will kill me and accept Rehoboam as their king.

²⁷ (12: 26)

²⁸ Jeroboam asked for advice and then made two gold statues of calves. He showed them to the people and said, Listen everyone! You won't have to go to

Jerusalem to worship any more. Here are your gods who rescued you from Egypt.

²⁹Then he put one of the gold calves in the town of Bethel. He put the other one in the town of Dan, and the crowd walked out in front as the calf was taken there. What Jeroboam did was a terrible sin.

³⁰(12: 29)

³¹Jeroboam built small places of worship at the shrines and appointed men who were not from the tribe of Levi to serve as priests.

³²He also decided to start a new festival for the Israelites on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, just like the one in Judah. On that day, Jeroboam went to Bethel and offered sacrifices on the altar to the gold calf he had put there. Then he assigned the priests their duties.

³³(12: 32)

13¹One day, Jeroboam was standing at the altar in Bethel, ready to make an offering. Suddenly one of God's prophets arrived from Judah and shouted: The LORD sent me with a message about this altar. A child named Josiah will be born into David's family.

He will sacrifice on this altar the priests who make offerings here, and human bones will be burnt on it.

²(13:1)

³You will know that the LORD has said these things when the altar splits in half, and the ashes on it fall to the ground.

⁴Jeroboam pointed at the prophet and shouted, Grab him! But straight away, Jeroboam's hand became stiff, and he could not move it.

⁵The altar split in half, and the ashes fell to the ground, just as the prophet had warned.

⁶Please pray to the LORD your God and ask him to heal my hand, Jeroboam begged. The prophet prayed, and Jeroboam's hand was healed.

⁷Come home with me and eat something, Jeroboam said. I want to give you a gift for what you have done.

⁸No, I wouldn't go with you, even if you offered me half of your kingdom. I won't eat or drink here either.

⁹The LORD said I can't eat or drink anything and that I can't go home the same way I came.

¹⁰Then he started home down a different road.

¹¹At that time an old prophet lived in Bethel, and one of his sons told him what the prophet from Judah had said and done.

¹²Show me which way he went, the old prophet said, and his sons pointed out the road.

¹³Put a saddle on my donkey, he told them. After they did, he got on the donkey

¹⁴and rode off to look for the prophet from Judah. The old prophet found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, Are you the prophet from Judah? Yes, I am.

¹⁵Come home with me, the old prophet said, and have something to eat.

¹⁶I can't go back with you, the prophet replied, and I can't eat or drink anything with you.

¹⁷The LORD warned me not to eat or drink or to go home the same way I came.

¹⁸The old prophet said, I'm a prophet too. One of the LORD's angels told me to take you to my house and give you something to eat and drink. The prophet

from Judah did not know that the old prophet was lying,

¹⁹so he went home with him and ate and drank.

²⁰During the meal the LORD gave the old prophet

²¹a message for the prophet from Judah: Listen to the LORD's message. You have disobeyed the LORD your God.

²²He told you not to eat or drink anything here, but you came home and ate with me. And so, when you die, your body won't be buried in your family tomb.

²³After the meal the old prophet got a donkey ready,

²⁴and the prophet from Judah left. Along the way, a lion attacked and killed him, and the donkey and the lion stood there beside his dead body.

²⁵Some people walked by and saw the body with the lion standing there. They ran into Bethel, telling everyone what they had seen.

²⁶When the old prophet heard the news, he said, That must be the prophet from Judah. The LORD warned him, but

he disobeyed. So the LORD sent a lion to kill him.

²⁷ The old prophet told his sons to saddle his donkey, and when it was ready,

²⁸ he left. He found the body lying on the road, with the donkey and lion standing there. The lion had not eaten the body or attacked the donkey.

²⁹ The old prophet picked up the body, put it on his own donkey, and took it back to Bethel, so he could bury it and mourn for the prophet from Judah.

³⁰ He buried the body in his own family tomb and cried for the prophet.

³¹ He said to his sons, When I die, bury my body next to this prophet.

³² I'm sure that everything he said about the altar in Bethel and the shrines in Samaria will happen.

³³ But Jeroboam kept on doing evil things. He appointed men to be priests at the local shrines, even if they were not Levites. In fact, anyone who wanted to be a priest could be one.

³⁴ This sinful thing led to the downfall of his kingdom.

14¹ About the same time, Abijah son of Jeroboam got sick.

² Jeroboam told his wife: Disguise yourself so no one will know you're my wife, then go to Shiloh, where the prophet Ahijah lives. Take him ten loaves of bread, some small cakes, and honey, and ask him what will happen to our son. He can tell you, because he's the one who told me I would become king.

³ (14: 2)

⁴ She got ready and left for Ahijah's house in Shiloh. Ahijah was now old and blind,

⁵ but the LORD told him, Jeroboam's wife is coming to ask about her son. I will tell you what to say to her. Jeroboam's wife came to Ahijah's house, pretending to be someone else.

⁶ But when Ahijah heard her walking up to the door, he said: Come in! I know you're Jeroboam's wife why are you pretending to be someone else? I have some bad news for you.

⁷ Give your husband this message from the LORD God of Israel: Jeroboam, you know that I, the LORD, chose you over

anyone else to be the leader of my people Israel.

⁸I even took David's kingdom away from his family and gave it to you. But you are not like my servant David. He always obeyed me and did what was right.

⁹You have made me very angry by rejecting me and making idols out of gold. Jeroboam, you have done more evil things than any king before you.

¹⁰Because of this, I will destroy your family by killing every man and boy in it, whether slave or free. I will wipe out your family, just as fire burns up rubbish.

¹¹Dogs will eat the bodies of your relatives who die in town, and vultures will eat the bodies of those who die in the country. I, the LORD, have spoken and will not change my mind!

¹²That's the LORD's message to your husband. As for you, go back home, and straight after you get there, your son will die.

¹³Everyone in Israel will mourn at his funeral. But he will be the last one from Jeroboam's family to receive a proper

burial, because he's the only one the LORD God of Israel is pleased with.

¹⁴The LORD will soon choose a new king of Israel, who will destroy Jeroboam's family. And I mean very soon.

¹⁵The people of Israel have made the LORD angry by setting up sacred poles for worshipping the goddess Asherah. So the LORD will punish them until they shake like grass in a stream. He will take them out of the land he gave to their ancestors, then scatter them as far away as the River Euphrates.

¹⁶Jeroboam sinned and caused the Israelites to sin. Now the LORD will desert Israel.

¹⁷Jeroboam's wife left and went back home to the town of Tirzah. As soon as she set foot in her house, her son died.

¹⁸Everyone in Israel came and mourned at his funeral, just as the LORD's servant Ahijah had said.

¹⁹Everything else Jeroboam did while he was king, including the battles he won, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁰He was king of Israel for twenty-two years, then he died, and his son Nadab became king.

²¹Rehoboam son of Solomon was forty-one years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled seventeen years from Jerusalem, the city where the LORD had chosen to be worshipped. His mother Naamah was from Ammon.

²²The people of Judah disobeyed the LORD and made him even angrier than their ancestors had.

²³They also built their own local shrines and stone images of foreign gods, and they set up sacred poles for worshipping the goddess Asherah on every hill and in the shade of large trees.

²⁴Even worse, they allowed prostitutes at the shrines, and followed the disgusting customs of the foreign nations that the LORD had forced out of Canaan.

²⁵After Rehoboam had been king for four years, King Shishak of Egypt attacked Jerusalem.

²⁶He took everything of value from the temple and the palace, including Solomon's gold shields.

²⁷ Rehoboam had bronze shields made to replace the gold ones, and he ordered the guards at the city gates to keep them safe.

²⁸ Whenever Rehoboam went to the LORD's temple, the guards carried the shields. But they always took them back to the guardroom as soon as he had finished.

²⁹ Everything else Rehoboam did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

³⁰ He and Jeroboam were constantly at war.

³¹ Rehoboam's mother Naamah was from Ammon, but when Rehoboam died, he was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem. His son Abijam then became king.

15 ¹ Abijam became king of Judah in Jeroboam's eighteenth year as king of Israel,

² and he ruled from Jerusalem for three years. His mother was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom.

³ Abijam did not truly obey the LORD his God as his ancestor David had done.

Instead, he was sinful just like his father Rehoboam.

⁴David had always obeyed the LORD's commands by doing right, except in the case of Uriah. And since Abijam was David's great-grandson, the LORD kept Jerusalem safe and let Abijam have a son who would be the next king.

⁵(15: 4)

⁶The war that had broken out between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continued during the time that Abijam was king. Everything else Abijam did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

⁷(15: 6)

⁸Abijam died and was buried in Jerusalem, and his son Asa became king.

⁹Asa became king of Judah in the twentieth year of Jeroboam's rule in Israel,

¹⁰and he ruled forty-one years from Jerusalem. His grandmother was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom.

¹¹Asa obeyed the LORD, as David had done.

¹²He forced the prostitutes at the shrines to leave the country, and he got rid of the idols his ancestors had made.

¹³His own grandmother Maacah had made an idol of Asherah, and Asa took it and burnt it in Kidron Valley. Then he removed Maacah from her position as queen mother.

¹⁴As long as Asa lived, he was completely faithful to the LORD, even though he did not destroy the local shrines.

¹⁵He placed in the temple all the silver and gold objects that he and his father had dedicated to the LORD.

¹⁶Asa was always at war with King Baasha of Israel.

¹⁷One time, Baasha invaded Judah and captured the town of Ramah. He started making the town stronger, so he could put troops there to stop people from going in and out of Judah.

¹⁸When Asa heard about this, he took the silver and gold from his palace and from the LORD's temple. He gave it to some of his officials and sent them to Damascus with this message for King Benhadad of Syria:

¹⁹Our fathers signed a peace treaty. Why don't we do the same thing? This silver and gold is a present for you. So, would you please break your treaty with Baasha and force him to leave my country?

²⁰Benhadad did what Asa asked and sent the Syrian army into Israel. They captured the towns of Ijon, Dan, and Abel-Bethmaacah, and the territories of Chinneroth and Naphtali.

²¹When Baasha heard about it, he left Ramah and went back to Tirzah.

²²Asa ordered everyone in Judah to carry away the stones and wood Baasha had used to strengthen the town of Ramah. Then he used these same stones and wood to fortify the town of Geba in the territory of Benjamin and the town of Mizpah.

²³Everything else Asa did while he was king, including his victories and the towns he rebuilt, is written in The History of the Kings of Judah. When he got older, he had a foot disease.

²⁴Asa died and was buried in the tomb of his ancestors in Jerusalem. His son Jehoshaphat then became king.

²⁵ Nadab son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in Asa's second year as king of Judah, and he ruled two years.

²⁶ Nadab disobeyed the LORD by following the evil example of his father, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

²⁷ Baasha son of Ahijah was from the tribe of Issachar, and he made plans to kill Nadab. When Nadab and his army went to attack the town of Gibbethon in Philistia, Baasha killed Nadab there. So in the third year of Asa's rule, Baasha became king of Israel.

²⁸ (15: 27)

²⁹ The LORD's prophet Ahijah had earlier said, Not one man or boy in Jeroboam's family will be left alive. And, as soon as Baasha became king, he killed everyone in Jeroboam's family,

³⁰ because Jeroboam had made the LORD God of Israel angry by sinning and causing the Israelites to sin.

³¹ Everything else Nadab did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

³² King Asa of Judah and King Baasha of Israel were always at war.

³³ Baasha son of Ahijah became king of Israel in Asa's third year as king of Judah, and he ruled twenty-four years from Tirzah.

³⁴ Baasha also disobeyed the LORD by acting like Jeroboam, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

16 ¹ The LORD sent Jehu son of Hanani to say to Baasha:

² Nobody knew who you were until I, the LORD, chose you to be the leader of my people Israel. And now you're acting exactly like Jeroboam by causing the Israelites to sin. What you've done has made me so angry

³ that I will destroy you and your family, just as I did the family of Jeroboam.

⁴ Dogs will eat the bodies of your relatives who die in town, and vultures will eat the bodies of those who die in the country.

⁵ Baasha made the LORD very angry, and that's why the LORD gave Jehu this message for Baasha and his family. Baasha constantly disobeyed the LORD by following Jeroboam's sinful example but even worse, he killed everyone in Jeroboam's family!

Everything else Baasha did while he was king, including his brave deeds, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel. Baasha died and was buried in Tirzah, and his son Elah became king.

⁶(16:5)

⁷(16:5)

⁸Elah son of Baasha became king of Israel after Asa had been king of Judah for twenty-five years, and he ruled from Tirzah for two years.

⁹Zimri commanded half of Elah's chariots, and he made plans to kill Elah. One day, Elah was in Tirzah, getting drunk at the home of Arza, his prime minister,

¹⁰when Zimri went there and killed Elah. So Zimri became king in the twenty-seventh year of Asa's rule in Judah.

¹¹As soon as Zimri became king, he killed everyone in Baasha's family. Not one man or boy in his family was left alive even his close friends were killed.

¹²Baasha's family was completely wiped out, just as the LORD's prophet Jehu had warned.

¹³Baasha and Elah sinned and caused the Israelites to sin, and they made the LORD angry by worshipping idols.

¹⁴Everything else Elah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁵Zimri became king of Israel in Asa's twenty-seventh year as king of Judah, but he ruled only seven days from Tirzah. Israel's army was camped near Gibbethon in Philistia under the command of Omri. The soldiers heard that Zimri had killed Elah, and they made Omri their king that same day.

¹⁶(16: 15)

¹⁷At once, Omri and his army marched to Tirzah and attacked.

¹⁸When Zimri saw that the town was captured, he ran into the strongest part of the palace and killed himself by setting it on fire.

¹⁹Zimri had disobeyed the LORD by following the evil example of Jeroboam, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

²⁰Everything else Zimri did while he was king, including his rebellion against Elah, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

²¹ After Zimri died, some of the Israelites wanted Tibni son of Ginath to be king, but others wanted Omri.

²² Omri's followers were stronger than Tibni's, so Tibni was killed, and Omri became king of Israel

²³ in the thirty-first year of Asa's rule in Judah. Omri ruled Israel for twelve years. The first six years he ruled from Tirzah,

²⁴ then he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for six thousand pieces of silver. He built a town there and named it Samaria, after Shemer who had owned the hill.

²⁵ Omri did more evil things than any king before him.

²⁶ He acted just like Jeroboam and made the LORD God of Israel angry by causing the Israelites to sin and to worship idols.

²⁷ Everything else Omri did while he was king, including his brave deeds, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁸ Omri died and was buried in Samaria, and his son Ahab became king.

²⁹Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa's rule in Judah, and he ruled twenty-two years from Samaria.

³⁰Ahab did more things to disobey the LORD than any king before him.

³¹He acted just like Jeroboam. Even worse, he married Jezebel the daughter of King Ethbaal of Sidon and started worshipping Baal.

³²Ahab built an altar and temple for Baal in Samaria

³³and set up a sacred pole for worshipping the goddess Asherah. Ahab did more to make the LORD God of Israel angry than any king of Israel before him.

³⁴While Ahab was king, a man from Bethel named Hiel rebuilt the town of Jericho. But while Hiel was laying the foundation for the town wall, his eldest son Abiram died. And while he was finishing the gates, his youngest son Segub died. This happened just as the LORD had told Joshua to say many years ago.

17 ¹Elijah was a prophet from Tishbe in Gilead. One day he went to King Ahab and said, I'm a servant of the

living LORD, the God of Israel. And I swear in his name that it won't rain until I say so. There won't even be any dew on the ground.

² Later, the LORD said to Elijah,

³ Leave and go across the River Jordan so you can hide near Cherith Brook.

⁴ You can drink water from the brook, and eat the food I've told the ravens to bring you.

⁵ Elijah obeyed the LORD and went to live near Cherith Brook.

⁶ Ravens brought him bread and meat twice a day, and he drank water from the brook.

⁷ But after a while, it dried up because there was no rain.

⁸ The LORD told Elijah,

⁹ Go to the town of Zarephath in Sidon and live there. I've told a widow in that town to give you food.

¹⁰ When Elijah came near the town gate of Zarephath, he saw a widow gathering sticks for a fire. Would you please bring me a cup of water? he asked.

¹¹ As she left to get it, he asked, Would you also please bring me a piece of bread?

¹²The widow answered, In the name of the living LORD your God, I swear that I don't have any bread. All I have is a handful of flour and a little olive oil. I'm on my way home now with these few sticks to cook what I have for my son and me. After that, we will starve to death.

¹³Elijah said, Everything will be fine. Do what you said. Go home and prepare something for yourself and your son. But first, please make a small piece of bread and bring it to me.

¹⁴The LORD God of Israel has promised that your jar of flour won't run out and your bottle of oil won't dry up before he sends rain for the crops.

¹⁵The widow went home and did exactly what Elijah had told her. She and Elijah and her family had enough food for a long time.

¹⁶The LORD kept the promise that his prophet Elijah had made, and she did not run out of flour or oil.

¹⁷Several days later, the son of the woman who owned the house got sick, and he kept getting worse, until finally he died.

¹⁸The woman shouted at Elijah, What have I done to you? I thought you were God's prophet. Did you come here to cause the death of my son as a reminder that I've sinned against God?

¹⁹Bring me your son, Elijah said. Then he took the boy from her arms and carried him upstairs to the room where he was staying. Elijah laid the boy on his bed

²⁰and prayed, LORD God, why did you do such a terrible thing to this woman? She's letting me stay here, and now you've let her son die.

²¹Elijah stretched himself out over the boy three times, while praying, LORD God, bring this boy back to life!

²²The LORD answered Elijah's prayer, and the boy started breathing again.

²³Elijah picked him up and carried him downstairs. He gave the boy to his mother and said, Look, your son is alive.

²⁴You are God's prophet! the woman replied. Now I know that you really do speak for the LORD.

18¹For three years no rain fell in Samaria, and there was almost nothing to eat anywhere. The LORD said

to Elijah, Go and meet with King Ahab. I will soon make it rain. So Elijah went to see Ahab.

²(18:1)

³At that time Obadiah was in charge of Ahab's palace, but he faithfully worshipped the LORD. In fact, when Jezebel was trying to kill the LORD's prophets, Obadiah hid a hundred of them in two caves and gave them food and water. Ahab sent for Obadiah

⁴(18:3)

⁵and said, We have to find something for our horses and mules to eat. If we don't, we will have to kill them. Let's look around every brook and spring in the country for some grass.

⁶You go one way, and I'll go the other. Then they left in separate directions.

⁷As Obadiah was walking along, he met Elijah. Obadiah recognized him, bowed down, and asked, Elijah, is it really you?

⁸Yes. Go and tell Ahab I'm here.

⁹Obadiah replied: King Ahab would kill me if I told him that. And I haven't even done anything wrong.

¹⁰I swear to you in the name of the living LORD your God that the king has

looked everywhere for you. He sent people to look in every country, and when they couldn't find you, he made the leader of each country swear that you were not in that country.

¹¹ Do you really want me to tell him you're here?

¹² What if the LORD's Spirit takes you away as soon as I leave? When Ahab comes to get you, he won't find you. Then he will surely kill me. I have worshipped the LORD since I was a boy.

¹³ I even hid a hundred of the LORD's prophets in caves when Jezebel was trying to kill them. I also gave them food and water.

¹⁴ Do you really want me to tell Ahab you're here? He will kill me!

¹⁵ Elijah said, I'm a servant of the living LORD All-Powerful, and I swear in his name that I will meet with Ahab today.

¹⁶ Obadiah left and told Ahab where to find Elijah. Ahab went to meet Elijah,

¹⁷ and when he saw him, Ahab shouted, There you are, the biggest troublemaker in Israel!

¹⁸ Elijah answered: You're the troublemaker not me! You and your

family have disobeyed the LORD's commands by worshipping Baal.

¹⁹Call together everyone from Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. Be sure to bring along the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table.

²⁰Ahab got everyone together, then they went to meet Elijah on Mount Carmel.

²¹Elijah stood in front of them and said, How much longer will you try to have things both ways? If the LORD is God, worship him! But if Baal is God, worship him! The people did not say a word.

²²Then Elijah continued: I am the LORD's only prophet, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.

²³Bring us two bulls. Baal's prophets can take one of them, kill it, and cut it into pieces. Then they can put the meat on the wood without lighting the fire. I will do the same thing with the other bull, and I won't light a fire under it either.

²⁴The prophets of Baal will pray to their god, and I will pray to the LORD. The one

who answers by starting the fire is God. That's a good idea, everyone agreed.

²⁵ Elijah said to Baal's prophets, There are more of you, so you go first. Pick out a bull and get it ready, but don't light the fire. Then pray to your god.

²⁶ They chose their bull, then they got it ready and prayed to Baal all morning, asking him to start the fire. They danced around the altar and shouted, Answer us, Baal! But there was no answer.

²⁷ At midday, Elijah began making fun of them. Pray louder! he said. Baal must be a god. Perhaps he's daydreaming or using the toilet or travelling somewhere. Or perhaps he's asleep, and you have to wake him up.

²⁸ The prophets kept shouting louder and louder, and they cut themselves with swords and knives until they were bleeding. This was the way they worshipped,

²⁹ and they kept it up all afternoon. But there was no answer of any kind.

³⁰ Elijah told everyone to gather around him while he repaired the LORD's altar.

³¹ Then he used twelve stones to build an altar in honour of the LORD. Each

stone stood for one of the tribes of Israel, which was the name the LORD had given to their ancestor Jacob. Elijah dug a ditch around the altar, large enough to hold almost fourteen litres.

³² (18: 31)

³³ He placed the wood on the altar, then they cut the bull into pieces and laid the meat on the wood. He told the people, Fill four large jars with water and pour it over the meat and the wood. After they did this,

³⁴ he told them to do it two more times. They did exactly as he said

³⁵ until finally, the water ran down the altar and filled the ditch.

³⁶ When it was time for the evening sacrifice, Elijah prayed: Our LORD, you are the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Now, prove that you are the God of this nation, and that I, your servant, have done this at your command.

³⁷ Please answer me, so these people will know that you are the LORD God, and that you will turn their hearts back to you.

³⁸ The LORD immediately sent fire, and it burnt up the sacrifice, the wood,

and the stones. It scorched the ground everywhere around the altar and dried up every drop of water in the ditch.

³⁹When the crowd saw what had happened, they all bowed down and shouted, The LORD is God! The LORD is God!

⁴⁰Just then, Elijah said, Grab the prophets of Baal! Don't let any of them get away. So the people captured the prophets and took them to the River Kishon, where Elijah killed every one of them.

⁴¹Elijah told Ahab, Get something to eat and drink. I hear a heavy rain coming.

⁴²Ahab left, but Elijah climbed back to the top of Mount Carmel. Then he stooped down with his face almost to the ground

⁴³and said to his servant, Look towards the sea. The servant left. And when he came back, he said, I looked, but I didn't see anything. Elijah told him to look seven more times.

⁴⁴After the seventh time the servant replied, I see a small cloud coming this way. But it's no bigger than a fist. Elijah told him, Tell Ahab to get his chariot

ready and start home now. Otherwise, the rain will stop him.

⁴⁵A few minutes later, it got very cloudy and windy, and rain started pouring down. So Elijah wrapped his coat around himself, and the LORD gave him strength to run all the way to Jezreel. Ahab followed him.

⁴⁶(18: 45)

19¹Ahab told his wife Jezebel what Elijah had done and that he had killed the prophets.

²She sent a message to Elijah: You killed my prophets. Now I'm going to kill you! I pray that the gods will punish me even more severely if I don't do it by this time tomorrow.

³Elijah was afraid when he got her message, and he ran to the town of Beersheba in Judah. He left his servant there,

⁴then walked another whole day into the desert. Finally, he came to a large bush and sat down in its shade. He begged the LORD, I've had enough. Just let me die! I'm no better off than my ancestors.

⁵Then he lay down in the shade and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel woke him up and said, Get up and eat.

⁶Elijah looked around, and by his head was a jar of water and some baked bread. He sat up, ate and drank, then lay down and went back to sleep.

⁷Soon the LORD's angel woke him again and said, Get up and eat, or else you'll get too tired to travel.

⁸So Elijah sat up and ate and drank. The food and water made him strong enough to walk forty more days. At last, he reached Mount Sinai, the mountain of God,

⁹and he spent the night there in a cave. While Elijah was on Mount Sinai, the LORD asked, Elijah, why are you here?

¹⁰He answered, LORD God All-Powerful, I've always done my best to obey you. But your people have broken their solemn promise to you. They have torn down your altars and killed all your prophets, except me. And now they are even trying to kill me!

¹¹Go out and stand on the mountain, the LORD replied. I want you to see me when I pass by. All at once, a strong

wind shook the mountain and shattered the rocks. But the LORD was not in the wind. Next, there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

¹²Then there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. Finally, there was a gentle breeze,

¹³and when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his coat. He went out and stood at the entrance to the cave. The LORD asked, Elijah, why are you here?

¹⁴Elijah answered, LORD God All-Powerful, I've always done my best to obey you. But your people have broken their solemn promise to you. They have torn down your altars and killed all your prophets, except me. And now they are even trying to kill me!

¹⁵The LORD said: Elijah, you can go back to the desert near Damascus. And when you get there, appoint Hazael to be king of Syria.

¹⁶Then appoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and Elisha son of Shaphat to take your place as my prophet.

¹⁷Hazael will start killing the people who worship Baal. Jehu will kill those

who escape from Hazael, and Elisha will kill those who escape from Jehu.

¹⁸But seven thousand Israelites have refused to worship Baal, and they will live.

¹⁹Elijah left and found Elisha ploughing a field with a pair of oxen. There were eleven other men in front of him, and each one was also ploughing with a pair of oxen. Elijah went over and put his own coat on Elisha.

²⁰Elisha stopped ploughing and ran after him. Let me kiss my parents goodbye, then I'll go with you, he said. You can go, Elijah said. But remember what I've done for you.

²¹Elisha left and took his oxen with him. He killed them and boiled them over a fire he had made with the wood from his plough. He gave the meat to the people who were with him, and they ate it. Then he left with Elijah and became his assistant.

20¹ King Benhadad of Syria called his army together. He was joined by thirty-two other kings with their horses and chariots, and together they marched to Samaria and attacked.

²Benhadad sent a messenger to tell King Ahab of Israel,

³Ahab, give me your silver and gold, your wives, and your strongest sons!

⁴Your Majesty, Ahab replied, everything I have is yours, including me.

⁵Later, Benhadad sent another messenger to say to Ahab, I have already told you to give me your silver and gold, your wives, and your children.

⁶But tomorrow at this time, I will send my officials into your city to search your palace and the houses of your officials. They will take everything else that you own.

⁷Ahab called a meeting with the leaders of Israel and said, Benhadad is causing real trouble. He told me to give him my wives and children, as well as my silver and gold. And I agreed.

⁸Don't listen to him! they answered. You don't have to do what he says.

⁹So Ahab sent someone to tell Benhadad, Your Majesty, I'll give you my silver and gold, and even my wives and children. But I won't let you have anything else. When Benhadad got his answer,

¹⁰he replied, I'll completely destroy Samaria! There won't even be enough of it left for my soldiers to carry back in their hands. If I don't do it, I pray that the gods will punish me terribly.

¹¹Ahab then answered, Benhadad, don't boast before the fighting even begins. Wait and see if you live through it.

¹²Meanwhile, Benhadad and the other kings had been drinking in their tents. But when Ahab's reply came, he ordered his soldiers to prepare to attack Samaria, and they all got ready.

¹³At that very moment, a prophet ran up to Ahab and said, You can see that Benhadad's army is very strong. But the LORD has promised to help you defeat them today. Then you will know that the LORD is in control.

¹⁴Who will fight the battle? Ahab asked. The prophet answered, The young bodyguards who serve the district officials. But who will lead them into battle? Ahab asked. You will! the prophet replied.

¹⁵So Ahab called together the two hundred and thirty-two young soldiers

and the seven thousand troops in Israel's army, and he got them ready to fight the Syrians.

¹⁶At midday, King Ahab and his Israelite army marched out of Samaria, with the young soldiers in front. King Benhadad of Syria and the thirty-two kings with him were drunk when the scouts he had sent out ran up to his tent, shouting, We just now saw soldiers marching out of Samaria!

¹⁷(20: 16)

¹⁸Take them alive! Benhadad ordered. I don't care if they have come out to fight or to surrender.

¹⁹The young soldiers led Israel's troops into battle,

²⁰and each of them attacked and killed an enemy soldier. The rest of the Syrian army turned and ran, and the Israelites went after them. Benhadad and some others escaped on horses,

²¹but Ahab and his soldiers followed them and captured their horses and chariots. Ahab and Israel's army crushed the Syrians.

²²Later, the prophet went back and warned Ahab, Benhadad will attack you

again next spring. Build up your troops and make sure you have some good plans.

²³ Meanwhile, Benhadad's officials went to him and explained: Israel's gods are mountain gods. We fought Israel's army in the hills, and that's why they defeated us. But if we fight them on flat land, there's no way we can lose.

²⁴ Here's what you should do. First, get rid of those thirty-two kings and put army commanders in their places.

²⁵ Then get more soldiers, horses, and chariots, so your army will be as strong as it was before. We'll fight Israel's army on flat land and wipe them out. Benhadad agreed and did what they suggested.

²⁶ In the spring, Benhadad got his army together, and they marched to the town of Aphek to attack Israel.

²⁷ The Israelites also prepared to fight. They marched out to meet the Syrians, and the two armies camped facing each other. The Syrians covered the whole area, but the Israelites looked like two little flocks of goats.

²⁸The prophet went to Ahab and said, The Syrians think the LORD is a god of the hills and not of the valleys. So he has promised to help you defeat their powerful army. Then you will know that the LORD is in control.

²⁹For seven days the two armies stayed in their camps, facing each other. Then on the seventh day the fighting broke out, and before sunset the Israelites had killed one hundred thousand Syrian troops.

³⁰The rest of the Syrian army ran back to Aphek, but the town wall fell and crushed twenty-seven thousand of them. Benhadad also escaped to Aphek and hid in the back room of a house.

³¹His officials said, Your Majesty, we've heard that Israel's kings keep their agreements. We will wrap sackcloth around our waists, put ropes around our heads, and ask Ahab to let you live.

³²They dressed in sackcloth and put ropes on their heads, then they went to Ahab and said, Your servant Benhadad asks you to let him live. Is he still alive? Ahab asked. Benhadad is like a brother to me.

³³ Benhadad's officials were trying to understand what Ahab was thinking, and when he said brother, they quickly replied, You're right! You and Benhadad are like brothers. Go and get him, Ahab said. When Benhadad came out, Ahab asked him to climb up into his chariot.

³⁴ Benhadad said, I'll give back the towns my father took from your father. And you can have shops in Damascus, just as my father had in Samaria. Ahab replied, If you do these things, I'll let you go free. Then they signed a peace treaty, and Ahab let Benhadad go.

³⁵ About this time the LORD commanded a prophet to say to a friend, Hit me! But the friend refused,

³⁶ and the prophet told him, You disobeyed the LORD, and as soon as you walk away, a lion will kill you. The friend left, and suddenly a lion killed him.

³⁷ The prophet found someone else and said, Hit me! So this man beat him up.

³⁸ The prophet left and put a bandage over his face to disguise himself. Then he went and stood beside the road, waiting for Ahab to pass by.

³⁹When Ahab went by, the prophet shouted, Your Majesty, right in the heat of battle, someone brought a prisoner to me and told me to guard him. He said if the prisoner got away, I would either be killed or forced to pay three thousand pieces of silver.

⁴⁰But I got busy doing other things, and the prisoner escaped. Ahab answered, You will be punished just as you have said.

⁴¹The man quickly tore the bandage off his face, and Ahab saw that he was one of the prophets.

⁴²The prophet said, The LORD told you to kill Benhadad, but you let him go. Now you will die in his place, and your people will die in place of his people.

⁴³Ahab went back to Samaria, angry and depressed.

21¹Naboth owned a vineyard in Jezreel near King Ahab's palace.

²One day, Ahab said, Naboth, your vineyard is near my palace. Give it to me so I can turn it into a vegetable garden. I'll give you a better vineyard or pay whatever you want for yours.

³ Naboth answered, This vineyard has always been in my family. I won't let you have it.

⁴ So Ahab went home, angry and depressed because of what Naboth had told him. He lay on his bed, just staring at the wall and refusing to eat a thing.

⁵ Jezebel his wife came in and asked, What's wrong? Why won't you eat?

⁶ I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard or to let me give him a better one, Ahab replied. And he told me I couldn't have it.

⁷ Aren't you the king of Israel? Jezebel asked. Get out of bed and eat something! Don't worry, I'll get Naboth's vineyard for you.

⁸ Jezebel wrote a letter to each of the leaders of the town where Naboth lived. In the letters she said: Call everyone together and tell them to go without eating today. When they come together, give Naboth a seat at the front. Get two liars to sit facing him and swear that Naboth has cursed God and the king. Then take Naboth outside and stone him to death! She signed Ahab's name to the

letters and sealed them with his seal.
Then she sent them to the town leaders.

⁹(21:8)

¹⁰(21:8)

¹¹After receiving her letters, they did exactly what she had asked.

¹²They told the people that it was a day to go without eating, and when they all came together, they seated Naboth at the front.

¹³The two liars came in and sat facing Naboth. Then they accused him of cursing God and the king, so the people dragged Naboth outside and stoned him to death.

¹⁴The leaders of Jezreel sent a message back to Jezebel that said, Naboth is dead.

¹⁵As soon as Jezebel got their message, she told Ahab, Now you can have the vineyard Naboth refused to sell. He's dead.

¹⁶Ahab got up and went to take over the vineyard.

¹⁷The LORD said to Elijah the prophet,

¹⁸King Ahab of Israel is in Naboth's vineyard right now, taking it over.

¹⁹Go and tell him that I say, Ahab, you murdered Naboth and took his property. And so, in the very spot where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, they will lick up your blood. When Elijah found him,

²⁰Ahab said, So, my enemy, you've found me at last. Elijah answered: Yes, I have! Ahab, you have managed to do everything the LORD hates.

²¹Now you will be punished. You and every man and boy in your family will die, whether slave or free.

²²Your whole family will be wiped out, just like the families of King Jeroboam and King Baasha. You've made the LORD very angry by sinning and causing the Israelites to sin.

²³And as for Jezebel, dogs will eat her body there in Jezreel.

²⁴Dogs will also eat the bodies of your relatives who die in town, and vultures will eat the bodies of those who die in the country.

²⁵When Ahab heard this, he tore his clothes and wore sackcloth day and night. He was depressed and refused to eat. Some time later, the LORD said, Elijah, do you see how sorry Ahab is for

what he did? I won't punish his family while he is still alive. I'll wait until his son is king. No one was more determined than Ahab to disobey the LORD. And Jezebel encouraged him. Worst of all, he had worshipped idols, just as the Amorites had done before the LORD forced them out of the land and gave it to Israel.

²⁶ (21: 25)

²⁷ (21: 25)

²⁸ (21: 25)

²⁹ (21: 25)

22¹ For the next three years there was peace between Israel and Syria.

² During the third year King Jehoshaphat of Judah went to visit King Ahab of Israel.

³ Ahab asked his officials, Why haven't we tried to get Ramoth in Gilead back from the Syrians? It belongs to us.

⁴ Then he asked Jehoshaphat, Would you go to Ramoth with me and attack the Syrians? Just tell me what to do, Jehoshaphat answered. My army and horses are at your command.

⁵ But first, let's ask the LORD.

⁶Ahab sent for about four hundred prophets and asked, Should I attack the Syrians at Ramoth? Yes! the prophets answered. The Lord will help you defeat them.

⁷But Jehoshaphat said, Just to make sure, is there another of the LORD's prophets we can ask?

⁸We could ask Micaiah son of Imlah, Ahab said. But I hate Micaiah. He always has bad news for me. Don't say that! Jehoshaphat replied.

⁹Then Ahab sent someone to bring Micaiah as soon as possible.

¹⁰All this time, Ahab and Jehoshaphat were dressed in their royal robes and were seated on their thrones at the threshing place near the gate of Samaria. They were listening to the prophets tell them what the LORD had said.

¹¹Zedekiah son of Chenaanah was one of the prophets. He had made some horns out of iron and shouted, Ahab, the LORD says you will attack the Syrians like a bull with iron horns and wipe them out!

¹²All the prophets agreed that Ahab should attack the Syrians at Ramoth,

and they promised that the LORD would help him defeat them.

¹³Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah whispered, Micaiah, all the prophets have good news for Ahab. Now go and say the same thing.

¹⁴I'll say whatever the living LORD tells me to say, Micaiah replied.

¹⁵Then Micaiah went to Ahab, and Ahab asked, Micaiah, should I attack the Syrians at Ramoth? Yes! Micaiah answered. The LORD will help you defeat them.

¹⁶Micaiah, I've told you over and over again to tell me the truth! Ahab shouted. What does the LORD really say?

¹⁷He answered, In a vision I saw Israelite soldiers walking around in the hills like sheep without a shepherd to guide them. The LORD said, This army has no leader. They should go home and not fight.

¹⁸Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat and said, I told you he would bring bad news!

¹⁹Micaiah replied: Listen to this! I also saw the LORD seated on his throne with every creature in heaven gathered around him.

²⁰The LORD asked, Who can trick Ahab and make him go to Ramoth where he will be killed? They talked about it for a while,

²¹ then finally a spirit came forward and said to the LORD, I can trick Ahab. How? the LORD asked.

²² I'll make Ahab's prophets lie to him. Good! the LORD replied. Now go and do it.

²³ This is exactly what has happened, Ahab. The LORD made all your prophets lie to you, and he knows you will soon be destroyed.

²⁴ Zedekiah walked up to Micaiah and slapped him on the face. Then he asked, Do you really think the LORD would speak to you and not to me?

²⁵ Micaiah answered, You'll find out on the day you have to hide in the back room of some house.

²⁶ Ahab shouted, Arrest Micaiah! Take him to Prince Joash and Governor Amon of Samaria.

²⁷ Tell them to put him in prison and to give him nothing but bread and water until I come back safely.

²⁸ Micaiah said, If you do come back, I was wrong about what the LORD wanted me to say. Then he told the crowd, Don't forget what I said!

²⁹ Ahab and Jehoshaphat led their armies to Ramoth in Gilead.

³⁰ Before they went into battle, Ahab said, Jehoshaphat, I'll disguise myself, but you wear your royal robe. Then Ahab disguised himself and went into battle.

³¹ The king of Syria had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders to attack only Ahab.

³² So when they saw Jehoshaphat in his robe, they thought he was Ahab and started to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat shouted out to them,

³³ they realized he wasn't Ahab, and they left him alone.

³⁴ However, during the fighting a soldier shot an arrow without even aiming, and it hit Ahab where two pieces of his armour joined. He shouted to his chariot driver, I've been hit! Get me out of here!

³⁵ The fighting lasted all day, with Ahab propped up in his chariot so he could see the Syrian troops. He bled so much that

the bottom of the chariot was covered with blood, and by evening he was dead.

³⁶As the sun was going down, someone in Israel's army shouted to the others, Retreat! Go back home!

³⁷Ahab's body was taken to Samaria and buried there.

³⁸Some workers washed his chariot near a spring in Samaria, and prostitutes washed themselves in his blood. Dogs licked Ahab's blood off the ground, just as the LORD had warned.

³⁹Everything else Ahab did while he was king, including the towns he strengthened and the palace he built and furnished with ivory, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

⁴⁰Ahab died, and his son Ahaziah became king.

⁴¹Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in Ahab's fourth year as king of Israel.

⁴²Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-five years. His mother was Azubah daughter of Shilhi.

⁴³Jehoshaphat obeyed the LORD, just as his father Asa had done, and during

his rule he was at peace with the king of Israel. He got rid of the rest of the prostitutes from the local shrines, but he did not destroy the shrines, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices. Everything else Jehoshaphat did while he was king, including his brave deeds and military victories, is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

⁴⁴ (22: 43)

⁴⁵ (22: 43)

⁴⁶ (22: 43)

⁴⁷ The country of Edom had no king at the time, so a lower official ruled the land.

⁴⁸ Jehoshaphat had seagoing ships built to sail to Ophir for gold. But they were wrecked at Ezion-Geber and never sailed.

⁴⁹ Ahaziah son of Ahab offered to let his sailors go with Jehoshaphat's sailors, but Jehoshaphat refused.

⁵⁰ Jehoshaphat died and was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem, and his son Jehoram became king.

⁵¹ Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel in the seventeenth year of

Jehoshaphat's rule in Judah, and he ruled two years from Samaria.

⁵²Ahaziah disobeyed the LORD, just as his father, his mother, and Jeroboam had done. They all led Israel to sin.

⁵³Ahaziah worshipped Baal and made the LORD God of Israel very angry, just as his father had done.

2 Kings

1 ¹ Soon after King Ahab of Israel died, the country of Moab rebelled against his son King Ahaziah. One day, Ahaziah fell through the wooden slats around the porch on the flat roof of his palace in Samaria, and he was badly injured. So he sent some messengers to the town of Ekron with orders to ask the god Baalzebub if he would get well.

² (1:1)

³ About the same time, an angel from the LORD sent Elijah the prophet from Tishbe to say to the king's messengers, Ahaziah has rejected Israel's own God by sending you to ask Baalzebub about his injury.

⁴ Tell him that because he has done this, he's on his deathbed! And Elijah did what he was told.

⁵ When the messengers returned to Ahaziah, he asked, Why are you back so soon?

⁶ A man met us along the road with a message for you from the LORD, they

answered. The LORD wants to know why you sent us to ask Baalzebub about your injury and why you don't believe there's a God in Israel. The man also told us that the LORD says you're going to die.

⁷What did the man look like? Ahaziah asked.

⁸He was hairy and had a leather belt around his waist, they answered. It must be Elijah! replied Ahaziah.

⁹So at once he sent an army officer and fifty soldiers to meet Elijah. Elijah was sitting on top of a hill at the time. The officer went up to him and said, Man of God, the king orders you to come down and talk with him.

¹⁰If I am a man of God, Elijah answered, God will send down fire on you and your fifty soldiers. Fire immediately came down from heaven and burnt up the officer and his men.

¹¹Ahaziah sent another officer and fifty more soldiers to Elijah. The officer said, Man of God, the king orders you to come and see him at once.

¹²If I am a man of God, Elijah answered, fire will destroy you and your

fifty soldiers. And God sent down fire from heaven on the officer and his men.

¹³Ahaziah sent a third army officer and fifty more soldiers. This officer went up to Elijah, then he got down on his knees and begged, Man of God, please be kind to me and these fifty servants of yours. Let us live!

¹⁴Fire has already wiped out the other officers and their soldiers. Please don't let it happen to me.

¹⁵The angel from the LORD said to Elijah, Go with him and don't be afraid. So Elijah got up and went with the officer.

¹⁶When Elijah arrived, he told Ahaziah, The LORD wants to know why you sent messengers to Ekron to ask Baalzebub about your injury. Don't you believe there's a God in Israel? Ahaziah, because you did that, the LORD says you will die.

¹⁷Ahaziah died, just as the LORD had said. But since Ahaziah had no sons, Joram his brother then became king. This happened in the second year that Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat was king of Judah.

¹⁸Everything else Ahaziah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

2¹Not long before the LORD took Elijah up into heaven in a strong wind, Elijah and Elisha were leaving Gilgal.

²Elijah said to Elisha, The LORD wants me to go to Bethel, but you must stay here. Elisha replied, I swear by the living LORD and by your own life that I will stay with you no matter what! And he went with Elijah to Bethel.

³A group of prophets who lived there asked Elisha, Do you know that today the LORD is going to take away your master? Yes, I do, Elisha answered. But don't remind me of it.

⁴Elijah then said, Elisha, now the LORD wants me to go to Jericho, but you must stay here. Elisha replied, I swear by the living LORD and by your own life, that I will stay with you no matter what! And he went with Elijah to Jericho.

⁵A group of prophets who lived there asked Elisha, Do you know that today the LORD is going to take away your

master? Yes, I do, Elisha answered. But don't remind me of it.

⁶Elijah then said to Elisha, Now the LORD wants me to go to the River Jordan, but you must stay here. Elisha replied, I swear by the living LORD and by your own life that I will never leave you! So the two of them walked on together.

⁷Fifty prophets followed Elijah and Elisha from Jericho, then stood at a distance and watched as the two men walked towards the river.

⁸When they got there, Elijah took off his coat, then he rolled it up and struck the water with it. At once a path opened up through the river, and the two of them walked across on dry ground.

⁹After they had reached the other side, Elijah said, Elisha, the LORD will soon take me away. What can I do for you before that happens? Elisha answered, Please give me twice as much of your power as you give the other prophets, so I can be the one who takes your place as their leader.

¹⁰It won't be easy, Elijah answered. It can happen only if you see me as I am being taken away.

¹¹Elijah and Elisha were walking along and talking, when suddenly there appeared between them a flaming chariot pulled by fiery horses. Straight away, a strong wind took Elijah up into heaven.

¹²Elisha saw this and shouted, Israel's cavalry and chariots have taken my master away! After Elijah had gone, Elisha tore his clothes in sorrow.

¹³Elijah's coat had fallen off, so Elisha picked it up and walked back to the River Jordan.

¹⁴He struck the water with the coat and wondered, Will the LORD perform miracles for me as he did for Elijah? As soon as Elisha did this, a dry path opened up through the water, and he walked across.

¹⁵When the prophets from Jericho saw what happened, they said to each other, Elisha now has Elijah's power. They walked over to him, bowed down,

¹⁶and said, There are fifty strong men here with us. Please let them go and look

for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD carried him off to some mountain or valley. No, Elisha replied, they won't find him.

¹⁷They kept begging until he was embarrassed to say no. He finally agreed, and the prophets sent the men out. They looked three days for Elijah but never found him.

¹⁸They returned to Jericho, and Elisha said, I told you that you wouldn't find him.

¹⁹One day the people of Jericho said, Elisha, you can see that our city is in a good spot. But the water from our spring is so bad that it even keeps our crops from growing.

²⁰He replied, Put some salt in a new bowl and bring it to me. They brought him the bowl of salt,

²¹and he carried it to the spring. He threw the salt into the water and said, The LORD has made this water pure again. From now on you'll be able to grow crops, and no one will starve.

²²The water has been fine ever since, just as Elisha said.

²³Elisha left and headed towards Bethel. Along the way some boys started making fun of him by shouting, Go away, baldy! Get out of here!

²⁴Elisha turned round and stared at the boys. Then he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Straight away two bears ran out of the woods and ripped to pieces forty-two of the boys.

²⁵Elisha went up to Mount Carmel, then returned to Samaria.

3¹Joram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Jehoshaphat's eighteenth year as king of Judah. Joram ruled twelve years from Samaria

²and disobeyed the LORD by doing wrong. He tore down the stone image his father had made to honour Baal, and so he wasn't as sinful as his parents.

³But he kept doing the sinful things that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to do.

⁴For many years the country of Moab had been controlled by Israel and was forced to pay taxes to the kings of Israel. King Mesha of Moab raised sheep, so he paid the king of Israel one hundred

thousand lambs and the wool from one hundred thousand rams.

⁵But soon after the death of Ahab, Mesha rebelled against Israel.

⁶One day, Joram left Samaria and called together Israel's army.

⁷He sent this message to King Jehoshaphat of Judah, The king of Moab has rebelled. Will you go with me to attack him? Yes, I will, Jehoshaphat answered. I'm on your side, and my soldiers and horses are at your command.

⁸But which way should we go? We will march through Edom Desert, Joram replied.

⁹So Joram, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom led their troops out. But seven days later, there was no drinking water left for them or their animals.

¹⁰Joram cried out, This is terrible! The LORD must have led us out here to be captured by Moab's army.

¹¹Jehoshaphat said, Which of the LORD's prophets is with us? We can find out from him what the LORD wants us to do. One of Joram's officers answered,

Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He was one of Elijah's closest followers.

¹²Jehoshaphat replied, He can give us the LORD's message. The three kings went over to Elisha,

¹³and he asked Joram, Why did you come to me? Go and talk to the prophets of the foreign gods your parents worshipped. No, Joram answered. It was the LORD who led us out here, so that Moab's army could capture us.

¹⁴Elisha said to him, I serve the LORD All-Powerful, and as surely as he lives, I swear I wouldn't even look at you if I didn't respect King Jehoshaphat.

¹⁵Then Elisha said, Send for someone who can play the harp. The harpist began playing, and the LORD gave Elisha this message for Joram:

¹⁶The LORD says that this dry river bed will be filled with water.

¹⁷You won't feel any wind or see any rain, but there will be plenty of water for you and your animals.

¹⁸That simple thing isn't all the LORD is going to do. He will also help you defeat Moab's army.

¹⁹You will capture all their walled cities and important towns. You will chop down every good tree and stop up every spring of water, then ruin their fertile fields by covering them with rocks.

²⁰The next morning, while the sacrifice was being offered, water suddenly started flowing from the direction of Edom, and it flooded the land.

²¹Meanwhile, the people of Moab had heard that the three kings were coming to attack them. They had called together all their fighting men, from the youngest to the oldest, and these troops were now standing at their border, ready for battle.

²²When they got up that morning, the sun was shining across the water, making it look red. The Moabite troops took one look

²³and shouted, Look at that blood! The armies of those kings must have fought and killed each other. Come on, let's go and take what's left in their camp.

²⁴But when they arrived at Israel's camp, the Israelite soldiers came out and attacked them, until they turned and ran away. Israel's army chased them all

the way back to Moab, and even there they kept up the attack.

²⁵The Israelites destroyed the Moabite towns. They chopped down the good trees and stopped up the springs of water, then covered the fertile fields with rocks. Finally, the only city left standing was Kir-Hareseth, but soldiers armed with slings surrounded and attacked it.

²⁶King Mesha of Moab saw that he was about to be defeated. So he took along seven hundred soldiers with swords and tried to break through the front line where the Edomite troops were positioned. But he failed.

²⁷He then grabbed his eldest son who was to be the next king and sacrificed him as an offering on the city wall. The Israelite troops were so horrified that they left the city and went back home.

4¹One day the widow of one of the LORD's prophets said to Elisha, You know that before my husband died, he was a follower of yours and a worshipper of the LORD. But he owed a man some money, and now that man is on his way to take my two sons as his slaves.

²Perhaps there's something I can do to help, Elisha said. What do you have in your house? Sir, I have nothing but a small bottle of olive oil.

³Elisha told her, Ask your neighbours for their empty jars. And after you've borrowed as many as you can,

⁴go home and shut the door behind you and your sons. Then begin filling the jars with oil and set each one aside as you fill it.

⁵The woman left. Later, when she and her sons were back inside their house, the two sons brought her the jars, and she began filling them.

⁶At last, she said to one of her sons, Bring me another jar. We don't have any more, he answered, and the oil stopped flowing from the small bottle.

⁷After she told Elisha what had happened, he said, Sell the oil and use part of the money to pay what you owe the man. You and your sons can live on what is left.

⁸Once, while Elisha was in the town of Shunem, he met a rich woman who invited him to her home for dinner. After that, whenever he was in Shunem, he

would have a meal there with her and her husband.

⁹Some time later the woman said to her husband, I'm sure the man who comes here so often is a prophet of God.

¹⁰Why don't we build him a small room on the flat roof of our house? We can put a bed, a table and chair, and an oil lamp in it. Then whenever he comes, he can stay with us.

¹¹The next time Elisha was in Shunem, he stopped at their house and went up to his room to rest.

¹²He said to his servant Gehazi, This woman has been very helpful. Ask her to come up here to the roof for a moment. She came, and Elisha told Gehazi to say to her, You've gone to a lot of trouble for us, and we want to help you. Is there something we can request the king or army commander to do? The woman answered, With my relatives nearby, I have everything I need.

¹³(4:12)

¹⁴Then what can we do for her? Elisha asked Gehazi. Gehazi replied, I do know that her husband is old, and that she doesn't have a son.

¹⁵Ask her to come here again, Elisha told his servant. He called for her, and she came and stood in the doorway of Elisha's room.

¹⁶Elisha said to her, Next year at this time, you'll be holding your own baby son in your arms. You're a man of God, the woman replied. Please don't lie to me.

¹⁷But a few months later, the woman got pregnant. She gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had promised.

¹⁸One day while the boy was still young, he was out in the fields with his father, where the workers were harvesting the crops.

¹⁹Suddenly he shouted, My head hurts. It hurts a lot! Carry him back to his mother, the father said to his servant.

²⁰The servant picked up the boy and carried him to his mother. The boy lay on her lap all morning, and by midday he was dead.

²¹She carried him upstairs to Elisha's room and laid him across the bed. Then she walked out and shut the door behind her.

²²The woman called to her husband, I need to see the prophet. Let me use one of the donkeys. Send a servant along with me, and let me leave now, so I can get back quickly.

²³Why do you need to see him today? her husband asked. It's not the Sabbath or time for the New Moon Festival. That's all right, she answered.

²⁴She saddled the donkey and said to her servant, Let's go. And don't slow down unless I tell you to.

²⁵She left at once for Mount Carmel to talk with Elisha. When Elisha saw her coming, he said, Gehazi, look! It's the woman from Shunem.

²⁶Run and meet her. And ask her if everything is all right with her and her family. Everything is fine, she answered Gehazi.

²⁷But as soon as she got to the top of the mountain, she went over and grabbed Elisha by the feet. Gehazi started towards her to push her away, when Elisha said, Leave her alone! Don't you see how sad she is? But the LORD hasn't told me why.

²⁸The woman said, Sir, I begged you not to get my hopes up, and I didn't even ask you for a son.

²⁹Gehazi, get ready and go to her house, Elisha said. Take along my walking stick, and when you get there, lay it on the boy's face. Don't stop to talk to anyone, even if they try to talk to you.

³⁰But the boy's mother said to Elisha, I swear by the living LORD and by your own life that I won't leave without you. So Elisha got up and went with them.

³¹Gehazi ran on ahead and laid Elisha's walking stick on the boy's face, but the boy didn't move or make a sound. Gehazi ran back to Elisha and said, The boy didn't wake up.

³²Elisha arrived at the woman's house and went straight to his room, where he saw the boy's body on his bed.

³³He walked in, shut the door, and prayed to the LORD.

³⁴Then he got on the bed and stretched out over the dead body, with his mouth on the boy's mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hand on his hands. As he lay there, the boy's body became warm.

³⁵Elisha got up and walked back and forth in the room, then he went back and leaned over the boy's body. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

³⁶Elisha called out to Gehazi, Ask the boy's mother to come here. Gehazi did, and when she was at the door, Elisha said, You can take your son.

³⁷She came in and bowed down at Elisha's feet. Then she picked up her son and left.

³⁸Later, Elisha went back to Gilgal, where there was almost nothing to eat, because the crops had failed. One day while the prophets who lived there were meeting with Elisha, he said to his servant, Prepare a big pot of stew for these prophets.

³⁹One of them went out into the woods to gather some herbs. He found a wild vine and picked as much of its fruit as he could carry, but he didn't know that the fruit was very sour. When he got back, he cut up the fruit and put it in the stew.

⁴⁰The stew was served, and when the prophets started eating it, they shouted,

Elisha, this stew tastes terrible! We can't eat it.

⁴¹ Bring me some flour, Elisha said. He sprinkled the flour in the stew and said, Now serve it to them. And the stew tasted fine.

⁴² A man from the town of Baal-Shalishah brought Elisha some freshly cut grain and twenty loaves of bread made from the first barley that was harvested. Elisha said, Give it to the people so they can eat.

⁴³ There's not enough here for a hundred people, his servant said. Just give it to them, Elisha replied. The LORD has promised there will be more than enough.

⁴⁴ So the servant served the bread and grain to the people. They ate and still had some left over, just as the LORD had promised.

5¹ Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army. The LORD had helped him and his troops defeat their enemies, so the king of Syria respected Naaman very much. Naaman was a brave soldier, but he had leprosy.

²One day while the Syrian troops were raiding Israel, they captured a girl, and she became a servant of Naaman's wife.

³Some time later the girl said, If your husband Naaman would go to the prophet in Samaria, he would be cured of his leprosy.

⁴When Naaman told the king what the girl had said,

⁵the king replied, Go ahead! I will give you a letter to take to the king of Israel. Naaman left and took along thirty thousand pieces of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten new outfits.

⁶He also carried the letter to the king of Israel. It said, I am sending my servant Naaman to you. Would you cure him of his leprosy?

⁷When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in fear and shouted, That Syrian king believes I can cure this man of leprosy! Does he think I'm God with power over life and death? He must be trying to pick a fight with me.

⁸As soon as Elisha the prophet heard what had happened, he sent the Israelite king this message: Why are you so

afraid? Send the man to me, so that he will know there is a prophet in Israel.

⁹Naaman left with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house.

¹⁰Elisha sent someone outside to say to him, Go and wash seven times in the River Jordan. Then you'll be completely cured.

¹¹But Naaman stormed off, grumbling, Why couldn't he come out and talk to me? I thought he would be sure to stand in front of me and pray to the LORD his God, then wave his hand over my skin and cure me.

¹²What about the River Abana or the River Pharpar? Those rivers in Damascus are just as good as any river in Israel. I could have washed in them and been cured.

¹³His servants went over to him and said, Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, you would have done it. So why don't you do what he said? Go and wash and be cured.

¹⁴Naaman walked down to the Jordan; he waded out into the water and stooped down in it seven times, just as Elisha

had told him. Straight away, he was cured, and his skin became as smooth as a child's.

¹⁵Naaman and his officials went back to Elisha. Naaman stood in front of him and announced, Now I know that the God of Israel is the only God in the whole world. Sir, would you please accept a gift from me?

¹⁶I am a servant of the living LORD, Elisha answered, and I swear that I will not take anything from you. Naaman kept begging, but Elisha kept refusing.

¹⁷Finally Naaman said, If you won't accept a gift, then please let me take home as much soil as two mules can pull in a wagon. Sir, from now on I will offer sacrifices only to the LORD.

¹⁸But I pray that the LORD will forgive me when I go into the temple of the god Rimmon and bow down there with the king of Syria.

¹⁹Go home, and don't worry about that, Elisha replied. Then Naaman left. After Naaman had gone only a short distance,

²⁰Gehazi said to himself, Elisha let that Syrian off too easily. He should have taken Naaman's gift. I swear by the

living LORD that I will talk to Naaman myself and get something from him.

²¹ So he hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw Gehazi running after him, he got out of his chariot to meet him. Naaman asked, Is everything all right?

²² Yes, Gehazi answered. But my master has sent me to tell you about two young prophets from the hills of Ephraim. They came asking for help, and now Elisha wants to know if you would give them three thousand pieces of silver and some new clothes?

²³ Certainly, Naaman replied. But why don't you take twice that amount of silver? He convinced Gehazi to take it all, then put the silver in two bags. He handed the bags and the clothes to his two servants, and they carried them for Gehazi.

²⁴ When they reached the hill where Gehazi lived, he took the bags from the servants and placed them in his house, then sent the men away. After they had gone,

²⁵ Gehazi went in and stood in front of Elisha, who asked, Gehazi, where

have you been? Nowhere, sir, Gehazi answered.

²⁶Elisha asked, Don't you know that my spirit was there when Naaman got out of his chariot to talk with you? Gehazi, you have no right to accept money or clothes, olive orchards or vineyards, sheep or cattle, or servants.

²⁷Because of what you've done, Naaman's leprosy will now be on you and your descendants for ever! Suddenly, Gehazi's skin became white with leprosy, and he left.

6¹One day the prophets said to Elisha, The place where we meet with you is too small.

²Why don't we build a new meeting place near the River Jordan? Each of us could get some wood, then we could build it. That's a good idea, Elisha replied, get started.

³Aren't you going with us? one of the prophets asked. Yes, I'll go, Elisha answered,

⁴and he left with them. They went to the River Jordan and began chopping down trees.

⁵ While one of the prophets was working, his axe head fell off and dropped into the water. Oh! he shouted. Sir, I borrowed this axe.

⁶ Where did it fall in? Elisha asked. The prophet pointed to the place, and Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water at that spot. The axe head floated to the top of the water.

⁷ Now get it, Elisha told him. And the prophet reached in and grabbed it.

⁸ Time after time, when the king of Syria was at war against the Israelites, he met with his officers and announced, I've decided where we will set up camp.

⁹ Each time, Elisha would send this warning to the king of Israel: Don't go near there. That's where the Syrian troops have set up camp.

¹⁰ So the king would warn the Israelite troops in that place to be on guard.

¹¹ The king of Syria was furious when he found out what was happening. He called in his officers and asked, Which one of you has been telling the king of Israel our plans?

¹² None of us, Your Majesty, one of them answered. It's an Israelite named

Elisha. He's a prophet, so he can tell his king everything even what you say in your own room.

¹³ Find out where he is! the king ordered. I'll send soldiers to bring him here. They learnt that Elisha was in the town of Dothan and reported it to the king.

¹⁴ He ordered his best troops to go there with horses and chariots. They marched out during the night and surrounded the town.

¹⁵ When Elisha's servant got up the next morning, he saw that Syrian troops had the town surrounded. Sir, what are we going to do? he asked.

¹⁶ Don't be afraid, Elisha answered. There are more troops on our side than on theirs.

¹⁷ Then he prayed, LORD, please help him to see. And the LORD let the servant see that the hill was covered with fiery horses and flaming chariots all around Elisha.

¹⁸ As the Syrian army came closer, Elisha prayed, LORD, make those soldiers blind! And the LORD blinded them with a bright light.

¹⁹Elisha told the enemy troops, You've taken the wrong road and are in the wrong town. Follow me. I'll lead you to the man you're looking for. Elisha led them straight to the capital city of Samaria.

²⁰When all the soldiers were inside the city, Elisha prayed, LORD, now let them see again. The LORD let them see that they were standing in the middle of Samaria.

²¹The king of Israel saw them and asked Elisha, Should I kill them, sir?

²²No! Elisha answered. You didn't capture these troops in battle, so you have no right to kill them. Instead, give them something to eat and drink and let them return to their leader.

²³The king ordered a huge meal to be prepared for Syria's army, and when they finished eating, he let them go. For a while, the Syrian troops stopped invading Israel's territory.

²⁴Some time later, King Benhadad of Syria called his entire army together, then they marched to Samaria and attacked.

²⁵They kept up the attack until there was nothing to eat in the city. In fact, a donkey's head cost about eighty pieces of silver, and a small bowl of pigeon droppings cost five pieces of silver.

²⁶One day as the king of Israel was walking along the top of the city wall, a woman shouted to him, Please, Your Majesty, help me!

²⁷Let the LORD help you! the king said. Do you think I have grain or wine to give you?

²⁸Then he asked, What's the matter anyway? The woman answered, Another woman and I were so hungry that we agreed to eat our sons. She said if we ate my son one day, we could eat hers the next day.

²⁹So yesterday we cooked my son and ate him. But today when I went to her house to eat her son, she had hidden him.

³⁰The king tore off his clothes in sorrow, and since he was on top of the city wall, the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth underneath.

³¹ He said, I pray that God will punish me terribly, if Elisha's head is still on his shoulders by this time tomorrow.

³² Then he sent a messenger to Elisha. Elisha was at home at the time, and the important leaders of Israel were meeting with him. Even before the king's messenger arrived, Elisha told the leaders, That murderer is sending someone to cut off my head. When you see him coming, shut the door and don't let him in. I'm sure the king himself will be just behind him.

³³ Before Elisha finished talking, the messenger came up and said, The LORD has made all these terrible things happen to us. Why should I think he will help us now?

7¹ Elisha answered, I have a message for you. The LORD promises that tomorrow here in Samaria, you will be able to buy a large sack of flour or two large sacks of barley for almost nothing.

² The chief officer there with the king replied, I don't believe it! Even if the LORD sent a rainstorm, it couldn't produce that much grain by tomorrow.

You will see it happen, but you won't eat any of the food, Elisha warned him.

³About the same time, four men with leprosy were just outside the gate of Samaria. They said to each other, Why should we sit here, waiting to die?

⁴There's nothing to eat in the city, so we would starve if we went inside. But if we stay out here, we will die for certain. Let's sneak over to the Syrian army camp and surrender. They might kill us, but they might not.

⁵That evening the four men got up and left for the Syrian camp. As they walked towards the camp, the Lord caused the Syrian troops to hear what sounded like the roar of a huge force of cavalry. The soldiers said to each other, Listen! The king of Israel must have hired Hittite and Egyptian troops to attack us. Let's get out of here! So they ran out of their camp that night, leaving their tents and horses and donkeys. When the four men with leprosy reached the edge of the Syrian camp, no one was there. They walked into one of the tents, where they ate and drank, before carrying off clothes, as well as silver and gold. They

hid all this, then walked into another tent; they took what they wanted and hid it too.

⁶(7:5)

⁷(7:5)

⁸(7:5)

⁹They said to each other, This isn't right. Today is a day to celebrate, and we haven't told anyone else what has happened. If we wait until morning, we will be punished. Let's go to the king's palace straight away and tell the good news.

¹⁰They went back to Samaria and shouted up to the guards at the gate, We've just come from the Syrian army camp, and all the soldiers are gone! The tents are empty, and the horses and donkeys are still tied up. We didn't see or hear anybody.

¹¹The guards reported the news to the king's palace.

¹²The king got out of bed and said to his officers, I know what those Syrians are doing. They know we're starving, so they're hiding in the fields, hoping we will go out to look for food. When we do,

they can capture us and take over our city.

¹³One of his officers replied, We have a few horses left why don't we let some men take five of them and go to the Syrian camp and see what's happening? We're going to die anyway like those who have already died.

¹⁴They found two chariots, and the king commanded the men to find out what had happened to the Syrian troops.

¹⁵The men rode as far as the River Jordan. All along the way they saw clothes and equipment that the Syrians had thrown away as they escaped. Then they went back to the king and told him what they had seen.

¹⁶At once the people went to the Syrian camp and carried off what was left. They took so much that a large sack of flour and two large sacks of barley sold for almost nothing, just as the LORD had promised.

¹⁷The king of Israel had put his chief officer in charge of the gate, but he died when the people trampled him as they rushed out of the city.

¹⁸Earlier, when the king was at Elisha's house, Elisha had told him that flour or barley would sell for almost nothing.

¹⁹But the officer refused to believe that even the LORD could do that. So Elisha warned him that he would see it happen, but would not eat any of the food.

²⁰And that's exactly what happened—the officer was trampled to death.

8¹Elisha told the woman whose son he had brought back to life, The LORD has warned that there will be no food here for seven years. Take your family and go and live somewhere else for a while.

²The woman did exactly what Elisha had said and went to live in Philistine territory. She and her family lived there seven years.

³Then she returned to Israel and immediately begged the king to give back her house and property.

⁴Meanwhile, the king was asking Gehazi the servant of Elisha about the amazing things Elisha had been doing.

⁵While Gehazi was telling him that Elisha had brought a dead boy back to life, the woman and her son arrived.

Here's the boy, Your Majesty, Gehazi said. And this is his mother.

⁶The king asked the woman to tell her story, and she told him everything that had happened. He then said to one of his officials, I want you to make sure that this woman gets back everything that belonged to her, including the money her crops have made since the day she left Israel.

⁷Some time later Elisha went to the capital city of Damascus to visit King Benhadad of Syria, who was sick. And when Benhadad was told he was there,

⁸he said to Hazael, Go and see Elisha the man of God and get him to ask the LORD if I will get well. And take along a gift for him.

⁹Hazael left with forty camel loads of the best things made in Damascus as a gift for Elisha. He found the prophet and said, Your servant, King Benhadad, wants to know if he will get well.

¹⁰Tell him he will, Elisha said to Hazael. But the LORD has already told me that Benhadad will definitely die.

¹¹Elisha stared at him until Hazael was embarrassed, then Elisha began crying.

¹² Sir, why are you crying? Hazael asked. Elisha answered, Because I know the terrible things you will do to the people of Israel. You will burn down their walled cities and slaughter their young men. You will even crush the heads of their babies and rip open their pregnant women.

¹³ How could I ever do anything like that? Hazael replied. I'm only a servant and don't have that kind of power. Hazael, the LORD has told me that you will be the next king of Syria.

¹⁴ Hazael went back to Benhadad and told him, Elisha said that you will get well.

¹⁵ But the very next day, Hazael got a thick blanket; he soaked it in water and held it over Benhadad's face until he died. Hazael then became king.

¹⁶ Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat became king of Judah in Joram's fifth year as king of Israel, while Jehoshaphat was still king of Judah.

¹⁷ Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled eight years from Jerusalem.

¹⁸Jehoram disobeyed the LORD by doing wrong. He married Ahab's daughter and was as sinful as Ahab's family and the kings of Israel.

¹⁹But the LORD refused to destroy Judah, because he had promised his servant David that someone from his family would always rule in Judah.

²⁰While Jehoram was king, the people of Edom rebelled and chose their own king.

²¹So Jehoram and his cavalry marched to Zair, where the Edomite army surrounded him and his commanders. During the night he attacked the Edomites, but he was defeated, and his troops escaped to their homes.

²²Judah was never able to regain control of Edom. Even the town of Libnah rebelled at that time.

²³Everything else Jehoram did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁴Jehoram died and was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem. His son Ahaziah then became king.

²⁵ Ahaziah son of Jehoram became king of Judah in the twelfth year of Joram's rule in Israel.

²⁶ Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled from Jerusalem for only one year. His mother was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel.

²⁷ Since Ahaziah was related to Ahab's family, he acted just like them and disobeyed the LORD by doing wrong.

²⁸ Ahaziah went with King Joram of Israel to attack King Hazael and the Syrian troops at Ramoth in Gilead. Joram was wounded in that battle,

²⁹ so he went to the town of Jezreel to recover. Ahaziah went there to visit him.

9¹ One day, Elisha called for one of the other prophets and said: Take this bottle of olive oil and get ready to go to the town of Ramoth in Gilead.

² When you get there, find Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi. Take him to a place where the two of you can be alone,

³ then pour olive oil on his head to show that he is the new king. Say to him, The LORD has chosen you to be king of

Israel. Then leave quickly don't wait for anything!

⁴The young prophet left for Ramoth.

⁵When he arrived, the army officers were meeting together. Sir, I have a message for you, he said. For which one of us? Jehu asked. You, sir, the prophet answered.

⁶So Jehu got up and went inside. The prophet poured olive oil on Jehu's head and told him: The LORD God of Israel has this message for you: I am the LORD, and I have chosen you to be king of my people Israel.

⁷I want you to wipe out the family of Ahab, so Jezebel will be punished for killing the prophets and my other servants.

⁸Every man and boy in Ahab's family must die, whether slave or free.

⁹His whole family must be destroyed, just like the families of Jeroboam son of Nebat and Baasha son of Ahijah.

¹⁰As for Jezebel, her body will be eaten by dogs in the town of Jezreel. There won't be enough left of her to bury. Then the young prophet opened the door and ran out.

¹¹ Jehu went back to his officers, and one of them asked, What did that mad prophet want? Is everything all right? You know him and how he talks, Jehu answered.

¹² No, we don't. What did he say? they asked. He had a message from the LORD, Jehu replied. He said that the LORD has chosen me to be the next king of Israel.

¹³ They quickly grabbed their coats and spread them out on the steps where Jehu was standing. Someone blew a trumpet, and everyone shouted, Jehu is king!

¹⁴ King Joram of Israel had been badly wounded in the battle at Ramoth, trying to defend it against King Hazael and the Syrian army. Joram was now recovering in Jezreel, and King Ahaziah of Judah was there, visiting him. Meanwhile, Jehu was in Ramoth, making plans to kill Joram. He said to his officers, If you want me to be king, then don't let anyone leave this town. They might go to Jezreel and tell Joram. Then Jehu got in his chariot and rode to Jezreel.

¹⁵ (9: 14)

¹⁶(9:14)

¹⁷When the guard in the watchtower at Jezreel saw Jehu and his men riding up, he shouted to the king, I see some men coming this way. Joram ordered, Send someone out to ask them if this is a friendly visit.

¹⁸One of the soldiers rode out and said to Jehu, King Joram wants to know if this is a friendly visit. What's it to you? Jehu asked. Just stay behind me with the rest of my troops! About the same time the guard in the watchtower said, Your Majesty, the rider got there, but he isn't coming back.

¹⁹So Joram sent out another rider, who rode up to Jehu and said, The king wants to know if this is a friendly visit. What's it to you? Jehu asked. Just get behind me with the rest of my troops!

²⁰The guard in the watchtower said, Your Majesty, the rider got there, but he isn't coming back either. Wait a minute! That one man is a reckless chariot driver it must be Jehu!

²¹Joram commanded, Get my chariot ready. Then he and Ahaziah got in their chariots and rode out to meet Jehu. They

all met on the land that had belonged to Naboth.

²² Joram asked, Jehu, is this a peaceful visit? How can there be peace? Jehu asked. Your mother Jezebel has caused everyone to worship idols and practise witchcraft.

²³ Ahaziah, let's get out of here! Joram yelled. It's a trap! As Joram tried to escape,

²⁴ Jehu shot an arrow. It hit Joram between his shoulders, then it went through his heart and came out of his chest. He fell over dead in his chariot.

²⁵ Jehu commanded his assistant Bidkar, Get Joram's body and throw it in the field that Naboth once owned. Do you remember when you and I used to ride side by side behind Joram's father Ahab? It was then that the LORD swore to Ahab that he would be punished in the same field where he had killed Naboth and his sons. So throw Joram's body there, just as the LORD said.

²⁶ (9: 25)

²⁷ Ahaziah saw all this happen and tried to escape to the town of Beth-Haggan, but Jehu caught up with him and

shouted, Kill him too! So his troops shot Ahaziah with an arrow while he was on the road to Gur near Ibleam. He went as far as Megiddo, where he died.

²⁸Ahaziah's officers put his body in a chariot and took it back to Jerusalem, where they buried him beside his ancestors.

²⁹Ahaziah had become king of Judah in the eleventh year of the rule of Ahab's son Joram.

³⁰Jehu headed towards Jezreel, and when Jezebel heard he was coming, she put on eye shadow and brushed her hair. Then she stood at the window, waiting for him to arrive.

³¹As he walked through the city gate, she shouted down to him, Why did you come here, you murderer? To kill the king? You're no better than Zimri!

³²He looked up towards the window and asked, Is anyone up there on my side? A few palace workers stuck their heads out of a window,

³³and Jehu shouted, Throw her out of the window! They threw her down, and her blood splattered on the walls and on the horses that trampled her body.

³⁴ Jehu left to get something to eat and drink. Then he told some workers, Even though she was evil, she was a king's daughter, so make sure she has a proper burial.

³⁵ But when they went out to bury her body, they found only her skull, her hands, and her feet.

³⁶ They reported this to Jehu, and he said, The LORD told Elijah the prophet that Jezebel's body would be eaten by dogs here in Jezreel.

³⁷ And he warned that her bones would be spread all over the ground like manure, so that no one could tell who it was.

10¹ Ahab still had seventy descendants living in Samaria. So Jehu wrote a letter to each of the important leaders and officials of the town, and to those who supported Ahab. In the letters he wrote:

² Your town is strong, and you're protected by chariots and an armed cavalry. And I know that King Ahab's descendants live there with you. So as soon as you read this letter,

³ choose the best person for the job and make him the next king. Then be prepared to defend Ahab's family.

⁴ The officials and leaders read the letters and were very frightened. They said to each other, Jehu has already killed King Joram and King Ahaziah! We have to do what he says.

⁵ The prime minister, the mayor of the city, as well as the other leaders and Ahab's supporters, sent this answer to Jehu, We are your servants, Your Majesty, and we will do whatever you tell us. But it's not our place to choose someone to be king. You do what you think is best.

⁶ Jehu then wrote another letter which said, If you are on my side and will obey me, then prove it. Bring me the heads of the descendants of Ahab! And be here in Jezreel by this time tomorrow. The seventy descendants of King Ahab were living with some of the most important people of the city.

⁷ And when these people read Jehu's second letter, they called together all seventy of Ahab's descendants. They

killed them, put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jezreel.

⁸When Jehu was told what had happened, he said, Put the heads in two piles at the city gate, and leave them there until morning.

⁹The next morning, Jehu went out and stood where everyone could hear him, and he said, You people are not guilty of anything. I'm the one who plotted against Joram and had him killed. But who killed all these men?

¹⁰Listen to me. Everything the LORD's servant Elijah promised about Ahab's family will come true.

¹¹Then Jehu killed the rest of Ahab's relatives living in Jezreel, as well as his highest officials, his priests, and his closest friends. No one in Ahab's family was left alive in Jezreel.

¹²Jehu left for Samaria, and along the way, he met some relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah at a place where shepherds meet. He asked, Who are you? We are relatives of Ahaziah, they answered. We're going to visit his family.

¹³(10: 12)

¹⁴Take them alive! Jehu said to his officers. So they grabbed them and led them to the well near the shepherds' meeting place, where they killed all forty-two of them.

¹⁵As Jehu went on, he saw Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him. Jehu greeted him, then said, Jehonadab, I'm on your side. Are you on mine? Yes, I am. Then give me your hand, Jehu answered. He helped Jehonadab into his chariot

¹⁶and said, Come with me and see how faithful I am to the LORD. They rode together in Jehu's chariot

¹⁷to Samaria. Jehu killed everyone there who belonged to Ahab's family, as well as all his officials. Everyone in his family was now dead, just as the LORD had promised Elijah.

¹⁸Jehu called together the people in Samaria and said: King Ahab sometimes worshipped Baal, but I will be completely faithful to Baal.

¹⁹I'm going to offer a huge sacrifice to him. So invite his prophets and priests, and be sure everyone who worships him is there. Anyone who doesn't come will

be killed. But this was a trick Jehu was really planning to kill the worshippers of Baal.

²⁰ He said, Announce a day of worship for Baal! After the day had been announced,

²¹ Jehu sent an invitation to everyone in Israel. All the worshippers of Baal came, and the temple was filled from one end to the other.

²² Jehu told the official in charge of the sacred robes to make sure that everyone had a robe to wear.

²³ Jehu and Jehonadab went into the temple, and Jehu said to the crowd, Look around and make sure that only the worshippers of Baal are here. No one who worships the LORD is allowed in.

²⁴ Then they began to offer sacrifices to Baal. Earlier, Jehu had ordered eighty soldiers to wait outside the temple. He had warned them, I will get all these worshippers here, and if any of you let even one of them escape, you will be killed instead!

²⁵ As soon as Jehu finished offering the sacrifice, he told the guards and soldiers, Come in and kill them! Don't let anyone

escape. They slaughtered everyone in the crowd and threw the bodies outside. Then they went back into the temple

²⁶and carried out the image of Baal.

They burnt it

²⁷and broke it into pieces, then they completely destroyed Baal's temple. And since that time, it's been nothing but a public toilet.

²⁸That's how Jehu stopped the worship of Baal in Israel.

²⁹But he did not stop the worship of the gold statues of calves at Dan and Bethel that Jeroboam had made for the people to worship.

³⁰Later the LORD said, Jehu, you have done right by destroying Ahab's entire family, just as I had planned. So I will make sure that the next four kings of Israel will come from your own family.

³¹But Jehu did not completely obey the commands of the LORD God of Israel. Instead, he kept doing the sinful things that Jeroboam had caused the Israelites to do.

³²In those days the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel's territory. King

Hazael of Syria defeated the Israelites and took control

³³ of the regions of Gilead and Bashan east of the River Jordan and north of the town of Aroer near the River Arnon. This was the land where the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh had once lived.

³⁴ Everything else Jehu did while he was king, including his brave deeds, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵ Jehu died and was buried in Samaria, and his son Jehoahaz became king.

³⁶ Jehu had ruled Israel twenty-eight years from Samaria.

11 ¹ As soon as Athaliah heard that her son King Ahaziah was dead, she decided to kill any relative who could possibly become king. She would have done that,

² but Jehosheba rescued Joash son of Ahaziah just as he was about to be murdered. Jehosheba, who was Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's half-sister, hid her nephew Joash and his personal servant in a bedroom in the LORD's temple where he was safe from Athaliah.

³ Joash hid in the temple with Jehosheba for six years while Athaliah ruled as queen of Judah.

⁴ Joash son of Ahaziah had hidden in the LORD's temple six years. Then in the seventh year, Jehoiada the priest sent for the commanders of the king's special bodyguards and the commanders of the palace guards. They met him at the temple, and he asked them to make a promise in the name of the LORD. Then he brought out Joash

⁵ and said to them: Here's what I want you to do. Three of your guard units will be on duty on the Sabbath. I want one unit to guard the palace.

⁶ Another unit will guard Sur Gate, and the third unit will guard the palace gate and relieve the palace guards.

⁷ The other two guard units are supposed to be off duty on the Sabbath. But I want both of them to stay here at the temple and protect King Joash.

⁸ Make sure they follow him wherever he goes, and tell them to keep their swords ready to kill anyone who tries to get near him.

⁹The commanders followed Jehoiada's orders. Each one called together his guardsthose coming on duty and those going off duty.

¹⁰Jehoiada brought out the swords and shields that had belonged to King David and gave them to the commanders.

¹¹Then they gave the weapons to their guards, who took their positions around the temple and the altar to protect Joash on every side.

¹²Jehoiada brought Joash outside, where he placed the crown on his head and gave him a copy of instructions for ruling the nation. Olive oil was poured on his head to show that he was now king, while the crowd clapped and shouted, Long live the king!

¹³Queen Athaliah heard the crowd and went to the temple.

¹⁴There she saw Joash standing by one of the columns, which was the usual place for the king. The singers and the trumpet players were standing next to him, and the people were celebrating and blowing trumpets. Athaliah tore her clothes in anger and shouted, You betrayed me, you traitors!

¹⁵ Straight away, Jehoiada said to the army commanders, Kill her! But don't do it anywhere near the LORD's temple. Take her out in front of the troops and kill anyone who is with her!

¹⁶ So the commanders dragged her to the gate where horses are led into the palace, and they killed her there.

¹⁷ Jehoiada the priest asked King Joash and the people to promise that they would be faithful to each other and to the LORD.

¹⁸ Then the crowd went to the temple built to honour Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. After Jehoiada had placed guards around the LORD's temple,

¹⁹ he called together all the commanders, the king's special bodyguards, the palace guards, and the people. They led Joash from the temple, through the Guards' Gate, and into the palace. He took his place on the throne and became king of Judah.

²⁰ Everyone celebrated because Athaliah had been killed and Jerusalem was peaceful again.

²¹ Joash was only seven years old when this happened.

12¹ Joash became king of Judah in Jehu's seventh year as king of Israel, and he ruled forty years from Jerusalem. His mother Zibiah was from the town of Beersheba.

² Jehoiada the priest taught Joash what was right, and so for the rest of his life Joash obeyed the LORD.

³ But even Joash did not destroy the local shrines, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices.

⁴ One day, Joash said to the priests, Collect all the money that has been given to the LORD's temple, whether from taxes or gifts,

⁵ and use it to repair the temple. You priests can contribute your own money too.

⁶ But the priests never started repairing the temple. So in the twenty-third year of his rule,

⁷ Joash called for Jehoiada and the other priests and said, Why aren't you using the money to repair the temple? Don't take any more money for yourselves. It is only to be used to pay for the repairs.

⁸The priests agreed that they would not collect any more money or be in charge of the temple repairs.

⁹Jehoiada found a wooden box; he cut a hole in the top of it and set it on the right side of the altar where people went into the temple. Whenever someone gave money to the temple, the priests guarding the entrance would put it into this box.

¹⁰When the box was full of money, the king's secretary and the chief priest would count the money and put it in bags.

¹¹Then they would give it to the men supervising the repairs to the temple. Some of the money was used to pay the builders, the woodworkers,

¹²the stonecutters, and the men who built the walls. And some was used to buy wood and stone and to pay any other costs for repairing the temple.

¹³While the repairs were being made, the money that was given to the temple was not used to make silver bowls, lamp snuffers, small sprinkling bowls, trumpets, or anything gold or silver for the temple.

¹⁴It went only to pay for repairs.

¹⁵The men in charge were honest, so no one had to keep track of the money.

¹⁶The fines that had to be paid along with the sacrifices to make things right and the sacrifices for sin did not go to the temple. This money belonged only to the priests.

¹⁷About the same time, King Hazael of Syria attacked the town of Gath and captured it. Next, he decided to attack Jerusalem.

¹⁸So Joash collected everything he and his ancestors Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah had dedicated to the LORD, as well as the gold in the storage rooms in the temple and palace. He sent it all to Hazael as a gift, and when Hazael received it, he ordered his troops to leave Jerusalem.

¹⁹Everything else Joash did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁰At the end of his rule, some of his officers rebelled against him. Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer murdered him in a building where the land was filled in on the east

side of Jerusalem, near the road to Silla. Joash was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem, and his son Amaziah became king.

²¹ (12: 20)

13¹ Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king of Israel in the twenty-third year of Joash's rule in Judah. Jehoahaz ruled seventeen years from Samaria

²and disobeyed the LORD by doing wrong. He never stopped following the example of Jeroboam, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

³The LORD was angry with the Israelites, so he let King Hazael of Syria and his son Benhadad rule over them for a long time.

⁴Jehoahaz prayed to the LORD for help, and the LORD saw how terribly Hazael was treating the Israelites. He answered Jehoahaz

⁵by sending Israel a leader who rescued them from the Syrians, and the Israelites lived in peace as they had before.

⁶But Hazael had defeated Israel's army so badly that Jehoahaz had only ten chariots, fifty cavalry troops, and ten thousand regular soldiers left in his

army. The Israelites kept sinning and following the example of Jeroboam's family. They did not tear down the sacred poles that had been set up in Samaria for the worship of the goddess Asherah.

⁷ (13: 6)

⁸ Everything else Jehoahaz did while he was king, including his brave deeds, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

⁹ Jehoahaz died and was buried in Samaria, and his son Jehoash became king.

¹⁰ Jehoash became king of Israel in the thirty-seventh year of Joash's rule in Judah, and he ruled sixteen years from Samaria.

¹¹ He disobeyed the LORD by doing just like Jeroboam, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

¹² Everything else Jehoash did while he was king, including his war against King Amaziah of Judah, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

¹³ Jehoash died and was buried in Samaria beside the other Israelite kings. His son Jeroboam then became king.

¹⁴Some time before the death of King Jehoash, Elisha the prophet was very sick and about to die. Jehoash went in and stood beside him, crying. He said, Master, what will Israel's chariots and cavalry be able to do without you?

¹⁵Grab a bow and some arrows, Elisha told him, and hold them in your hand. Jehoash grabbed the bow and arrows and held them. Elisha placed his hand on the king's hand

¹⁶(13: 15)

¹⁷and said, Open the window facing east. When it was open, Elisha shouted, Now shoot! Jehoash shot an arrow and Elisha said, That arrow is a sign that the LORD will help you completely defeat the Syrian army at Aphek.

¹⁸Elisha said, Pick up the arrows and hit the ground with them. Jehoash grabbed the arrows and hit the ground three times, then stopped.

¹⁹Elisha became angry with the king and exclaimed, If you had struck it five or six times, you would completely wipe out the Syrians. Now you will defeat them only three times.

²⁰Elisha died and was buried. Every year in the spring, Moab's leaders sent raiding parties into Israel.

²¹Once, while some Israelites were burying a man's body, they saw a group of Moabites. The Israelites quickly threw the body into Elisha's tomb and ran away. As soon as the man's body touched the bones of Elisha, the man came back to life and stood up.

²²Israel was under the power of King Hazael of Syria during the entire rule of Jehoahaz.

²³But the LORD was kind to the Israelites and showed them mercy because of his solemn agreement with their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, he has never turned his back on them or let them be completely destroyed.

²⁴Hazael died, and his son Benhadad then became king of Syria.

²⁵King Jehoash of Israel attacked and defeated the Syrian army three times. He took back from Benhadad all the towns Hazael had captured in battle from his father Jehoahaz.

14¹ Amaziah son of Joash became king of Judah in the second year of Jehoash's rule in Israel.

² Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he ruled twenty-nine years from Jerusalem, which was also the home town of his mother Jehoaddin.

³ Amaziah followed the example of his father Joash by obeying the LORD and doing right. But he was not as faithful as his ancestor David.

⁴ Amaziah did not destroy the local shrines, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices.

⁵ As soon as Amaziah had control of Judah, he arrested and killed the officers who had murdered his father.

⁶ But the children of those officers were not killed. The LORD had commanded in the Law of Moses that only the people who sinned were to be punished, not their parents or children.

⁷ While Amaziah was king, he killed ten thousand Edomite soldiers in Salt Valley. He captured the town of Sela and renamed it Joktheel, which is still its name.

⁸One day, Amaziah sent a message to King Jehoash of Israel: Come out and face me in battle!

⁹Jehoash sent back this reply: Once upon a time, a small thorn bush in Lebanon announced that his son was going to marry the daughter of a large cedar tree. But a wild animal came along and trampled the small bush.

¹⁰Amaziah, you think you're so powerful because you defeated Edom. Go ahead and celebrate but stay at home. If you cause any trouble, both you and your kingdom of Judah will be destroyed.

¹¹But Amaziah refused to listen. So Jehoash and his troops marched to the town of Beth-Shemesh in Judah to attack Amaziah and his troops.

¹²During the battle, Judah's army was crushed. Every soldier from Judah ran back home,

¹³and Jehoash captured Amaziah. Jehoash then marched to Jerusalem and broke down the city wall from Ephraim Gate to Corner Gate, a section nearly two hundred metres long.

¹⁴He took the gold and silver, as well as everything of value from the LORD's

temple and the king's treasury. He took hostages, then returned to Samaria.

¹⁵ Everything else Jehoash did while he was king, including his brave deeds and how he defeated King Amaziah of Judah, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁶ Jehoash died and was buried in Samaria beside the other Israelite kings. His son Jeroboam then became king.

¹⁷ Fifteen years after Jehoash died,

¹⁸ some people in Jerusalem plotted against Amaziah. He was able to escape to the town of Lachish, but another group of people caught him and killed him there. His body was taken back to Jerusalem on horseback and buried beside his ancestors. Everything else Amaziah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁹ (14: 18)

²⁰ (14: 18)

²¹ After his death the people of Judah made his son Azariah king, even though he was only sixteen at the time.

²² Azariah was the one who later recaptured and rebuilt the town of Elath.

²³ Jeroboam son of Jehoash became king of Israel in the fifteenth year of Amaziah's rule in Judah. Jeroboam ruled forty-one years from Samaria.

²⁴ He disobeyed the LORD by following the evil example of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

²⁵ Jeroboam extended the boundaries of Israel from Lebo-Hamath in the north to the Dead Sea in the south, just as the LORD had promised his servant Jonah son of Amittai, who was a prophet from Gath-Hepher.

²⁶ The LORD helped Jeroboam do this because he had seen how terribly the Israelites were suffering, whether slave or free, and no one was left to help them.

²⁷ And since the LORD had promised that he would not let Israel be completely destroyed, he helped Jeroboam rescue them.

²⁸ Everything else Jeroboam did while he was king, including his brave deeds and how he recaptured the towns of Damascus and Hamath, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁹ Jeroboam died and was buried, and his son Zechariah became king.

15 ¹ Azariah son of Amaziah became king of Judah in Jeroboam's twenty-seventh year as king of Israel.

² He was only sixteen years old when he became king, and he ruled fifty-two years from Jerusalem, which was also the home town of his mother Jecoliah.

³ Azariah obeyed the LORD by doing right, as his father Amaziah had done.

⁴ But Azariah did not destroy the local shrines, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices.

⁵ The LORD punished Azariah with leprosy for the rest of his life. He wasn't allowed to live in the royal palace, so his son Jotham lived there and ruled in his place.

⁶ Everything else Azariah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

⁷ Azariah died and was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem. His son Jotham then became king.

⁸ Zechariah son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in the thirty-eighth year of

Azariah's rule in Judah, but he ruled only six months from Samaria.

⁹Like his ancestors, Zechariah disobeyed the LORD by following the evil ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

¹⁰Shallum son of Jabesh plotted against Zechariah and killed him in public. Shallum then became king.

¹¹So the LORD had kept his promise to Jehu that the next four kings of Israel would come from his family. Everything else Zechariah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

¹²(15:11)

¹³Shallum became king of Israel in the thirty-ninth year of Azariah's rule in Judah. But only one month after Shallum became king,

¹⁴Menahem son of Gadi came to Samaria from Tirzah and killed him. Menahem then became king. The town of Tiphseh would not surrender to him, so he destroyed it and all the surrounding towns as far as Tirzah. He killed everyone living in Tiphseh, and with his sword he even ripped open pregnant women.

Everything else Shallum did while he was king, including his plot against Zechariah, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁵ (15: 14)

¹⁶ (15: 14)

¹⁷ Menahem became king of Israel in Azariah's thirty-ninth year as king of Judah, and he ruled Israel ten years from Samaria.

¹⁸ He constantly disobeyed the LORD by following the example of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

¹⁹ During Menahem's rule, King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria invaded Israel. He agreed to help Menahem keep control of his kingdom, if Menahem would pay him thirty-four thousand kilogrammes of silver.

²⁰ So Menahem ordered every rich person in Israel to give him fifty pieces of silver, and he gave it all to Tiglath Pileser, who stopped his attack and left Israel.

²¹ Everything else Menahem did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

²² Menahem died, and his son Pekahiah became king.

²³ Pekahiah became king of Israel in the fiftieth year of Azariah's rule in Judah, and he ruled two years from Samaria.

²⁴ He disobeyed the LORD and caused the Israelites to sin, just as Jeroboam son of Nebat had done.

²⁵ Pekah son of Remaliah was Pekahiah's chief officer, but he made plans to kill the king. So he and fifty men from Gilead broke into the strongest part of the palace in Samaria and murdered Pekahiah, together with Argob and Arieah. Pekah then became king.

²⁶ Everything else Pekahiah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁷ Pekah son of Remaliah became king of Israel in Azariah's fifty-second year as king of Judah, and he ruled twenty years from Samaria.

²⁸ He disobeyed the LORD and followed the evil example of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused the Israelites to sin.

²⁹ During Pekah's rule, King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria marched into Israel.

He captured the territories of Gilead and Galilee, including the towns of Ijon, Abel-Bethmaacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor, as well as the entire territory of Naphtali. Then he took Israelites from those regions to Assyria as prisoners.

³⁰In the twentieth year of Jotham's rule in Judah, Hoshea son of Elah plotted against Pekah and murdered him. Hoshea then became king of Israel.

³¹Everything else Pekah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

³²Jotham son of Azariah became king of Judah in the second year of Pekah's rule in Israel.

³³Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he ruled sixteen years from Jerusalem. His mother Jerusha was the daughter of Zadok.

³⁴Jotham followed the example of his father by obeying the LORD and doing right.

³⁵It was Jotham who rebuilt the Upper Gate that led into the court around the LORD's temple. But the local shrines

were not destroyed, and they were still used as places for offering sacrifices.

³⁶Everything else Jotham did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

³⁷During his rule, the LORD let King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel start attacking Judah.

³⁸Jotham died and was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem, and his son Ahaz became king.

16¹ Ahaz son of Jotham became king of Judah in the seventeenth year of Pekah's rule in Israel.

²He was twenty years old at the time, and he ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. Ahaz wasn't like his ancestor David. Instead, he disobeyed the LORD

³and was even more sinful than the kings of Israel. He sacrificed his own son, which was a disgusting custom of the nations that the LORD had forced out of Israel.

⁴Ahaz offered sacrifices at the local shrines, as well as on every hill and in the shade of large trees.

⁵While Ahaz was ruling Judah, the king of Edom recaptured the town of Elath

from Judah and forced out the people of Judah. Edomites then moved into Elath, and they still live there. About the same time, King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah of Israel marched to Jerusalem and attacked, but they could not capture it.

⁶(16: 5)

⁷Ahaz sent a message to King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria that said, Your Majesty, King Rezin and King Pekah are attacking me, your loyal servant. Please come and rescue me.

⁸Along with the message, Ahaz sent silver and gold from the LORD's temple and from the palace treasury as a gift for the Assyrian king.

⁹As soon as Tiglath Pileser received the message, he and his troops marched to Syria. He captured the capital city of Damascus, then he took the people living there to the town of Kir as prisoners and killed King Rezin.

¹⁰Later, Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath Pileser. And while Ahaz was there, he saw an altar and sent a model of it back to Uriah the priest, along with the plans for building one.

¹¹ Uriah followed the plans and built an altar exactly like the one in Damascus, finishing it just before Ahaz came back.

¹² When Ahaz returned, he went to see the altar and to offer sacrifices on it. He walked up to the altar

¹³ and poured wine over it. Then he offered sacrifices to please the LORD, to give him thanks, and to ask for his blessings.

¹⁴ After that, he had the bronze altar moved aside, so his new altar would be right in front of the LORD's temple.

¹⁵ He told Uriah the priest: From now on, the morning and evening sacrifices as well as all gifts of grain and wine are to be offered on this altar. The sacrifices for the people and for the king must also be offered here. Sprinkle the blood from all the sacrifices on it, but leave the bronze altar for me to use for prayer and finding out what God wants me to do.

¹⁶ Uriah did everything Ahaz told him.

¹⁷ Ahaz also had the side panels and the small bowls taken off the moveable stands in the LORD's temple. He had the large bronze bowl, called the Sea, removed from the bronze bulls on which

it rested and had it placed on a stand made of stone.

¹⁸He took down the special tent that was used for worship on the Sabbath and closed up the private entrance that the kings of Judah used for going into the temple. He did all these things to please Tiglath Pileser.

¹⁹Everything else Ahaz did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁰Ahaz died and was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem, and his son Hezekiah became king.

17 ¹Hoshea son of Elah became king of Israel in the twelfth year of Ahaz's rule in Judah, and he ruled nine years from Samaria.

²Hoshea disobeyed the LORD and sinned, but not as much as the earlier Israelite kings had done.

³During Hoshea's rule, King Shalmaneser of Assyria invaded Israel; he took control of the country and made Hoshea pay taxes.

⁴But later, Hoshea refused to pay the taxes and asked King So of Egypt to help him rebel. When Shalmaneser found

out, he arrested Hoshea and put him in prison.

⁵Shalmaneser invaded Israel and attacked the city of Samaria for three years,

⁶before capturing it in the ninth year of Hoshea's rule. The Assyrian king took the Israelites away to Assyria as prisoners. He forced some of them to live in the town of Halah, others to live near the River Habor in the territory of Gozan, and still others to live in towns where the Median people lived.

⁷All of this happened because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had rescued them from Egypt, where they had been slaves. They worshipped foreign gods,

⁸followed the customs of the nations that the LORD had forced out of Israel, and were just as sinful as the Israelite kings.

⁹Even worse, the Israelites tried to hide their sins from the LORD their God. They built their own local shrines everywhere in Israel from small towns to large, walled cities.

¹⁰They also built stone images of foreign gods and set up sacred poles for the worship of Asherah on every hill and under every shady tree.

¹¹They offered sacrifices at the shrines, just as the foreign nations had done before the LORD forced them out of Israel. They did sinful things that made the LORD very angry.

¹²Even though the LORD had commanded the Israelites not to worship idols, they did it anyway.

¹³So the LORD made sure that every prophet warned Israel and Judah with these words: I, the LORD, command you to stop doing sinful things and start obeying my laws and teachings! I gave them to your ancestors, and I told my servants the prophets to repeat them to you.

¹⁴But the Israelites would not listen; they were as stubborn as their ancestors who had refused to worship the LORD their God.

¹⁵They ignored the LORD's warnings and commands, and they rejected the solemn agreement he had made with their ancestors. They worshipped

worthless idols and became worthless themselves. The LORD had told the Israelites not to do the things that the foreign nations around them were doing, but Israel became just like them.

¹⁶The people of Israel disobeyed all the commands of the LORD their God. They made two gold statues of calves and set up a sacred pole for Asherah; they also worshipped the stars and the god Baal.

¹⁷They used magic and witchcraft and even sacrificed their own children. The Israelites were determined to do whatever the LORD hated.

¹⁸The LORD became so furious with the people of Israel that he allowed them to be carried away as prisoners. Only the people living in Judah were left,

¹⁹but they also disobeyed the LORD's commands and acted like the Israelites.

²⁰So the LORD turned his back on everyone in Israel and Judah and let them be punished and defeated until no one was left.

²¹Earlier, when the LORD took the northern tribes away from David's family, the people living in northern Israel chose Jeroboam son of Nebat as their king.

Jeroboam caused the Israelites to sin and to stop worshipping the LORD.

²²The people kept on sinning like Jeroboam,

²³until the LORD got rid of them, just as he had warned his servants the prophets. That's why the people of Israel were taken away as prisoners to Assyria, and that's where they remained.

²⁴The king of Assyria took people who were living in the cities of Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and forced them to move to Israel. They took over the towns where the Israelites had lived, including the capital city of Samaria.

²⁵At first these people did not worship the LORD, so he sent lions to attack them, and the lions killed some of them.

²⁶A messenger told the king of Assyria, The people you moved to Israel don't know how to worship the god of that country. So he sent lions that have attacked and killed some of them.

²⁷The king replied, Get one of the Israelite priests we brought here and send him back to Israel. He can live

there and teach them about the god of that country.

²⁸One of the Israelite priests was chosen to go back to Israel. He lived in Bethel and taught the people how to worship the LORD.

²⁹But in towns all over Israel, the different groups of people made statues of their own gods, then they placed these idols in local Israelite shrines.

³⁰The people from Babylonia made the god Succoth-Benoth; those from Cuthah made the god Nergal; those from Hamath made Ashima;

³¹those from Avva made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the people from Sepharvaim sacrificed their children to their own gods Adrammelech and Anammelech.

³²They worshipped their own gods, just as they had before they were taken away to Israel. They also worshipped the LORD, but they chose their own people to be priests at the shrines.

³³(17: 32)

³⁴Everyone followed their old customs. None of them worshipped only the LORD, and they refused to obey the laws and commands that the LORD had given to

the descendants of Jacob, the man he named Israel.

³⁵At the time when the LORD had made his solemn agreement with the people of Israel, he told them: Do not worship any other gods! Do not bow down to them or offer them a sacrifice.

³⁶Worship only me! I am the one who rescued you from Egypt with my mighty power. Bow down to me and offer sacrifices.

³⁷Never worship any other god, always obey my laws and teachings,

³⁸and remember the solemn agreement between us. I will say it again: do not worship any god

³⁹except me. I am the LORD your God, and I will rescue you from all your enemies.

⁴⁰But the people living in Israel ignored that command and kept on following their old customs.

⁴¹They did worship the LORD, but they also worshipped their own idols. Their descendants did the same thing.

18¹Hezekiah son of Ahaz became king of Judah in the third year of Hoshea's rule in Israel.

² Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he ruled twenty-nine years from Jerusalem. His mother Abi was the daughter of Zechariah.

³ Hezekiah obeyed the LORD, just as his ancestor David had done.

⁴ He destroyed the local shrines, then tore down the images of foreign gods and cut down the sacred pole for worshipping the goddess Asherah. He also smashed the bronze snake Moses had made. The people had named it Nehushtan and had been offering sacrifices to it.

⁵ Hezekiah trusted the LORD God of Israel. No other king of Judah was like Hezekiah, either before or after him.

⁶ He was completely faithful to the LORD and obeyed the laws the LORD had given to Moses for the people.

⁷ The LORD helped Hezekiah, so he was successful in everything he did. He even rebelled against the king of Assyria, refusing to be his servant.

⁸ Hezekiah defeated the Philistine towns as far away as Gaza from the smallest towns to the large, walled cities.

⁹During the fourth year of Hezekiah's rule, which was the seventh year of Hoshea's rule in Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria led his troops to Samaria, the capital city of Israel. They attacked

¹⁰and captured it three years later, in the sixth year of Hezekiah's rule and the ninth year of Hoshea's rule.

¹¹The king of Assyria took the Israelites away as prisoners; he forced some of them to live in the town of Halah, others to live near the River Habor in the territory of Gozan, and still others to live in towns where the Median people lived.

¹²All of that happened because the people of Israel had not obeyed the LORD their God. They rejected the solemn agreement he had made with them, and they ignored everything that the LORD's servant Moses had told them.

¹³In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's rule in Judah, King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded the country and captured every walled city, except Jerusalem.

¹⁴Hezekiah sent this message to Sennacherib, who was in the town of Lachish: I know I am guilty of rebellion.

But I will pay you whatever you want, if you stop your attack. Sennacherib told Hezekiah to pay ten thousand kilogrammes of silver and a thousand kilogrammes of gold.

¹⁵ So Hezekiah collected all the silver from the LORD's temple and the royal treasury.

¹⁶ He even stripped the gold that he had used to cover the doors and doorposts in the temple. He gave it all to Sennacherib.

¹⁷ The king of Assyria ordered his three highest military officers to leave Lachish and take a large army to Jerusalem. When they arrived, the officers stood on the road near the cloth makers' shops along the canal from the upper pool.

¹⁸ They called out to Hezekiah, and three of his highest officials came out to meet them. One of them was Hilkiyah's son Eliakim, who was the prime minister. The other two were Shebna, assistant to the prime minister, and Joah son of Asaph, keeper of the government records.

¹⁹ One of the Assyrian commanders told them: I have a message for Hezekiah

from the great king of Assyria. Ask Hezekiah why he feels so sure of himself.

²⁰ Does he think he can plan and win a war with nothing but words? Who is going to help him, now that he has turned against the king of Assyria?

²¹ Is he depending on Egypt and its king? That's the same as leaning on a broken stick, and it will go right through his hand.

²² Is Hezekiah now depending on the LORD your God? Didn't Hezekiah tear down all except one of the LORD's altars and places of worship? Didn't he tell the people of Jerusalem and Judah to worship at that one place?

²³ The king of Assyria wants to make a bet with you people. He will give you two thousand horses, if you have enough troops to ride them.

²⁴ How could you even defeat our lowest ranking officer, when you have to depend on Egypt for chariots and cavalry?

²⁵ Don't forget that it was the LORD who sent me here with orders to destroy your nation!

²⁶ Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said, Sir, we don't want the people listening from

the city wall to understand what you are saying. So please speak to us in Aramaic instead of Hebrew.

²⁷The Assyrian army commander answered, My king sent me to speak to everyone, not just to you leaders. These people will soon have to eat their own body waste and drink their own urine! And so will the three of you.

²⁸Then, in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, he shouted in Hebrew: Listen to what the great king of Assyria says!

²⁹Don't be fooled by Hezekiah. He can't save you.

³⁰Don't trust him when he tells you that the LORD will protect you from the king of Assyria.

³¹Stop listening to Hezekiah! Pay attention to my king. Surrender to him. He will let you keep your own vineyards, fig trees, and cisterns

³²for a while. Then he will come and take you away to a country just like yours, where you can plant vineyards, raise your own grain, and have plenty of olive oil and honey. Believe me, you won't starve there. Hezekiah claims the

LORD will save you. But don't be fooled by him.

³³Were any other gods able to defend their land against the king of Assyria?

³⁴What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? What about the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Were the gods of Samaria able to protect their land against the Assyrian forces?

³⁵None of these gods kept their people safe from the king of Assyria. Do you think the LORD your God can do any better?

³⁶Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah had been warned by King Hezekiah not to answer the Assyrian commander. So they tore their clothes in sorrow and reported to Hezekiah everything the commander had said.

³⁷(18: 36)

19¹As soon as Hezekiah heard the news, he tore off his clothes in sorrow and put on sackcloth. Then he went into the temple of the LORD.

²He told Prime Minister Eliakim, Assistant Prime Minister Shebna, and the senior priests to dress in sackcloth and tell the prophet Isaiah:

³These are difficult and disgraceful times. Our nation is like a woman too weak to give birth, when it's time for her baby to be born.

⁴Please pray for those of us who are left alive. The king of Assyria sent his army commander to insult the living God. Perhaps the LORD heard what he said and will do something, if you will pray.

⁵When these leaders went to Isaiah,
⁶he told them that the LORD had this message for Hezekiah: I am the LORD. Don't worry about the insulting things that have been said about me by these messengers from the king of Assyria.

⁷I will upset him with rumours about what's happening in his own country. He will go back, and there I will make him die a violent death.

⁸Meanwhile, the commander of the Assyrian forces heard that his king had left the town of Lachish and was now attacking Libnah. So he went there.

⁹About this same time the king of Assyria learnt that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was on his way to attack him.

Then the king of Assyria sent some messengers with this note for Hezekiah:

¹⁰Don't trust your God or be fooled by his promise to defend Jerusalem against me.

¹¹You have heard how we Assyrian kings have completely wiped out other nations. What makes you feel so safe?

¹²The Assyrian kings before me destroyed the towns of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and everyone from Eden who lived in Telassar. What good did their gods do them?

¹³The kings of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah have all disappeared.

¹⁴After Hezekiah had read the note from the king of Assyria, he took it to the temple and spread it out for the LORD to see.

¹⁵He prayed: LORD God of Israel, your throne is above the winged creatures. You created the heavens and the earth, and you alone rule the kingdoms of this world.

¹⁶But just look how Sennacherib has insulted you, the living God.

¹⁷It is true, our LORD, that Assyrian kings have turned nations into deserts.

¹⁸They destroyed the idols of wood and stone that the people of those nations had made and worshipped.

¹⁹But you are our LORD and our God! We ask you to keep us safe from the Assyrian king. Then everyone in every kingdom on earth will know that you are the only God.

²⁰Isaiah went to Hezekiah and told him that the LORD God of Israel had said: Hezekiah, I heard your prayer about King Sennacherib of Assyria.

²¹Now this is what I say to that king: The people of Jerusalem hate and make fun of you; they laugh behind your back.

²²Sennacherib, you cursed, shouted, and sneered at me, the holy God of Israel.

²³You let your officials insult me, the Lord. And here is what you have said about yourself, I led my chariots to the highest heights of Lebanon's mountains. I went deep into its forest, cutting down the best cedar and cypress trees.

²⁴I dried up every stream in the land of Egypt, and I drank water from wells I had dug.

²⁵Sennacherib, now listen to me, the Lord. I planned all this long ago. And you don't even realize that I alone am the one who decided that you would do these things. I let you make ruins of fortified cities.

²⁶Their people became weak, terribly confused. They were like wild flowers or tender young grass growing on a flat roof, scorched before it matures.

²⁷I know all about you, even how fiercely angry you are with me.

²⁸I have seen your pride and the tremendous hatred you have for me. Now I will put a hook in your nose, a bit in your mouth, then I will send you back to where you came from.

²⁹Hezekiah, I will tell you what's going to happen. This year you will eat crops that grow on their own, and the next year you will eat whatever springs up where those crops grew. But the third year you will plant grain and vineyards, and you will eat what you harvest.

³⁰Those who survive in Judah will be like a vine that puts down deep roots and bears fruit.

³¹I, the LORD All-Powerful, will see to it that some who live in Jerusalem will survive.

³²I promise that the king of Assyria won't get into Jerusalem, or shoot an arrow into the city, or even surround it and prepare to attack.

³³As surely as I am the LORD, he will return by the way he came and will never enter Jerusalem.

³⁴I will protect it for myself and for my servant David.

³⁵That same night the LORD sent an angel to the camp of the Assyrians, and he killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand of them. And so the next morning, the camp was full of dead bodies.

³⁶After this King Sennacherib went back to Assyria and lived in the city of Nineveh.

³⁷One day he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, when his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, killed him with their swords. They escaped to the

land of Ararat, and his son Esarhaddon became king.

20¹ About this time, Hezekiah got sick and was almost dead. Isaiah the prophet went in and told him, The LORD says you won't ever get well. You are going to die, so you had better start doing what needs to be done.

² Hezekiah turned towards the wall and prayed,

³ Don't forget that I have been faithful to you, LORD. I have obeyed you with all my heart, and I do whatever you say is right. After this, he cried hard.

⁴ Before Isaiah got to the middle court of the palace,

⁵ the LORD sent him back to Hezekiah with this message: Hezekiah, you are the ruler of my people, and I am the LORD God, who was worshipped by your ancestor David. I heard you pray, and I saw you cry. I will heal you, so that three days from now you will be able to worship in my temple.

⁶ I will let you live fifteen years more, while I protect you and your city from the king of Assyria. I will defend this city

as an honour to me and to my servant David.

⁷ Then Isaiah said to the king's servants, Bring some mashed figs and place them on the king's open sore. He will then get well.

⁸ Hezekiah asked Isaiah, Can you prove that the LORD will heal me, so that I can worship in his temple in three days?

⁹ Isaiah replied, The LORD will prove to you that he will keep his promise. Will the shadow made by the setting sun on the stairway go forward ten steps or back ten steps?

¹⁰ It's normal for the sun to go forward, Hezekiah answered. But how can it go back?

¹¹ Isaiah prayed, and the LORD made the shadow go back ten steps on the stairway built for King Ahaz.

¹² Merodach Baladan, the son of Baladan, was now king of Babylonia. And when he learnt that Hezekiah had been sick, he sent messengers with letters and a gift for him.

¹³ Hezekiah welcomed the messengers and showed them all the silver, the gold, the spices, and the fine oils that were in

his storehouse. He even showed them where he kept his weapons. Nothing in his palace or in his entire kingdom was kept hidden from them.

¹⁴Isaiah asked Hezekiah, Where did these men come from? What did they want? They came all the way from Babylonia, Hezekiah answered.

¹⁵What did you show them? Isaiah asked. Hezekiah answered, I showed them everything in my kingdom.

¹⁶Then Isaiah told Hezekiah: I have a message for you from the LORD.

¹⁷One day everything you and your ancestors have stored up will be taken to Babylonia. The LORD has promised that nothing will be left.

¹⁸Some of your own sons will be taken to Babylonia, where they will be disgraced and made to serve in the king's palace.

¹⁹Hezekiah thought, At least our nation will be at peace for a while. So he told Isaiah, The message you brought me from the LORD is good.

²⁰Everything else Hezekiah did while he was king, including how he made the upper pool and tunnel to bring water into

Jerusalem, is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

²¹ Hezekiah died, and his son Manasseh became king.

21 ¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled fifty-five years from Jerusalem. His mother was Hephzibah.

² Manasseh disobeyed the LORD by following the disgusting customs of the nations that the LORD had forced out of Israel.

³ He rebuilt the local shrines that his father Hezekiah had torn down. He built altars for the god Baal and set up a sacred pole for worshipping the goddess Asherah, just as King Ahab of Israel had done. And he faithfully worshipped the stars in heaven.

⁴ In the temple, where only the LORD was supposed to be worshipped, Manasseh built altars for pagan gods

⁵ and for the stars. He placed these altars in both courts of the temple,

⁶ and even set up the pole for Asherah there. Manasseh practised magic and witchcraft; he asked fortune-tellers for advice and sacrificed his own son. He did

many sinful things and made the LORD very angry. Years ago the LORD had told David and his son Solomon: Jerusalem is the place I prefer above all others in Israel. It belongs to me, and there I will be worshipped for ever.

⁷ (21:6)

⁸ If my people will faithfully obey all the commands in the Law of my servant Moses, I will never make them leave the land I gave to their ancestors.

⁹ But the people of Judah disobeyed the LORD. They listened to Manasseh and did even more sinful things than the nations the LORD had wiped out.

¹⁰ One day the LORD said to some of his prophets:

¹¹ King Manasseh has done more disgusting things than the Amorites, and he has led my people to sin by forcing them to worship his idols.

¹² Now I, the LORD God of Israel, will destroy both Jerusalem and Judah! People will hear about it but won't believe it.

¹³ Jerusalem is as sinful as Ahab and the people of Samaria were. So I will wipe out Jerusalem and be done with it,

just as someone wipes water off a plate and turns it over to dry.

¹⁴I will even get rid of my people who survive. They will be defeated and robbed by their enemies.

¹⁵My people have done what I hate and have not stopped making me angry since their ancestors left Egypt.

¹⁶Manasseh was guilty of causing the people of Judah to sin and disobey the LORD. He also refused to protect innocent people he even let so many of them be killed that their blood filled the streets of Jerusalem.

¹⁷Everything else Manasseh did while he was king, including his terrible sins, is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁸He died and was buried in Uzza Garden near his palace, and his son Amon became king.

¹⁹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for two years. His mother Meshullemeth was the daughter of Haruz from Jotbah.

²⁰Amon disobeyed the LORD, just as his father Manasseh had done.

²¹ Amon worshipped the idols Manasseh had made and

²² refused to be faithful to the LORD, the God his ancestors had worshipped.

²³ Some of Amon's officials plotted against him and killed him in his palace.

²⁴ He was buried in Uzza Garden. Soon after that, the people of Judah killed the murderers of Amon, then they made his son Josiah king. Everything else Amon did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁵ (21: 24)

²⁶ (21: 24)

22¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled thirty-one years from Jerusalem. His mother Jedidah was the daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath.

² Josiah always obeyed the LORD, just as his ancestor David had done.

³ After Josiah had been king for eighteen years, he told Shaphan, one of his highest officials: Go to the LORD's temple

⁴ and ask Hilkiyah the high priest to collect from the guards all the money that the people have donated.

⁵Tell Hilkiah to give it to the men supervising the repairs to the temple. They can use some of the money to pay ⁶the workers, and with the rest of it they can buy wood and stone for the repair work.

⁷They are honest, so we won't ask them to keep track of the money.

⁸While Shaphan was at the temple, Hilkiah handed him a book and said, Look what I found here in the temple The Book of God's Law. Shaphan read it, ⁹then went back to Josiah and reported, Your officials collected the money in the temple and gave it to the men supervising the repairs.

¹⁰But there's something else, Your Majesty. The priest Hilkiah gave me this book. Then Shaphan read it out loud.

¹¹When Josiah heard what was in The Book of God's Law, he tore his clothes in sorrow.

¹²At once he called together Hilkiah, Shaphan, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, and his own servant Asaiah. He said,

¹³The LORD must be furious with me and everyone else in Judah, because our

ancestors did not obey the laws written in this book. Go and find out what the LORD wants us to do.

¹⁴The five men left straight away and went to talk with Huldah the prophet. Her husband was Shallum, who was in charge of the king's clothes. Huldah lived in the northern part of Jerusalem, and when they met in her home,

¹⁵she said: You were sent here by King Josiah, and this is what the LORD God of Israel says to him:

¹⁶Josiah, I am the LORD! And I will see to it that this country and everyone living in it will be destroyed. It will happen just as this book says.

¹⁷The people of Judah have rejected me. They have offered sacrifices to foreign gods and have worshipped their own idols. I cannot stand it any longer. I am furious.

¹⁸Josiah, listen to what I am going to do.

¹⁹I noticed how sad you were when you read that this country and its people would be completely wiped out. You even tore your clothes in sorrow, and I heard you cry.

²⁰So I will let you die in peace, before I destroy this place. The men left and took Huldah's answer back to Josiah.

23¹ King Josiah called together the older leaders of Judah and Jerusalem.

²Then he went to the LORD's temple, together with the people of Judah and Jerusalem, the priests, and the prophets. Finally, when everybody was there, he read aloud The Book of God's Law that had been found in the temple.

³After Josiah had finished reading, he stood by one of the columns. He asked the people to promise in the LORD's name to obey the LORD faithfully and to follow his commands. The people agreed to do everything written in the book.

⁴Josiah told Hilkiah the priest, the assistant priests, and the guards at the temple door to go into the temple and bring out the things used to worship Baal, Asherah, and the stars. Josiah had these things burnt in Kidron Valley just outside Jerusalem, and he had the ashes carried away to the town of Bethel.

⁵Josiah also got rid of the pagan priests at the local shrines in Judah and around

Jerusalem. These were the men whom the kings of Judah had appointed to offer sacrifices to Baal and to the sun, moon, and stars.

⁶ Josiah had the sacred pole for Asherah brought out of the temple and taken to Kidron Valley, where it was burnt. He then had its ashes ground into dust and scattered over the public cemetery there.

⁷ He had the buildings torn down where the male prostitutes lived next to the temple, and where the women wove sacred robes for the idol of Asherah.

⁸ In almost every town in Judah, priests had been offering sacrifices to the LORD at local shrines. Josiah brought these priests to Jerusalem and had their shrines made unfit for worship every shrine from Geba just north of Jerusalem to Beersheba in the south. He even tore down the shrine at Beersheba that was just to the left of Joshua Gate, which was named after the highest official of the city.

⁹ Those local priests could not serve at the LORD's altar in Jerusalem, but they

were allowed to eat sacred bread, just like the priests from Jerusalem.

¹⁰Josiah sent some men to Hinnom Valley just outside Jerusalem with orders to make the altar there unfit for worship. That way, people could no longer use it for sacrificing their children to the god Molech.

¹¹He also got rid of the horses that the kings of Judah used in their ceremonies to worship the sun, and he destroyed the chariots along with them. The horses had been kept near the entrance to the LORD's temple, in a courtyard close to where an official named Nathan-Melech lived.

¹²Some of the kings of Judah, especially Manasseh, had built altars in the two courts of the temple and in the room that Ahaz had built on the palace roof. Josiah had these altars torn down and smashed to pieces, and he had the pieces thrown into Kidron Valley, just outside Jerusalem.

¹³After that, he closed down the shrines that Solomon had built east of Jerusalem and south of Spoil Hill to honour Astarte the disgusting goddess

of Sidon, Chemosh the disgusting god of Moab, and Milcom the disgusting god of Ammon.

¹⁴He tore down the stone images of foreign gods and cut down the sacred pole used in the worship of Asherah. Then he had the whole area covered with human bones.

¹⁵But Josiah had not finished yet. At Bethel he destroyed the shrine and the altar that Jeroboam son of Nebat had built and that had caused the Israelites to sin. Josiah had the shrine and the Asherah pole burnt and ground into dust.

¹⁶As he looked around, he saw graves on the hillside. He had the bones in them dug up and burnt on the altar, so that it could no longer be used. This happened just as God's prophet had said when Jeroboam was standing at the altar, celebrating a festival. Then Josiah saw the grave of the prophet who had said this would happen

¹⁷and he asked, Whose grave is that? Some people who lived nearby answered, It belongs to the prophet from Judah who told what would happen to this altar.

¹⁸ Josiah replied, Then leave it alone. Don't dig up his bones. So they did not disturb his bones or the bones of the old prophet from Israel who had also been buried there.

¹⁹ Some of the Israelite kings had made the LORD angry by building pagan shrines all over Israel. So Josiah sent troops to destroy these shrines just as he had done to the one in Bethel.

²⁰ He killed the priests who served at them and burnt their bones on the altars. After all that, Josiah went back to Jerusalem.

²¹ Josiah told the people of Judah, Celebrate Passover in honour of the LORD your God, just as it says in The Book of God's Law.

²² This festival had not been celebrated in this way since kings ruled Israel and Judah.

²³ But in Josiah's eighteenth year as king of Judah, everyone came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

²⁴ Josiah got rid of every disgusting person and thing in Judah and Jerusalem including magicians, fortune-tellers, and idols. He did his best to

obey every law written in the book that the priest Hilkiah found in the LORD's temple.

²⁵No other king before or after Josiah tried as hard as he did to obey the Law of Moses.

²⁶But the LORD was still furious with the people of Judah because Manasseh had done so many things to make him angry.

²⁷The LORD said, I will desert the people of Judah, just as I deserted the people of Israel. I will reject Jerusalem, even though I chose it to be mine. And I will abandon this temple built to honour me.

²⁸Everything else Josiah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁹During Josiah's rule, King Neco of Egypt led his army north to the River Euphrates to help the king of Assyria. Josiah led his troops north to fight Neco, but when they met in battle at Megiddo, Josiah was killed.

³⁰A few of Josiah's servants put his body in a chariot and took it back to Jerusalem, where they buried it in his

own tomb. Then the people of Judah found his son Jehoahaz and poured olive oil on his head to show that he was their new king.

³¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem only three months. His mother Hamutal was the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah.

³² Jehoahaz disobeyed the LORD, just as some of his ancestors had done.

³³ King Neco of Egypt had Jehoahaz arrested and put in prison at Riblah near Hamath. Then he forced the people of Judah to pay him three thousand four hundred kilogrammes of silver and thirty-four kilogrammes of gold as taxes.

³⁴ Neco appointed Josiah's son Eliakim king of Judah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. He took Jehoahaz as a prisoner to Egypt, where he died.

³⁵ Jehoiakim forced the people of Judah to pay higher taxes, so he could give Neco the silver and gold he demanded.

³⁶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he was appointed king, and he ruled eleven years from Jerusalem. His

mother Zebidah was the daughter of Pedaiah from Rumah.

³⁷ Jehoiakim disobeyed the LORD by following the example of his ancestors.

24¹ During Jehoiakim's rule, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia invaded and took control of Judah. Jehoiakim obeyed Nebuchadnezzar for three years, but then he rebelled.

² At that time, the LORD started sending troops to rob and destroy towns in Judah. Some of these troops were from Babylonia, and others were from Syria, Moab, and Ammon. The LORD had sent his servants the prophets to warn Judah about this,

³ and now he was making it happen. The country of Judah was going to be wiped out, because Manasseh had sinned ⁴ and caused many innocent people to die. The LORD would not forgive this.

⁵ Everything else Jehoiakim did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah.

⁶ Jehoiakim died, and his son Jehoiachin became king.

⁷ King Nebuchadnezzar defeated King Neco of Egypt and took control of his

land from the Egyptian Gorge all the way north to the River Euphrates. So Neco never invaded Judah again.

⁸Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled only three months from Jerusalem. His mother Nehushta was the daughter of Elnathan from Jerusalem.

⁹Jehoiachin disobeyed the LORD, just as his father Jehoiakim had done.

¹⁰King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia sent troops to attack Jerusalem soon after Jehoiachin became king.

¹¹During the attack, Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived at the city.

¹²Jehoiachin immediately surrendered, together with his mother and his servants, as well as his army officers and officials. Then Nebuchadnezzar had Jehoiachin arrested. These things took place in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule in Babylonia.

¹³The LORD had warned that some day the treasures would be taken from the royal palace and from the temple, including the gold objects that Solomon had made for the temple. And that's

exactly what Nebuchadnezzar ordered his soldiers to do.

¹⁴He also led away as prisoners the Jerusalem officials, the military leaders, and the skilled workers ten thousand in all. Only the very poorest people were left in Judah.

¹⁵Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon, along with his mother, his wives, his officials, and the most important leaders of Judah.

¹⁶He also led away seven thousand soldiers, one thousand skilled workers, and anyone who would be useful in battle.

¹⁷Then Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah king of Judah and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he was appointed king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother Hamutal was the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah.

¹⁹Zedekiah disobeyed the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done.

²⁰It was Zedekiah who finally rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. The people

of Judah and Jerusalem had made the LORD so angry that he finally turned his back on them. That's why these horrible things were happening.

25¹ In Zedekiah's ninth year as king, on the tenth day of the tenth month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia led his entire army to attack Jerusalem. The troops set up camp outside the city and built ramps up to the city walls.

² After a year and a half, all the food in Jerusalem was gone. Then on the ninth day of the fourth month,

³ (25: 2)

⁴ the Babylonian troops broke through the city wall. That same night, Zedekiah and his soldiers tried to escape through the gate near the royal garden, even though they knew the enemy had the city surrounded. They headed towards the desert,

⁵ but the Babylonian troops caught up with them near Jericho. They arrested Zedekiah, but his soldiers scattered in every direction.

⁶Zedekiah was taken to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar put him on trial and found him guilty.

⁷Zedekiah's sons were killed right in front of him. His eyes were then put out, and he was put in chains and dragged off to Babylon.

⁸About a month later, in Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year as king, Nebuzaradan, who was his official in charge of the guards, arrived in Jerusalem.

⁹Nebuzaradan burnt down the LORD's temple, the king's palace, and every important building in the city, as well as all the houses.

¹⁰Then he ordered the Babylonian soldiers to break down the walls around Jerusalem.

¹¹He led away as prisoners the people left in the city, including those who had become loyal to Nebuchadnezzar.

¹²Only some of the poorest people were left behind to work the vineyards and the fields.

¹³The Babylonian soldiers took the two bronze columns that stood in front of the temple, the ten moveable bronze

stands, and the large bronze bowl called the Sea. They broke them into pieces so they could take the bronze to Babylonia.

¹⁴They carried off the bronze things used for worship at the temple, including the pans for hot ashes, and the shovels, snuffers, and also the dishes for incense,

¹⁵as well as the fire pans and the sprinkling bowls. Nebuzaradan ordered his soldiers to take everything made of gold or silver.

¹⁶The pile of bronze from the columns, the stands, and the large bowl that Solomon had made for the temple was too large to be weighed.

¹⁷Each column had been eight metres tall with a bronze cap over one metre high. These caps were decorated with bronze designs some of them like chains and others like pomegranates.

¹⁸Next, Nebuzaradan arrested Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah his assistant, and three temple officials.

¹⁹Then he arrested one of the army commanders, the king's five personal advisers, and the officer in charge of gathering the troops for battle. He also

found sixty more soldiers who were still in Jerusalem.

²⁰ Nebuzaradan led them all to Riblah

²¹ near Hamath, where Nebuchadnezzar had them killed. The people of Judah no longer lived in their own country.

²² King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam to rule the few people still living in Judah.

²³ When the army officers and troops heard that Gedaliah was their ruler, the officers met with him at Mizpah. These men were Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth from Netophah, and Jaazaniah from Maacah.

²⁴ Gedaliah said to them, Everything will be fine, I promise. We don't need to be afraid of the Babylonian rulers, if we live here peacefully and do what Nebuchadnezzar says.

²⁵ Ishmael was from the royal family. And about two months after Gedaliah began his rule, Ishmael and ten other men went to Mizpah. They killed Gedaliah and his officials, including those from Judah and those from Babylonia.

²⁶After that, the army officers and all the people in Mizpah, whether important or not, were afraid of what the Babylonians might do. So they left Judah and went to Egypt.

²⁷Jehoiachin was a prisoner in Babylon for thirty-seven years. Then Evil-Merodach became king of Babylonia, and in the first year of his rule, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, he let Jehoiachin out of prison.

²⁸Evil-Merodach was kind to Jehoiachin and honoured him more than any of the other kings held prisoner there.

²⁹Jehoiachin was even allowed to wear his own clothes, and he ate at the king's table every day.

³⁰As long as Jehoiachin lived, he was paid a daily allowance to buy whatever he needed.

1 Chronicles

1 ¹ Adam was the father of Seth, and his descendants were Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah, who had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

² (1: 1)

³ (1: 1)

⁴ (1: 1)

⁵ Japheth was the father of Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras, and they were the ancestors of the kingdoms named after them.

⁶ Gomer was the ancestor of Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁷ Javan was the ancestor of Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

⁸ Ham was the father of Ethiopia, Egypt, Put, and Canaan, and they were the ancestors of the kingdoms named after them.

⁹ Ethiopia was the ancestor of Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raamah, and Sabteca. Raamah was the ancestor of Sheba and Dedan.

¹⁰Ethiopia was also the father of Nimrod, the world's first mighty warrior.

¹¹Egypt was the ancestor of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim,

¹²Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, the ancestor of the Philistines.

¹³Canaan's eldest son was Sidon; his other son was Heth.

¹⁴Canaan was also the ancestor of the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

¹⁵(1:14)

¹⁶(1:14)

¹⁷Shem was the ancestor of Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech; they were the ancestors of the kingdoms named after them.

¹⁸Arpachshad was Shelah's father and Eber's grandfather.

¹⁹Eber named his first son Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided into tribal regions. Eber's second son was Joktan,

²⁰the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal,

Diklah, Ebal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

²¹ (1: 20)

²² (1: 20)

²³ (1: 20)

²⁴ Shem's descendants included Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abram, later renamed Abraham.

²⁵ (1: 24)

²⁶ (1: 24)

²⁷ (1: 24)

²⁸ Abraham was the father of Isaac and Ishmael.

²⁹ Ishmael had twelve sons, who were born in the following order: Nebaioth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

³⁰ (1: 29)

³¹ (1: 29)

³² Abraham and his slave woman Keturah had six sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan.

³³ Midian was the father of Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah.

³⁴ Abraham's son Isaac was the father of Esau and Jacob.

³⁵ Esau was the father of Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

³⁶ Eliphaz was the father of Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek.

³⁷ Reuel was the father of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

³⁸ Seir was the father of Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

³⁹ Lotan was the father of Hori and Homam; Lotan's sister was Timna.

⁴⁰ Shobal was the father of Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. Zibeon was the father of Aiah and Anah.

⁴¹ Anah was the father of Dishon and the grandfather of Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

⁴² Ezer was the father of Bilhan, Zaavan, and Jaakan. Dishan was the father of Uz and Aran.

⁴³ Before kings ruled in Israel, Bela son of Beor ruled the country of Edom from its capital of Dinhabah.

⁴⁴ After Bela's death, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king.

⁴⁵ After Jobab's death, Husham from the land of Teman became king.

⁴⁶ After Husham's death, Hadad son of Bedad became king and ruled from Avith. Earlier, Bedad had defeated the Midianites in the territory of Moab.

⁴⁷ After Hadad's death, Samlah from Masrekah became king;

⁴⁸ after Samlah's death, Shaul from the town of Rehoboth on the River Euphrates became king;

⁴⁹ and after Shaul's death, Baal Hanan son of Achbor became king.

⁵⁰ After Baal Hanan's death, Hadad ruled from Pai. His wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Mezahab.

⁵¹ The Edomite clans were Timna, Alvah, Jetheth,

⁵² Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,

⁵³ Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,

⁵⁴ Magdiel, and Iram.

2¹ Jacob was the father of twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

² (2: 1)

³ Judah and his Canaanite wife Bathshua had three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. But the LORD had Er put to death, because he disobeyed and did what the LORD hated.

⁴ Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar also had two sons: Perez and Zerah.

⁵ Perez was the father of Hezron and Hamul.

⁶ Zerah was the father of Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Darda.

⁷ Achan, who was a descendant of Zerah and the son of Carmi, caused trouble for Israel, because he kept for himself things that belonged only to the LORD.

⁸ Ethan's son was Azariah.

⁹ Hezron was the father of Jerahmeel, Ram, and Caleb.

¹⁰ Ram was the father of Amminadab and the grandfather of Nahshon, a tribal leader of Judah.

¹¹ Nahshon's descendants included Salma, Boaz,

¹² Obed, and Jesse.

¹³ Jesse had seven sons, who were born in the following order: Eliab, Abinadab, Shimea, Nethanel, Raddai, Ozem, and David.

¹⁴ (2: 13)

¹⁵ (2: 13)

¹⁶ Jesse also had two daughters: Zeruah and Abigail. Zeruah was the mother of Abishai, Joab, and Asahel.

¹⁷ Abigail's husband was Jether, who was a descendant of Ishmael, and their son was Amasa.

¹⁸ Hezron's son Caleb married Azubah, and their daughter was Jerioth, the mother of Jeshur, Shobab, and Ardon.

¹⁹ After the death of Azubah, Caleb married Ephrath. Their son Hur

²⁰ was the father of Uri and the grandfather of Bezalel.

²¹ When Hezron was sixty years old, he married the daughter of Machir, who settled the region of Gilead. Their son Segub

²² was the father of Jair, who ruled twenty-three villages in the region of Gilead.

²³ Some time later the nations of Geshur and Aram captured sixty towns in that region, including the villages that belonged to Jair, as well as the town of Kenath and the nearby villages.

Everyone from the region of Gilead was a descendant of Machir.

²⁴After the death of Hezron, Caleb married Ephrath, his father's wife. Their son was Ashhur, who later settled the town of Tekoa.

²⁵Jerahmeel, Hezron's eldest son, was the father of Ram, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah.

²⁶Jerahmeel had a second wife, Atarah, who gave birth to Onam.

²⁷Ram was the father of Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.

²⁸Onam was the father of Shammai and Jada. Shammai was the father of Nadab and Abishur.

²⁹Abishur married Abihail, and their two sons were Ahban and Molid.

³⁰Nadab was the father of Seled and Appaim. Seled had no children;

³¹Appaim's son was Ishi, the father of Sheshan and the grandfather of Ahlai.

³²Jada was the father of Jether and Jonathan. Jether had no children,

³³but Jonathan had two sons: Peleth and Zaza.

³⁴ Sheshan had no sons, and so he let one of his daughters marry Jarha, his Egyptian slave. Their son was Attai,
³⁵ (2: 34)

³⁶ the father of Nathan and the grandfather of Zabad.

³⁷ Zabad's descendants included Ephlal, Obed, Jehu, Azariah, Helez, Eleasah, Sismai, Shallum, Jekamiah, and Elishama.

³⁸ (2: 37)

³⁹ (2: 37)

⁴⁰ (2: 37)

⁴¹ (2: 37)

⁴² Caleb, Jerahmeel's brother, had the following descendants: Mesha, Ziph, Mareshah, Hebron,

⁴³ and Hebron's four sons, Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema.

⁴⁴ Shema was the father of Raham and the grandfather of Jorkeam. Rekem was the father of Shammai,

⁴⁵ the grandfather of Maon, and the great-grandfather of Bethzur.

⁴⁶ Ephah was one of Caleb's wives, and their sons were Haran, Moza, and Gazez. Haran named his son after his brother Gazez.

⁴⁷ Ephah was the daughter of Jahdai, who was also the father of Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, and Shaaph.

⁴⁸ Maacah was another of Caleb's wives, and their sons were Sheber and Tirhanah.

⁴⁹ Later, they had two more sons: Shaaph the father of Madmannah, and Sheva the father of Machbenah and Gibeah. Caleb's daughter was Achsah.

⁵⁰ All of these were Caleb's descendants. Hur, the eldest son of Caleb and Ephrath, had three sons: Shobal, Salma, and Hareph, who settled the town of Beth-Gader.

⁵¹ (2: 50)

⁵² Shobal, who settled the town of Kiriath-Jearim, was the ancestor of Haroeh, half of the Menuhoth clan,

⁵³ and the clans that lived near Kiriath-Jearim; they were the Ithrites, the Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mishraitites. The Zorathites and the Eshtaolites were descendants of the Mishraitites.

⁵⁴ Salma settled the town of Bethlehem and was the ancestor of the Netophathites, the people of

Atroth-Bethjoab, half of the Manahathite clan, and the Zorites.

⁵⁵Salma was also the ancestor of the clans in Jabez that kept the court and government records; they were the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites. These clans were the descendants of Hammath the Kenite, who was also the ancestor of the Rechabites.

3¹ King David ruled from Hebron for seven years and six months, and during that time he had six sons, who were born in the following order: Amnon, Daniel, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithream. Ahinoam from Jezreel was the mother of Amnon; Abigail from Carmel was the mother of Daniel; Maacah daughter of King Talmi of Geshur was the mother of Absalom; Haggith was the mother of Adonijah; Abital was the mother of Shephatiah; and Eglah was the mother of Ithream. David then ruled from Jerusalem for thirty-three years,

² (3: 1)

³ (3: 1)

⁴ (3: 1)

⁵and during that time, he had thirteen more sons. His wife Bathsheba daughter of Ammiel gave birth to Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon.

⁶David's other sons included Ibhar, Elishua, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

⁷(3: 6)

⁸(3: 6)

⁹David's other wives also gave birth to sons. Tamar was his daughter.

¹⁰Solomon's descendants included the following kings: Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah and his four sons, Johanan, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Jehoahaz.

¹¹(3: 10)

¹²(3: 10)

¹³(3: 10)

¹⁴(3: 10)

¹⁵(3: 10)

¹⁶Jehoiakim was the father of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.

¹⁷Jehoiachin, who was taken to Babylon as a prisoner, had seven sons: Shealtiel,

¹⁸Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.

¹⁹Pedaiah had two sons: Zerubbabel and Shimei. Zerubbabel was the father of Meshullam, Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister.

²⁰He also had five other sons: Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushabhesed.

²¹Hananiah's descendants were Pelatiah, Jeshaiah, Rephaiah, Arnan, Obadiah, and Shecaniah,

²²the father of Shemaiah and the grandfather of Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat.

²³Neariah was the father of Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam.

²⁴Elioenai was the father of Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani.

4¹Judah was the father of five sons: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal.

²Shobal was the father of Reaiah, the grandfather of Jahath, and the great-grandfather of Ahumai and Lahad. These men all belonged to the Zorathite clan.

³Hur was the eldest son of Caleb and Ephrath. Some of his descendants settled the town of Bethlehem. Hur's other descendants included Etam, Penuel, and Ezer. Etam's sons were Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash, and his daughter was Hazzelponi. Penuel settled the town of Gedor, and Ezer settled the town of Hushah.

⁴(4: 3)

⁵Ashhur, who settled the town of Tekoa, had two wives: Helah and Naarah.

⁶Ashhur and Naarah were the parents of Ahuzzam, Hopher, Temeni, and Haahashtari.

⁷Ashhur and Helah were the parents of Zereth, Izhar, and Ethnan.

⁸Koz, the father of Anub and Zobebah, was also the ancestor of the clans of Aharhel, the son of Harum.

⁹Jabez was a man who got his name because of the pain he caused his mother during birth. But he was still the most respected son in his family.

¹⁰One day he prayed to Israel's God, Please bless me and give me a lot of land. Be with me so I will be safe from

harm. And God did just what Jabez had asked.

¹¹Chelub was the brother of Shuhah and the father of Mehir. Later, Mehir had a son, Eshton,

¹²whose three sons were Bethrapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah. It was Tehinnah who settled the town of Nahash. These men and their families lived in the town of Recah.

¹³Kenaz was the father of Othniel and Seraiah. Othniel had two sons: Hathath and Meonothai,

¹⁴who was the father of Ophrah. Seraiah was the father of Joab, who settled a place called Valley of Crafts because the people who lived there were experts in making things.

¹⁵Caleb son of Jephunneh had three sons: Iru, Elah, and Naam. Elah was the father of Kenaz.

¹⁶Jehallelel was the father of Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.

¹⁷Ezrah was the father of Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. Mered was married to Bithiah the daughter of the king of Egypt. They had a daughter named Miriam and two sons: Shammai and Ishbah.

It was Ishbah who settled the town of Eshtemoa. Mered was also married to a woman from the tribe of Judah, and their sons were Jered, Heber, and Jekuthiel. Jered settled the town of Gedor; Heber settled the town of Soco; and Jekuthiel settled the town of Zanoah.

¹⁸ (4: 17)

¹⁹ A man named Hodiah was married to the sister of Naham. Hodiah's descendants included Keilah of the Garmite clan and Eshtemoa of the Maacathite clan.

²⁰ Shimon was the father of Amnon, Rinnah, Benhanan, and Tilon. Ishi was the father of Zoheth and Benzoheth.

²¹ Judah also had a son named Shelah, whose descendants included Jokim and the people of the town of Cozeba, as well as Er who settled the town of Lecah and Laadah who settled the town of Mareshah. The people who lived in Beth-Ashbea were also descendants of Shelah, and they were experts in weaving cloth. Shelah was the ancestor of Joash and Saraph, two men who married Moabite women and then settled

near Bethlehem but these family records are very old.

²² (4: 21)

²³ The members of these clans were the potters who lived in the towns of Netaim and Gederah and worked for the king.

²⁴ Simeon had five sons: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul.

²⁵ The descendants of Shaul included his son Shallum, his grandson Mibsam, and his great-grandson Mishma.

²⁶ The descendants of Mishma included his son Hammuel, his grandson Zaccur, and his great-grandson Shimei.

²⁷ Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters. But his brothers did not have as many children, so the Simeon tribe was smaller than the Judah tribe.

²⁸ Before David became king, the people of the Simeon tribe lived in the following towns: Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar-Shual, Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, Beth-Marcaboth, Hazarsusim, Bethbiri, and Shaaraim.

²⁹ (4: 28)

³⁰ (4: 28)

³¹ (4: 28)

³²They also lived in the five villages of Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan,
³³as well as in the nearby villages as far as the town of Baal. These are the places where Simeon's descendants had settled, according to their own family records.

³⁴As their families and clans became larger, the people of Simeon had the following leaders: Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, Joel, Jehu, Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, and Ziza.

³⁵ (4: 34)

³⁶ (4: 34)

³⁷ (4: 34)

³⁸ (4: 34)

³⁹When the people needed more pasture land for their flocks and herds, they looked as far as the eastern side of the valley where the town of Gerar is,

⁴⁰and they found a lot of good pasture land that was quiet and undisturbed.

This had once belonged to the Hamites,

⁴¹but when Hezekiah was king of Judah, the descendants of Simeon attacked and forced the Hamites and Meunites off the land, then settled there.

⁴²Some time later, five hundred men from the Simeon tribe went into Edom under the command of Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel the sons of Ishi.

⁴³They killed the last of the Amalekites and lived there from then on.

5¹ Reuben was the eldest son of Jacob, but he lost his rights as the firstborn son because he slept with one of his father's wives. The honour of the firstborn son was then given to Joseph,² even though it was the Judah tribe that became the most powerful and produced a leader.

³Reuben had four sons: Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

⁴The descendants of Joel included Shemaiah, Gog, Shimei, Micah, Reaiah, Baal, and Beerah, a leader of the Reuben tribe. Later, King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria took Beerah away as prisoner.

⁵(5: 4)

⁶(5: 4)

⁷The family records also include Jeiel, who was a clan leader, Zechariah, and Bela son of Azaz and grandson of Shema of the Joel clan. They lived in the

territory around the town of Aroer, as far north as Nebo and Baal-Meon,

⁸(5: 7)

⁹and as far east as the desert just west of the River Euphrates. They needed this much land because they owned too many cattle to keep them all in Gilead.

¹⁰When Saul was king, the Reuben tribe attacked and defeated the Hagrites, then took over their land east of Gilead.

¹¹The tribe of Gad lived in the region of Bashan, north of the Reuben tribe. Gad's territory extended all the way to the town of Salecah.

¹²Some of the clan leaders were Joel, Shapham, Janai, and Shaphat.

¹³Their relatives included Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and Eber.

¹⁴They were all descendants of Abihail, whose family line went back through Huri, Jaroah, Gilead, Michael, Jeshishai, Jahdo, and Buz.

¹⁵Ahi, the son of Abdiel and the grandson of Guni, was the leader of their clan.

¹⁶The people of Gad lived in the towns in the regions of Bashan and Gilead, as well as in the pasture land of Sharon.

¹⁷Their family records were written when Jotham was king of Judah and Jeroboam was king of Israel.

¹⁸The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh had 44,760 soldiers trained to fight in battle with shields, swords, bows, and arrows.

¹⁹They fought against the Hagarites and the tribes of Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab.

²⁰Whenever these soldiers went to war against their enemies, they prayed to God and trusted him to help. That's why the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh defeated the Hagarites and their allies.

²¹These Israelite tribes captured fifty thousand camels, two hundred and fifty thousand sheep, two thousand donkeys, and one hundred thousand people.

²²Many of the Hagarites died in battle, because God was fighting this battle against them. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh lived in that territory until they were taken as prisoners to Assyria.

²³East Manasseh was a large tribe, so its people settled in the northern region of Bashan, as far north as Baal-Hermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon.

²⁴Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel were their clan leaders; they were well-known leaders and brave soldiers.

²⁵The people of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh were unfaithful to the God their ancestors had worshipped, and they started worshipping the gods of the nations that God had forced out of Canaan.

²⁶So God sent King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria to attack these Israelite tribes. The king led them away as prisoners to Assyria, and from then on, he forced them to live in Halah, Habor, Hara, and near the River Gozan.

6¹Levi was the father of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

²Kohath was the father of Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

³Amram was the father of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁴ Eleazar's descendants included Phinehas, Abishua, Bukki, Uzzi, Zerahiah, Meraioth, Amariah, Ahitub, Zadok, Ahimaaz, Azariah, Johanan, Azariah the priest who served in the temple built by King Solomon, Amariah, Ahitub, Zadok, Shallum, Hilkiah, Azariah, Seraiah, and Jehozadak.

⁵ (6: 4)

⁶ (6: 4)

⁷ (6: 4)

⁸ (6: 4)

⁹ (6: 4)

¹⁰ (6: 4)

¹¹ (6: 4)

¹² (6: 4)

¹³ (6: 4)

¹⁴ (6: 4)

¹⁵ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia took Jehozadak to Babylon as prisoner when the LORD let the people of Judah and Jerusalem be dragged from their land.

¹⁶ Levi's three sons had sons of their own.

¹⁷ Gershon was the father of Libni and Shimei.

¹⁸Kohath was the father of Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹⁹Merari was the father of Mahli and Mushi. These descendants of Levi each became leaders of their own clans.

²⁰Gershon's descendants included Libni, Jahath, Zimmah, Joah, Iddo, Zerach, and Jeatherai.

²¹ (6: 20)

²²Kohath's descendants included Amminadab, Korah, Assir, Elkanah, Ebiasaph, Assir, Tahath, Uriel, Uzziah, and Shaul.

²³ (6: 22)

²⁴ (6: 22)

²⁵Elkanah was the father of Amasai and Ahimoth.

²⁶Ahimoth's descendants included Elkanah, Zophai, Nahath, Eliab, Jeroham, and Elkanah.

²⁷ (6: 26)

²⁸Samuel was the father of Joel and Abijah, born in that order.

²⁹Merari's descendants included Mahli, Libni, Shimei, Uzzah, Shimea, Haggiah, and Asaiah.

³⁰ (6: 29)

³¹ After King David had the sacred chest moved to Jerusalem, he appointed musicians from the Levi tribe to be in charge of the music at the place of worship.

³² These musicians served at the sacred tent and later at the LORD's temple that King Solomon built.

³³ Here is a list of these musicians and their family lines: Heman from the Kohathite clan was the director. His ancestors went all the way back to Jacob and included Joel, Samuel, Elkanah, Jeroham, Eliel, Toah, Zuph, Elkanah, Mahath, Amasai, Elkanah, Joel, Azariah, Zephaniah, Tahath, Assir, Ebiasaph, Korah, Izhar, Kohath, Levi.

³⁴ (6: 33)

³⁵ (6: 33)

³⁶ (6: 33)

³⁷ (6: 33)

³⁸ (6: 33)

³⁹ Asaph was Heman's relative and served as his assistant. Asaph's ancestors included Berechiah, Shimea, Michael, Baaseiah, Malchijah, Ethni, Zerah, Adaiah, Ethan, Zimmah, Shimei, Jahath, Gershon, and Levi.

⁴⁰ (6: 39)

⁴¹ (6: 39)

⁴² (6: 39)

⁴³ (6: 39)

⁴⁴ Ethan was also Heman's relative and served as his assistant. Ethan belonged to the Merari clan, and his ancestors included Kishi, Abdi, Malluch, Hashabiah, Amaziah, Hilkiah, Amzi, Bani, Shemer, Mahli, Mushi, Merari, and Levi.

⁴⁵ (6: 44)

⁴⁶ (6: 44)

⁴⁷ (6: 44)

⁴⁸ The rest of the Levites were appointed to work at the sacred tent.

⁴⁹ Only Aaron and his descendants were allowed to offer sacrifices and incense on the two altars at the sacred tent. They were in charge of the most holy place and the ceremonies to forgive sins, just as God's servant Moses had commanded.

⁵⁰ Aaron's descendants included his son Eleazar, Phinehas, Abishua, Bukki, Uzzi, Zerariah, Meraioth, Amariah, Ahitub, Zadok, and Ahimaaz.

⁵¹ (6: 50)

⁵² (6: 50)

⁵³ (6: 50)

⁵⁴ Aaron's descendants belonged to the Levite clan of Kohath, and they were the first group chosen to receive towns to live in.

⁵⁵ They received the town of Hebron in the territory of Judah and the pasture land around it.

⁵⁶ But the farmland and villages around Hebron were given to Caleb son of Jephunneh.

⁵⁷ So Aaron's descendants received the following Safe Towns and the pasture land around them: Hebron, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Hilen, Debir, Ashan, and Beth-Shemesh.

⁵⁸ (6: 57)

⁵⁹ (6: 57)

⁶⁰ From the Benjamin tribe they were given the towns of Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth and the pasture land around them. Thirteen towns were given to Aaron's descendants.

⁶¹ The rest of the Levite clan of Kohath received ten towns from West Manasseh.

⁶² The Levite clan of Gershon received thirteen towns from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and East Manasseh in Bashan.

⁶³The Levite clan of Merari received twelve towns from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

⁶⁴So the people of Israel gave the Levites towns to live in and the pasture land around them.

⁶⁵All the towns were chosen with the LORD's help, including those towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

⁶⁶Some of the families of the Kohath clan received their towns from the tribe of Ephraim.

⁶⁷These families received the following Safe Towns and the pasture land around them: Shechem in the hill country, Gezer, Jokmeam, Beth-Horon, Aijalon, and Gath-Rimmon.

⁶⁸(6: 67)

⁶⁹(6: 67)

⁷⁰And from West Manasseh they received Aner and Bileam, together with their pasture land.

⁷¹The Gershonite clan received two towns from the tribe of East Manasseh: Golan in Bashan and Ashtaroth, including the pasture land around them.

⁷²The Gershonites also received four towns from the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh, Daberath, Ramoth, and Anem, including the pasture land around them.

⁷³(6: 72)

⁷⁴The Gershonites received four towns from the tribe of Asher: Mashal, Abdon, Hukok, and Rehob, including the pasture land around them.

⁷⁵(6: 74)

⁷⁶Finally, the Gershonites received three towns from the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee, Hammon, and Kiriathaim, including the pasture land around them.

⁷⁷The rest of the Merari clan received the towns of Rimmono and Tabor and their pasture land from the tribe of Zebulun.

⁷⁸They also received four towns east of the River Jordan from the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the flat lands, Jahzah, Kedemoth, and Mephaath, including the pastures around them.

⁷⁹(6: 78)

⁸⁰And from the tribe of Gad the Merarites received the towns of Ramoth in Gilead, Mahanaim, Heshbon, and

Jazer, including the pasture land around them.

⁸¹ (6: 80)

7¹ Issachar was the father of four sons: Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron.

²Tola was the father of Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Shemuel, who were all brave soldiers and family leaders in their clan. There were 22,600 people in Tola's family by the time David became king.

³Uzzi was the father of Izrahiah and the grandfather of Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Isshiah, who were also family leaders.

⁴Their families were so large that they had 36,000 soldiers in their clans.

⁵In fact, according to family records, the tribe of Issachar had a total of 87,000 warriors.

⁶Benjamin was the father of three sons: Bela, Becher, and Jediael.

⁷Bela was the father of Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri. They were all brave soldiers and family leaders in their father's clan. The number of soldiers in their clan was 22,034.

⁸Becher was the father of Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth.

⁹The official family records listed 20,200 soldiers in the families of this clan, as well as their family leaders.

¹⁰Jediael was the father of Bilhan and the grandfather of Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar.

¹¹They were family leaders in their clan, which had 17,200 soldiers prepared to fight in battle.

¹²Ir was the father of Shuppim and Huppim, who also belonged to this clan. Dan was the father of Hushim.

¹³Naphtali's mother was Bilhah, and he was the father of Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum.

¹⁴Manasseh and his Syrian wife were the parents of Asriel and Machir the father of Gilead.

¹⁵Machir found a wife for Huppim and one for Shuppim. Machir had a sister named Maacah. Zelophehad was also a descendant of Manasseh, and he had five daughters.

¹⁶ Machir and his wife Maacah were the parents of Peresh and Sheresh. Peresh was the father of Ulam and Rekem.

¹⁷ Ulam was the father of Bedan. These were all descendants of Gilead, the son of Machir and the grandson of Manasseh.

¹⁸ Gilead's sister Hammolecheth was the mother of Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah.

¹⁹ Shemida, another descendant of Manasseh, was the father of Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

²⁰ Ephraim was the father of Shuthelah and the ancestor of Bered, Tahath, Eleadah, Tahath,

²¹ Zabad, and Shuthelah. Ephraim had two other sons, Ezer and Elead. But they were killed when they tried to steal livestock from the people who lived in the territory of Gath.

²² Ephraim mourned for his sons a long time, and his relatives came to comfort him.

²³ Some time later his wife gave birth to another son, and Ephraim named him Beriah, because he was born during a time of misery.

²⁴ Ephraim's daughter was Sheerah. She built the towns of Lower Beth-Horon, Upper Beth-Horon, and Uzen-Sheerah.

²⁵ Ephraim also had a son named Repah, and his descendants included Resheph, Telah, Tahan,

²⁶ Ladan, Ammihud, Elishama,

²⁷ Nun, and Joshua.

²⁸ The descendants of Ephraim took over the territory as far south as Bethel, as far east as Naaran, and as far west as Gezer. Their territory included all the villages around these towns, as well as Shechem, Ayyah, and the nearby villages.

²⁹ The descendants of Manasseh settled in the territory that included Beth-Shan, Taanach, Megiddo, Dor, and the nearby villages. The descendants of Joseph lived in these towns and villages.

³⁰ Asher had four sons, Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah, and one daughter, Serah.

³¹ Beriah was the father of Heber and Malchiel the father of Birzaith.

³² Heber was the father of three sons, Japhlet, Shomer, and Hotham, and one daughter, Shua.

³³ Japhlet was the father of Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashvath.

³⁴ Shomer was the father of Ahi, Rohgah, Hubbah, and Aram.

³⁵ And Japhlet's brother Hotham was the father of Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal.

³⁶ Zophah was the father of Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah,

³⁷ Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Beera.

³⁸ Jether was the father of Jephunneh, Pispah, and Ara.

³⁹ Ulla was the father of Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia.

⁴⁰ These were the descendants of Asher, and they were all respected family leaders and brave soldiers. The tribe of Asher had a total of 26,000 soldiers.

8¹ Benjamin had five sons, who were born in the following order: Bela, Ashbel, Aharah,

² Nohah, and Rapha.

³ Bela was the father of Addar, Gera, Abihud,

⁴ Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah,

⁵ Gera, Shephuphan, and Hiram.

⁶Ehud was the father of Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera. They were clan leaders in the town of Geba, but were later forced to move to the town of Manahath, and Gera led the way. He had two sons: Uzza and Ahihud.

⁷ (8: 6)

⁸Shaharaim and his wife Hushim had two sons: Abitub and Elpaal. But Shaharaim later divorced her and his other wife, Baara. Then he moved to the country of Moab and married Hodesh, and they had seven sons: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. They were all family leaders in his clan.

⁹ (8: 8)

¹⁰ (8: 8)

¹¹ (8: 8)

¹²Elpaal was the father of Eber, Misham, and Shemed, who settled the towns of Ono and Lod, as well as the nearby villages.

¹³Beriah and Shema were family leaders in the clan that lived in the town of Aijalon and that forced out the people of Gath.

¹⁴Beriah's descendants included Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth, Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, Michael, Ishpah, and Joha.

¹⁵(8: 14)

¹⁶(8: 14)

¹⁷Elpaal's descendants included Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab.

¹⁸(8: 17)

¹⁹Shimei's descendants included Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath.

²⁰(8: 19)

²¹(8: 19)

²²Shashak's descendants included Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, Iphdeiah, and Penuel.

²³(8: 22)

²⁴(8: 22)

²⁵(8: 22)

²⁶Jeroham's descendants included Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri.

²⁷(8: 26)

²⁸These were the family leaders in their ancestor's clan, and they and their descendants lived in Jerusalem.

²⁹ Jeiel settled the town of Gibeon. He and his wife Maacah lived there

³⁰ along with their sons, who were born in the following order: Abdon, Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,

³¹ Gedor, Ahio, Zecher,

³² and Mikloth the father of Shimeah. Some of them went to live in Jerusalem near their relatives.

³³ Ner was the father of Kish and the grandfather of King Saul. Saul had four sons: Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.

³⁴ Jonathan was the father of Meribbaal, the grandfather of Micah,

³⁵ and the great-grandfather of Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz.

³⁶ Saul's other descendants were Jehoaddah, Alemeth, Azmaveth, Zimri, Moza,

³⁷ Binea, Raphah, Eleasah, Azel,

³⁸ as well as Azel's six sons: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan.

³⁹ Azel's brother Eshek was the father of Ulam, Jeush, and Eliphelet.

⁴⁰ Ulam's sons were brave soldiers who were experts at using a bow and arrows.

They had a total of one hundred and fifty children and grandchildren. All of these belonged to the tribe of Benjamin.

9¹ Everyone in Israel was listed in the official family records that were included in the history of Israel's kings. The people of Judah were taken to Babylonia as prisoners because they sinned against the LORD.

² And the first people to return to their towns included priests, Levites, temple workers, and other Israelites.

³ People from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh settled in Jerusalem.

⁴ There were six hundred and ninety people from the Judah tribe who settled in Jerusalem. They were all descendants of Judah's three sons: Perez, Shelah, and Zerah. Their leaders were Uthai, Asaiah, and Jeuel. Uthai was the son of Ammihud and a descendant of Omri, Imri, Bani, and Perez. Asaiah was a descendant of Shelah; Jeuel was a descendant of Zerah.

⁵ (9: 4)

⁶ (9: 4)

⁷ There were also nine hundred and fifty-six family leaders from the Benjamin tribe who settled in Jerusalem. They included: Sallu son of Meshullam, grandson of Hodaviah, and great-grandson of Hassenuah; Ibneiah son of Jeroham; Elah son of Uzzi and grandson of Michri; Meshullam son of Shephatiah, grandson of Reuel, and great-grandson of Ibnijah.

⁸ (9: 7)

⁹ (9: 7)

¹⁰ Here is a list of priests who settled in Jerusalem: Jedaiah; Jehoiarib; Jachin; Azariah, who was a temple official, and whose ancestors included Hilkiah, Meshullam, Zadok, Meraioth, and Ahitub; Adaiah son of Jeroham, whose ancestors included Pashhur and Malchijah; Maasai son of Adiel, whose ancestors included Jahzerah, Meshullam, Meshillemith, and Immer.

¹¹ (9: 10)

¹² (9: 10)

¹³ There was a total of 1,760 priests, all of them family leaders in their clan and trained in the work at the temple.

¹⁴ Here is a list of Levites who settled in Jerusalem: Shemaiah from the Merari clan, whose ancestors included Hasshub, Azrikam, and Hashabiah; Bakbakkar; Heresh; Galal; Mattaniah son of Mica, whose ancestors included Zichri and Asaph; Obadiah son of Shemaiah, whose ancestors included Galal and Jeduthun; Berechiah son of Asa and grandson of Elkanah, who had lived in the villages near the town of Netophah.

¹⁵ (9: 14)

¹⁶ (9: 14)

¹⁷ Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their relatives were the guards at the temple gates. Shallum was the leader of this clan,

¹⁸ and for a long time they had been the guards at the King's Gate on the east side of the city. Before that, their ancestors guarded the entrance to the Levite camp.

¹⁹ Shallum son of Kore, as well as the other men in the Korahite clan, guarded the entrance to the temple, just as their ancestors had guarded the entrance to the sacred tent.

²⁰Phinehas son of Eleazar had supervised their work because the LORD was with him.

²¹Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was also one of the guards at the temple.

²²There was a total of two hundred and twelve guards, all of them listed in the family records in their towns. Their ancestors had been chosen by King David and by Samuel the prophet to be responsible for this work,

²³and now they guarded the temple gates.

²⁴There was one full-time guard appointed to each of the four sides of the temple.

²⁵Their assistants lived in the villages outside the city, and every seven days a group of them would come into the city and take their turn at guard duty.

²⁶The four full-time guards were Levites, and they supervised the other guards and were responsible for the rooms in the temple and the supplies kept there.

²⁷They guarded the temple day and night and opened its doors every morning.

²⁸ Some of the Levites were responsible for the equipment used in worship at the temple, and they had to count everything before and after it was used.

²⁹ Others were responsible for the temple furnishings and its sacred objects, as well as the flour, wine, olive oil, incense, and spices.

³⁰ But only the priests could mix the spices.

³¹ Mattithiah, Shallum's eldest son, was a member of the Levite clan of Korah, and he was in charge of baking the bread used for offerings.

³² The Levites from the Kohath clan were in charge of baking the sacred loaves of bread for each Sabbath.

³³ The Levite family leaders who were the musicians also lived at the temple. They had no other responsibilities, because they were on duty day and night.

³⁴ All these men were family leaders in the Levi tribe and were listed that way in their family records. They lived in Jerusalem.

³⁵ Jeiel had settled the town of Gibeon, where he and his wife Maacah lived.

³⁶They had ten sons, who were born in the following order: Abdon, Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,

³⁷Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth

³⁸the father of Shimeam. Some of them went to live in Jerusalem near their relatives.

³⁹Ner was the father of Kish and the grandfather of King Saul. Saul had four sons: Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.

⁴⁰Jonathan was the father of Meribbaal, the grandfather of Micah, and the great-grandfather of Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz.

⁴¹ (9: 40)

⁴²The descendants of Ahaz included Jarah, Alemeth, Azmaveth, Zimri, Moza, Binea, Rephaiah, Eleasah, and Azel and his six sons: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan.

⁴³ (9: 42)

⁴⁴ (9: 42)

10¹The Philistines fought against Israel in a battle at Mount Gilboa. Israel's soldiers ran from the Philistines, and many of them were killed.

²The Philistines closed in on Saul and his sons and killed three of them: Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua.

³The fighting was fierce around Saul, and he was badly wounded by enemy arrows.

⁴Saul told the soldier who carried his weapons, Kill me with your sword! I don't want those godless Philistines to torture and make fun of me. But the soldier was afraid to kill him. Then Saul stuck himself in the stomach with his own sword and fell on the blade.

⁵When the soldier realized that Saul was dead, he killed himself in the same way.

⁶Saul, three of his sons, and all his male relatives were dead.

⁷The Israelites who lived in Jezreel Valley learnt that their army had run away and that Saul and his sons were dead. They ran away too, and the Philistines moved into the towns the Israelites left behind.

⁸The next day the Philistines came back to the battlefield to carry away the weapons of the dead Israelite soldiers.

When they found the bodies of Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa,

⁹they took Saul's weapons, pulled off his armour, and cut off his head. Then they sent messengers everywhere in Philistia to spread the news among their people and to thank the idols of their gods.

¹⁰They put Saul's armour in the temple of their gods and hung his head in the temple of their god Dagon.

¹¹When the people who lived in Jabesh in Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,

¹²some brave men went to get his body and the bodies of his three sons. The men brought the bodies back to Jabesh, where they buried them under an oak tree. Then for seven days, they went without eating to show their sorrow.

¹³Saul died because he was unfaithful and disobeyed the LORD. He even asked advice from a woman who talked to spirits of the dead,

¹⁴instead of asking the LORD. So the LORD had Saul killed and gave his kingdom to David, the son of Jesse.

11 ¹ Israel's leaders met with David at Hebron and said, We are your relatives,

² and we know that you have led our army into battle, even when Saul was still our king. The LORD God has promised that you would rule our country and take care of us like a shepherd.

³ So we have come to crown you king of Israel. David made an agreement with the leaders and asked the LORD to be their witness. Then the leaders poured olive oil on David's head to show that he was now king of Israel. This happened just as the LORD's prophet Samuel had said.

⁴ Jerusalem was called Jebus at the time, and David led Israel's army to attack the town.

⁵ The Jebusites said, You won't be able to get in here! But David captured the fortress of Mount Zion, which is now called the City of David.

⁶ David had told his troops, The first soldier to kill a Jebusite will become my army commander. And since Joab son of Zeruah attacked first, he became commander.

⁷ Later, David moved to the fortressthat's why it's called the City of David.

⁸ He had the city rebuilt, starting at the landfill on the east side. Meanwhile, Joab supervised the repairs to the rest of the city.

⁹ David became a great and strong ruler, because the LORD All-Powerful was on his side.

¹⁰ The LORD had promised that David would become king, and so everyone in Israel gave David their support. Certain warriors also helped keep his kingdom strong.

¹¹ The first of these warriors was Jashobeam the son of Hachmoni, the leader of the Three Warriors. In one battle he killed three hundred men with his spear.

¹² Another one of the Three Warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo the Ahohite.

¹³ During a battle against the Philistines at Pas-Dammim, all the Israelite soldiers ran away,

¹⁴ except Eleazar, who stayed with David. They took their positions in a nearby barley field and defeated the

Philistines! The LORD gave Israel a great victory that day.

¹⁵One time the Three Warriors went to meet David among the rocks at Adullam Cave. The Philistine army had set up camp in Rephaim Valley

¹⁶and had taken over Bethlehem. David was in a fortress,

¹⁷and he said, I'm very thirsty. I wish I had a drink of water from the well by the gate to Bethlehem.

¹⁸The Three Warriors sneaked through the Philistine camp and got some water from the well near Bethlehem's gate. They took it back to David, but he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured out the water as a sacrifice to the LORD

¹⁹and said, Drinking this water would be like drinking the blood of these men who risked their lives to get it for me. The Three Warriors did these brave deeds.

²⁰Joab's brother Abishai was the leader of the Thirty Warriors, and in one battle he killed three hundred men with his spear. He was just as famous as the Three Warriors

²¹ and was more famous than the rest of the Thirty Warriors. He was their commander, but he never became one of the Three Warriors.

²² Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was a brave man from Kabzeel who did some amazing things. One time he killed two of Moab's best fighters, and one snowy day he went into a pit and killed a lion.

²³ Another time he killed an Egyptian who was over two metres tall and was armed with a spear. Benaiah only had a club, so he grabbed the spear from the Egyptian and killed him with it.

²⁴ Benaiah did things like that; he was just as brave as the Three Warriors,

²⁵ even though he never became one of them. And he was certainly as famous as the rest of the Thirty Warriors. So David made him the leader of his own bodyguard.

²⁶ Here is a list of the other famous warriors: Asahel the brother of Joab; Elhanan the son of Dodo from Bethlehem; Shammoth from Haror; Helez from Pelon; Ira the son of Ikkesh from Tekoa; Abiezer from Anathoth; Sibbecai the Hushathite; Ilai the Ahohite;

Maharai from Netophah; Heled the son of Baanah from Netophah; Ithai the son of Ribai from Gibeah in Benjamin; Benaiah from Pirathon; Hurai from near the streams on Mount Gaash; Abiel from Arbah; Azmaveth from Baharum; Eliahba from Shaalbon; Hashem the Gizonite; Jonathan the son of Shagee from Harar; Ahiam the son of Sachar the Hararite; Eliphai the son of Ur; Hopher from Mecherah; Ahijah from Pelon; Hezro from Carmel; Naarai the son of Ezbai; Joel the brother of Nathan; Mibhar the son of Hagri; Zelek from Ammon; Naharai from Beeroth who carried Joab's weapons; Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the Ithrite; Uriah the Hittite; Zabad the son of Ahlai; Adina the son of Shiza, a leader in the Reuben tribe, and thirty of his soldiers; Hanan the son of Maacah; Joshaphat from Mithan; Uzzia from Ashterah; Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham from Aroer; Jedaiel and Joha the sons of Shimri from Tiz; Eliel from Mahavah; Jeribai and Joshaviah the sons of Elnaam; Ithmah from Moab; Eliel, Obed, and Jaasiel from Mezobah.

²⁷ (11: 26)

28 (11: 26)

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40 (11: 26)

41 (11: 26)

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47 (11: 26)

12¹ Some time earlier, David had gone to live in the town of Ziklag to escape from King Saul. While David was there, several brave warriors joined him to help fight his battles.

² Several of these warriors were from King Saul's own tribe of Benjamin. They were experts at using a bow and arrows,

and they could shoot an arrow or sling a stone with either hand.

³Their leaders were Ahiezer and Joash, the sons of Shemaah from Gibeah. Here is a list of those men from Benjamin: Jeziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth; Beracah and Jehu from Anathoth; Ishmaiah from Gibeon, who was the leader of the Thirty Warriors; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, and Jozabad from Gederah; Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, and Shephatiah from Haruph; Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam from the Korah clan; Joelah and Zebadiah the sons of Jeroham from Gedor.

⁴ (12: 3)

⁵ (12: 3)

⁶ (12: 3)

⁷ (12: 3)

⁸Men from the tribe of Gad also joined David at his fortress in the desert and served as his warriors. They were also brave soldiers fierce as lions and quick as gazelles. They were always prepared to fight with shields and spears.

⁹There were eleven of them, ranked in the following order: Ezer the leader, then

Obadiah, Eliab, Mishmannah, Jeremiah, Attai, Eliel, Johanan, Elzabad, Jeremiah, and Machbannai.

¹⁰ (12: 9)

¹¹ (12: 9)

¹² (12: 9)

¹³ (12: 9)

¹⁴ All these men were army officers; some were high-ranking officers over a thousand troops, and others were officers over a hundred troops.

¹⁵ Earlier, they had crossed the River Jordan when it flooded, and they chased out the people who lived in the valleys on each side of the river.

¹⁶ One time a group of men from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah went to the fortress where David was staying.

¹⁷ David met them outside and said, If you are coming as friends to fight on my side, then stay and join us. But if you try to turn me over to my enemies, the God our ancestors worshipped will punish you, because I have done nothing wrong.

¹⁸ Amasai, who later became the leader of the Thirty Warriors, was one of these men who went to David. God's Spirit

took control of him, and he said, We will join you, David son of Jesse! You and your followers will always be successful, because God fights on your side. So David agreed to let them stay, and he even put them in charge of his soldiers who raided enemy villages.

¹⁹Some of the warriors who joined David were from the tribe of Manasseh. They had earlier gone with David when he agreed to fight on the side of the Philistines against King Saul. But as soon as the Philistine rulers realized that David might turn against them and rejoin Saul, they sent David away to the town of Ziklag.

²⁰That's when the following men from Manasseh joined him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai. They had all been commanders in Saul's army

²¹and brave soldiers, and so David made them officers in his army. They fought on his side when enemy troops attacked.

²²Day after day, new men came to join David, and soon he had a large, powerful army.

²³The kingdom of Israel had been taken away from Saul, and it now belonged to David. He was ruling from Hebron, and thousands of well-trained soldiers from each tribe went there to crown David king of all Israel, just as the LORD had promised. These soldiers, who were always prepared for battle, included: 6,800 from Judah, who were armed with shields and spears; 7,100 from Simeon; 4,600 from Levi, including Jehoiada, who was a leader from Aaron's descendants, and his 3,700 men, as well as Zadok, who was a brave soldier, and 22 of his relatives, who were also officers; 3,000 from Benjamin, because this was Saul's own tribe and most of the men had remained loyal to him; 20,800 from Ephraim, who were not only brave, but also famous in their clans; 18,000 from West Manasseh, who had been chosen to help make David king; 200 leaders from Issachar, along with troops under their command—these leaders knew the right time to do what needed to be done; 50,000 from Zebulun, who were not only loyal, but also trained to use any weapon; 1,000 officers from Naphtali

and 37,000 soldiers armed with shields and spears; 28,600 from Dan; 40,000 from Asher; and 120,000 from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh, who were armed with all kinds of weapons.

²⁴ (12: 23)

²⁵ (12: 23)

²⁶ (12: 23)

²⁷ (12: 23)

²⁸ (12: 23)

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³² (12: 23)

³³ (12: 23)

³⁴ (12: 23)

³⁵ (12: 23)

³⁶ (12: 23)

³⁷ (12: 23)

³⁸ All these soldiers voluntarily came to Hebron because they wanted David to become king of Israel. In fact, everyone in Israel wanted the same thing.

³⁹ The soldiers stayed in Hebron three days, eating and drinking what their relatives had prepared for them.

⁴⁰ Other Israelites from as far away as the territories of Issachar, Zebulun, and

Naphtali brought cattle and sheep to slaughter for food. They also brought donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen that were loaded down with flour, dried figs, wine, and olive oil. Everyone in Israel was very happy.

13¹ Some time later, David talked with his army commanders,² and then announced to the people of Israel: While Saul was king, the sacred chest was ignored. But now it's time to bring the chest to Jerusalem. We will invite everyone in Israel to come here, including the priests and the Levites in the towns surrounded by pasture land. But we will do these things only if you agree, and if the LORD our God wants us to.

³ (13: 2)

⁴ The people agreed this was the right thing to do.

⁵ David gathered everyone from the River Shihor in Egypt to Lebo-Hamath in the north.

⁶ Then he led them to Baalah in Judah, which was also called Kiriath-Jearim. They went there to get the sacred chest and bring it to Jerusalem, because it

belonged to the LORD God, whose throne is above the winged creatures on the lid of the chest.

⁷The sacred chest was still at Abinadab's house, and when David and the crowd arrived there, they brought the chest outside and placed it on a new ox cart. Abinadab's sons Uzzah and Ahio guided the cart,

⁸while David and the crowd danced and sang praises to the LORD with all their might. They played music on small harps and other stringed instruments, and on tambourines, cymbals, and trumpets.

⁹But when they came to Chidon's threshing place, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out and took hold of the chest to stop it from falling.

¹⁰The LORD God was very angry at Uzzah for doing this, and he killed Uzzah there beside the chest.

¹¹David then got angry with God for killing Uzzah. So he named that place Attack on Uzzah, and it's been called that ever since.

¹²David was afraid of what the LORD might do to him, and he asked himself,

Should I really be the one to take care of the sacred chest?

¹³So instead of taking it to Jerusalem, David decided to take it to the home of Obed-Edom, who lived in the town of Gath.

¹⁴The chest stayed there for three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-Edom, his family, and everything he owned.

14¹ King Hiram of Tyre sent some officials to David. They brought along carpenters and stone workers, and enough cedar logs to build David a palace.

²David now knew that the LORD had made him a powerful king of Israel for the good of his people.

³After David moved to Jerusalem, he married more women and had more sons and daughters.

⁴His children born there were Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

⁵(14: 4)

⁶(14: 4)

⁷ (14: 4)

⁸When the Philistines heard that David had become king of Israel, they came to capture him. But David heard about their plan and marched out to meet them in battle.

⁹The Philistines had already camped in Rephaim Valley and were raiding the nearby villages.

¹⁰David asked God, Should I attack the Philistines? Will you help me win? The LORD told David, Yes, attack them! I will give you victory.

¹¹David and his army marched to Baal-Perazim, where they attacked and defeated the Philistines. He said, I defeated my enemies because God broke through them like a mighty flood. So he named the place The Lord Broke Through.

¹²Then David ordered his troops to burn the idols that the Philistines had left behind.

¹³Some time later, the Philistines came back into the hill country and camped in Rephaim Valley.

¹⁴David asked God what he should do, and God answered, Don't attack them

from the front. Circle around behind them where the balsam trees are.

¹⁵Wait there until you hear the treetops making the sound of marching troops. That sound will mean I have marched out ahead of you to fight the Philistine army. So you must then attack quickly!

¹⁶David obeyed God and he defeated the Philistines. He even chased them all the way from Gibeon to the entrance to Gezer.

¹⁷From then on, David became even more famous, and the LORD made all the nations afraid of him.

15¹ David had several buildings built in Jerusalem, and he had a tent set up where the sacred chest would be kept.

²He said, Only Levites will be allowed to carry the chest, because the LORD has chosen them to do that work and to serve him for ever.

³Next, David invited everyone to come to Jerusalem and watch the sacred chest being carried to the place he had set up for it.

⁴ He also sent for Aaron's descendants and for the Levites. The Levites who came were:

⁵ Uriel, the leader of the Kohath clan, and one hundred and twenty of his relatives;

⁶ Asaiah, the leader of the Merari clan, and two hundred and twenty of his relatives;

⁷ Joel, the leader of the Gershon clan, and one hundred and thirty of his relatives;

⁸ Shemaiah, the leader of the Elizaphan clan, and two hundred of his relatives;

⁹ Eliel, the leader of the Hebron clan, and eighty of his relatives; and

¹⁰ Amminadab, the leader of the Uzziel clan, with one hundred and twelve of his relatives.

¹¹ David called together these six Levites and the two priests, Zadok and Abiathar.

¹² He said to them, You are the leaders of the clans in the Levi tribe. You and your relatives must first go through the ceremony to make yourselves clean and acceptable to the LORD. Then you may carry the sacred chest that belongs to

the LORD God of Israel and bring it to the place I have prepared for it.

¹³The first time we tried to bring the chest to Jerusalem, we didn't ask the LORD what he wanted us to do. He was angry with us, because you Levites weren't there to carry the chest.

¹⁴The priests and the Levites made themselves clean. They were now ready to carry the sacred chest

¹⁵on poles that rested on their shoulders, just as the LORD had told Moses to do.

¹⁶David then told the leaders to choose some Levites to sing and play music on small harps, other stringed instruments, and cymbals.

¹⁷The men chosen to play the cymbals were Heman the son of Joel, his relative Asaph the son of Berechiah, and Ethan the son of Kushaiah from the Merari clan. Some of their assistants played the smaller harps: they were Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah. Others played the larger harps: they were Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Azaziah, and two

of the temple guards, Obed-Edom and Jeiel.

¹⁸ (15: 17)

¹⁹ (15: 17)

²⁰ (15: 17)

²¹ (15: 17)

²² Chenaniah was chosen to be the music director, because he was a skilled musician.

²³ Four Levites were then appointed to guard the sacred chest. They were Berechiah, Elkanah, Obed-Edom, and Jehiah. Finally, David chose priests to walk in front of the sacred chest and blow trumpets. They were Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer.

²⁴ (15: 23)

²⁵ David, the leaders of Israel, and the army commanders were very happy as they went to Obed-Edom's house to get the sacred chest.

²⁶ God gave the Levites the strength they needed to carry the chest, and so they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams.

²⁷ David, the Levites, Chenaniah the music director, and all the musicians

were wearing linen robes, and David was also wearing a linen cloth.

²⁸While the sacred chest was being carried into Jerusalem, everyone was celebrating by shouting and playing music on horns, trumpets, cymbals, harps, and other stringed instruments.

²⁹Saul's daughter Michal looked out of her window and watched the chest being brought into David's City. But when she saw David jumping and dancing in honour of the LORD, she was disgusted.

16 ¹They put the sacred chest inside the tent that David had set up for it, then they offered sacrifices to please the LORD and sacrifices to ask his blessing.

²After David had finished, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD

³and gave every person in the crowd a small loaf of bread, some meat, and a handful of raisins.

⁴David appointed some of the Levites to serve at the sacred chest; they were to play music and sing praises to the LORD God of Israel.

⁵Asaph was their leader, and Zechariah was his assistant. Jeiel, Shemiramoth,

Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom, and another man named Jeiel were appointed to play small harps and stringed instruments. Asaph himself played the cymbals,

⁶and the two priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to blow trumpets every day in front of the sacred chest.

⁷That same day, David instructed Asaph and his relatives for the first time to sing these praises to the LORD:

⁸Praise the LORD and pray in his name! Tell everyone what he has done.

⁹Sing praises to the LORD! Tell about his miracles.

¹⁰Celebrate and worship his holy name with all your heart.

¹¹Trust the LORD and his mighty power. Worship him always.

¹²Remember his miracles and all his wonders and his fair decisions.

¹³You belong to the family of Israel, his servant; you are his chosen ones, the descendants of Jacob.

¹⁴The LORD is our God, bringing justice everywhere on earth.

¹⁵We must never forget his agreement and his promises, not in thousands of years.

¹⁶God made an eternal promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

¹⁷(16: 16)

¹⁸when he said, I'll give you the land of Canaan.

¹⁹At the time there were only a few of us, and we were homeless.

²⁰We wandered from nation to nation, from one country to another.

²¹God did not let anyone ill-treat our people. Instead he protected us by punishing rulers

²²and telling them, Don't touch my chosen leaders or harm my prophets!

²³Everyone on this earth, sing praises to the LORD. Day after day announce, The LORD has saved us!

²⁴Tell every nation on earth, The LORD is wonderful and does marvellous things!

²⁵The LORD is great and deserves our greatest praise! He is the only God worthy of our worship.

²⁶Other nations worship idols, but the LORD created the heavens.

²⁷ Give honour and praise to the LORD, whose power and beauty fill his holy temple.

²⁸ Tell everyone of every nation, Praise the glorious power of the LORD.

²⁹ He is wonderful! Praise him and bring an offering into his temple. Worship the LORD, majestic and holy.

³⁰ Everyone on earth, now tremble! The world stands firm, never to be shaken.

³¹ Tell the heavens and the earth to be glad and celebrate! And announce to the nations, The LORD is King!

³² Command the ocean to roar with all its creatures and the fields to rejoice with all their crops.

³³ Then every tree in the forest will sing joyful songs to the LORD. He is coming to judge all people on earth.

³⁴ Praise the LORD because he is good to us, and his love never fails.

³⁵ Say to him, Save us, LORD God! Bring us back from among the nations. Let us celebrate and shout in praise of your holy name.

³⁶ LORD God of Israel, you deserve to be praised for ever and ever. After David

finished, the people shouted, Amen!
Praise the LORD!

³⁷ David chose Asaph and the Levites in his clan to be in charge of the daily worship at the place where the sacred chest was kept.

³⁸ Obed-Edom and sixty-eight of his relatives were their assistants, and Hosah and Obed-Edom the son of Jeduthun were the guards.

³⁹ David also chose Zadok the priest and his relatives who were priests to serve at the LORD's sacred tent at Gibeon.

⁴⁰ They were to offer sacrifices on the altar every morning and evening, just as the LORD had commanded in the Law he gave Israel.

⁴¹ Heman and Jeduthun were their assistants, as well as the other men who had been chosen to praise the LORD for his never-ending love.

⁴² Heman and Jeduthun were also responsible for blowing the trumpets, and for playing the cymbals and other instruments during worship at the tent. The Levites in Jeduthun's clan were the guards at Gibeon.

⁴³After that, everyone went home, and David went home to his family.

17 ¹Soon after David moved into his new palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, Look around! I live in a palace made of cedar, but the sacred chest is kept in a tent.

²Nathan replied, The LORD is with you do what you want.

³That night, the LORD told Nathan

⁴to go to David and tell him: David, you are my servant, so listen carefully: you are not the one to build a temple for me.

⁵I didn't live in a temple when I brought my people out of Egypt, and I don't live in one now. A tent has always been my home wherever I have gone with them.

⁶I chose special leaders and told them to be like shepherds for my people Israel. But did I ever say anything to even one of them about building a cedar temple for me?

⁷David, this is what I, the LORD All-Powerful, say to you. I brought you in from the fields where you took care of sheep, and I made you the leader of my people.

⁸Wherever you went, I helped you and destroyed your enemies right in front of your eyes. I have made you one of the most famous people in the world.

⁹I have given my people Israel a land of their own where they can live in peace. They will no longer have to tremble with fear. Evil nations won't bother them, as they did

¹⁰when I let judges rule my people, and I will keep your enemies from attacking you. Now I promise that like you, your descendants will be kings.

¹¹I'll choose one of your sons to be king when you reach the end of your life and are buried beside your ancestors. I'll make him a strong ruler,

¹²and no one will be able to take his kingdom away from him. He will be the one to build a temple for me.

¹³I will be like a father to him, and he will be like a son to me. I will never put an end to my agreement with him, as I put an end to my agreement with Saul, who was king before you.

¹⁴I will make sure that your son and his descendants will rule my people and my kingdom for ever.

¹⁵ Nathan told David exactly what the LORD had said.

¹⁶ David went into the tent he had set up for the sacred chest. He sat there and prayed: LORD God, my family and I don't deserve what you have already done for us,

¹⁷ and yet you have promised to do even more for my descendants. You are treating me as if I am a very important person.

¹⁸ I am your servant, and you know my thoughts. What else can I say, except that you have honoured me?

¹⁹ It was your choice to do these wonderful things for me and to make these promises.

²⁰ No other god is like you, LORD you alone are God. Everything we have heard about you is true.

²¹ And there is no other nation on earth like Israel, the nation you rescued from slavery in Egypt to be your own. You became famous by using great and wonderful miracles to force other nations and their gods out of your land, so that your people could live here.

²²You have chosen Israel to be your people for ever, and you have become their God.

²³LORD God, please do what you promised me and my descendants.

²⁴Then you will be famous for ever, and everyone will say, The LORD All-Powerful rules Israel and is their God. My kingdom will be strong,

²⁵because you are my God, and you have promised that my descendants will be kings. That's why I have the courage to pray to you like this, even though I am only your servant.

²⁶You are the LORD God, and you have made this good promise to me.

²⁷Now please bless my descendants for ever, and let them always be your chosen kings. You have already blessed my family, and I know you will bless us for ever.

18¹ Later, David attacked and defeated the Philistines. He captured their town of Gath and the nearby villages.

² David also defeated the Moabites, and so they had to accept him as their ruler and pay taxes to him.

³ While King Hadadezer of Zobah was trying to gain control of the territory near the River Euphrates, David met him in battle at Hamath and defeated him.

⁴ David captured one thousand chariots, seven thousand chariot drivers, and twenty thousand soldiers. And he crippled all but one hundred of the horses.

⁵ When troops from the Syrian kingdom of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, David killed twenty-two thousand of them.

⁶ Then David stationed some of his troops in Damascus, and the people there had to accept David as their ruler and pay taxes to him. Everywhere David went, the LORD helped him win battles.

⁷ Hadadezer's officers had carried gold shields, but David took these shields and brought them back to Jerusalem.

⁸ He also took a lot of bronze from the cities of Tibhath and Cun, which had belonged to Hadadezer. Later, Solomon used this bronze to make the large bowl called the Sea, and to make the pillars and other furnishings for the temple.

⁹King Tou of Hamath and King Hadadezer had been enemies. So when Tou heard that David had defeated Hadadezer's whole army, he sent his son Hadoram to congratulate David on his victory. Hadoram also brought him gifts made of gold, silver, and bronze.

¹⁰(18: 9)

¹¹David gave these gifts to the LORD, just as he had done with the silver and gold he had captured from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Amalek.

¹²Abishai the son of Zeruah defeated the Edomite army in Salt Valley and killed eighteen thousand of their troops.

¹³Then he stationed troops in Edom, and the people there had to accept David as their ruler. Everywhere David went, the LORD gave him victory in war.

¹⁴David ruled all Israel with fairness and justice.

¹⁵Joab the son of Zeruah was the commander in chief of the army. Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud kept the government records.

¹⁶Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests. Shavsha was the secretary.

¹⁷ Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was the commander of David's bodyguard. David's sons were his highest-ranking officials.

19 ¹ Some time later, King Nahash of Ammon died, and his son Hanun became king.

² David said, Nahash was kind to me, so I will be kind to his son. He sent some officials to Ammon to tell Hanun how sorry he was that his father had died. But when David's officials arrived at Ammon,

³ the Ammonite leaders said to Hanun, Do you really believe King David is honouring your father by sending these men to comfort you? He probably sent them to spy on our country, so he can come and destroy it.

⁴ Hanun arrested David's officials and had their beards shaved off and their robes cut off just below the waist, and then he sent them away.

⁵ They were terribly ashamed. When David found out what had happened to his officials, he sent a message that told them, Stay in Jericho until your beards grow back. Then you can come home.

⁶The Ammonites realized they had made David furious. So they paid thirty-four thousand kilogrammes of silver to hire chariot troops from Mesopotamia and from the Syrian kingdoms of Maacah and Zobah.

⁷Thirty-two thousand troops, as well as the king of Maacah and his army, came and camped near Medeba. The Ammonite troops also left their towns and came to prepare for battle.

⁸David heard what was happening, and he sent out Joab with his army.

⁹The Ammonite troops marched to the entrance of the city and prepared for battle, while the Syrian troops took their positions in the open fields.

¹⁰Joab saw that the enemy troops were lined up on both sides of him. So he picked some of the best Israelite soldiers to fight the Syrians.

¹¹Then he put his brother Abishai in command of the rest of the army and told them to fight against the Ammonites.

¹²Joab told his brother, If the Syrians are too much for me to handle, come and help me. And if the Ammonites are

too strong for you, I'll come and help you.

¹³ Be brave and fight hard to protect our people and the towns of our LORD God. I pray he will do whatever pleases him.

¹⁴ Joab and his soldiers attacked the Syrians, and the Syrians ran from them.

¹⁵ When the Ammonite troops saw that the Syrians had run away, they ran from Abishai's soldiers and went back into their own city. Joab then returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁶ As soon as the Syrians realized they had been defeated, they sent for their troops that were stationed on the other side of the River Euphrates. Shophach, the commander of Hadadezer's army, led these troops to Ammon.

¹⁷ David found out what the Syrians were doing, and he brought Israel's entire army together. They crossed the River Jordan, and he commanded them to take their positions facing the Syrian troops. Soon after the fighting began,

¹⁸ the Syrians ran from Israel. David killed seven thousand chariot troops and forty thousand regular soldiers. He also killed Shophach, their commander.

¹⁹When the kings who had been under Hadadezer's rule saw that Israel had defeated them, they made peace with David and accepted him as their new ruler. The Syrians never helped the Ammonites again.

20¹The next spring, the time when kings go to war, Joab marched out in command of the Israelite army and destroyed towns all over the country of Ammon. He attacked the capital city of Rabbah and left it in ruins. But David stayed in Jerusalem.

²Later, David himself went to Rabbah, where he took the crown from the statue of their god Milcom. The crown was made of about thirty-four kilogrammes of gold, and there was a valuable jewel on it. David put the jewel on his crown, then carried off everything else of value.

³He forced the people of Rabbah to work with saws, iron picks, and axes. He also did the same thing with the people in all the other Ammonite towns. David then led Israel's army back to Jerusalem.

⁴Some time later, Israel fought a battle against the Philistines at Gezer. During this battle, Sibbecai from Hushah killed

Sippai, a descendant of the Rephaim, and the Philistines were defeated.

⁵In another battle against the Philistines, Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath from Gath, whose spear shaft was like a weaver's beam.

⁶Another one of the Philistine soldiers who was a descendant of the Rephaim was as big as a giant and had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. During a battle at Gath,

⁷he made fun of Israel, so David's nephew Jonathan killed him.

⁸David and his soldiers killed these three men from Gath who were descendants of the Rephaim.

21 ¹Satan decided to cause trouble for Israel by making David think it was a good idea to find out how many people there were in Israel and Judah.

²David told Joab and the army commanders, Count everyone in Israel, from the town of Beersheba in the south all the way north to Dan. Then I will know how many people can serve in my army.

³Joab answered, Your Majesty, even if the LORD made your kingdom a hundred times larger, you would still rule everyone in it. Why do you need to know how many soldiers there are? Don't you think that would make the whole nation angry?

⁴But David would not change his mind. And so Joab went everywhere in Israel and Judah and counted the people. He returned to Jerusalem

⁵and told David that the total number of men who could serve in the army was one million one hundred thousand in Israel and four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah.

⁶Joab refused to include anyone from the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, because he still disagreed with David's orders.

⁷David's order to count the people made God angry, and he punished Israel.

⁸David prayed, I am your servant. But what I did was stupid and terribly wrong. Please forgive me.

⁹The LORD said to Gad, one of David's prophets,

¹⁰Tell David that I will punish him in one of three ways. But he will have to choose which one it will be.

¹¹Gad went to David and told him: You must choose how the LORD will punish you:

¹²Will there be three years when the land won't grow enough food for its people? Or will your enemies constantly defeat you for three months? Or will the LORD send a horrible disease to strike your land for three days? Think about it and decide, because I have to give your answer to God who sent me.

¹³David was miserable and said, It's a terrible choice to make! But the LORD is kind, and I'd rather be punished by him than by anyone else.

¹⁴So the LORD sent a horrible disease on Israel, and seventy thousand Israelites died.

¹⁵Then he sent an angel to destroy the city of Jerusalem. But just as the angel was about to do that, the LORD felt sorry for all the suffering he had caused the people, and he told the angel, Stop! They have suffered enough. This happened

at the threshing place that belonged to Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁶David saw the LORD's angel in the air, holding a sword over Jerusalem. He and the leaders of Israel, who were all wearing sackcloth, bowed with their faces to the ground,

¹⁷and David prayed, It's my fault! I sinned by ordering the people to be counted. They have done nothing wrong they are innocent sheep. LORD God, please punish me and my family. Don't let the disease wipe out your people.

¹⁸The LORD's angel told the prophet Gad to tell David that he must go to Araunah's threshing place and build an altar in honour of the LORD.

¹⁹David followed the LORD's instructions.

²⁰Araunah and his four sons were threshing wheat at the time, and when they saw the angel, the four sons ran to hide.

²¹Just then, David arrived, and when Araunah saw him, he stopped his work and bowed down.

²² David said, Would you sell me your threshing place, so I can build an altar on it to the LORD? Then this disease will stop killing the people. I'm willing to pay whatever you say it's worth.

²³ Araunah answered, Take it, Your Majesty, and do whatever you want with it. I'll even give you the oxen for the sacrifice and the wheat for the grain sacrifice. And you can use the threshing-boards for the fire. It's all yours!

²⁴ But David replied, No! I want to pay you what they're worth. I can't just take something from you and then offer the LORD a sacrifice that cost me nothing.

²⁵ So David paid Araunah six hundred gold coins for his threshing place.

²⁶ David built an altar and offered sacrifices to please the LORD and sacrifices to ask his blessing. David prayed, and the LORD answered him by sending fire down on the altar.

²⁷ Then the LORD commanded the angel to put the sword away.

²⁸ When David saw that the LORD had answered his prayer, he offered more sacrifices there at the threshing place,

²⁹because he was afraid of the angel's sword and did not want to go all the way to Gibeon. That's where the sacred tent that Moses had made in the desert was kept, as well as the altar where sacrifices were offered to the LORD.

³⁰(21:29)

22¹David said, The temple of the LORD God must be built here at this threshing place. And the altar for offering sacrifices will also be here.

²David ordered the foreigners living in Israel to come to Jerusalem. Then he assigned some to cut blocks of stone for building the temple.

³He got a large supply of iron to make into nails and hinges for the doors, and he provided so much bronze that it could not be weighed.

⁴He also had cedar logs brought in from the cities of Sidon and Tyre.

⁵He said, The temple for the LORD must be great, so that everyone in the world will know about it. But since my son Solomon is young and has no experience, I will make sure that everything is ready for the temple to

be built. That's why David did all these things before he died.

⁶David sent for his son Solomon and told him to build a temple for the LORD God of Israel.

⁷He said: My son, I wanted to build a temple where the LORD my God would be worshipped.

⁸But some time ago, he told me, David, you have killed too many people and have fought too many battles. That's why you are not the one to build my temple.

⁹But when your son becomes king, I will give him peace throughout his kingdom. His name will be Solomon, because during his rule I will keep Israel safe and peaceful.

¹⁰Solomon will build my temple. He will be like a son to me, and I will be like a father to him. In fact, one of his descendants will always rule in Israel.

¹¹Solomon, my son, I now pray that the LORD your God will be with you and keep his promise to help you build a temple for him.

¹²May he give you wisdom and knowledge, so that you can rule Israel according to his Law.

¹³If you obey the laws and teachings that the LORD gave Moses, you will be successful. Be strong and brave and don't get discouraged or be afraid of anything.

¹⁴I have all the supplies you'll need to build the temple: you have more than three thousand tonnes of gold and over thirty-four thousand tonnes of silver. There's also plenty of wood, stone, and more bronze and iron than I could weigh. Ask for anything else you need.

¹⁵I have also assigned men who will cut and lay the stone. And there are carpenters and people who are experts in working with

¹⁶gold, silver, bronze, and iron. You have plenty of workers to do the job. Now get started, and I pray that the LORD will be with you in your work.

¹⁷David then gave orders for the leaders of Israel to help Solomon.

¹⁸David said: The LORD our God has helped me defeat all the people who lived here before us, and he has given

you peace from all your enemies. Now this land belongs to the LORD and his people.

¹⁹Obey the LORD your God with your heart and soul. Begin work on the temple to honour him, so that the sacred chest and the things used for worship can be kept there.

23¹David was old when he chose his son Solomon to be king of Israel.

²Some time later, David called together all of Israel's leaders, priests, and Levites.

³He then counted the Levite men who were at least thirty years old, and the total was thirty-eight thousand.

⁴He said, Twenty-four thousand of the Levites will be in charge of the temple, six thousand will be temple officials and judges,

⁵four thousand will be guards at the temple, and four thousand will praise the LORD by playing the musical instruments I have given them.

⁶David then divided the Levites into three groups according to the clans of Levi's sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

⁷Gershon had two sons: Ladan and Shimei.

⁸Ladan was the father of Jehiel, Zetham, and Joel.

⁹They were all family leaders among their father's descendants. Shimei was the father of Shelomoth, Haziël, and Haran.

¹⁰Later, Shimei had four more sons, in the following order: Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah. But Jeush and Beriah didn't have many children, so their descendants were counted as one family.

¹¹ (23: 10)

¹²Kohath had four sons: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹³Amram was the father of Aaron and Moses. Aaron and his descendants were chosen to be in charge of all the sacred things. They served the LORD by offering sacrifices to him and by blessing the people in his name.

¹⁴Moses, the man of God, was the father of Gershom and Eliezer, and their descendants were considered Levites.

¹⁵ (23: 14)

¹⁶Gershom's eldest son was Shebuel.

¹⁷ Rehabiah, who was Eliezer's only son, had many children.

¹⁸ The second son born to Kohath was Izhar, and his eldest son was Shelomith.

¹⁹ Hebron, the third son of Kohath, was the father of Jeriah, Amariah, Jahaziel, and Jekameam.

²⁰ Kohath's youngest son, Uzziel, was the father of Micah and Isshiah.

²¹ Merari had two sons: Mahli and Mushi. Mahli was the father of Eleazar and Kish.

²² Eleazar had no sons, only daughters, and they married their uncle's sons.

²³ Mushi the second son of Merari, was the father of Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth.

²⁴ These were the clans and families of the tribe of Levi. Those who were twenty years and older were assigned to work at the LORD's temple.

²⁵ David said: The LORD God of Israel has given his people peace, and he will live in Jerusalem for ever.

²⁶ And so, the Levites won't need to move the sacred tent and the things used for worship from place to place.

²⁷ From now on, all Levites at least twenty years old

²⁸will serve the LORD by helping Aaron's descendants do their work at the temple, by keeping the courtyards and rooms of the temple clean, and by making sure that everything used in worship stays pure.

²⁹They will also be in charge of the sacred loaves of bread, the flour for the grain sacrifices, the thin wafers, any offerings to be baked, and the flour mixed with olive oil. These Levites will weigh and measure these offerings.

³⁰Every morning and evening, the Levites are to give thanks to the LORD and sing praises to him.

³¹They must also give thanks and sing praises when sacrifices are offered on each Sabbath, as well as during New Moon Festivals and other religious feasts. There must always be enough Levites on duty at the temple to do everything that needs to be done.

³²They were once in charge of taking care of the sacred tent; now they are responsible for the temple and for helping Aaron's descendants.

24¹Aaron's descendants were then divided into work groups. Aaron

had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

²But Nadab and Abihu died long before their father, without having any sons. That's why Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests.

³David divided Aaron's descendants into groups, according to their assigned work. Zadok, one of Eleazar's descendants, and Ahimelech, one of Ithamar's descendants, helped David.

⁴Eleazar's descendants were divided into sixteen groups, and Ithamar's were divided into eight groups, because Eleazar's family included more family leaders.

⁵However, both families included temple officials and priests, and so to make sure the work was divided fairly, David asked God what to do.

⁶As each group was assigned their duties, Shemaiah the son of Nethanel the Levite wrote down the name of the family leader in charge of that group. The witnesses were David and his officials, as well as Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and the family leaders

from the clans of the priests and the Levites.

⁷ Each group of priests went by the name of its family leader, and they were assigned their duties in the following order: Jehoiarib, Jedaiah, Harim, Seorim, Malchijah, Mijamin, Hakkoz, Abijah, Jeshua, Shecaniah, Eliashib, Jakim, Huppah, Jeshebeab, Bilgah, Immer, Hezir, Happizzetz, Pethahiah, Jehezkel, Jachin, Gamul, Delaiah, Maaziah.

⁸ (24: 7)

⁹ (24: 7)

¹⁰ (24: 7)

¹¹ (24: 7)

¹² (24: 7)

¹³ (24: 7)

¹⁴ (24: 7)

¹⁵ (24: 7)

¹⁶ (24: 7)

¹⁷ (24: 7)

¹⁸ (24: 7)

¹⁹ These men were assigned their duties at the temple, just as the LORD God of Israel had commanded their ancestor Aaron.

²⁰ Here is a list of the other descendants of Levi: Amram was the ancestor of Shubael and Jehdeiah.

²¹ Rehabiah was the ancestor of Isshiah, the eldest son in his family.

²² Izhar was the father of Shelomoth and the grandfather of Jahath.

²³ Hebron had four sons, in the following order: Jeriah, Amariah, Jahaziel, and Jekameam.

²⁴ Uzziel was the father of Micah and the grandfather of Shamir.

²⁵ Isshiah, Micah's brother, was the father of Zechariah.

²⁶ Merari was the father of Mahli, Mushi, and Jaaziah.

²⁷ Jaaziah had three sons: Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri.

²⁸ Mahli was the father of Eleazar and Kish. Eleazar had no sons, but Kish was the father of Jerahmeel.

²⁹ (24: 28)

³⁰ Mushi had three sons: Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the descendants of Levi, according to their clans.

³¹ Each one was assigned his duties in the same way that their relatives the

priests had been assigned their duties. David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the family leaders of the priests and Levites were the witnesses.

25¹ David and the temple officials chose the descendants of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun to be in charge of music. They were to praise the LORD by playing cymbals, harps and other stringed instruments. Here is a list of the musicians and their duties:

²Asaph's four sons, Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asarelah, were under the direction of their father and played music whenever the king told them to.

³Jeduthun's six sons, Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, were under the direction of their father and played harps and sang praises to the LORD.

⁴Heman had fourteen sons: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romamtiezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth.

⁵Heman was one of the king's prophets, and God honoured Heman by giving him fourteen sons and three daughters.

⁶His sons were under his direction and played cymbals, harps, and other stringed instruments during times of worship at the temple. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman took their orders directly from the king.

⁷There were two hundred and eighty-eight of these men, and all of them were skilled musicians.

⁸David assigned them their duties by asking the LORD what he wanted. Everyone was responsible for something, whether young or old, teacher or student.

⁹The musicians were divided into twenty-four groups of twelve, and each group went by the name of their family leader. They were assigned their duties in the following order: Joseph, Gedaliah, Zaccur, Zeri, Nethaniah, Bukkiah, Asarelah, Jeshaiiah, Mattaniah, Shimei, Uzziel, Hashabiah, Shebuel, Mattithiah, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Joshbekashah, Hanani, Mallothi, Eliathah, Hothir, Giddalti, Mahazioth, and Romamtiezer.

¹⁰(25: 9)

¹¹(25: 9)

¹²(25: 9)

13 (25: 9)

14 (25: 9)

15 (25: 9)

16 (25: 9)

17 (25: 9)

18 (25: 9)

19 (25: 9)

20 (25: 9)

21 (25: 9)

22 (25: 9)

23 (25: 9)

24 (25: 9)

25 (25: 9)

26 (25: 9)

27 (25: 9)

28 (25: 9)

29 (25: 9)

30 (25: 9)

31 (25: 9)

26¹ The temple guards were also divided into groups according to clans. Meshelemiah son of Kore was from the Korah clan and was a descendant of Asaph.

² He had seven sons, who were born in the following order: Zechariah, Jediael, Zebadiah, Jathniel,

³ Elam, Jehohanan, and Eliehoenai.

⁴Obed-Edom had been blessed with eight sons: Shemaiah, Jehozabad, Joah, Sachar, Nethanel, Ammiel, Issachar, and Peullethai.

⁵(26: 4)

⁶Shemaiah was the father of Othni, Rephael, Obed, Elzabad, Elihu, and Semachiah. They were all respected leaders in their clan.

⁷(26: 6)

⁸There were sixty-two descendants of Obed-Edom who were strong enough to be guards at the temple.

⁹Eighteen descendants of Meshelemiah were chosen for this work.

¹⁰Hosah, from the Merari clan, was the father of Shimri, Hilkiah, Tebaliah, and Zechariah. Hosah had made Shimri the family leader, even though he was not the eldest son. Thirteen men from Hosah's family were chosen to be temple guards.

¹¹(26: 10)

¹²The guards were divided into groups, according to their family leaders, and they were assigned duties at the temple, just like the other Levites.

¹³Each group, no matter how large or small, was assigned a gate to guard, and they let the LORD show them what he wanted done.

¹⁴Shelemiah was chosen to guard the East Gate. Zechariah his son was a wise man and was chosen to guard the North Gate.

¹⁵Obed-Edom was then chosen to guard the South Gate, and his sons were chosen to guard the storerooms.

¹⁶Shuppim and Hosah were chosen to guard the West Gate and the Shallecheth Gate on the upper road. The guards were assigned the following work schedule:

¹⁷each day six guards were on duty on the east side of the temple, four were on duty on the north side, and four were on duty on the south side. Two guards were stationed at each of the two storerooms,

¹⁸four were stationed along the road leading to the west courtyard, and two guards stayed in the court itself.

¹⁹These were the guard duties assigned to the men from the clans of Korah and Merari.

²⁰The Levites who were relatives of the Korahites and the Merarites were in

charge of guarding the temple treasury and the gifts that had been dedicated to God.

²¹ Ladan was from the Gershon clan and was the father of Jehieli. Many of his other descendants were family leaders in the clan.

²² Jehieli was the father of Zetham and Joel, and they were responsible for guarding the treasury.

²³ Other guards at the treasury were from the Kohathite clans of Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

²⁴ Shebuel was a descendant of Gershom the son of Moses. He was the chief official in charge of the temple treasury.

²⁵ The descendants of Gershom's brother Eliezer included Rehabiah, Jeshaiiah, Joram, Zichri, and Shelomoth.

²⁶ Shelomoth and his relatives were in charge of all the gifts that were dedicated to the LORD. These included the gifts that King David had dedicated, as well as those dedicated by the family leaders, army officers, and army commanders.

²⁷ And whenever valuable things were captured in battle, these men brought some of them to the temple.

²⁸ Shelomoth and his relatives were responsible for any gifts that had been given to the temple, including those from Samuel the prophet, King Saul the son of Kish, Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah.

²⁹ Chenaniah from the Izhar clan and his sons were government officials and judges. They did not work at the temple.

³⁰ Hashabiah from the Hebron clan and one thousand seven hundred of his skilled relatives were the officials in charge of all religious and government business in the Israelite territories west of the River Jordan.

³¹ Jerijah was the leader of the Hebron clan. David assigned him and two thousand seven hundred of his relatives, who were all respected family leaders, to be the officials in charge of all religious and government business in the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and East Manasseh. David found out about these men during the fortieth year of his rule, when he had a list made of all the families in the Hebron

clan. They were from the town of Jazer in the territory of Gilead.

³² (26:31)

27 ¹ Each month a group of twenty-four thousand men served as soldiers in Israel's army. These men, which included the family leaders, army commanders, and officials of the king, were under the command of the following men, arranged by the month of their service:

² In the first month, Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel,

³ a descendant of Perez;

⁴ in the second month, Dodai the Ahohite, whose assistant was Mikloth;

⁵ in the third month, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada the priest,

⁶ who was the leader of the Thirty Warriors, and whose son Ammizabad was also an army commander;

⁷ in the fourth month, Asahel the brother of Joab, whose son Zebadiah took over command after him;

⁸ in the fifth month, Shamhuth from the Izrah clan;

⁹ in the sixth month, Ira the son of Ikkesh from Tekoa;

¹⁰in the seventh month, Helez from Pelon in the territory of Ephraim;

¹¹in the eighth month, Sibbecai from Hushah of the Zerah clan;

¹²in the ninth month, Abiezer from Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin;

¹³in the tenth month, Maharai from Netophah of the Zerah clan;

¹⁴in the eleventh month, Benaiah from Pirathon in the territory of Ephraim;

¹⁵in the twelfth month, Heldai from Netophah, who was a descendant of Othniel.

¹⁶Here is a list of the leaders of each tribe in Israel: Eliezer son of Zichri was over Reuben; Shephatiah son of Maacah was over Simeon; Hashabiah son of Kemuel was over the Levites, and Zadok the priest was over the descendants of Aaron; Elihu the brother of David was over Judah; Omri son of Michael was over Issachar; Ishmaiah son of Obadiah was over Zebulun; Jerimoth son of Azriel was over Naphtali; Hoshea son of Azaziah was over Ephraim; Joel son of Pedaiah was over West Manasseh; Iddo son of Zechariah was over East Manasseh; Jaasiel son of Abner was over

Benjamin; Azarel son of Jeroham was over Dan.

¹⁷ (27:16)

¹⁸ (27:16)

¹⁹ (27:16)

²⁰ (27:16)

²¹ (27:16)

²² (27:16)

²³ When David decided to count the people of Israel, he gave orders not to count anyone under twenty years of age, because the LORD had promised long ago that Israel would have as many people as there are stars in the sky.

²⁴ Joab the son of Zeruah had begun to count the people, but he stopped when the LORD began punishing Israel. So the total number was never included in David's official records.

²⁵ Azmaveth the son of Adiel was in charge of the king's personal storage rooms. Jonathan the son of Uzziah was in charge of the king's other storerooms that were in the towns, the villages, and the defence towers in Israel.

²⁶ Ezri the son of Chelub was in charge of the workers who farmed the king's land.

²⁷ Shimei from Ramah was in charge of the vineyards, and Zabdi from Shepham was in charge of storing the wine.

²⁸ Baal Hanan from Geder was in charge of the olive and sycamore trees in the western foothills, and Joash was in charge of storing the olive oil.

²⁹ Shitrai from Sharon was responsible for the cattle that were kept in Sharon Plain, and Shaphat son of Adlai was responsible for those kept in the valleys.

³⁰ Obil the Ishmaelite was in charge of the camels, Jehdeiah from Meronoth was in charge of the donkeys, and Jaziz the Hagrite was in charge of the sheep and goats.

³¹ These were the men in charge of David's royal property.

³² David's uncle Jonathan was a wise and intelligent adviser. He and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni taught David's sons.

³³ Ahithophel and Hushai the Archite were two of David's advisers.

³⁴ Jehoiada the son of Benaiah was the king's adviser after Ahithophel, and later, Abiathar was his adviser. Joab was commander of Israel's army.

28¹ David called a meeting in Jerusalem for all Israel's leaders, including the tribal leaders, the government officials, the army commanders, the officials in charge of the royal property and livestock, the palace officials, and the brave warriors.

² After everyone was there, David stood up and said: Listen to me, my people. I wanted to build a place where the sacred chest would be kept, so we could go there and worship the LORD our God. I have prepared all the supplies for building a temple,

³ but the LORD has refused to let me build it, because he said I have killed too many people in battle.

⁴ The LORD God chose Judah to be the leading tribe in Israel. Then from Judah, he chose my father's family, and from that family, he chose me to be the king of Israel, and he promised that my descendants will also rule as kings.

⁵ The LORD has blessed me with many sons, but he chose my son Solomon to be the next king of Israel.

⁶ The LORD said to me, Your son Solomon will build my temple, and it will

honour me. Solomon will be like a son to me, and I will be like a father to him.

⁷If he continues to obey my laws and commands, his kingdom will never end.

⁸My friends, you are the LORD's people. And now, with God as your witness, I want you to promise that you will do your best to obey everything the LORD God has commanded us. Then this land will always belong to you and your descendants.

⁹Solomon, my son, worship God and obey him with all your heart and mind, just as I have done. He knows all your thoughts and your reasons for doing things, and so if you turn to him, he will hear your prayers. But if you ignore him, he will reject you for ever.

¹⁰The LORD has chosen you to build a temple for worshipping him. Be confident and do the work you have been assigned.

¹¹After David finished speaking, he gave Solomon the plans for building the main rooms of the temple, including the porch, the storerooms, the rooms upstairs and downstairs, as well as the most holy place.

¹²He gave Solomon his plans for the courtyards and the open areas around the temple, and for the rooms to store the temple treasures and gifts that had been dedicated to God.

¹³David also gave Solomon his plans for dividing the priests and the Levites into groups, as well as for the work that needed to be done at the temple and for taking care of the objects used for worship.

¹⁴He told Solomon how much gold and silver was to be used in making the sacred objects,

¹⁵including the lampstands and lamps,

¹⁶the gold table which held the sacred loaves of bread, the tables made of silver,

¹⁷the meat forks, the bowls and cups,

¹⁸the gold incense altar, and the gold statue of a chariot for the winged creatures which were on the lid of the sacred chest.

¹⁹David then said to Solomon: The LORD showed me how his temple is to be built.

²⁰But you must see that everything is done according to these plans.

Be confident, and never be afraid of anything or get discouraged. The LORD my God will help you do everything needed to finish the temple, so it can be used for worshipping him.

²¹ The priests and Levites have been assigned their duties, and all the skilled workers are prepared to do their work. The people and their leaders will do anything you tell them.

29¹ David told the crowd: God chose my son Solomon to build the temple, but Solomon is young and has no experience. This is not just any building this is the temple for the LORD God!

² That's why I have done my best to get everything Solomon will need to build it gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, onyx, turquoise, coloured gems, all kinds of precious stones, and marble.

³ Besides doing all that, I have promised to give part of my own gold and silver as a way of showing my love for God's temple.

⁴ More than a hundred tonnes of my finest gold and almost two hundred and

forty tonnes of my silver will be used to decorate its walls

⁵and to make the gold and silver objects. Now, who else will show their dedication to the LORD by giving gifts for building his temple?

⁶After David finished speaking, the family leaders, the tribal leaders, the army commanders, and the government officials voluntarily gave gifts

⁷for the temple. These gifts included more than a hundred and seventy tonnes of gold, over three hundred and forty tonnes of silver, six hundred and twenty tonnes of bronze, and more than three thousand four hundred tonnes of iron.

⁸Everyone who owned precious stones also donated them to the temple treasury, where Jehiel from the Levite clan of Gershon guarded them.

⁹David and the people were very happy that so much had been given to the LORD, and they all celebrated.

¹⁰Then, in front of everyone, David sang praises to the LORD: I praise you for ever, LORD! You are the God our ancestor Jacob worshipped.

¹¹Your power is great, and your glory is seen everywhere in heaven and on earth. You are king of the entire world,
¹²and you rule with strength and power. You make people rich and powerful and famous.

¹³We thank you, our God, and praise you.

¹⁴But why should we be happy that we have given you these gifts? They belong to you, and we have only given back what is already yours.

¹⁵We are only foreigners living here on earth for a while, just as our ancestors were. And we will soon be gone, like a shadow that suddenly disappears.

¹⁶Our LORD God, we have brought all these things for building a temple to honour you. They belong to you, and you gave them to us.

¹⁷But we are happy, because everyone has voluntarily given you these things. You know what is in everyone's heart, and you are pleased when people are honest.

¹⁸Always make us eager to give, and help us be faithful to you, just as our

ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob faithfully worshipped you.

¹⁹And give Solomon the desire to obey your laws and teachings completely, and the desire to build the temple for which I have provided these gifts.

²⁰David then said to the people, Now it's your turn to praise the LORD, the God your ancestors worshipped! So everyone praised the LORD, and they bowed down to honour him and David their king.

²¹The next day, the Israelites slaughtered a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, and they offered them as sacrifices to please the LORD, along with offerings of wine.

²²The people were very happy, and they ate and drank there at the LORD's altar. That same day, Solomon was crowned king. The people celebrated and poured olive oil on Solomon's head to show that he would be their next king. They also poured oil on Zadok's head to show that he was their priest.

²³So Solomon became king after David his father. Solomon was successful, and everyone in Israel obeyed him.

²⁴ Every official and every soldier, as well as all David's other sons, were loyal to him.

²⁵ The LORD made Solomon a great king, and the whole nation was amazed at how famous he was. In fact, no other king of Israel was as great as Solomon.

²⁶ David the son of Jesse was king of Israel

²⁷ for forty years. He ruled from Hebron for seven years and from Jerusalem for thirty-three years.

²⁸ David was rich and respected and lived to be an old man. Then he died, and his son Solomon became king.

²⁹ Everything David did while he was king is included in the history written by the prophets Samuel, Nathan, and Gad.

³⁰ They wrote about his powerful rule and about the things that happened not only to him, but also to Israel and the other nations.

2 Chronicles

1 ¹ King Solomon, the son of David, was now in complete control of his kingdom, because the LORD God had blessed him and made him a powerful king.

² At that time, the sacred tent that Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the desert was still kept at Gibeon, and in front of the tent was the bronze altar that Bezalel had made. One day, Solomon told the people of Israel, the army commanders, the officials, and the family leaders, to go with him to the place of worship at Gibeon, even though his father King David had already moved the sacred chest from Kiriath-Jearim to the tent that he had set up for it in Jerusalem. Solomon and the others went to Gibeon to worship the LORD,

³ (1: 2)

⁴ (1: 2)

⁵ (1: 2)

⁶and there at the bronze altar, Solomon offered a thousand animals as sacrifices to please the LORD.

⁷God appeared to Solomon that night in a dream and said, Solomon, ask for anything you want, and I will give it to you.

⁸Solomon answered: LORD God, you were always loyal to my father David, and now you have made me king of Israel.

⁹I am supposed to rule these people, but there are as many of them as there are specks of dust on the ground. So keep the promise you made to my father
¹⁰and make me wise. Give me the knowledge I'll need to be the king of this great nation of yours.

¹¹God replied: Solomon, you could have asked me to make you rich or famous or to let you live a long time. Or you could have asked for your enemies to be destroyed. Instead, you asked for wisdom and knowledge to rule my people.

¹²So I will make you wise and intelligent. But I will also make you

richer and more famous than any king before or after you.

¹³Solomon then left Gibeon and returned to Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel.

¹⁴Solomon had a force of one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses that he kept in Jerusalem and other towns.

¹⁵While Solomon was king of Israel, there was silver and gold everywhere in Jerusalem, and cedar was as common as ordinary sycamore trees in the foothills.

¹⁶Solomon's merchants bought his horses and chariots in the regions of Musri and Kue. They paid six hundred pieces of silver for a chariot and a hundred and fifty pieces of silver for a horse. They also sold horses and chariots to the Hittite and Syrian kings.

¹⁷ (1:16)

2¹ Solomon decided to build a temple where the LORD would be worshipped, and also to build a palace for himself.

²He assigned seventy thousand men to carry building supplies and eighty thousand to cut stone from the hills. And

he chose three thousand six hundred men to supervise these workers.

³Solomon sent the following message to King Hiram of Tyre: Years ago, when my father David was building his palace, you supplied him with cedar logs. Now will you send me supplies?

⁴I am building a temple where the LORD my God will be worshipped. Sweet-smelling incense will be burnt there, and sacred bread will be offered to him. Worshippers will offer sacrifices to the LORD every morning and evening, every Sabbath, and on the first day of each month, as well as during all our religious festivals. These things will be done for all time, just as the LORD has commanded.

⁵This will be a great temple, because our God is greater than all other gods.

⁶No one can ever build a temple large enough for God even the heavens are too small a place for him to live in! All I can do is build a place where we can offer sacrifices to him.

⁷Send me a worker who can not only carve, but who can work with gold, silver, bronze, and iron, as well as make

brightly-coloured cloth. The person you send will work here in Judah and Jerusalem with the skilled workers that my father has already hired.

⁸I know that you have workers who are experts at cutting timber in Lebanon. So would you please send me some cedar, pine, and juniper logs? My workers will be there to help them,

⁹because I'll need a lot of timber to build such a large and glorious temple.

¹⁰I will pay your woodcutters two thousand tonnes of wheat, the same amount of barley, four hundred thousand litres of wine, and that same amount of olive oil.

¹¹Hiram sent his answer back to Solomon: I know that the LORD must love his people, because he has chosen you to be their king.

¹²Praise the LORD God of Israel who made heaven and earth! He has given David a son who is not only wise and clever, but who has the knowledge to build a temple for the LORD and a palace for himself.

¹³I am sending Hiram Abi to you. He is very bright.

¹⁴His mother was from the Israelite tribe of Dan, and his father was from Tyre. Not only is Hiram an expert at working with gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, but he can also make coloured cloth and fine linen. And he can carve anything if you give him a pattern to follow. He can help your workers and those hired by your father King David.

¹⁵Go ahead and send the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine you promised to pay my workers.

¹⁶I will tell them to start cutting down trees in Lebanon. They will cut as many as you need, then tie them together into rafts, and float them down along the coast to Joppa. Your workers can take them to Jerusalem from there.

¹⁷Solomon counted all the foreigners who were living in Israel, just as his father David had done when he was king, and the total was 153,600.

¹⁸He assigned 70,000 of them to carry building supplies and 80,000 of them to cut stone from the hills. He chose 3,600 others to supervise the workers and to make sure the work was completed.

3¹ Solomon's workers began building the temple in Jerusalem on the second day of the second month, four years after Solomon had become king of Israel. It was built on Mount Moriah where the LORD had appeared to David at the threshing place that had belonged to Araunah from Jebus.

² (3: 1)

³ The inside of the temple was twenty-seven metres long and nine metres wide, according to the older standards.

⁴ Across the front of the temple was a porch nine metres wide and nine metres high. The inside walls of the porch were covered with pure gold.

⁵ Solomon had the inside walls of the temple's main room panelled first with pine and then with a layer of gold, and he had them decorated with carvings of palm trees and designs that looked like chains.

⁶ He used precious stones to decorate the temple, and he used gold imported from Parvaim

⁷ to decorate the ceiling beams, the doors, the door frames, and the walls. Solomon also made the workers carve

designs of winged creatures into the walls.

⁸The most holy place was nine metres square, and its walls were covered with over twenty tonnes of fine gold.

⁹Five hundred and seventy grammes of gold was used to cover the heads of the nails. The walls of the small storage rooms were also covered with gold.

¹⁰Solomon had two statues of winged creatures made to put in the most holy place, and he covered them with gold.

¹¹Each creature had two wings and was four and a half metres from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other wing. Solomon set them next to each other in the most holy place, facing the doorway. Their wings were spread out and reached all the way across the nine-metre room.

¹²(3: 11)

¹³(3: 11)

¹⁴A curtain was made of fine linen woven with blue, purple, and red wool, and embroidered with designs of winged creatures.

¹⁵Two columns were made for the entrance to the temple. Each one was

five and a half metres tall and had a cap on top that was over two metres high.

¹⁶The top of each column was decorated with designs that looked like chains and with a hundred carvings of pomegranates.

¹⁷Solomon had one of the columns placed on the south side of the temple's entrance; it was called Jachin. The other one was placed on the north side of the entrance; it was called Boaz.

4¹ Solomon had a bronze altar made that was nine metres square and four and a half metres high.

²He also gave orders to make a large metal bowl called the Sea. It was four and a half metres across, just over two metres deep, and thirteen and a half metres around.

³Its outer edge was decorated with two rows of carvings of bulls, ten bulls to about every forty-five centimetres, all made from the same piece of metal as the bowl.

⁴The bowl itself sat on top of twelve bronze bulls, with three bulls facing outwards in each of four directions.

⁵The sides of the bowl were seventy-five millimetres thick, and its rim was in the shape of a cup that curved outwards like flower petals. The bowl held about sixty thousand litres.

⁶He also made ten small bowls and put five on each side of the large bowl. The small bowls were used to wash the animals that were burnt on the altar as sacrifices, and the priests used the water in the large bowl to wash their hands.

⁷Ten gold lampstands were also made according to the plans. Solomon placed these lampstands inside the temple, five on each side of the main room.

⁸He also made ten tables and placed them in the main room, five on each side. And he made a hundred small gold sprinkling bowls.

⁹Solomon gave orders to build two courtyards: a smaller one that only priests could use and a larger one. The doors to these courtyards were covered with bronze.

¹⁰The large bowl called the Sea was placed near the south-east corner of the temple.

¹¹ Hiram made shovels, sprinkling bowls, and pans for hot ashes. Here is a list of the other furnishings he made for God's temple:

¹² two columns, two bowl-shaped caps for the tops of these columns, two chain designs on the caps,

¹³ four hundred pomegranates for the chain designs,

¹⁴ the stands and the small bowls,

¹⁵ the large bowl and the twelve bulls that held it up,

¹⁶ pans for hot ashes, as well as shovels and meat forks. Hiram made all these things out of polished bronze

¹⁷ by pouring melted bronze into the clay moulds he had set up near the River Jordan, between Succoth and Zeredah.

¹⁸ There were so many bronze furnishings that no one ever knew how much bronze it took to make them.

¹⁹ Solomon also gave orders to make the following temple furnishings out of gold: the altar, the tables that held the sacred loaves of bread,

²⁰ the lampstands and the lamps that burnt in front of the most holy place,

²¹ flower designs, lamps and tongs,

²² lamp snuffers, small sprinkling bowls, ladles, fire pans, and the doors to the most holy place and the main room of the temple.

5¹ After the LORD's temple was finished, Solomon put in its storage rooms everything that his father David had dedicated to the LORD, including the gold and silver, and the objects used in worship.

² The sacred chest had been kept on Mount Zion, also known as the city of David. But Solomon decided to have the chest moved to the temple while everyone was in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Shelters during the seventh month. Solomon called together all the important leaders of Israel.

³ (5: 2)

⁴ Then the priests and the Levites picked up the sacred chest, the sacred tent, and the objects used for worship, and they carried them to the temple.

⁵ (5: 4)

⁶ Solomon and a crowd of people walked in front of the chest, and along the way they sacrificed more sheep and cattle than could be counted.

⁷The priests carried the chest into the most holy place and put it under the winged creatures,

⁸whose wings covered the chest and the poles used for carrying it.

⁹The poles were so long that they could be seen from just outside the most holy place, but not from anywhere else. And they stayed there from then on.

¹⁰The only things kept in the chest were the two flat stones Moses had put there when the LORD made his agreement with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, after bringing them out of Egypt.

¹¹The priests of every group had gone through the ceremony to make themselves clean and acceptable to the LORD. The Levite musicians, including Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and relatives, were wearing robes of fine linen. They were standing on the east side of the altar, playing cymbals, small harps, and other stringed instruments. One hundred and twenty priests were with these musicians, and they were blowing trumpets. They were praising the LORD by playing music and singing: The LORD is good, and his love never

ends. Suddenly a cloud filled the temple as the priests were leaving the holy place.

¹² (5: 11)

¹³ (5: 11)

¹⁴ The LORD's glory was in that cloud, and the light from it was so bright that the priests could not stay inside to do their work.

6¹ Solomon prayed: Our LORD, you said that you would live in a dark cloud.

² Now I've built a glorious temple where you can live for ever.

³ Solomon turned towards the people standing there. Then he blessed them

⁴ and said: Praise the LORD God of Israel! He brought his people out of Egypt long ago and later kept his promise to make my father David the king of Israel. The LORD also promised him that Jerusalem would be the city where his temple will be built, and now that promise has come true.

⁵ (6: 4)

⁶ (6: 4)

⁷ When my father wanted to build a temple for the LORD God of Israel,

⁸ the LORD said, It's good that you want to build a temple where I can be worshipped.

⁹ But you're not the one to do it. Your son will build the temple to honour me.

¹⁰ The LORD has done what he promised. I am now the king of Israel, and I've built a temple for the LORD our God.

¹¹ I've also put the sacred chest in the temple. And in that chest are the two flat stones on which is written the solemn agreement the LORD made with our ancestors when he rescued them from Egypt.

¹² Earlier, Solomon had a bronze platform made that was about two metres square and over a metre high, and he put it in the centre of the outer courtyard near the altar. Solomon stood on the platform facing the altar with everyone standing behind him. Then he lifted his arms towards heaven; he knelt down

¹³ (6:12)

¹⁴ and prayed: LORD God of Israel, no other god in heaven or on earth is like you! You never forget the agreement

you made with your people, and you are loyal to anyone who faithfully obeys your teachings.

¹⁵My father David was your servant, and today you have kept every promise you made to him.

¹⁶You promised that someone from his family would always be king of Israel, if they do their best to obey you, just as he did.

¹⁷Please keep this promise you made to your servant David.

¹⁸There's not enough room in all of heaven for you, LORD God. How could you possibly live on earth in this temple I have built?

¹⁹But I ask you to answer my prayer.

²⁰This is the temple where you have chosen to be worshipped. Please watch over it day and night and listen when I turn towards it and pray.

²¹I am your servant, and the people of Israel belong to you, and so whenever any of us look towards this temple and pray, answer from your home in heaven and forgive our sins.

²²Suppose someone accuses a person of a crime, and the accused has to stand

in front of the altar in your temple and say, I swear I am innocent!

²³ Listen from heaven and decide who is right. Then punish the guilty person and let the innocent one go free.

²⁴ Suppose your people Israel sin against you, and then an enemy defeats them. If they come to this temple and beg for forgiveness,

²⁵ listen from your home in heaven. Forgive them and bring them back to the land you gave their ancestors.

²⁶ Suppose your people sin against you, and you punish them by holding back the rain. If they stop sinning and turn towards this temple to pray in your name,

²⁷ listen from your home in heaven and forgive them. The people of Israel are your servants, so teach them to live right. And send rain on the land you promised them for ever.

²⁸ Sometimes the crops may dry up or rot or be eaten by locusts or grasshoppers, and your people will be starving. Sometimes enemies may surround their towns, or your people will become sick with deadly diseases.

²⁹ Please listen when anyone in Israel truly feels sorry and sincerely prays with arms lifted towards your temple.

³⁰ You know what is in everyone's heart. So from your home in heaven answer their prayers, according to what they do and what is in their hearts.

³¹ Then your people will worship you and obey you for as long as they live in the land you gave their ancestors.

³² Foreigners will hear about you and your mighty power, and some of them will come to live among your people Israel. If any of them pray towards this temple,

³³ listen from your home in heaven and answer their prayers. Then everyone on earth will worship you, just as your own people Israel do, and they will know that I have built this temple in your honour.

³⁴ Sometimes you will order your people to attack their enemies. Then your people will turn towards this temple I have built for you in your chosen city, and they will pray to you.

³⁵ Answer their prayers from heaven and give them victory.

³⁶ Everyone sins. But when your people sin against you, suppose you get angry enough to let their enemies drag them away to foreign countries.

³⁷ Later, they may feel sorry for what they did and ask your forgiveness. Answer them when they pray towards this temple I have built for you in your chosen city, here in this land you gave their ancestors. From your home in heaven, listen to their sincere prayers and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

³⁸ (6: 37)

³⁹ (6: 37)

⁴⁰ LORD God, hear us when we pray in this temple.

⁴¹ Come to your new home, where we have already placed the sacred chest, which is the symbol of your strength. I pray that when the priests announce your power to save people, those who are faithful to you will celebrate what you've done for them.

⁴² Always remember the love you had for your servant David, so that you will not reject your chosen kings.

7¹ As soon as Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and burnt up the offerings. The LORD's dazzling glory then filled the temple,² and the priests could not go in.

³ When the crowd of people saw the fire and the LORD's glory, they knelt down and worshipped the LORD. They prayed: The LORD is good, and his love never ends.

⁴ Solomon and the people dedicated the temple to the LORD by sacrificing twenty-two thousand cattle and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep.

⁵ (7: 4)

⁶ Everybody stood up during the ceremony. The priests were in their assigned places, blowing their trumpets. And the Levites faced them, playing the musical instruments that David had made for them to use when they praised the LORD for his never-ending love.

⁷ On that same day, Solomon dedicated the courtyard in front of the temple and got it ready to be used for worship. The bronze altar he had made was too small, so he used the courtyard to offer sacrifices to please the LORD and grain

sacrifices, and also to send up in smoke the fat from the other offerings.

⁸For seven days, Solomon and the crowd celebrated the Festival of Shelters, and people came from as far away as the Egyptian Gorge in the south and Lebo-Hamath in the north.

⁹Then on the next day, everyone came together for worship. They had celebrated a total of fourteen days, seven days for the dedication of the altar and seven more days for the festival.

¹⁰Then on the twenty-third day of the seventh month, Solomon sent everyone home. They left very happy because of all the good things the LORD had done for David and Solomon, and for his people Israel.

¹¹The LORD's temple and Solomon's palace were now finished. In fact, everything Solomon had planned to do was completed.

¹²Some time later, the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream and said: I heard your prayer, and I have chosen this temple as the place where sacrifices will be offered to me.

¹³ Suppose I hold back the rain or send locusts to eat the crops or make my people suffer with deadly diseases.

¹⁴ If my own people will humbly pray and turn back to me and stop sinning, then I will answer them from heaven. I will forgive them and make their land fertile once again.

¹⁵ I will hear the prayers made in this temple,

¹⁶ because it belongs to me, and this is where I will be worshipped for ever. I will never stop watching over it.

¹⁷ Your father David obeyed me, and now, Solomon, you must do the same. Obey my laws and teachings,

¹⁸ and I will keep my solemn promise to him that someone from your family will always be king of Israel.

¹⁹ But if you or any of the people of Israel disobey my laws or start worshipping foreign gods,

²⁰ I will pull you out of this land I gave you. I will desert this temple where I said I would be worshipped, so that people everywhere will think it is only a joke and will make fun of it.

²¹ This temple is now magnificent. But when these things happen, everyone who walks by it will be shocked and will ask, Why did the LORD do such a terrible thing to his people and to this temple?

²² Then they will answer, It was because the people of Israel rejected the LORD their God, who rescued their ancestors from Egypt, and they started worshipping other gods.

8¹ It took twenty years for the LORD's temple and Solomon's palace to be built.

² After that, Solomon's workers rebuilt the towns that Hiram had given him. Then Solomon sent Israelites to live in those towns.

³ Solomon attacked and captured the town of Hamath-Zobah.

⁴ He made his workers build the town of Tadmor in the desert and some towns in Hamath where he could keep his supplies.

⁵ He strengthened Upper Beth-Horon and Lower Beth-Horon by adding walls and gates that could be locked.

⁶ He did the same thing to the town of Baalath and to the cities where he kept

supplies, chariots, and horses. Solomon made his workers build whatever he wanted in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and anywhere else in his kingdom.

⁷ Solomon did not force the Israelites to do his work. Instead, they were his soldiers, officers, army commanders, and cavalry troops. But he did make slaves of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites who were living in Israel. These were the descendants of those foreigners the Israelites did not destroy, and they remained Israel's slaves.

⁸ (8: 7)

⁹ (8: 7)

¹⁰ Solomon appointed two hundred and fifty officers to be in charge of his workers.

¹¹ Solomon's wife, the daughter of the king of Egypt, moved from the part of Jerusalem called David's City to her new palace that Solomon had built. The sacred chest had been kept in David's City, which made his palace sacred, and so Solomon's wife could no longer live there.

¹²Solomon offered sacrifices to the LORD on the altar he had built in front of the temple.

¹³He followed the requirements that Moses had given for sacrifices offered on the Sabbath, on the first day of each month, the Festival of Thin Bread, the Harvest Festival, and the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁴Solomon then assigned the priests and the Levites their duties at the temple, and he followed the instructions that his father David had given him. Some of the Levites were to lead music and help the priests in their duties, and others were to guard the temple gates

¹⁵and the storage rooms. The priests and Levites followed these instructions exactly.

¹⁶Everything Solomon had planned to do was now finished from the laying of the temple's foundation to its completion.

¹⁷Solomon went to Ezion-Geber and Eloth, two Edomite towns on the Red Sea.

¹⁸Hiram sent him ships and some of his experienced sailors. They went with Solomon's own sailors to the country

of Ophir and brought back more than fifteen thousand kilogrammes of gold for Solomon.

9¹ The Queen of Sheba heard how famous Solomon was, so she went to Jerusalem to test him with difficult questions. She took along several of her officials, and she loaded her camels with gifts of spices, jewels, and gold. When she arrived, she and Solomon talked about everything she could think of.

² He answered every question, no matter how difficult it was.

³ The Queen was amazed at Solomon's wisdom. She was breathless when she saw his palace, the food on his table, his officials, all his servants in their uniforms, and the sacrifices he offered at the LORD's temple.

⁴ (9: 3)

⁵ She said: Solomon, in my own country I had heard about your wisdom and all you've done.

⁶ But I didn't believe it until I saw it with my own eyes! And there's so much I didn't hear about. You are greater than I was told.

⁷Your people and officials are lucky to be here where they can listen to the wise things you say.

⁸I praise the LORD your God. He is pleased with you and has made you king of Israel. God loves the people of this country and will never desert them, so he has given them a king who will rule fairly and honestly.

⁹The Queen of Sheba gave Solomon more than four thousand kilogrammes of gold, a large amount of jewels, and the best spices anyone had ever seen.

¹⁰In return, Solomon gave her everything she wanted even more than she had given him. Then she and her officials went back to their own country. Hiram's and Solomon's sailors brought gold, juniper wood, and jewels from the country of Ophir. Solomon used the wood to make steps for the temple and palace, and harps and other stringed instruments for the musicians. Nothing like these had ever been made in Judah.

¹¹ (9: 10)

¹² (9: 10)

¹³Solomon received almost twenty-three thousand kilogrammes of gold each year,

¹⁴not counting what the merchants and traders brought him. The kings of Arabia and the leaders of Israel also gave him gold and silver.

¹⁵Solomon made two hundred gold shields that weighed over three kilogrammes each.

¹⁶He also made three hundred smaller gold shields that weighed almost two kilogrammes, and he put these shields in his palace in Forest Hall.

¹⁷His throne was made of ivory and covered with pure gold.

¹⁸It had a gold footstool attached to it and arm rests on each side. There was a statue of a lion on each side of the throne,

¹⁹and there were two lion statues on each of the six steps leading up to the throne. No other throne in the world was like Solomon's.

²⁰Solomon's cups and dishes in Forest Hall were made of pure gold, because silver was almost worthless in those days.

²¹ Solomon had a lot of seagoing ships. Every three years he sent them out with Hiram's ships to bring back gold, silver, and ivory, as well as monkeys and peacocks.

²² Solomon was the richest and wisest king in the world.

²³ Year after year, other kings came to hear the wisdom God had given him. And they brought gifts of silver and gold, as well as clothes, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

²⁴ (9: 23)

²⁵ Solomon had four thousand stalls for his horses and chariots, and he owned twelve thousand horses that he kept in Jerusalem and other towns.

²⁶ He ruled all the nations from the River Euphrates in the north to the land of Philistia in the south, as far as the border of Egypt.

²⁷ While Solomon was king, there was silver everywhere in Jerusalem, and cedar was as common as the sycamore trees in the western foothills.

²⁸ Solomon's horses were brought in from other countries, including Musri.

²⁹ Everything else Solomon did while he was king is written in the records of Nathan the prophet, Ahijah the prophet from Shiloh, and Iddo the prophet who wrote about Jeroboam son of Nebat.

³⁰ After Solomon had ruled forty years from Jerusalem,

³¹ he died and was buried in the city of his father David. His son Rehoboam then became king.

10¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem where everyone was waiting to crown him king.

² Jeroboam son of Nebat heard what was happening, and he returned from Egypt, where he had gone to hide from Solomon.

³ The people from the northern tribes of Israel sent for him. Then together they went to Rehoboam and said,

⁴ Your father Solomon forced us to work very hard. But if you make our work easier, we will serve you and do whatever you ask.

⁵ Rehoboam replied, Come back in three days for my answer. So the people left.

⁶ Rehoboam went to some leaders who had been his father's senior officials, and

he asked them, What should I tell these people?

⁷They answered, If you want them to serve and obey you, then you should be kind and promise to make their work easier.

⁸But Rehoboam refused their advice and went to the younger men who had grown up with him and were now his officials.

⁹He asked, What do you think I should say to these people who asked me to make their work easier?

¹⁰His younger advisers said: Here's what we think you should say to them: Compared to me, my father was weak.

¹¹He made you work hard, but I'll make you work even harder. He punished you with whips, but I'll use whips with pieces of sharp metal!

¹²Three days later, Jeroboam and the others came back.

¹³Rehoboam ignored the advice of the older advisers. He spoke bluntly

¹⁴and told them exactly what his own advisers had suggested. He said: My father made you work hard, but I'll make you work even harder. He punished you

with whips, but I'll use whips with pieces of sharp metal!

¹⁵When the people realized that Rehoboam would not listen to them, they shouted: We don't have to be loyal to David's family. We can do what we want. Come on, people of Israel, let's go home! Rehoboam can rule his own people. Adoniram was in charge of the work force, and Rehoboam sent him to talk to the people. But they stoned him to death. Then Rehoboam ran to his chariot and hurried back to Jerusalem. Everyone from Israel's northern tribes went home, leaving Rehoboam to rule only the people from Judah. And since that day, the people of Israel have been opposed to David's descendants in Judah. All this happened just as Ahijah the LORD's prophet from Shiloh had told Jeroboam.

¹⁶(10: 15)

¹⁷(10: 15)

¹⁸(10: 15)

¹⁹(10: 15)

11 ¹After Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem, he decided to attack Israel and regain control of the whole

country. So he called together one hundred and eighty thousand soldiers from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

²Meanwhile, the LORD had told Shemaiah the prophet

³to tell Rehoboam and everyone from Judah and Benjamin,

⁴The LORD warns you not to go to war against the people from the northern tribes they are your relatives. Go home! The LORD is the one who made these things happen. Rehoboam and his army obeyed the LORD's message and did not attack Jeroboam and his troops.

⁵Rehoboam ruled from Jerusalem, and he had several cities in Judah turned into fortresses so he could use them to defend his country. These cities included

⁶Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa,

⁷Beth-Zur, Soco, Adullam,

⁸Gath, Mareshah, Ziph,

⁹Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah,

¹⁰Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron. After he had fortified these cities in the territories of Judah and Benjamin,

¹¹he assigned an army commander to each of them and stocked them with supplies of food, olive oil, and wine,

¹²as well as with shields and spears. He used these fortified cities to keep control of Judah and Benjamin.

¹³The priests and Levites from the northern tribes of Israel gave their support to King Rehoboam.

¹⁴And since Jeroboam and the kings of Israel who followed him would not allow any Levites to serve as priests, most Levites left their towns and pasture lands in Israel and moved to Jerusalem and other towns in Judah.

¹⁵Jeroboam chose his own priests to serve at the local shrines in Israel and at the places of worship where he had set up statues of goat-demons and of calves.

¹⁶But some of the people from Israel wanted to worship the LORD God, just as their ancestors had done. So they followed the priests and Levites to Jerusalem, where they could offer sacrifices to the LORD.

¹⁷For the next three years, they lived in Judah and were loyal to Rehoboam and his kingdom, just as they had been loyal to David and Solomon.

¹⁸Rehoboam married Mahalath, whose father was Jerimoth son of David, and whose mother was Abihail the daughter of Eliab and granddaughter of Jesse.

¹⁹Rehoboam and Mahalath had three sons: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham.

²⁰Then Rehoboam married Maacah the daughter of Absalom. Their sons were Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith.

²¹Rehoboam had eighteen wives, but he also married sixty other women, and he was the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. Rehoboam loved his wife Maacah the most,

²²so he chose their eldest son Abijah to be the next king.

²³Rehoboam was wise enough to put one of his sons in charge of each fortified city in his kingdom. He gave them all the supplies they needed and found wives for every one of them.

12¹Soon after Rehoboam had control of his kingdom, he and everyone in Judah stopped obeying the LORD.

²So in the fifth year of Rehoboam's rule, the LORD punished them for their

unfaithfulness and allowed King Shishak of Egypt to invade Judah.

³Shishak attacked with his army of one thousand two hundred chariots and sixty thousand cavalry troops, as well as Egyptian soldiers from Libya, Sukkoth, and Ethiopia.

⁴He captured every one of the fortified cities in Judah and then marched to Jerusalem.

⁵Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah had gone to Jerusalem to escape Shishak's invasion. And while they were there, Shemaiah the prophet told them, The LORD says that because you have disobeyed him, he has now abandoned you. The LORD will not help you against Shishak!

⁶Rehoboam and the leaders were sorry for what they had done and admitted, The LORD is right. We have deserted him.

⁷When the LORD heard this, he told Shemaiah: The people of Judah are truly sorry for their sins, and so I won't let Shishak completely destroy them. But because I am still angry,

⁸ he will conquer and rule them. Then my people will know what it's like to serve a foreign king instead of serving me.

⁹ Shishak attacked Jerusalem and took all the valuable things from the temple and from the palace, including Solomon's gold shields.

¹⁰ Rehoboam had bronze shields made to replace the gold ones, and he ordered the guards at the city gates to keep them safe.

¹¹ Whenever Rehoboam went to the LORD's temple, the guards carried the shields. But they always took them back to the guardroom as soon as he had finished worshipping.

¹² Rehoboam turned back to the LORD, and so the LORD did not let Judah be completely destroyed, and Judah was prosperous again.

¹³ Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he ruled seventeen years from Jerusalem, the city where the LORD had chosen to be worshipped. His mother Naamah was from Ammon. Rehoboam was a powerful king,

¹⁴but he still did wrong and refused to obey the LORD.

¹⁵Everything else Rehoboam did while he was king, including a history of his family, is written in the records of the two prophets, Shemaiah and Iddo. During Rehoboam's rule, he and King Jeroboam of Israel were constantly at war.

¹⁶When Rehoboam died, he was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem, and his son Abijah became king.

13¹Abijah became king of Judah in Jeroboam's eighteenth year as king of Israel,

²and he ruled from Jerusalem for three years. His mother was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel from Gibeah. Some time later, Abijah and King Jeroboam of Israel went to war against each other.

³Abijah's army had four hundred thousand troops, and Jeroboam met him in battle with eight hundred thousand troops.

⁴Abijah went to the top of Mount Zemaraim in the hills of Ephraim and shouted: Listen, Jeroboam and all you Israelites!

⁵The LORD God of Israel has made a solemn promise that every king of Israel will be from David's family.

⁶But Jeroboam, you were King Solomon's official, and you rebelled.

⁷Then straight after Rehoboam became king, you and your bunch of worthless followers challenged Rehoboam, who was too young to know how to stop you.

⁸Now you and your powerful army think you can stand up to the kingdom that the LORD has given to David's descendants. The only gods you have are those gold statues of calves that Jeroboam made for you.

⁹You don't even have descendants of Aaron on your side, because you forced out the LORD's priests and Levites. In their place, you appoint ordinary people to be priests, just as the foreign nations do. In fact, anyone who brings a bull and seven rams to the altar can become a priest of your so-called gods.

¹⁰But we have not turned our backs on the LORD God! Aaron's own descendants serve as our priests, and the Levites are their assistants.

¹¹ Twice every day they offer sacrifices and burn incense to the LORD. They set out the sacred loaves of bread on a table that has been purified, and they light the lamps in the gold lampstand every day at sunset. We follow the commands of the LORD our God you have rejected him!

¹² That's why God is on our side and will lead us into battle when the priests sound the signal on the trumpets. It's no use, Israelites. You might as well give up. There's no way you can defeat the LORD, the God your ancestors worshipped.

¹³ But while Abijah was talking, Jeroboam had sent some of his troops to attack Judah's army from behind, while the rest attacked from the front.

¹⁴ Judah's army realized they were trapped, and so they prayed to the LORD. The priests blew the signal on the trumpet,

¹⁵ and the troops let out a battle cry. Then with Abijah leading them into battle, God defeated Jeroboam and Israel's army.

¹⁶ The Israelites ran away, and God helped Judah's soldiers slaughter

¹⁷ five hundred thousand enemy troops.

¹⁸Judah's army won because they had trusted the LORD God of their ancestors.

¹⁹Abijah kept up his attack on Jeroboam's army and captured the Israelite towns of Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephron, as well as the villages around them.

²⁰Jeroboam never regained his power during the rest of Abijah's rule. The LORD punished Jeroboam, and he died, but Abijah became more powerful.

²¹Abijah had a total of fourteen wives, twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters.

²²Everything Abijah said and did while he was king is written in the records of Iddo the prophet.

14¹Abijah died and was buried in Jerusalem. Then his son Asa became king, and Judah had ten years of peace.

²Asa obeyed the LORD his God and did right.

³He destroyed the local shrines and the altars to foreign gods. He smashed the stone images of gods and cut down the sacred poles used in worshipping the goddess Asherah.

⁴Then he told everyone in Judah to worship the LORD God, just as their ancestors had done, and to obey his laws and teachings.

⁵He destroyed every local shrine and incense altar in Judah.

⁶The LORD blessed Judah with peace while Asa was king, and so during that time, Asa fortified many of the towns.

⁷He said to the people, Let's build walls and defence towers for these towns, and put in gates that can be locked with bars. This land still belongs to us, because we have obeyed the LORD our God. He has given us peace from all our enemies. The people did everything Asa had suggested.

⁸Asa had a large army of brave soldiers: three hundred thousand of them were from the tribe of Judah and were armed with shields and spears; two hundred and eighty thousand were from Benjamin and were armed with bows and arrows.

⁹Zerah from Ethiopia led an army of a million soldiers and three hundred chariots to the town of Mareshah in Judah.

¹⁰Asa met him there, and the two armies prepared for battle in Zephathah Valley.

¹¹Asa prayed: LORD God, only you can help a powerless army defeat a stronger one. So we depend on you to help us. We will fight against this powerful army to honour your name, and we know that you won't be defeated. You are the LORD our God.

¹²The LORD helped Asa and his army defeat the Ethiopians. The enemy soldiers ran away,

¹³but Asa and his troops chased them as far as Gerar. It was a total defeat the Ethiopians could not even fight back! The soldiers from Judah took everything that had belonged to the Ethiopians.

¹⁴The people who lived in the villages around Gerar learnt what had happened and were afraid of the LORD. So Judah's army easily defeated them and carried off everything of value that they wanted from these towns.

¹⁵They also attacked the camps where the shepherds lived and took a lot of sheep, goats, and camels. Then they went back to Jerusalem.

15¹ Some time later, God spoke to Azariah son of Oded.

² At once, Azariah went to Asa and said: Listen to me, King Asa and you people of Judah and Benjamin. The LORD will be with you and help you, as long as you obey and worship him. But if you disobey him, he will desert you.

³ For a long time, the people of Israel did not worship the true God or listen to priests who could teach them about God. They refused to obey God's Law.

⁴ But whenever trouble came, Israel turned back to the LORD their God and worshipped him.

⁵ There was so much confusion in those days that it wasn't safe to go anywhere in Israel.

⁶ Nations were destroying each other, and cities were wiping out other cities, because God was causing trouble and unrest everywhere.

⁷ So you must be brave. Don't give up! God will honour you for obeying him.

⁸ As soon as Asa heard what Azariah the prophet said, he gave orders for all the idols in Judah and Benjamin to be destroyed, including those in the

towns he had captured in the territory of Ephraim. He also repaired the LORD's altar that was in front of the temple porch.

⁹Asa called together the people from Judah and Benjamin, as well as the people from the territories of Ephraim, West Manasseh, and Simeon who were living in Judah. Many of these people were now loyal to Asa, because they had seen that the LORD was with him.

¹⁰In the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's rule, they all met in Jerusalem.

¹¹That same day, they took seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats from what they had brought back from Gerar and sacrificed them as offerings to the LORD.

¹²They made a solemn promise to faithfully worship the LORD God their ancestors had worshipped,

¹³and to put to death anyone who refused to obey him.

¹⁴The crowd solemnly agreed to keep their promise to the LORD, then they celebrated by shouting and blowing trumpets and horns.

¹⁵Everyone was happy because they had made this solemn promise, and in return, the LORD blessed them with peace from all their enemies.

¹⁶Asa's grandmother Maacah had made a disgusting idol of the goddess Asherah, so he cut it down, crushed it, and burnt it in Kidron Valley. Then he removed Maacah from her position as queen mother.

¹⁷As long as Asa lived, he was faithful to the LORD, even though he did not destroy the local shrines in Israel.

¹⁸He placed in the temple all the silver and gold objects that he and his father had dedicated to God.

¹⁹There was peace in Judah until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's rule.

16¹In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's rule, King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah and captured the town of Ramah. He started making the town stronger, and he put troops there to stop people from going in and out of Judah.

²When Asa heard about this, he took the silver and gold from his palace and from the LORD's temple. Then he sent it

to Damascus with this message for King Benhadad of Syria:

³I think we should sign a peace treaty, just as our fathers did. This silver and gold is a present for you. Would you please break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel and force him to leave my country?

⁴Benhadad did what Asa asked and sent the Syrian army into Israel. They captured the towns of Ijon, Dan, Abel-Maim, and all the towns in Naphtali where supplies were kept.

⁵When Baasha heard about it, he stopped his work on the town of Ramah.

⁶Asa ordered everyone in Judah to carry away the stones and wood Baasha had used to fortify Ramah. Then he fortified the towns of Geba and Mizpah with these same stones and wood.

⁷Soon after that happened, Hanani the prophet went to Asa and said: You depended on the king of Syria instead of depending on the LORD your God. And so, you will never defeat the Syrian army.

⁸Remember how powerful the Ethiopian and Libyan army was, with all their

chariots and cavalry troops! You trusted the LORD to help you then, and you defeated them.

⁹The LORD is constantly watching everyone, and he gives strength to those who faithfully obey him. But you have done a foolish thing, and your kingdom will never be at peace again.

¹⁰When Asa heard this, he was so angry that he put Hanani in prison. Asa was also cruel to some of his people.

¹¹Everything Asa did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

¹²In the thirty-ninth year of his rule, he got a very bad foot disease, but he relied on doctors and refused to ask the LORD for help.

¹³He died two years later.

¹⁴Earlier, Asa had his own tomb cut out of a rock hill in Jerusalem. So he was buried there, and the tomb was filled with spices and sweet-smelling oils. Then the people built a bonfire in his honour.

17 ¹Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king and strengthened his defences against Israel.

²He assigned troops to the fortified cities in Judah, as well as to other towns in Judah and to those towns in Ephraim that his father Asa had captured.

³When Jehoshaphat's father had first become king of Judah, he was faithful to the LORD and refused to worship the god Baal as the kings of Israel did. Jehoshaphat followed his father's example and obeyed and worshipped the LORD. And so the LORD blessed Jehoshaphat

⁴(17:3)

⁵and helped him keep firm control of his kingdom. The people of Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, but even after he became very rich and respected,

⁶he remained completely faithful to the LORD. He destroyed all the local shrines in Judah, including the places where the goddess Asherah was worshipped.

⁷In the third year of Jehoshaphat's rule, he chose five officials and gave them orders to teach the LORD's Law in every city and town in Judah. They were Benhail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah.

⁸Their assistants were the following nine Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-Adonijah. Two priests, Elishama and Jehoram, also went along.

⁹They carried with them a copy of the LORD's Law wherever they went and taught the people from it.

¹⁰The nations around Judah were afraid of the LORD's power, so none of them attacked Jehoshaphat.

¹¹Philistines brought him silver and other gifts to keep peace. Some of the Arab people brought him seventy-seven hundred rams and the same number of goats.

¹²As Jehoshaphat became more powerful, he built fortresses and cities

¹³where he stored supplies. He also kept in Jerusalem some experienced soldiers

¹⁴from the Judah and Benjamin tribes. These soldiers were grouped according to their clans. Adnah was the commander of the troops from Judah, and he had three hundred thousand soldiers under his command.

¹⁵Jehohanan was second in command, with two hundred and eighty thousand soldiers under him.

¹⁶Amasiah son of Zichri, who had volunteered to serve the LORD, was third in command, with two hundred thousand soldiers under him.

¹⁷Eliada was a brave warrior who commanded the troops from Benjamin. He had two hundred thousand soldiers under his command, all of them armed with bows and shields.

¹⁸Jehozabad was second in command, with one hundred and eighty thousand soldiers under him.

¹⁹These were the troops who protected the king in Jerusalem, not counting those he had assigned to the fortified cities throughout the country.

18¹Jehoshaphat was now very rich and famous. He signed a treaty with King Ahab of Israel by arranging the marriage of his son and Ahab's daughter.

²One day, Jehoshaphat went to visit Ahab in his capital city of Samaria. Ahab slaughtered sheep and cattle and prepared a big feast to honour Jehoshaphat and the officials with him.

Ahab talked about attacking the city of Ramoth in Gilead,

³and finally asked, Jehoshaphat, would you go with me to attack Ramoth? Yes, Jehoshaphat answered. My army is at your command.

⁴But first let's ask the LORD what to do.

⁵Ahab sent for four hundred prophets and asked, Should I attack the city of Ramoth? Yes! the prophets answered. God will help you capture the city.

⁶But Jehoshaphat said, Just to make sure, is there another of the LORD's prophets we can ask?

⁷We could ask Micaiah son of Imlah, Ahab said. But I hate Micaiah. He always has bad news for me. Don't say that! Jehoshaphat replied.

⁸Then Ahab sent someone to bring Micaiah as soon as possible.

⁹All this time, Ahab and Jehoshaphat were dressed in their royal robes and were seated on their thrones at the threshing place near the gate of Samaria, listening to the prophets tell them what the LORD had said.

¹⁰Zedekiah son of Chenaanah was one of the prophets. He had made some

horns out of iron and shouted, Ahab, the LORD says you will attack the Syrians like a bull with iron horns and wipe them out!

¹¹All the prophets agreed that Ahab should attack the Syrians at Ramoth and promised that the LORD would help him defeat them.

¹²Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah whispered, Micaiah, all the prophets have good news for Ahab. Now go and say the same thing.

¹³I'll say whatever the living LORD my God tells me to say, Micaiah replied.

¹⁴Then Micaiah went up to Ahab, who asked, Micaiah, should we attack Ramoth? Yes! Micaiah answered. The LORD will help you capture the city.

¹⁵Ahab shouted, Micaiah, I've told you over and over again to tell me the truth! What does the LORD really say?

¹⁶Micaiah answered, In a vision I saw Israelite soldiers wandering around, lost in the hills like sheep without a shepherd. The LORD said, These troops have no leader. They should go home and not fight.

¹⁷ Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat and said, I told you he would bring me bad news!

¹⁸ Micaiah replied: I then saw the LORD seated on his throne with every creature in heaven gathered around him.

¹⁹ The LORD asked, Who can trick Ahab and make him go to Ramoth where he will be killed? They talked about it for a while,

²⁰ then finally a spirit came forward and said to the LORD, I can trick Ahab. How? the LORD asked.

²¹ I'll make Ahab's prophets lie to him. Good! the LORD replied. Now go and do it. You will be successful.

²² Ahab, this is exactly what has happened. The LORD made all your prophets lie to you, and he knows you will soon be destroyed.

²³ Zedekiah walked over and slapped Micaiah on the face. Then he asked, Do you really think the LORD would speak to you and not to me?

²⁴ Micaiah answered, You'll find out on the day you have to hide in the back room of some house.

²⁵ Ahab shouted, Arrest Micaiah! Take him to Prince Joash and Governor Amon of Samaria.

²⁶ Tell them to put him in prison and to give him nothing but bread and water until I come back safely.

²⁷ Micaiah said, If you do come back, I was wrong about what the LORD wanted me to say. Then he told the crowd, Don't forget what I said!

²⁸ Ahab and Jehoshaphat led their armies to Ramoth in Gilead.

²⁹ Before they went into battle, Ahab said, Jehoshaphat, I'll disguise myself, but you wear your royal robe. Ahab disguised himself and went into battle.

³⁰ The king of Syria had ordered his chariot commanders to attack only Ahab.

³¹ So when they saw Jehoshaphat in his robe, they thought he was Ahab and started to attack him. But Jehoshaphat prayed, and the LORD made the Syrian soldiers stop.

³² And when they realized he wasn't Ahab, they left him alone.

³³ However, during the fighting a soldier shot an arrow without even aiming, and it hit Ahab between two pieces of his

armour. He shouted to his chariot driver, I've been hit! Get me out of here!

³⁴The fighting lasted all day, with Ahab propped up in his chariot so he could see the Syrian troops. He stayed there until evening, and by sundown he was dead.

19¹ Jehoshaphat returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem.

²But the prophet Jehu son of Hanani met him and said: By helping that wicked Ahab, you have made friends with someone who hates the LORD. Now the LORD God is angry with you!

³But not everything about you is bad. You destroyed the sacred poles used in worshipping the goddess Asherah that shows you have tried to obey the LORD.

⁴Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he often travelled through his kingdom, from Beersheba in the south to the edge of the hill country of Ephraim in the north. He talked with the people and convinced them to turn back to the LORD God and worship him, just as their ancestors had done.

⁵He assigned judges to each of the fortified cities in Judah

⁶and told them: Be careful when you make your decisions in court, because these are the LORD's people, and he will know what you decide.

⁷So do your work in honour of him and know that he won't allow you to be unfair to anyone or to take bribes.

⁸Jehoshaphat also chose some Levites, some priests, and some of the family leaders, and he appointed them to serve as judges in Jerusalem.

⁹He told them: Faithfully serve the LORD!

¹⁰The people of Judah will bring you legal cases that involve every type of crime, including murder. You must settle these cases and warn the people to stop sinning against the LORD, so that he won't get angry and punish Judah. Remember, if you follow these instructions, you won't be held responsible for anything that happens.

¹¹Amariah the high priest will have the final say in any religious case. And Zebadiah, the leader of the Judah tribe, will have the final say in all other cases. The rest of the Levites will serve as your

assistants. Be brave, and I pray that the LORD will help you do right.

20¹ Some time later, the armies of Moab and Ammon, together with the Meunites, went to war against Jehoshaphat.

² Messengers told Jehoshaphat, A large army from Edom east of the Dead Sea has invaded our country. They have already reached En-Gedi.

³ Jehoshaphat was afraid, so he asked the LORD what to do. He then told the people of Judah to go without eating to show their sorrow.

⁴ They immediately left for Jerusalem to ask for the LORD's help.

⁵ After everyone from Judah and Jerusalem had come together at the LORD's temple, Jehoshaphat stood in front of the new courtyard

⁶ and prayed: You, LORD, are the God our ancestors worshipped, and from heaven you rule every nation in the world. You are so powerful that no one can defeat you.

⁷ Our God, you forced out the nations who lived in this land before your people Israel came here, and you gave it to the

descendants of your friend Abraham for ever.

⁸Our ancestors lived in this land and built a temple to honour you.

⁹They believed that whenever this land is struck by war or disease or famine, your people can pray to you at the temple, and you will hear their prayer and save them.

¹⁰You can see that the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Edom are attacking us! Those are the nations you would not let our ancestors invade on their way from Egypt, so these nations were not destroyed.

¹¹Now they are coming to take back the land you gave us.

¹²Aren't you going to punish them? We won't stand a chance when this army attacks. We don't know what to do we are begging for your help.

¹³While every man, woman, and child of Judah was standing there at the temple,

¹⁴the LORD's Spirit suddenly spoke to Jahaziel, a Levite from the Asaph clan.

¹⁵Then Jahaziel said: Your Majesty and everyone from Judah and Jerusalem,

the LORD says that you don't need to be afraid or let this powerful army discourage you. God will fight on your side!

¹⁶So here's what you must do. Tomorrow the enemy armies will march through the desert around the town of Jeruel. March down and meet them at the town of Ziz as they come up the valley.

¹⁷You won't even have to fight. Just take your positions and watch the LORD rescue you from your enemy. Don't be afraid. Just do as you're told. And as you march out tomorrow, the LORD will be there with you.

¹⁸Jehoshaphat bowed low to the ground and everyone worshipped the LORD.

¹⁹Then some Levites from the Kohath and Korah clans stood up and shouted praises to the LORD God of Israel.

²⁰Early the next morning, as everyone got ready to leave for the desert near Tekoa, Jehoshaphat stood up and said, Listen my friends, if we trust the LORD God and believe what these prophets have told us, the LORD will help us, and we will be successful.

²¹ Then he explained his plan and appointed men to march in front of the army and praise the LORD for his holy power by singing: Praise the LORD! His love never ends.

²² As soon as they began singing, the LORD confused the enemy camp,

²³ so that the Ammonite and Moabite troops attacked and completely destroyed those from Edom. Then they turned against each other and fought until the entire camp was wiped out!

²⁴ When Judah's army reached the tower that overlooked the desert, they saw that every soldier in the enemy's army was lying dead on the ground.

²⁵ So Jehoshaphat and his troops went into the camp to carry away everything of value. They found a large herd of livestock, a lot of equipment, clothes, and other valuable things. It took them three days to carry it all away, and there was still some left over.

²⁶ Then on the fourth day, everyone came together in Beracah Valley and sang praises to the LORD. That's why that place was called Praise Valley.

²⁷ Jehoshaphat led the crowd back to Jerusalem. And as they marched, they played harps and blew trumpets. They were very happy because the LORD had given them victory over their enemies, so when they reached the city, they went straight to the temple.

²⁸ (20: 27)

²⁹ When the other nations heard how the LORD had fought against Judah's enemies, they were too afraid

³⁰ to invade Judah. The LORD let Jehoshaphat's kingdom be at peace.

³¹ Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for twenty-five years. His mother was Azubah daughter of Shilhi.

³² Jehoshaphat obeyed the LORD, just as his father Asa had done,

³³ but he did not destroy the local shrines. So the people still worshipped foreign gods, instead of faithfully serving the God their ancestors had worshipped.

³⁴ Everything else Jehoshaphat did while he was king is written in the records of Jehu son of Hanani that are

included in The History of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵While Jehoshaphat was king, he signed a peace treaty with Ahaziah the wicked king of Israel.

³⁶They agreed to build several seagoing ships at Ezion-Geber.

³⁷But the prophet Eliezer warned Jehoshaphat, The LORD will destroy these ships because you have supported Ahaziah. The ships were wrecked and never sailed.

21 ¹Jehoshaphat died and was buried beside his ancestors in Jerusalem, and his son Jehoram became king.

²King Jehoshaphat had seven sons: Jehoram, Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah.

³Jehoshaphat gave each of them silver and gold, as well as other valuable gifts. He also put them in charge of the fortified cities in Judah, but he had chosen his eldest son Jehoram to succeed him as king.

⁴After Jehoram had taken control of Judah, he had his brothers killed, as well as some of the nation's leaders.

⁵ He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled eight years from Jerusalem.

⁶ Jehoram married Ahab's daughter and followed the sinful example of Ahab's family and the other kings of Israel. He disobeyed the LORD by doing wrong,

⁷ but because the LORD had made a solemn promise to King David that someone from his family would always rule in Judah, he refused to wipe out David's descendants.

⁸ While Jehoram was king, the people of Edom rebelled and chose their own king.

⁹ Jehoram, his officers, and his cavalry marched to Edom, where the Edomite army surrounded them. He escaped during the night,

¹⁰ but Judah was never able to regain control of Edom. Even the town of Libnah rebelled at that time. Those things happened because Jehoram had turned away from the LORD, the God his ancestors had worshipped.

¹¹ Jehoram even built local shrines in the hills of Judah and let the people sin against the LORD by worshipping foreign gods.

¹²One day, Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet that said: I have a message for you from the LORD God your ancestor David worshipped. He knows that you have not followed the example of Jehoshaphat your father or Asa your grandfather.

¹³Instead you have acted like those sinful kings of Israel and have encouraged the people of Judah to stop worshipping the LORD, just as Ahab and his descendants did. You even murdered your own brothers, who were better men than you.

¹⁴Because you have done these terrible things, the LORD will severely punish the people in your kingdom, including your own family, and he will destroy everything you own.

¹⁵You will be struck with a painful stomach disease and suffer until you die.

¹⁶The LORD later caused the Philistines and the Arabs who lived near the Ethiopians to become angry with Jehoram.

¹⁷They invaded Judah and stole the royal property from the palace, and they led Jehoram's wives and sons away as

prisoners. The only one left behind was Ahaziah, his youngest son.

¹⁸After this happened, the LORD struck Jehoram with an incurable stomach disease.

¹⁹About two years later, Jehoram died in terrible pain. No bonfire was built to honour him, even though the people had done this for his ancestors.

²⁰Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he ruled eight years from Jerusalem. He died, and no one even felt sad. He was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the royal tombs.

22¹Earlier, when the Arabs led a raid against Judah, they killed all of Jehoram's sons, except Ahaziah, the youngest one. So the people of Jerusalem crowned him their king.

²He was twenty-two years old at the time, and he ruled only one year from Jerusalem. Ahaziah's mother was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel,

³and she encouraged her son to sin against the LORD. He followed the evil example of King Ahab and his descendants.

⁴In fact, after his father's death, Ahaziah sinned against the LORD by appointing some of Ahab's relatives to be his advisers. Their advice led to his downfall.

⁵He listened to them and went with King Joram of Israel to attack King Hazael and the Syrian troops at Ramoth in Gilead. Joram was wounded in that battle,

⁶and he went to the town of Jezreel to recover. And Ahaziah later went there to visit him.

⁷It was during that visit that God had Ahaziah put to death. When Ahaziah arrived at Jezreel, he and Joram went to meet with Jehu, grandson of Nimshi. The LORD had already told Jehu to kill every male in Ahab's family,

⁸and while Jehu was doing that, he saw some of Judah's leaders and Ahaziah's nephews who had come with Ahaziah. Jehu killed them on the spot,

⁹then gave orders to find Ahaziah. Jehu's officers found him hiding in Samaria. They brought Ahaziah to Jehu, who immediately put him to death. They buried Ahaziah only because they

respected Jehoshaphat his grandfather, who had done his best to obey the LORD. There was no one from Ahaziah's family left to become king of Judah.

¹⁰As soon as Athaliah heard that her son King Ahaziah was dead, she decided to kill any relative who could possibly become king. She would have done just that,

¹¹but Jehosheba rescued Joash son of Ahaziah just as the others were about to be murdered. Jehosheba, who was Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's half-sister, was married to Jehoiada the priest. So she was able to hide her nephew Joash and his personal servant in a bedroom in the LORD's temple where he was safe from Athaliah.

¹²Joash hid in the temple with them for six years while Athaliah ruled as queen of Judah.

23¹After Ahaziah's son Joash had hidden in the temple for six years, Jehoiada the priest knew that something had to be done. So he made sure he had the support of several army officers. They were Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son

of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zichri.

²These five men went to the towns in Judah and called together the Levites and the clan leaders. They all came to Jerusalem

³and gathered at the temple, where they agreed to help Joash. Jehoiada said to them: Joash will be our next king, because long ago the LORD promised that one of David's descendants would always be king.

⁴Here is what we will do. Three groups of priests and Levites will be on guard duty on the Sabbath one group will guard the gates of the temple,

⁵one will guard the palace, and the other will guard Foundation Gate. The rest of you will stand guard in the temple courtyards.

⁶Only the priests and Levites who are on duty will be able to enter the temple, because they will be the only ones who have gone through the ceremony to make themselves clean and acceptable. The others must stay outside in the courtyards, just as the LORD has commanded.

⁷ You Levites must protect King Joash. Don't let him out of your sight! And keep your swords ready to kill anyone who comes into the temple.

⁸ The Levites and the people of Judah followed Jehoiada's orders. The guards going off duty were not allowed to go home, and so each commander had all his guards available those going off duty as well as those coming on duty.

⁹ Jehoiada went into the temple and brought out the swords and shields that had belonged to King David, and he gave them to the commanders.

¹⁰ They gave the weapons to the guards, and Jehoiada then made sure that the guards took their positions around the temple and the altar to protect the king on every side.

¹¹ Jehoiada and his sons brought Joash outside, where they placed the crown on his head and gave him a copy of the instructions for ruling the nation. Olive oil was poured on his head to show that he was now king, and the crowd cheered and shouted, Long live the king!

¹²As soon as Queen Athaliah heard the crowd cheering for Joash, she went to the temple.

¹³There she saw Joash standing by one of the columns near the entrance, which was the usual place for the king. The commanders and the trumpet players were standing next to him, and the musicians were playing instruments and leading the people as they celebrated and blew trumpets. Athaliah tore her clothes in anger and shouted, You betrayed me, you traitors!

¹⁴Straight away, Jehoiada said to the army commanders, Don't kill her near the LORD's temple. Take her out in front of the troops, and be sure to kill all her followers!

¹⁵She tried to escape, but the commanders caught and killed her near the gate where horses are led into the palace.

¹⁶Jehoiada asked King Joash and the people to join with him in being faithful to the LORD. They agreed,

¹⁷then rushed to the temple of the god Baal and tore it down. They smashed the

altars and the idols and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

¹⁸Jehoiada assigned the priests and Levites their duties at the temple, just as David had done. They were in charge of offering sacrifices to the LORD according to the Law of Moses, and they were responsible for leading the celebrations with singing.

¹⁹Jehoiada ordered the guards at the temple gates to keep out anyone who was unclean.

²⁰Finally, Jehoiada called together the army commanders, the most important citizens of Judah, and the government officials. The crowd of people followed them as they led Joash from the temple, through the Upper Gate, and into the palace, where he took his place as king of Judah.

²¹Everyone celebrated because Athaliah had been killed and Jerusalem was peaceful again.

24¹ Joash was only seven years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled forty years from Jerusalem. His mother Zibiah was from the town of Beersheba.

² While Jehoiada the priest was alive, Joash obeyed the LORD by doing right.

³ Jehoiada even chose two women for Joash to marry so he could have a family.

⁴ Some time later, Joash decided it was time to repair the temple.

⁵ He called together the priests and Levites and said, Go everywhere in Judah and collect the annual tax from the people. I want this done straight away we need that money to repair the temple. But the Levites were in no hurry to follow the king's orders.

⁶ So he sent for Jehoiada the high priest and asked, Why didn't you send the Levites to collect the taxes? The LORD's servant Moses and the people agreed long ago that this tax would be collected and used to pay for the upkeep of the sacred tent.

⁷ And now we need it to repair the temple because the sons of that evil woman Athaliah came in and wrecked it. They even used some of the sacred objects to worship the god Baal.

⁸ Joash gave orders for a wooden box to be made and had it placed outside, near the gate of the temple.

⁹He then sent letters everywhere in Judah and Jerusalem, asking everyone to bring their taxes to the temple, just as Moses had required their ancestors to do.

¹⁰The people and their leaders agreed, and they brought their money to Jerusalem and placed it in the box.

¹¹Each day, after the Levites took the box into the temple, the king's secretary and the high priest's assistant would take out the money and count it. Then the empty box would be taken back outside. This happened day after day, and soon a large amount of money was collected.

¹²Joash and Jehoiada turned the money over to the men who were supervising the repairs to the temple. They used the money to hire stonecutters, carpenters, and experts in working with iron and bronze.

¹³These workers went straight to work repairing the temple, and when they had finished, it looked as good as new.

¹⁴They did not use all the tax money for the repairs, so the rest of it was handed over to Joash and Jehoiada,

who then used it to make dishes and other gold and silver objects for the temple. Sacrifices to please the LORD were offered regularly in the temple for as long as Jehoiada lived.

¹⁵He died at the ripe old age of one hundred and thirty years,

¹⁶and he was buried in the royal tombs in Jerusalem, because he had done so much good for the people of Israel, for God, and for the temple.

¹⁷After the death of Jehoiada the priest, the leaders of Judah went to Joash and talked him into doing what they wanted.

¹⁸Straight away, the people of Judah stopped worshipping in the temple of the LORD God, and they started worshipping idols and the symbols of the goddess Asherah. These sinful things made the LORD God angry with the people of Judah and Jerusalem,

¹⁹but he still sent prophets who warned them to turn back to him. The people refused to listen.

²⁰God's Spirit spoke to Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest, and Zechariah told everyone that God was saying: Why are you disobeying me and my laws? This

will only bring punishment! You have deserted me, so now I will desert you.

²¹ King Joash forgot that Zechariah's father had always been a loyal friend. So when the people of Judah plotted to kill Zechariah, Joash joined them and gave orders for them to stone him to death in the courtyard of the temple. As Zechariah was dying, he said, I pray that the LORD will see this and punish all of you.

²² (24: 21)

²³ In the spring of the following year, the Syrian army invaded Judah and Jerusalem, killing all the nation's leaders. They collected everything of value that belonged to the people and took it back to their king in Damascus.

²⁴ The Syrian army was very small, but the LORD let them defeat Judah's large army, because he was punishing Joash and the people of Judah for turning away from him.

²⁵ Joash was severely wounded during the battle, and as soon as the Syrians left Judah, two of his officials, Zabad and Jehozabad, decided to avenge the death of Zechariah. They plotted and killed

Joash while he was in bed, recovering from his wounds. Joash was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the royal tombs.

²⁶ (24: 25)

²⁷ The History of the Kings also tells more about the sons of Joash, what the prophets said about him, and how he repaired the temple. Amaziah son of Joash became king after his father's death.

25 ¹ Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he ruled twenty-nine years from Jerusalem, the home town of his mother Jehoaddin.

² Even though Amaziah obeyed the LORD by doing right, he refused to be completely faithful.

³ For example, as soon as he had control of Judah, he arrested and killed the officers who had murdered his father.

⁴ But the children of those officers were not killed; the LORD had commanded in the Law of Moses that only the people who sinned were to be punished.

⁵ Amaziah sent a message to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and called together all the men who were twenty years old and older. Three hundred

thousand men went to Jerusalem, all of them ready for battle and able to fight with spears and shields. Amaziah grouped these soldiers according to their clans and put them under the command of his army officers.

⁶Amaziah also paid about three thousand four hundred kilogrammes of silver to hire one hundred thousand soldiers from Israel.

⁷One of God's prophets said, Your Majesty, don't let these Israelite soldiers march into battle with you. The LORD has refused to help anyone from the northern kingdom of Israel,

⁸and so he will let your enemies defeat you, even if you fight hard. He is the one who brings both victory and defeat.

⁹Amaziah replied, What am I supposed to do about all the silver I paid those troops? The LORD will give you back even more than you paid, the prophet answered.

¹⁰Amaziah ordered the troops from Israel to go home, but when they left, they were furious with the people of Judah.

¹¹ After Amaziah got his courage back, he led his troops to Salt Valley, where he killed ten thousand Edomite soldiers in battle.

¹² He captured ten thousand more soldiers and dragged them to the top of a high cliff. Then he pushed them over the side, and they were all killed on the rocks below.

¹³ Meanwhile, the Israelite troops that Amaziah had sent home, raided the towns in Judah between Samaria and Beth-Horon. They killed three thousand people and carried off their possessions.

¹⁴ After Amaziah had defeated the Edomite army, he returned to Jerusalem. He took with him the idols of the Edomite gods and set them up. Then he bowed down and offered them sacrifices.

¹⁵ This made the LORD very angry, and he sent a prophet to ask Amaziah, Why would you worship these foreign gods that couldn't even save their own people from your attack?

¹⁶ But before the prophet finished speaking, Amaziah interrupted and said, You're not one of my advisers! Don't say another word, or I'll have you killed. The

prophet stopped. But then he added, First you sinned and now you've ignored my warning. It's clear that God has decided to punish you!

¹⁷ King Amaziah of Judah talked with his officials, then sent a message to King Jehoash of Israel: Come out and face me in battle!

¹⁸ Jehoash sent back a reply that said: Once upon a time, a small thorn bush in Lebanon arranged the marriage between his son and the daughter of a large cedar tree. But a wild animal came along and trampled the small bush.

¹⁹ Amaziah, you think you're so powerful because you defeated Edom. But stay at home and do your celebrating. If you cause any trouble, both you and your kingdom of Judah will be destroyed.

²⁰ God made Amaziah stubborn because he was planning to punish him for worshipping the Edomite gods. Amaziah refused to listen to Jehoash's warning,

²¹ so Jehoash led his army to the town of Beth-Shemesh in Judah to attack Amaziah and his troops.

²² During the battle, Judah's army was crushed. Every soldier from Judah ran back home,

²³ and Jehoash captured Amaziah. Jehoash took Amaziah with him when he went to attack Jerusalem. Jehoash broke down the city wall from Ephraim Gate to Corner Gate, a section nearly two hundred metres long.

²⁴ He carried away the gold, the silver, and all the valuable furnishings from God's temple where the descendants of Obed-Edom stood guard. He robbed the king's treasury, took hostages, then returned to Samaria.

²⁵ Amaziah lived fifteen years after Jehoash died.

²⁶ Everything else Amaziah did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

²⁷ As soon as Amaziah started disobeying the LORD, some people in Jerusalem plotted against Amaziah. He was able to escape to the town of Lachish, but another group of people caught him and killed him there.

²⁸His body was taken to Jerusalem on horseback and buried beside his ancestors.

26 ¹After the death of King Amaziah, the people of Judah crowned his son Uzziah king, even though he was only sixteen at the time. Uzziah ruled fifty-two years from Jerusalem, the home town of his mother Jecoliah. During his rule, he recaptured and rebuilt the town of Elath.

²(26: 1)

³(26: 1)

⁴He obeyed the LORD by doing right, as his father Amaziah had done.

⁵Zechariah was Uzziah's adviser and taught him to obey God. And so, as long as Zechariah was alive, Uzziah was faithful to God, and God made him successful.

⁶While Uzziah was king, he started a war against the Philistines. He smashed the walls of the cities of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, then rebuilt towns around Ashdod and in other parts of Philistia.

⁷God helped him defeat the Philistines, the Arabs living in Gur-Baal, and the Meunites.

⁸Even the Ammonites paid taxes to Uzziah. He became very powerful, and people who lived as far away as Egypt heard about him.

⁹In Jerusalem, Uzziah built fortified towers at the Corner Gate, the Valley Gate, and the place where the city wall turned inward.

¹⁰He also built defence towers out in the desert. He owned such a large herd of livestock in the western foothills and in the flat lands, that he had cisterns dug there to catch the rainwater. He loved farming, so he had crops and vineyards planted in the hill country wherever there was fertile soil, and he hired farmers to take care of them.

¹¹Uzziah's army was always ready for battle. Jeiel and Maaseiah were the officers who kept track of the number of soldiers, and these two men were under the command of Hananiah, one of Uzziah's officials.

¹²There were 307,500 trained soldiers, all under the command of 2,600 clan leaders. These powerful troops protected the king against any enemy.

¹³(26: 12)

¹⁴Uzziah supplied his army with shields, spears, helmets, armour, bows, and stones used for slinging.

¹⁵Some of his skilled workers invented machines that could shoot arrows and sling large stones. Uzziah set these up in Jerusalem at his defence towers and at the corners of the city wall. God helped Uzziah become more and more powerful, and he was famous all over the world.

¹⁶Uzziah became proud of his power, and this led to his downfall. One day, Uzziah disobeyed the LORD his God by going into the temple and burning incense as an offering to him.

¹⁷Azariah the priest and eighty other brave priests followed Uzziah into the temple

¹⁸and said, Your Majesty, this isn't right! You are not allowed to burn incense to the LORD. That must be done only by priests who are descendants of Aaron. You will have to leave! You have sinned against the LORD, and so he will no longer bless you.

¹⁹Uzziah, who was standing next to the incense altar at the time, was holding the incense burner, ready to offer incense to

the LORD. He became very angry when he heard Azariah's warning, and leprosy suddenly appeared on his forehead!

²⁰ Azariah and the other priests saw it and immediately told him to leave the temple. Uzziah realized that the LORD had punished him, so he hurried to get outside.

²¹ Uzziah had leprosy for the rest of his life. He was no longer allowed in the temple or in his own palace. That's why his son Jotham lived there and ruled in his place.

²² Everything else Uzziah did while he was king is in the records written by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

²³ Since Uzziah had leprosy, he could not be buried in the royal tombs. Instead, he was buried in a nearby cemetery that the kings owned. His son Jotham then became king.

27 ¹ Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. Jerushah his mother was the daughter of Zadok.

² Jotham obeyed the LORD and did right. He followed the example of his

father Uzziah, except he never burnt incense in the temple as his father had done. But the people of Judah kept sinning against the LORD.

³Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple and did a lot of work to repair the wall near Mount Ophel.

⁴He built towns in the mountains of Judah and built fortresses and defence towers in the forests.

⁵During his rule he attacked and defeated the Ammonites. Then every year for the next three years, he forced them to pay three thousand four hundred kilogrammes of silver, one thousand tonnes of wheat, and one thousand tonnes of barley.

⁶Jotham remained faithful to the LORD his God and became a very powerful king.

⁷Everything else Jotham did while he was king, including the wars he fought, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

⁸After he had ruled Judah sixteen years, he died at the age of forty-one.

⁹He was buried in Jerusalem, and his son Ahaz became king.

28¹ Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for sixteen years. Ahaz was nothing like his ancestor David. Ahaz disobeyed the LORD

²and was as sinful as the kings of Israel. He made idols of the god Baal,³ and he offered sacrifices in Hinnom Valley. Worst of all, Ahaz sacrificed his own sons, which was a disgusting custom of the nations that the LORD had forced out of Israel.

⁴Ahaz offered sacrifices at the local shrines, as well as on every hill and in the shade of large trees.

⁵Ahaz and the people of Judah sinned and turned away from the LORD, the God their ancestors had worshipped. So the LORD punished them by letting their enemies defeat them. The king of Syria attacked Judah and took many of its people to Damascus as prisoners. King Pekah of Israel later defeated Judah and killed one hundred and twenty thousand of its bravest soldiers in one day.

⁶(28: 5)

⁷During that battle, an Israelite soldier named Zichri killed three men

from Judah: Maaseiah the king's son; Azrikam, the official in charge of the palace; and Elkanah, the king's second in command.

⁸The Israelite troops captured two hundred thousand women and children and took them back to their capital city of Samaria, along with a large amount of their possessions. They did these things even though the people of Judah were their own relatives.

⁹Oded lived in Samaria and was one of the LORD's prophets. He met Israel's army on their way back from Judah and said to them: The LORD God of your ancestors let you defeat Judah's army only because he was angry with them. But you should not have been so cruel!

¹⁰If you make slaves of the people of Judah and Jerusalem, you will be as guilty as they are of sinning against the LORD.

¹¹Send these prisoners back home they are your own relatives. If you don't, the LORD will punish you in his anger.

¹²About the same time, four of Israel's leaders arrived. They were Azariah son of Johanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth,

Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai. They agreed with Oded that the Israelite troops were wrong,¹³ and they said: If you bring these prisoners into Samaria, that will be one more thing we've done to sin against the LORD. And he is already angry enough with us.

¹⁴So in front of the leaders and the crowd, the troops handed over their prisoners and the property they had taken from Judah.

¹⁵The four leaders took some of the stolen clothes and gave them to the prisoners who needed something to wear. They later gave them all a new change of clothes and shoes, then provided something for them to eat and drink, and cleaned their wounds with olive oil. They gave donkeys to those who were too weak to walk, and led all of them back to Jericho, the city known for its palm trees. The leaders then returned to Samaria.

¹⁶Some time later, the Edomites attacked the eastern part of Judah again and carried away prisoners. And at the same time, the Philistines raided

towns in the western foothills and in the Southern Desert. They conquered the towns of Beth-Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco, Timnah, and Gimzo, including the villages around them. Then some of the Philistines went to live in these places. Ahaz sent a message to King Tiglath Pileser of Assyria and begged for help.

¹⁷ (28: 16)

¹⁸ (28: 16)

¹⁹ But God was punishing Judah with these disasters, because Ahaz had disobeyed him and refused to stop Judah from sinning.

²⁰ So Tiglath Pileser came to Judah, but instead of helping, he made things worse.

²¹ Ahaz gave him gifts from the LORD's temple and the king's palace, as well as from the homes of Israel's other leaders. The Assyrian king still refused to help Ahaz.

²² Even after all these terrible things happened to Ahaz, he sinned against the LORD even worse than before.

²³ He said to himself, The Syrian gods must have helped their kings defeat

me. Perhaps if I offer sacrifices to those gods, they will help me. That was the sin that finally led to the downfall of Ahaz, as well as to the destruction of Judah.

²⁴Ahaz collected all the furnishings of the temple and smashed them to pieces. Then he locked the doors to the temple and set up altars to foreign gods on every street corner in Jerusalem.

²⁵In every city and town in Judah he built local shrines to worship foreign gods. All this made the LORD God of his ancestors very angry.

²⁶Everything else Ahaz did while he was king is written in The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

²⁷Ahaz died and was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the royal tombs. His son Hezekiah then became king.

29¹ Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled twenty-nine years from Jerusalem. His mother was Abijah daughter of Zechariah.

²Hezekiah obeyed the LORD by doing right, just as his ancestor David had done.

³In the first month of the first year of Hezekiah's rule, he unlocked the doors to the LORD's temple and had them repaired.

⁴Then he called the priests and Levites to the east courtyard of the temple

⁵and said: It's time to purify the temple of the LORD God of our ancestors.

You Levites must first go through the ceremony to make yourselves clean, then go into the temple and bring out everything that is unclean and unacceptable to the LORD.

⁶Some of our ancestors were unfaithful and disobeyed the LORD our God. Not only did they turn their backs on the LORD, but they also completely ignored his temple.

⁷They locked the doors, then let the lamps go out and stopped burning incense and offering sacrifices to him.

⁸The LORD became terribly angry with the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and everyone was shocked and horrified at what he did to punish them. Not only were

⁹our ancestors killed in battle, but our own children and wives were taken captive.

¹⁰So I have decided to renew our agreement with the LORD God of Israel. Perhaps then he will stop being so angry with us.

¹¹Let's not waste any time, my friends. You are the ones who were chosen to be the LORD's priests and to offer him sacrifices.

¹²When Hezekiah finished talking, the following Levite leaders went to work: Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah from the Kohath clan; Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel from the Merari clan; Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah from the Gershon clan; Shimri and Jeuel from the Elizaphan clan; Zechariah and Mattaniah from the Asaph clan; Jehuel and Shimei from the Heman clan; Shemaiah and Uzziel from the Jeduthun clan.

¹³(29: 12)

¹⁴(29: 12)

¹⁵These leaders gathered together the rest of the Levites, and they all went through the ceremony to make

themselves clean. Then they began to purify the temple according to the Law of the LORD, just as Hezekiah had commanded.

¹⁶The priests went into the temple and carried out everything that was unclean. They put these things in the courtyard, and from there, the Levites carried them outside the city to Kidron Valley.

¹⁷The priests and Levites began their work on the first day of the first month. It took them one week to purify the courtyards of the temple and another week to purify the temple. So on the sixteenth day of that same month

¹⁸they went back to Hezekiah and said: Your Majesty, we have finished our work. The entire temple is now pure again, and so is the altar and its utensils, as well as the table for the sacred loaves of bread and its utensils.

¹⁹And we have brought back all the things that King Ahaz took from the temple during the time he was unfaithful to God. We purified them and put them back in front of the altar.

²⁰ Straight away, Hezekiah called together the officials of Jerusalem, and they went to the temple.

²¹ They brought with them seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven goats as sacrifices to take away the sins of Hezekiah's family and of the people of Judah, as well as to purify the temple. Hezekiah told the priests, who were descendants of Aaron, to sacrifice these animals on the altar.

²² The priests killed the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, then splattered the blood on the altar.

²³ They took the goats to Hezekiah and the worshippers, and they laid their hands on the animals.

²⁴ The priests then killed the goats and splattered the blood on the altar as a sacrifice to take away the sins of everyone in Israel, because Hezekiah had commanded that these sacrifices be made for all the people of Israel.

²⁵ Next, Hezekiah assigned the Levites to their places in the temple. He gave them cymbals, harps, and other stringed instruments, according to the instructions that the LORD had given

King David and the two prophets, Gad and Nathan.

²⁶The Levites were ready to play the instruments that had belonged to David; the priests were ready to blow the trumpets.

²⁷As soon as Hezekiah gave the signal for the sacrifices to be burnt on the altar, the musicians began singing praises to the LORD and playing their instruments,

²⁸and everyone worshipped the LORD. This continued until the last animal was sacrificed.

²⁹After that, Hezekiah and the crowd of worshippers knelt down and worshipped the LORD.

³⁰Then Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to sing the songs of praise that David and Asaph the prophet had written. And so they bowed down and joyfully sang praises to the LORD.

³¹Hezekiah said to the crowd, Now that you are once again acceptable to the LORD, bring sacrifices and offerings to give him thanks. The people did this, and some of them voluntarily brought animals to be offered as sacrifices.

³² Seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs were brought as sacrifices to please the LORD;

³³ six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep were brought as sacrifices to ask the LORD's blessing.

³⁴ There were not enough priests to skin all these animals, because many of the priests had not taken the time to go through the ceremony to make themselves clean. However, since all the Levites had made themselves clean, they helped the priests until the last animal was skinned.

³⁵ Besides all the sacrifices that were burnt on the altar, the fat from the other animal sacrifices was burnt, and the offerings of wine were poured over the altar. So the temple was once again used for worshipping the LORD.

³⁶ Hezekiah and the people of Judah celebrated, because God had helped them make this happen so quickly.

30¹ Passover wasn't celebrated in the first month, which was the usual time, because many of the priests were still unclean and unacceptable to serve, and because not everyone in

Judah had come to Jerusalem for the festival. So Hezekiah, his officials, and the people agreed to celebrate Passover in the second month. Hezekiah sent a message to everyone in Israel and Judah, including those in the territories of Ephraim and West Manasseh, inviting them to the temple in Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover in honour of the LORD God of Israel.

² (30: 1)

³ (30: 1)

⁴ (30: 1)

⁵ Everyone from Beersheba in the south to Dan in the north was invited. This was the largest crowd of people that had ever celebrated Passover, according to the official records.

⁶ Hezekiah's messengers went everywhere in Israel and Judah with the following letter: People of Israel, now that you have survived the invasion of the Assyrian kings, it's time for you to turn back to the LORD God our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped. If you do this, he will stop being angry.

⁷ Don't follow the example of your ancestors and your Israelite relatives in

the north. They were unfaithful to the LORD, and he punished them horribly.

⁸Don't be stubborn like your ancestors. Decide now to obey the LORD our God! Come to Jerusalem and worship him in the temple that will belong to him for ever. Then he will stop being angry,

⁹and the enemies who have captured your families will show pity and send them back home. The LORD God is kind and merciful, and if you turn back to him, he will no longer turn his back on you.

¹⁰The messengers went to every town in Ephraim and West Manasseh as far north as the territory of Zebulun, but everyone laughed and insulted them.

¹¹Only a few people from the tribes of Asher, West Manasseh, and Zebulun were humble and went to Jerusalem.

¹²God also made everyone in Judah eager to do what Hezekiah and his officials had commanded.

¹³In the second month, a large crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Thin Bread.

¹⁴They took all the foreign altars and incense altars in Jerusalem and threw them into Kidron Valley.

¹⁵Then, on the fourteenth day of that same month, the Levites began killing the lambs for Passover, because many of the worshippers were unclean and were not allowed to kill their own lambs. Meanwhile, some of the priests and Levites felt ashamed because they had not gone through the ceremony to make themselves clean. They immediately went through that ceremony and went to the temple, where they offered sacrifices to please the LORD. Then the priests and Levites took their positions, according to the Law of Moses, the servant of God. As the Levites killed the lambs, they handed some of the blood to the priests, who splattered it on the altar.

¹⁶(30: 15)

¹⁷(30: 15)

¹⁸Most of the people who came from Ephraim, West Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun had not made themselves clean, but they ignored God's Law and ate the Passover lambs anyway. Hezekiah found out what they had done and prayed,

LORD God, these people are unclean according to the laws of holiness. But they are worshipping you, just as their ancestors did. So, please be kind and forgive them.

¹⁹(30: 18)

²⁰The LORD answered Hezekiah's prayer and did not punish them.

²¹The worshippers in Jerusalem were very happy and celebrated the Festival for seven days. The Levites and priests sang praises to the LORD every day and played their instruments.

²²Hezekiah thanked the Levites for doing such a good job, leading the celebration. The worshippers celebrated for seven days by offering sacrifices, by eating the sacred meals, and by praising the LORD God of their ancestors.

²³Everyone was so excited that they agreed to celebrate seven more days.

²⁴So Hezekiah gave the people one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep to be offered as sacrifices and to be used as food for the sacred meals. His officials gave one thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep, and many more priests

agreed to go through the ceremony to make themselves clean.

²⁵ Everyone was very happy, including those from Judah and Israel, the priests and Levites, and the foreigners living in Judah and Israel.

²⁶ It was the biggest celebration in Jerusalem since the days of King Solomon, the son of David.

²⁷ The priests and Levites asked God to bless the people, and from his home in heaven, he did.

31 ¹ After the Festival, the people went to every town in Judah and smashed the stone images of foreign gods and cut down the sacred poles for worshipping the goddess Asherah. They destroyed all the local shrines and foreign altars in Judah, as well as those in the territories of Benjamin, Ephraim, and West Manasseh. Then everyone went home.

² Hezekiah divided the priests and Levites into groups, according to their duties. Then he assigned them the responsibilities of offering sacrifices to please the LORD and sacrifices to ask his blessing. He also appointed people to

serve at the temple and to sing praises at the temple gates.

³Hezekiah provided animals from his own herds and flocks to use for the morning and evening sacrifices, as well as for the sacrifices during the Sabbath celebrations, the New Moon Festivals, and the other religious feasts required by the Law of the LORD.

⁴He told the people of Jerusalem to bring the offerings that were to be given to the priests and Levites, so that they would have time to serve the LORD with their work.

⁵As soon as the people heard what the king wanted, they brought a tenth of everything they owned, including their best grain, wine, olive oil, honey, and other crops.

⁶The people from the other towns of Judah brought a tenth of their herds and flocks, as well as a tenth of anything they had dedicated to the LORD.

⁷The people started bringing their offerings to Jerusalem in the third month, and the last ones arrived four months later.

⁸When Hezekiah and his officials saw these offerings, they thanked the LORD and the people.

⁹Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the large amount of offerings.

¹⁰The high priest at the time was Azariah, a descendant of Zadok, and he replied, Ever since the people have been bringing us their offerings, we have had more than enough food and supplies. The LORD has certainly blessed his people. Look at how much is left over!

¹¹So the king gave orders for storerooms to be built in the temple, and when they were completed,

¹²all the extra offerings were taken there. Hezekiah and Azariah then appointed Conaniah the Levite to be in charge of these storerooms. His brother Shimei was his assistant, and the following Levites worked with them: Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah.

¹³(31: 12)

¹⁴Kore son of Imnah was assigned to guard the East Gate, and he was put in charge of receiving the offerings

voluntarily given to God and of dividing them among the priests and Levites.

¹⁵He had six assistants who were responsible for seeing that all the priests in the other towns of Judah also got their share of these offerings. They were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah. Every priest and every Levite over thirty years old who worked daily in the temple received part of these offerings, according to their duties.

¹⁶(31:15)

¹⁷The priests were listed in the official records by clans, and the Levites twenty years old and older were listed by their duties.

¹⁸The official records also included their wives and children, because they had also been faithful in keeping themselves clean and acceptable to serve the LORD.

¹⁹Hezekiah also appointed other men to take food and supplies to the priests and Levites whose homes were in the pasture land around the towns of Judah. But the priests had to be descendants of Aaron, and the Levites had to be listed in the official records.

²⁰ Everything Hezekiah did while he was king of Judah, including what he did for the temple in Jerusalem, was right and good. He was a successful king, because he obeyed the LORD God with all his heart.

²¹ (31: 20)

32¹ After King Hezekiah had faithfully obeyed the LORD's instructions by doing these things, King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah. He attacked the fortified cities and thought he would capture every one of them.

² As soon as Hezekiah learnt that Sennacherib was planning to attack Jerusalem,

³ he and his officials worked out a plan to cut off the supply of water outside the city, so that the Assyrians would have no water when they came to attack. The officials got together a large work force that stopped up the springs and streams near Jerusalem.

⁴ (32: 3)

⁵ Hezekiah's workers also repaired the broken sections of the city wall. Then they built defence towers and an outer

wall to help protect the one already there. The landfill on the east side of David's City was also strengthened. He gave orders to make a large supply of weapons and shields,

⁶and he appointed army commanders over the troops. Then he gathered the troops together in the open area in front of the city gate and said to them:

⁷Be brave and confident! There's no reason to be afraid of King Sennacherib and his powerful army. We are much more powerful,

⁸because the LORD our God fights on our side. The Assyrians must rely on human power alone. These words encouraged the army of Judah.

⁹When Sennacherib and his troops were camped at the town of Lachish, he sent a message to Hezekiah and the people in Jerusalem. It said:

¹⁰I am King Sennacherib of Assyria, and I have Jerusalem surrounded. Do you think you can survive my attack?

¹¹Hezekiah your king is telling you that the LORD your God will save you from me. But he is lying, and you'll die of hunger and thirst.

¹² Didn't Hezekiah tear down all except one of the LORD's altars and places of worship? And didn't he tell you people of Jerusalem and Judah to worship at that one place?

¹³ You've heard what my ancestors and I have done to other nations. Were the gods of those nations able to defend their land against us?

¹⁴ None of those gods kept their people safe from the kings of Assyria. Do you really think your God can do any better?

¹⁵ Don't be fooled by Hezekiah! No god of any nation has ever been able to stand up to Assyria. Believe me, your God cannot keep you safe!

¹⁶ The Assyrian officials said terrible things about the LORD God and his servant Hezekiah.

¹⁷ Sennacherib's letter even made fun of the LORD. It said, The gods of other nations could not save their people from Assyria's army, and neither will the God that Hezekiah worships.

¹⁸ The officials said all these things in Hebrew, so that everyone listening from the city wall would understand and be terrified and surrender.

¹⁹The officials talked about the LORD God as if he were nothing but an ordinary god or an idol that someone had made.

²⁰Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz asked the LORD for help,

²¹and he sent an angel who killed every soldier and commander in the Assyrian camp. Sennacherib returned to Assyria, completely disgraced. Then one day he went into the temple of his god where some of his sons killed him.

²²The LORD rescued Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and also protected them from other enemies.

²³People brought offerings to Jerusalem for the LORD and expensive gifts for Hezekiah, and from that day on, every nation on earth respected Hezekiah.

²⁴About this same time, Hezekiah got sick and was almost dead. He prayed, and the LORD gave him a sign that he would recover.

²⁵But Hezekiah was so proud that he refused to thank the LORD for everything he had done for him. This made the LORD angry, and he punished Hezekiah and the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

²⁶Hezekiah and the people later felt sorry and asked the LORD to forgive them. So the LORD did not punish them as long as Hezekiah was king.

²⁷Hezekiah was very rich, and everyone respected him. He built special rooms to store the silver, the gold, the precious stones and spices, the shields, and the other valuable possessions.

²⁸Storehouses were also built for his supply of grain, wine, and olive oil; barns were built for his cattle, and pens were put up for his sheep.

²⁹God made Hezekiah extremely rich, so he bought even more sheep, goats, and cattle. And he built towns where he could keep all these animals.

³⁰It was Hezekiah who built a tunnel that carried the water from Gihon Spring into the city of Jerusalem. In fact, everything he did was successful!

³¹Even when the leaders of Babylonia sent messengers to ask Hezekiah about the sign God had given him, God let Hezekiah give his own answer to test him and to see if he would remain faithful.

³²Everything else Hezekiah did while he was king, including how faithful he was

to the LORD, is included in the records kept by Isaiah the prophet. These are written in The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

³³When Hezekiah died, he was buried in the section of the royal tombs that was reserved for the most respected kings, and everyone in Judah and Jerusalem honoured him. His son Manasseh then became king.

33¹Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled fifty-five years from Jerusalem.

²Manasseh disobeyed the LORD by following the disgusting customs of the nations that the LORD had forced out of Israel.

³He rebuilt the local shrines that his father Hezekiah had torn down. He built altars for the god Baal and set up sacred poles for worshipping the goddess Asherah. And he faithfully worshipped the stars in the sky.

⁴In the temple, where only the LORD was supposed to be worshipped, Manasseh built altars for pagan gods

⁵and for the stars. He placed these altars in both courtyards of the temple
⁶and even set up a stone image of a foreign god. Manasseh practised magic and witchcraft; he asked fortune-tellers for advice and sacrificed his own sons in Hinnom Valley. He did many other sinful things and made the LORD very angry. Years ago, God had told David and Solomon: Jerusalem is the place I prefer above all others in Israel. It belongs to me, and there in the temple I will be worshipped for ever.

⁷ (33: 6)

⁸If my people will faithfully obey all the laws and teaching I gave to my servant Moses, I will never again force them to leave the land I gave to their ancestors.

⁹But the people of Judah and Jerusalem listened to Manasseh and did even more sinful things than the nations the LORD had wiped out.

¹⁰The LORD tried to warn Manasseh and the people about their sins, but they ignored the warning.

¹¹So he let Assyrian army commanders invade Judah and capture Manasseh. They put a hook in his nose and tied

him up in chains, and they took him to Babylon.

¹²While Manasseh was held captive there, he asked the LORD God to forgive him and to help him.

¹³The LORD listened to Manasseh's prayer and saw how sorry he was, and so he let him go back to Jerusalem and rule as king. Manasseh knew from then on that the LORD was God.

¹⁴Later, Manasseh rebuilt the eastern section of Jerusalem's outer wall and made it taller. This section went from Gihon Valley north to Fish Gate and around the part of the city called Mount Ophel. He also assigned army officers to each of the fortified cities in Judah.

¹⁵Manasseh also removed the idols and the stone image of the foreign god from the temple, and he gathered the altars he had built near the temple and in other parts of Jerusalem. He threw all these things outside the city.

¹⁶Then he repaired the LORD's altar and offered sacrifices to thank him and sacrifices to ask his blessing. He gave orders that everyone in Judah must worship the LORD God of Israel.

¹⁷The people obeyed Manasseh, but they worshipped the LORD at their own shrines.

¹⁸Everything else Manasseh did while he was king, including his prayer to the LORD God and the warnings from his prophets, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁹Hozai wrote a lot about Manasseh, including his prayer and God's answer. But Hozai also recorded the evil things Manasseh did before turning back to God, as well as a list of places where Manasseh set up idols, and where he built local shrines and places to worship Asherah.

²⁰Manasseh died and was buried near the palace, and his son Amon became king.

²¹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for two years.

²²Amon disobeyed the LORD, just as his father Manasseh had done, and he worshipped and offered sacrifices to the idols his father had made.

²³Manasseh had turned back to the LORD, but Amon refused to do that.

Instead, he sinned even more than his father.

²⁴ Some of Amon's officials plotted against him and killed him in his palace.

²⁵ But the people of Judah killed the murderers of Amon and made his son Josiah king.

34¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled thirty-one years from Jerusalem.

² He followed the example of his ancestor David and always obeyed the LORD.

³ When Josiah was only sixteen years old he began worshipping God, just as his ancestor David had done. Then, four years later, he decided to destroy the local shrines in Judah and Jerusalem, as well as the sacred poles for worshipping the goddess Asherah and the idols of foreign gods.

⁴ He watched as the altars for the worship of the god Baal were torn down, and as the nearby incense altars were smashed. The Asherah poles, the idols, and the stone images were also smashed, and the pieces were scattered over the graves of their worshippers.

⁵Josiah then had the bones of the pagan priests burnt on the altars. And so Josiah got rid of the worship of foreign gods in Judah and Jerusalem.

⁶He did the same things in the towns and ruined villages in the territories of West Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as the border of Naphtali.

⁷Everywhere in the northern kingdom of Israel, Josiah tore down pagan altars and Asherah poles; he crushed idols to dust and smashed incense altars. Then Josiah went back to Jerusalem.

⁸In the eighteenth year of Josiah's rule in Judah, after he had got rid of all the sinful things from the land and from the LORD's temple, he sent three of his officials to repair the temple. They were Shaphan son of Azaliah, Governor Maaseiah of Jerusalem, and Joah son of Joahaz, who kept the government records.

⁹These three men went to Hilkiah the high priest. They gave him the money that the Levite guards had collected from the people of West Manasseh, Ephraim, and the rest of Israel, as well

as those living in Judah, Benjamin, and Jerusalem.

¹⁰Then the money was turned over to the men who supervised the repairs to the temple. They used some of it to pay the workers,

¹¹and they gave the rest of it to the carpenters and builders, who used it to buy the stone and wood they needed to repair the other buildings that Judah's kings had not taken care of.

¹²The workers were honest, and their supervisors were Jahath and Obadiah from the Levite clan of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam from the Levite clan of Kohath. Other Levites, who were all skilled musicians,

¹³were in charge of carrying supplies and supervising the workers. Other Levites were appointed to stand guard around the temple.

¹⁴While the money was being given to these supervisors, Hilkiah found the book that contained the laws that the LORD had given to Moses.

¹⁵Hilkiah handed the book to Shaphan the official and said, Look what I found

here in the temple The Book of God's Law.

¹⁶Shaphan took the book to Josiah and reported, Your officials are doing everything you wanted.

¹⁷They have collected the money from the temple and have given it to the men supervising the repairs.

¹⁸But there's something else, Your Majesty. The priest Hilkiah gave me this book. Then Shaphan read it aloud.

¹⁹When Josiah heard what was in The Book of God's Law, he tore his clothes in sorrow.

²⁰At once he called together Hilkiah, Shaphan, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, and his own servant Asaiah. He said,

²¹The LORD must be furious with me and everyone else in Israel and Judah, because our ancestors did not obey the laws written in this book. Go and find out what the LORD wants us to do.

²²Hilkiah and the four other men left straight away and went to talk with Huldah the prophet. Her husband was Shallum, who was in charge of the king's clothes. Huldah lived in the northern part

of Jerusalem, and when they met in her home,

²³ she said: You were sent here by King Josiah, and this is what the LORD God of Israel says to him:

²⁴ Josiah, I am the LORD! And I intend to punish this country and everyone in it, just as this book says.

²⁵ The people of Judah and Israel have rejected me. They have offered sacrifices to foreign gods and have worshipped their own idols. I can't stand it any longer. I am furious.

²⁶ Josiah, listen to what I am going to do. I noticed how sad you were when you heard that this country and its people would be completely wiped out. You even tore your clothes in sorrow, and I heard you cry.

²⁷ (34: 26)

²⁸ So before I destroy this place, I will let you die in peace. The men left and reported to Josiah what Huldah had said.

²⁹ King Josiah called together the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem.

³⁰ Then he went to the LORD's temple, together with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, the priests, and the Levites.

Finally, when everybody was there, he read aloud The Book of God's Law that had been found in the temple.

³¹ After Josiah had finished reading, he stood in the place reserved for the king. He promised in the LORD's name to obey the LORD faithfully and to follow his laws and teachings that were written in the book.

³² Then he asked the people of Jerusalem and Benjamin to make that same promise and to obey the God their ancestors had worshipped.

³³ Josiah destroyed all the idols in the territories of Israel, and he commanded everyone in Israel to worship only the LORD God. The people did not turn away from the LORD God of their ancestors for the rest of Josiah's rule as king.

35¹ Josiah commanded that Passover be celebrated in Jerusalem to honour the LORD. So, on the fourteenth day of the first month, the lambs were killed for the Passover celebration.

² On that day, Josiah made sure the priests knew what duties they were to do in the temple.

³He called together the Levites who served the LORD and who taught the people his laws, and he said: No longer will you have to carry the sacred chest from place to place. It will stay in the temple built by King Solomon son of David, where you will serve the LORD and his people Israel.

⁴Get ready to do the work that David and Solomon assigned to you, according to your clans.

⁵Divide yourselves into groups, then arrange yourselves throughout the temple so that each family of worshippers will be able to get help from one of you.

⁶When the people bring you their Passover lamb, you must kill it and prepare it to be sacrificed to the LORD. Make sure the people celebrate according to the instructions that the LORD gave Moses, and don't do anything to make yourselves unclean and unacceptable.

⁷Josiah donated thirty thousand sheep and goats, and three thousand bulls from his own flocks and herds for the people to offer as sacrifices.

⁸ Josiah's officials also voluntarily gave some of their animals to the people, the priests, and the Levites as sacrifices. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, who were the officials in charge of the temple, gave the priests twenty-six hundred sheep and lambs and three hundred bulls to sacrifice during the Passover celebration.

⁹ Conaniah, his two brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, as well as Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad were leaders of the Levites, and they gave the other Levites five thousand sheep and goats, and five hundred bulls to offer as sacrifices.

¹⁰ When everything was ready to celebrate Passover, the priests and the Levites stood where Josiah had told them.

¹¹ Then the Levites killed and skinned the Passover lambs, and they handed some of the blood to the priests, who splattered it on the altar.

¹² The Levites set aside the parts of the animal that the worshippers needed for their sacrifices to please the LORD, just as the Law of Moses required. They also did the same thing with the bulls.

¹³They sacrificed the Passover animals on the altar and boiled the meat for the other offerings in pots, kettles, and pans. Then they quickly handed the meat to the people so they could eat it.

¹⁴All day long, the priests were busy offering sacrifices and burning the animals' fat on the altar. And when everyone had finished, the Levites prepared Passover animals for themselves and for the priests.

¹⁵During the celebration some of the Levites prepared Passover animals for the musicians and the guards, so that the Levite musicians would not have to leave their places, which had been assigned to them according to the instructions of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's prophet. Even the guards at the temple gates did not have to leave their posts.

¹⁶So on that day, Passover was celebrated to honour the LORD, and sacrifices were offered on the altar to him, just as Josiah had commanded.

¹⁷The worshippers then celebrated the Festival of Thin Bread for the next seven days.

¹⁸ People from Jerusalem and from towns all over Judah and Israel were there. Passover had not been observed like this since the days of Samuel the prophet. In fact, this was the greatest Passover celebration in Israel's history!

¹⁹ All these things happened in the eighteenth year of Josiah's rule in Judah.

²⁰ Some time later, King Neco of Egypt led his army to the city of Carchemish on the River Euphrates. And Josiah led his troops north to meet the Egyptians in battle.

²¹ Neco sent the following message to Josiah: I'm not attacking you, king of Judah! We're not even at war. But God has told me to attack my enemy quickly. God is on my side, so if you try to stop me, he will punish you.

²² But Josiah ignored Neco's warning, even though it came from God! Instead, he disguised himself and marched into battle against Neco in the valley near Megiddo.

²³ During the battle an Egyptian soldier shot Josiah with an arrow. Josiah told his servants, Get me out of here! I've been hit.

²⁴ They carried Josiah out of his chariot, then put him in the other chariot he had there and took him back to Jerusalem, where he soon died. He was buried beside his ancestors, and everyone in Judah and Jerusalem mourned his death.

²⁵ Jeremiah the prophet wrote a funeral song in honour of Josiah. And since then, anyone in Judah who mourns the death of Josiah sings that song. It is included in the collection of funeral songs.

²⁶ Everything else Josiah did while he was king, including how he faithfully obeyed the LORD,

²⁷ is written in The History of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

36 ¹ After the death of Josiah, the people of Judah crowned his son Jehoahaz their new king.

² He was twenty-three years old at the time, and he ruled only three months from Jerusalem.

³ King Neco of Egypt captured Jehoahaz and forced Judah to pay three thousand four hundred kilogrammes of silver and thirty-four kilogrammes of gold as taxes.

⁴ Then Neco appointed Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim king of Judah and

changed his name to Jehoiakim. He led Jehoahaz away to Egypt as his prisoner.

⁵ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he was appointed king, and he ruled eleven years from Jerusalem. Jehoiakim disobeyed the LORD his God by doing evil.

⁶ During Jehoiakim's rule, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia invaded Judah. He arrested Jehoiakim and put him in chains, and he sent him to the capital city of Babylon.

⁷ Nebuchadnezzar also carried off many of the valuable things in the LORD's temple, and he put them in his palace in Babylon.

⁸ Everything else Jehoiakim did while he was king, including all the disgusting and evil things, is written in The History of the Kings of Israel and Judah. His son Jehoiachin then became king.

⁹ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king of Judah, and he ruled only three months and ten days from Jerusalem. Jehoiachin also disobeyed the LORD by doing evil.

¹⁰ In the spring of the year, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia had

Jehoiachin arrested and taken to Babylon, along with more of the valuable items in the temple. Then Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah king of Judah.

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he was appointed king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years.

¹² He disobeyed the LORD his God and refused to change his ways, even after a warning from Jeremiah, the LORD's prophet.

¹³ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia had forced Zedekiah to promise in God's name that he would be loyal. Zedekiah was stubborn and refused to turn back to the LORD God of Israel, so he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁴ The people of Judah and even the priests who were their leaders became more unfaithful. They followed the disgusting example of the nations around them and made the LORD's holy temple unfit for worship.

¹⁵ But the LORD God felt sorry for his people, and instead of destroying the temple, he sent prophets who warned

the people over and over again about their sins.

¹⁶But the people only laughed and insulted these prophets. They ignored what the LORD God was trying to tell them, until he finally became so angry that nothing could stop him from punishing Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁷The LORD sent King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia to attack Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar killed the young men who were in the temple, and he showed no mercy to anyone, whether man or woman, young or old. God let him kill everyone in the city.

¹⁸Nebuchadnezzar carried off everything that was left in the temple; he robbed the treasury and the personal storerooms of the king and his officials. He took everything back to Babylon.

¹⁹Nebuchadnezzar's troops burnt down the temple and destroyed every important building in the city. Then they broke down the city wall.

²⁰The survivors were taken to Babylonia as prisoners, where they were slaves of the king and his sons, until Persia became a powerful nation.

²¹ Judah was an empty desert, and it stayed that way for seventy years, to make up for all the years it was not allowed to rest. These things happened just as Jeremiah the LORD's prophet had said.

²² In the first year that Cyrus was king of Persia, the LORD told Cyrus to send a message to all parts of his kingdom. This happened just as Jeremiah the LORD's prophet had promised.

²³ The message said: I am King Cyrus of Persia. The LORD God of heaven has made me the ruler of every nation on earth. He has also chosen me to build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. The LORD God will watch over any of his people who want to go back to Judah.

Ezra

1 ¹ Years ago the LORD sent Jeremiah with a message about a promise for the people of Israel. Then in the first year that Cyrus was king of Persia, the LORD kept his promise by telling Cyrus to send this official message to all parts of his kingdom:

² I am King Cyrus of Persia. The LORD God of heaven, who is also the God of Israel, has made me the ruler of all nations on earth. And he has chosen me to build a temple for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. The LORD God will watch over and encourage any of his people who want to go back to Jerusalem and help build the temple.

³ (1: 2)

⁴ Everyone else must provide what is needed. They must give money, supplies, and animals, as well as gifts for rebuilding God's temple.

⁵ Many people felt that the LORD God wanted them to help rebuild his temple, and they made plans to go to Jerusalem.

Among them were priests, Levites, and leaders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

⁶The others helped by giving silver articles, gold, personal possessions, cattle, and other valuable gifts, as well as offerings for the temple.

⁷King Cyrus gave back the things that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the LORD's temple in Jerusalem and had put in the temple of his own gods.

⁸Cyrus placed Mithredath, his chief treasurer, in charge of these things. Mithredath counted them and gave a list to Sheshbazzar, the governor of Judah.

⁹Included among them were: 30 large gold dishes; 1,000 large silver dishes; 29 other dishes; 30 gold bowls; 410 silver bowls; and 1,000 other articles.

¹⁰(1: 9)

¹¹Altogether, there were 5,400 gold and silver dishes, bowls, and other articles. Sheshbazzar took them with him when he and the others returned to Jerusalem from Babylonia.

2¹ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia had captured many of the people of Judah and had taken them as prisoners

to Babylonia. Now they were on their way back to Jerusalem and to their own towns everywhere in Judah.

²Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah were in charge of the ones who were coming back. And here is a list of how many returned from each family group: 2,172 from the family of Parosh; 372 from the family of Shephatiah; 775 from the family of Arah; 2,812 descendants of Jeshua and Joab from the family of Pahath Moab; 1,254 from the family of Elam; 945 from the family of Zattu; 760 from the family of Zaccai; 642 from the family of Bani; 623 from the family of Bebai; 1,222 from the family of Azgad; 666 from the family of Adonikam; 2,056 from the family of Bigvai; 454 from the family of Adin; 98 from the family of Ater, also known as Hezekiah; 323 from the family of Bezai; 112 from the family of Jorah; 223 from the family of Hashum; and 95 from the family of Gibbar.

³ (2: 2)

⁴ (2: 2)

⁵ (2: 2)

⁶ (2: 2)

⁷ (2: 2)

⁸ (2: 2)

⁹ (2: 2)

¹⁰ (2: 2)

¹¹ (2: 2)

¹² (2: 2)

¹³ (2: 2)

¹⁴ (2: 2)

¹⁵ (2: 2)

¹⁶ (2: 2)

¹⁷ (2: 2)

¹⁸ (2: 2)

¹⁹ (2: 2)

²⁰ (2: 2)

²¹ Here is how many people returned whose ancestors had come from the following towns: 123 from Bethlehem; 56 from Netophah; 128 from Anathoth; 42 from Azmaveth; 743 from Kiriatharim, Chephirah, and Beeroth; 621 from Ramah and Geba; 122 from Michmas; 223 from Bethel and Ai; 52 from Nebo; 156 from Magbish; 1,254 from the other Elam; 320 from Harim; 725 from Lod, Hadid, and Ono; 345 from Jericho; and 3,630 from Senaah.

22 (2: 21)

23 (2: 21)

24 (2: 21)

25 (2: 21)

26 (2: 21)

27 (2: 21)

28 (2: 21)

29 (2: 21)

30 (2: 21)

31 (2: 21)

32 (2: 21)

33 (2: 21)

34 (2: 21)

35 (2: 21)

³⁶ Here is a list of how many returned from each family of priests: 973 descendants of Jeshua from the family of Jedaiah; 1,052 from the family of Immer; 1,247 from the family of Pashhur; and 1,017 from the family of Harim.

³⁷ (2: 36)

³⁸ (2: 36)

³⁹ (2: 36)

⁴⁰ And here is a list of how many returned from the families of Levites: 74 descendants of Hodaviah from the families of Jeshua and Kadmiel; 128

descendants of Asaph from the temple musicians; and 139 descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai from the temple guards.

⁴¹ (2: 40)

⁴² (2: 40)

⁴³ Here is a list of the families of temple workers whose descendants returned: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, Keros, Siaha, Padon, Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub, Hagab, Shamlai, Hanan, Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah, Besai, Asnah, Meunim, Nephisim, Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha, Barkos, Sisera, Temah, Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁴⁴ (2: 43)

⁴⁵ (2: 43)

⁴⁶ (2: 43)

⁴⁷ (2: 43)

⁴⁸ (2: 43)

⁴⁹ (2: 43)

⁵⁰ (2: 43)

⁵¹ (2: 43)

⁵² (2: 43)

⁵³ (2: 43)

⁵⁴ (2: 43)

⁵⁵ Here is a list of Solomon's servants whose descendants returned: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel, Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth Hazzebaim, and Ami.

⁵⁶ (2: 55)

⁵⁷ (2: 55)

⁵⁸ A total of 392 descendants of temple workers and of Solomon's servants returned.

⁵⁹ There were 652 who returned from the families of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, though they could not prove that they were Israelites. They had lived in the Babylonian towns of Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer.

⁶⁰ (2: 59)

⁶¹ The families of Habaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai could not prove that they were priests. The ancestor of the family of Barzillai had married the daughter of Barzillai from Gilead and had taken his wife's family name. But the records of these three families could not be found, and none of them were allowed to serve as priests.

⁶² (2: 61)

⁶³In fact, the governor told them, You cannot eat the food offered to God until we find out if you really are priests.

⁶⁴There were 42,360 who returned, in addition to 7,337 servants and 200 musicians, both women and men. They brought with them 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁶⁵(2: 64)

⁶⁶(2: 64)

⁶⁷(2: 64)

⁶⁸When the people came to where the LORD's temple had been in Jerusalem, some of the family leaders gave gifts so it could be rebuilt in the same place.

⁶⁹They gave all they could, and it came to a total of 500 kilogrammes of gold, 2,800 kilogrammes of silver, and 100 robes for the priests.

⁷⁰Everyone returned to the towns from which their families had come, including the priests, the Levites, the musicians, the temple guards, and the workers.

3¹During the seventh month of the year, the Israelites who had settled in their towns went to Jerusalem.

²The priest Joshua son of Jozadak, together with the other priests, and

Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his relatives rebuilt the altar of Israel's God. Then they were able to offer sacrifices there by following the instructions God had given to Moses.

³And they built the altar where it had stood before, even though they were afraid of the people who were already living around there. Then every morning and evening they burnt sacrifices and offerings to the LORD.

⁴The people followed the rules for celebrating the Festival of Shelters and offered the proper sacrifices each day.

⁵They offered sacrifices to please the LORD, sacrifices at each New Moon Festival, and sacrifices at the rest of the LORD's festivals. Every offering the people had brought was presented to the LORD.

⁶Although work on the temple itself had not yet begun, the people started offering sacrifices on the LORD's altar on the first day of the seventh month of that year.

⁷King Cyrus of Persia had said the Israelites could have cedar trees brought from Lebanon to Joppa by sea. So they

sent grain, wine, and olive oil to the cities of Tyre and Sidon as payment for these trees, and they gave money to the stoneworkers and carpenters.

⁸During the second month of the second year after the people had returned from Babylonia, they started rebuilding the LORD's temple. Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak, the priests, the Levites, and everyone else who had returned started working. Every Levite over twenty years of age was put in charge of some part of the work.

⁹The Levites in charge of the whole project were Joshua and his sons and relatives and Kadmiel and his sons from the family of Hodaviah. The family of Henadad worked along with them.

¹⁰When the builders had finished laying the foundation of the temple, the priests put on their robes and blew trumpets in honour of the LORD, while the Levites from the family of Asaph praised God with cymbals. All of them followed the instructions given years before by King David.

¹¹They praised the LORD and gave thanks as they took turns singing:

The LORD is good! His faithful love for Israel will last for ever. Everyone started shouting and praising the LORD because work on the foundation of the temple had begun.

¹²Many of the older priests and Levites and the heads of families cried aloud because they remembered seeing the first temple years before. But others were so happy that they celebrated with joyful shouts.

¹³Their shouting and crying were so noisy that it all sounded alike and could be heard a long way off.

4¹The enemies of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people had come back to rebuild the temple of the LORD God of Israel.

²So they went to Zerubbabel and to the family leaders and said, Let us help! Ever since King Esarhaddon of Assyria brought us here, we have worshipped your God and offered sacrifices to him.

³But Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the family leaders answered, You cannot take part in building a temple for the LORD our God! We will build it ourselves,

just as King Cyrus of Persia commanded us.

⁴Then the neighbouring people began to do everything possible to frighten the Jews and to make them stop building.

⁵During the time when Cyrus was king and even until Darius became king, they kept bribing government officials to slow down the work.

⁶In the first year that Xerxes was king, the neighbouring people brought written charges against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷Later, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and their advisers got together and wrote a letter to Artaxerxes when he was king of Persia. It was written in Aramaic and had to be translated.

⁸A letter was also written to Artaxerxes about Jerusalem by Governor Rehum, Secretary Shimshai, and their advisers, including the judges, the governors, the officials, and the local leaders. They were joined in writing this letter by people from Erech and Babylonia, the Elamites from Susa, and people from other foreign nations that the great and famous Ashurbanipal had forced to settle

in Samaria and other parts of Western Province.

⁹(4: 8)

¹⁰(4: 8)

¹¹This letter said: Your Majesty King Artaxerxes, we are your servants from everywhere in Western Province, and we send you our greetings.

¹²You should know that the Jews who left your country have moved back to Jerusalem and are now rebuilding that terrible city. In fact, they have almost finished rebuilding the walls and repairing the foundations.

¹³You should also know that if the walls are completed and the city is rebuilt, the Jews won't pay any kind of taxes, and there will be less money in your treasury.

¹⁴We are telling you this, because you have done so much for us, and we want everyone to respect you.

¹⁵If you look up the official records of your ancestors, you will find that Jerusalem has constantly rebelled and has led others to rebel against kings and provinces. That's why the city was destroyed in the first place.

¹⁶If Jerusalem is rebuilt and its walls completed, you will no longer have control over Western Province.

¹⁷King Artaxerxes answered: Greetings to Governor Rehum, Secretary Shimshai, and to your advisers in Samaria and other parts of Western Province.

¹⁸After your letter was translated and read to me,

¹⁹I had the old records checked. It is true that for years Jerusalem has rebelled and caused trouble for other kings and nations.

²⁰And powerful kings have ruled Western Province from Jerusalem and have collected all kinds of taxes.

²¹I want you to command the people to stop rebuilding the city until I give further notice.

²²Do this straight away, so that no harm will come to the kingdom.

²³As soon as this letter was read, Governor Rehum, Secretary Shimshai, and their advisers went to Jerusalem and forced everyone to stop rebuilding the city.

²⁴The Jews were forced to stop work on the temple and were not able to do any

more building until the year after Darius became king of Persia.

5¹ Then the LORD God of Israel told the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to speak in his name to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. And they did.

² So Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the priest urged the people to start working on the temple again, and God's prophets encouraged them.

³ Governor Tattenai of Western Province and his assistant Shethar Bozenai got together with some of their officials. Then they went to Jerusalem and said to the people, Who told you to rebuild this temple?

⁴ Give us the names of the workers!

⁵ But God was looking after the Jewish leaders. So the governor and his group decided not to make the people stop working on the temple until they could report to Darius and get his advice.

⁶ Governor Tattenai, Shethar Bozenai, and their advisers sent a report to Darius,

⁷ which said: King Darius, we wish you the best!

⁸We went to Judah, where the temple of the great God is being built with huge stones and wooden beams set in the walls. Everyone is working hard, and the building is going up fast.

⁹We asked those in charge to tell us who gave them permission to rebuild the temple.

¹⁰We also asked for the names of their leaders, so that we could write them down for you.

¹¹They claimed to be servants of the God who rules heaven and earth. And they said they were rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago by one of Israel's greatest kings.

¹²We were told that their people had made God angry, and he let them be captured by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who took them away as captives to Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar tore down their temple,

¹³took its gold and silver articles, and put them in the temple of his own god in Babylon. They also said that during the first year Cyrus was king of Babylonia, he gave orders for God's temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem where it had stood

before. So Cyrus appointed Sheshbazzar governor of Judah and sent these gold and silver articles for him to put in the temple.

¹⁴ (5: 13)

¹⁵ (5: 13)

¹⁶ Sheshbazzar then went to Jerusalem and laid the foundation for the temple, and the work is still going on.

¹⁷ Your Majesty, please order someone to look up the old records in Babylonia and find out if King Cyrus really did give orders to rebuild God's temple in Jerusalem. We will do whatever you think we should.

6¹ King Darius ordered someone to go through the old records kept in Babylonia.

² Finally, a scroll was found in Ecbatana, the capital of Media Province, and it said: This official record will show

³ that in the first year Cyrus was king, he gave orders to rebuild God's temple in Jerusalem, so that sacrifices and offerings could be presented there. It is to be built twenty-seven metres high and twenty-seven metres wide,

⁴ with one row of wooden beams for each three rows of large stones. The royal treasury will pay for everything.

⁵ Then return to their proper places the gold and silver things that Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple and brought to Babylonia.

⁶ King Darius sent this message: Governor Tattenai of Western Province and Shethar Bozenai, you and your advisers must stay away from the temple.

⁷ Let the Jewish governor and leaders rebuild it where it stood before. And stop slowing them down!

⁸ Starting at once, I am ordering you to help the leaders by paying their expenses from the tax money collected in Western Province.

⁹ And don't fail to let the priests in Jerusalem have whatever they need each day so they can offer sacrifices to the God of heaven. Give them young bulls, rams, sheep, as well as wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil.

¹⁰ I want them to be able to offer pleasing sacrifices to God and to pray for me and my family.

¹¹ If any of you don't obey this order, a wooden beam will be taken from your house and sharpened on one end. Then it will be driven through your body, and your house will be torn down and turned into a rubbish dump.

¹² I ask the God who is worshipped in Jerusalem to destroy any king or nation who tries either to change what I have said or to tear down his temple. I, Darius, give these orders, and I expect them to be followed carefully.

¹³ Governor Tattenai, Shethar Bozenai, and their advisers carefully obeyed King Darius.

¹⁴ With great success the Jewish leaders continued working on the temple, while Haggai and Zechariah encouraged them by their preaching. And so, the temple was completed at the command of the God of Israel and by the orders of kings Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes of Persia.

¹⁵ On the third day of the month of Adar in the sixth year of the rule of Darius, the temple was finished.

¹⁶ The people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and everyone else who had returned from exile were happy

and celebrated as they dedicated God's temple.

¹⁷One hundred bulls, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs were offered as sacrifices at the dedication. Also twelve goats were sacrificed as sin offerings for the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹⁸Then the priests and Levites were assigned their duties in God's temple in Jerusalem, according to the instructions Moses had written.

¹⁹Everyone who had returned from exile celebrated Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.

²⁰The priests and Levites had gone through a ceremony to make themselves acceptable to lead in worship. Then some of them killed Passover lambs for those who had returned, including the other priests and themselves.

²¹The sacrifices were eaten by the Israelites who had returned and by the neighbouring people who had given up the sinful customs of other nations in order to worship the LORD God of Israel.

²²For seven days they celebrated the Festival of Thin Bread. Everyone was happy because the LORD God of Israel

had made sure that the king of Assyria would be kind to them and help them build the temple.

7¹ Much later, when Artaxerxes was king of Persia, Ezra came to Jerusalem from Babylonia. Ezra was the son of Seraiah and the grandson of Azariah. His other ancestors were Hilkiah, Shallum, Zadok, Ahitub, Amariah, Azariah, Meraioth, Zerariah, Uzzi, Bukki, Abishua, Phinehas, Eleazar, and Aaron, the high priest. Ezra was an expert in the Law that the LORD God of Israel had given to Moses, and the LORD made sure that the king gave Ezra everything he asked for.

² (7: 1)

³ (7: 1)

⁴ (7: 1)

⁵ (7: 1)

⁶ (7: 1)

⁷ Other Jews, including priests, Levites, musicians, the temple guards, and servants, came to Jerusalem with Ezra. This happened during the seventh year that Artaxerxes was king.

⁸ God helped Ezra, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth

month of that seventh year, after leaving Babylonia on the first day of the first month.

⁹(7:8)

¹⁰Ezra had spent his entire life studying and obeying the Law of the LORD and teaching it to others.

¹¹Ezra was a priest and an expert in the laws and commands that the LORD had given to Israel. One day King Artaxerxes gave Ezra a letter which said:

¹²Greetings from the great King Artaxerxes to Ezra the priest and expert in the teachings of the God of heaven.

¹³Any of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom may go with you to Jerusalem if they want to. My seven advisers and I agree that you may go to Jerusalem and Judah to find out if the laws of your God are being obeyed.

¹⁴(7:13)

¹⁵When you go, take the silver and gold that I and my advisers are freely giving to the God of Israel, whose temple is in Jerusalem.

¹⁶Take the silver and gold that you collect from everywhere in Babylonia. Also take the gifts that your own people

and priests have so willingly contributed for the temple of your God in Jerusalem.

¹⁷ Use the money carefully to buy the best bulls, rams, lambs, grain, and wine. Then sacrifice them on the altar at God's temple in Jerusalem.

¹⁸ If any silver or gold is left, you and your people may use it for whatever pleases your God.

¹⁹ Give your God the other articles that have been contributed for use in his temple.

²⁰ If you need to get anything else for the temple, you may have the money you need from the royal treasury.

²¹ Ezra, you are a priest and an expert in the laws of the God of heaven, and I order all treasurers in Western Province to do their very best to help you.

²² They will be allowed to give as much as 3,400 kilogrammes of silver, 10,000 kilogrammes of wheat, 2,000 litres of wine, 2,000 litres of olive oil, and all the salt you need.

²³ They must provide whatever the God of heaven demands for his temple, so that he won't be angry with me and with the kings who rule after me.

²⁴We want you to know that no priests, Levites, musicians, guards, temple servants, or any other temple workers will have to pay any kind of taxes.

²⁵Ezra, use the wisdom God has given you and choose officials and leaders to govern the people of Western Province. These leaders should know God's laws and have them taught to anyone who doesn't know them.

²⁶Everyone who fails to obey God's Law or the king's law will be punished without pity. They will be executed or put in prison or forced to leave their country, or have all they own taken away.

²⁷Because King Artaxerxes was so kind, Ezra said: Praise the LORD God of our ancestors! He made sure that the king honoured the LORD's temple in Jerusalem.

²⁸God has told the king, his advisers, and his powerful officials to treat me with kindness. The LORD God has helped me, and I have been able to bring many Jewish leaders back to Jerusalem.

8¹ Artaxerxes was king of Persia when I led the following chiefs of the family groups from Babylonia to Jerusalem:

²Gershom of the Phinehas family; Daniel of the Ithamar family; Hattush son of Shecaniah of the David family; Zechariah and 150 other men of the Parosh family, who had family records; Eliehoenai son of Zeremiah with 200 men of the Pahath Moab family; Shecaniah son of Jahaziel with 300 men of the Zattu family; Ebed son of Jonathan with 50 men of the Adin family; Jeshaiiah son of Athaliah with 70 men of the Elam family; Zebadiah son of Michael with 80 men of the Shephatiah family; Obadiah son of Jehiel with 218 men of the Joab family; Shelomith son of Josiphiah with 160 men of the Bani family; Zechariah son of Bebai with 28 men of the Bebai family; Johanan son of Hakkatan with 110 men of the Azgad family; Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah who returned some time later with 60 men of the Adonikam family; Uthai and Zaccur with 70 men of the Bigvai family.

³ (8: 2)

⁴ (8: 2)

⁵ (8: 2)

⁶ (8: 2)

⁷ (8: 2)

⁸ (8: 2)

⁹ (8: 2)

¹⁰ (8: 2)

¹¹ (8: 2)

¹² (8: 2)

¹³ (8: 2)

¹⁴ (8: 2)

¹⁵ I brought everyone together by the river that flows to the town of Ahava where we camped for three days. Not one Levite could be found among the people and priests.

¹⁶ So I sent for the leaders Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam. I also sent for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were very wise.

¹⁷ Then I sent them to Iddo, the leader at Casiphia, and I told them to ask him and his temple workers to send people to serve in God's temple.

¹⁸ God was kind to us and made them send a skilful man named Sherebiah, who was a Levite from the family of Mahli. Eighteen of his relatives came with him.

¹⁹We were also sent Hashabiah and Jeshaiiah from the family of Merari along with twenty of their relatives.

²⁰In addition, 220 others came to help the Levites in the temple. The ancestors of these workers had been chosen years ago by King David and his officials, and they were all listed by name.

²¹Beside the River Ahava, I asked the people to go without eating and to pray. We humbled ourselves and asked God to bring us and our children safely to Jerusalem with all our possessions.

²²I was ashamed to ask the king to send soldiers and cavalry to protect us against enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king that our God takes care of everyone who truly worships him, but that he gets very angry and punishes anyone who refuses to obey.

²³So we went without food and asked God himself to protect us, and he answered our prayers.

²⁴I chose twelve of the leading priests Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their relatives.

²⁵Then I weighed the gifts that had been given for God's temple, and I

divided them among the twelve priests I had chosen. There were gifts of silver and gold, as well as the articles that the king, his advisers and officials, and the people of Israel had contributed. In all there were: 22 tonnes of silver; 100 silver articles weighing 70 kilogrammes; 3,400 kilogrammes of gold; 20 gold bowls weighing over 8 kilogrammes; and 2 polished bronze articles as valuable as gold.

²⁶ (8: 25)

²⁷ (8: 25)

²⁸I said to the priests: You belong to the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and these things also belong to him. The silver and gold were willingly given as gifts to the LORD.

²⁹Be sure to guard them and keep them safe until you reach Jerusalem. Then weigh them inside God's temple in the presence of the chief priests, the Levites, and the heads of the Israelite families.

³⁰The priests and Levites then took charge of the gifts that had been weighed, so they could take them to the temple of our God in Jerusalem.

³¹ On the twelfth day of the first month, we left the River Ahava and started for Jerusalem. Our God watched over us, and as we travelled along, he kept our enemies from ambushing us.

³² After arriving in Jerusalem, we rested for three days.

³³ Then on the fourth day we went to God's temple, where the silver, the gold, and the other things were weighed and given to the priest Meremoth son of Uriah. With him were Eleazar son of Phinehas and the two Levites, Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui.

³⁴ Everything was counted, weighed, and recorded.

³⁵ Those who had returned from exile offered sacrifices on the altar to the God of Israel. Twelve bulls were offered for all Israel. Ninety-six rams and seventy-seven lambs were offered on the altar. And twelve goats were sacrificed for the sins of the people.

³⁶ Some of those who had returned took the king's orders to the governors and officials in Western Province. Then the officials did what they could for the people and for the temple of God.

9¹ Later the Jewish leaders came to me and said: Many Israelites, including priests and Levites, are living just like the people around them. They are even guilty of some of the horrible sins of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

² Some Israelite men have married foreign women and have let their sons do the same thing. Our own officials and leaders were the first to commit this disgusting sin, and now God's holy people are mixed with foreigners.

³ This news made me so angry that I ripped my clothes and tore hair from my head and beard. Then I just sat in shock

⁴ until time for the evening sacrifice. Many of our people were greatly concerned and gathered around me, because the God of Israel had warned us to stay away from foreigners.

⁵ At the time of the evening sacrifice, I was still sitting there in sorrow with my clothes all torn. So I got down on my knees, then lifted my arms,

⁶and prayed: I am much too ashamed to face you, LORD God. Our sins and our guilt have swept over us like a flood that reaches up to the heavens.

⁷Since the time of our ancestors, all of us have sinned. That's why we, our kings, and our priests have often been defeated by other kings. They have killed some of us and made slaves of others; they have taken our possessions and made us ashamed, just as we are today.

⁸But for now, LORD God, you have shown great kindness to us. You made us truly happy by letting some of us settle in this sacred place and by helping us in our time of slavery.

⁹We are slaves, but you have never turned your back on us. You love us, and because of you, the kings of Persia have helped us. It's as though you have given us new life! You let us rebuild your temple and live safely in Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰Our God, what can we say now? Even after all this, we have disobeyed the commands

¹¹that were given to us by your servants the prophets. They said the

land you are giving us is full of sinful and wicked people, who never stop doing disgusting things.

¹²And we were warned not to let our daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters. Your prophets also told us never to help those foreigners or even let them live in peace. You wanted us to become strong and to enjoy the good things in the land, then some day to leave it to our children for ever.

¹³You punished us because of our terrible sins. But you did not punish us nearly as much as we deserve, and you have brought some of us back home.

¹⁴Why should we disobey your commands again by letting our sons and daughters marry these foreigners who do such disgusting things? That would make you angry enough to destroy us all!

¹⁵LORD God of Israel, you have been more than fair by letting a few of us survive. But once again, our sins have made us ashamed to face you.

10¹While Ezra was down on his knees in front of God's temple, praying with tears in his eyes, and

confessing the sins of the people of Israel, a large number of men, women, and children gathered around him and cried bitterly.

²Shecaniah son of Jehiel from the family of Elam said: Ezra, we have disobeyed God by marrying these foreign women. But there is still hope for the people of Israel,

³if we follow your advice and the advice of others who truly respect the laws of God. We must promise God that we will divorce our foreign wives and send them away, together with their children.

⁴Ezra, it's up to you to do something! We will support whatever you do. So be brave!

⁵Ezra stood up and made the chief priests, the Levites, and everyone else in Israel swear that they would follow the advice of Shecaniah.

⁶Then Ezra left God's temple and went to spend the night in the living quarters of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. He felt sorry for what the people had done, and he did not eat or drink a thing.

⁷The officials and leaders sent a message to all who had returned

from Babylonia and were now living in Jerusalem and Judah. It told them to meet in Jerusalem within three days, or else they would lose everything they owned and would no longer be considered part of the people that had returned from Babylonia.

⁸(10:7)

⁹Three days later, on the twentieth day of the ninth month, everyone from Judah and Benjamin came to Jerusalem and sat in the temple courtyard. It was a serious meeting, and they sat there, trembling in the rain.

¹⁰Ezra the priest stood up and said: You have broken God's Law by marrying foreign women, and you have made the whole nation guilty!

¹¹Now you must confess your sins to the LORD God of your ancestors and obey him. Divorce your foreign wives and don't have anything to do with the rest of the foreigners who live around here.

¹²Everyone in the crowd shouted: You're right! We will do what you say.

¹³But there are so many of us, and we can't just stay out here in this downpour.

A lot of us have sinned by marrying foreign women, and the matter can't be settled in only a day or two.

¹⁴Why can't our officials stay on in Jerusalem and take care of this for us? Let everyone who has sinned in this way meet here at a certain time with leaders and judges from their own towns. If we take care of this problem, God will surely stop being so terribly angry with us.

¹⁵Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah were the only ones who objected, except for the two Levites, Meshullam and Shabbethai.

¹⁶Everyone else who had returned from exile agreed with the plan. So Ezra the priest chose men who were heads of the families, and he listed their names. They started looking into the matter on the first day of the tenth month,

¹⁷and they did not finish until the first day of the first month of the next year.

¹⁸Here is a list of the priests who had agreed to divorce their foreign wives and to sacrifice a ram as a sin offering: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah from the family of Joshua son of Jozadak and his brothers;

¹⁹ (10: 18)

²⁰ Hanani and Zebadiah from the family of Immer;

²¹ Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah from the family of Harim;

²² Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah from the family of Pashhur.

²³ Those Levites who had foreign wives were: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (also known as Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

²⁴ Eliashib, the musician, had a foreign wife. These temple guards had foreign wives: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

²⁵ Here is a list of the others from Israel who had foreign wives: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Hashabiah, and Benaiah from the family of Parosh;

²⁶ Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah from the family of Elam;

²⁷ Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza from the family of Zattu;

²⁸ Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai from the family of Bebai;

²⁹ Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth from the family of Bani;

³⁰ Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh from the family of Pahath Moab;

³¹ Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah from the family of Harim;

³² (10: 31)

³³ Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei from the family of Hashum;

³⁴ Maadai, Amram, Uel, Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi, Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu from the family of Bani;

³⁵ (10: 34)

³⁶ (10: 34)

³⁷ (10: 34)

³⁸ Shimei, Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph from the family of Binnui;

³⁹ (10: 38)

⁴⁰ (10: 38)

⁴¹ (10: 38)

⁴² (10: 38)

⁴³ Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah from the family of Nebo.

⁴⁴ These men divorced their foreign wives, then sent them and their children away.

Nehemiah

1 ¹I am Nehemiah son of Hacaliah, and in this book I tell what I have done. During the month of Chislev in the twentieth year that Artaxerxes ruled Persia, I was in his fortress city of Susa, ²when my brother Hanani came with some men from Judah. So I asked them about the Jews who had escaped from being captives in Babylonia. I also asked them about the city of Jerusalem.

³They told me, Those captives who have come back are having all kinds of troubles. They are terribly disgraced, Jerusalem's walls are broken down, and its gates have been burnt.

⁴When I heard this, I sat down and cried. Then for several days, I mourned; I went without eating to show my sorrow, and I prayed:

⁵LORD God of heaven, you are great and fearsome. And you faithfully keep your promises to everyone who loves you and obeys your commands.

⁶I am your servant, so please have mercy on me and answer the prayer that I make day and night for these people of Israel who serve you. I, my family, and the rest of your people have sinned

⁷by choosing to disobey you and the laws and teachings you gave to your servant Moses.

⁸Please remember the promise you made to Moses. You told him that if we were unfaithful, you would scatter us among foreign nations.

⁹But you also said that no matter how far away we were, we could turn to you and start obeying your laws. Then you would bring us back to the place where you have chosen to be worshipped.

¹⁰Our LORD, I am praying for your servantsthose you rescued by your great strength and mighty power.

¹¹Please answer my prayer and the prayer of your other servants who gladly honour your name. When I serve the king his wine today, make him pleased with me and let him do what I ask.

2¹ During the month of Nisan in the twentieth year that Artaxerxes was king, I served him his wine, as I had

done before. But this was the first time I had ever looked depressed.

²So the king said, Why do you look so sad? You're not sick. Something must be bothering you. Even though I was frightened,

³I answered, Your Majesty, I hope you live for ever! I feel sad because the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and its gates have been burnt down.

⁴The king asked, What do you want me to do? I prayed to the God who rules from heaven.

⁵Then I told the king, Sir, if it's all right with you, please send me back to Judah, so that I can rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried.

⁶The queen was sitting beside the king when he asked me, How long will it take, and when will you be back? The king agreed to let me go, and I told him when I would return.

⁷Then I asked, Your Majesty, would you be willing to give me letters to the governors of the provinces west of the River Euphrates, so that I can travel safely to Judah?

⁸I will need timber to rebuild the gates of the fortress near the temple and more timber to construct the city wall and to build a place for me to live. And so, I would appreciate a letter to Asaph, who is in charge of the royal forest. God was good to me, and the king did everything I asked.

⁹The king sent some army officers and cavalry troops along with me, and as I travelled through the Western Provinces, I gave the letters to the governors.

¹⁰But when Sanballat from Horon and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about what had happened, they became very angry, because they didn't want anyone to help the people of Israel.

¹¹Three days after arriving in Jerusalem,

¹²I got up during the night and left my house. I took some men with me, without telling anyone what I thought God wanted me to do for the city. The only animal I took was the donkey I rode on.

¹³I went through Valley Gate on the west, then south past Dragon Spring, before coming to Rubbish Gate. As I

rode along, I took a good look at the crumbled walls of the city and the gates that had been torn down and burnt.

¹⁴On the east side of the city, I headed north to Fountain Gate and King's Pool, but then the path became too narrow for my donkey.

¹⁵So I went down to Kidron Valley and looked at the wall from there. Then before daylight I returned to the city through Valley Gate.

¹⁶None of the city officials knew what I had in mind. And I had not even told any of the Jews not the priests, the leaders, the officials, or any other Jews who would be helping in the work.

¹⁷But when I got back, I said to them, Jerusalem is truly in a mess! The gates have been torn down and burnt, and everything is in ruins. We must rebuild the city wall so that we can again take pride in our city.

¹⁸Then I told them how kind God had been and what the king had said. Immediately, they replied, Let's start building now! So they got everything ready.

¹⁹When Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard about our plans, they started insulting us and saying, Just look at you! Do you plan to rebuild the walls of the city and rebel against the king?

²⁰I answered, We are servants of the God who rules from heaven, and he will make our work succeed. So we will start rebuilding Jerusalem, but you have no right to any of its property, because you have had no part in its history.

3¹These are the people who helped rebuild the wall and gates of Jerusalem: The high priest Eliashib and the other priests rebuilt Sheep Gate and hung its doors. Then they dedicated Sheep Gate and the section of the wall as far as Hundred Tower and Hananel Tower.

²The people of Jericho rebuilt the next section of the wall, and Zaccur son of Imri rebuilt the section after that.

³The family of Hassenaah built Fish Gate. They put the beams in place and hung the doors, then they added metal bolts and wooden beams as locks.

⁴Meremoth, son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, completed the next section of

the wall. Meshullam, son of Berechiah and grandson of Meshezabel, rebuilt the next section, and Zadok son of Baana rebuilt the section beside that.

⁵The next section was to be repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their town leaders refused to do the hard work they were assigned.

⁶Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah restored Ancient Gate. They put the beams in place, hung the doors, and added metal bolts and wooden beams as locks.

⁷Melatiah from Gibeon, Jadon from Meronoth, and the men from Gibeon and Mizpah rebuilt the next section of the wall. This section reached as far as the house of the governor of West Euphrates Province.

⁸Uzziel son of Harhaiah the goldsmith rebuilt the next section. Hananiah the perfume maker rebuilt the section next after that, and it went as far as Broad Wall.

⁹Rephaiah son of Hur ruled half of the Jerusalem District, and he rebuilt the next section of the wall.

¹⁰The section after that was close to the home of Jedaiah son of Harumaph, and he rebuilt it. Hattush son of Hashabneiah constructed the next section of the wall.

¹¹Malchijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath Moab rebuilt the section after that, and they also built Oven Tower.

¹²Shallum son of Hallohesh ruled the other half of the Jerusalem District, and he rebuilt the next section of the wall. Shallum's daughters also worked with him.

¹³Hanun and the people who lived in the town of Zanoah rebuilt Valley Gate. They hung the doors and added metal bolts and wooden beams as locks. They also rebuilt the wall for four hundred and forty metres, all the way to Rubbish Gate.

¹⁴Malchijah son of Rechab ruled the district of Beth-Haccherem, and he rebuilt Rubbish Gate. He hung the doors and added metal bolts and wooden beams as locks.

¹⁵Shallum son of Colhozeh ruled the district of Mizpah, and he rebuilt Fountain Gate. He put a cover over the gateway,

then hung the doors and added metal bolts and wooden beams as locks. He also rebuilt the wall at Shelah Pool. This section was next to the king's garden and went as far as the stairs leading down from David's City.

¹⁶Nehemiah son of Azbuk ruled half of the district of Beth-Zur, and he rebuilt the next section of the wall. It went as far as the royal cemetery, the artificial pool, and the army barracks.

¹⁷The Levites who worked on the next sections of the wall were Rehum son of Bani; Hashabiah, who ruled half of the district of Keilah and did this work for his district;

¹⁸Binnui son of Henadad, who ruled the other half of the district of Keilah;

¹⁹Ezer son of Jeshua, who ruled Mizpah, rebuilt the section of the wall that was in front of the armoury and reached to the corner of the wall;

²⁰Baruch son of Zabbai eagerly rebuilt the section of the wall that went all the way to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest;

²¹ Meremoth, son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz, built up to the far end of Eliashib's house.

²² Here is a list of the priests who worked on the wall: Priests from the region around Jerusalem rebuilt the next section of the wall.

²³ Benjamin and Hasshub rebuilt the wall in front of their own houses. Azariah, who was the son of Maaseiah and the grandson of Ananiah, rebuilt the section in front of his house.

²⁴ Binnui son of Henadad rebuilt the section of the wall from Azariah's house to the corner of the wall.

²⁵ Palal son of Uzai rebuilt the next section, which began at the corner of the wall and the tower of the upper palace near the court of the guard. Pedaiah son of Parosh rebuilt the next section of the wall.

²⁶ He stopped at a place near the Water Gate on the east and the tower guarding the temple. This was close to a section in the city called Ophel, where the temple workers lived.

²⁷ The men from Tekoa rebuilt the next section of the wall, and it was their

second section. It started at a place opposite the large tower that guarded the Temple, and it went all the way to the wall near Ophel.

²⁸Some priests rebuilt the next section of the wall. They began working north of Horse Gate, and each one worked on a section in front of his own house.

²⁹Zadok son of Immer rebuilt the wall in front of his house. Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, who looked after the East Gate, rebuilt the section after that.

³⁰Hananiah and Hanun rebuilt the next section, which was the second section for them. Meshullam son of Berechiah rebuilt the next section, which happened to be in front of his house.

³¹Malchijah, a goldsmith, rebuilt the next section, as far as the house used by the temple workers and merchants. This area was opposite Gathering Gate, near the room on top of the wall at the north-east corner.

³²The goldsmiths and merchants rebuilt the last section of the wall, which went from the corner room all the way to Sheep Gate.

4¹ When Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, heard that we were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he became angry and started insulting our people.

² In front of his friends and the Samaritan army he said, What is this feeble bunch of Jews trying to do? Are they going to rebuild the wall and offer sacrifices all in one day? Do they think they can make something out of this pile of scorched stones?

³ Tobiah from Ammon was standing beside Sanballat and said, Look at the wall they are building! Why, even a fox could knock over this pile of stones.

⁴ But I prayed, Our God, these people hate us and have wished horrible things for us. Please answer our prayers and make their insults fall on them! Let them be the ones to be dragged away as prisoners of war.

⁵ Don't forgive the mean and evil way they have insulted the builders.

⁶ The people worked hard, and we built the walls of Jerusalem halfway up again.

⁷ But Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people from the

city of Ashdod saw the walls going up and the holes being repaired. So they became angry

⁸and decided to stir up trouble, and to fight against the people of Jerusalem.

⁹But we kept on praying to our God, and we also stationed guards day and night.

¹⁰Meanwhile, the people of Judah were singing a sorrowful song: So much rubble for us to haul! Worn out and weary, will we ever finish this wall?

¹¹Our enemies were saying, Before those Jews know what has happened, we will sneak up and kill them and put an end to their work.

¹²On at least ten different occasions, the Jews living near our enemies warned us against attacks from every side,

¹³and so I sent people to guard the wall at its lowest places and where there were still holes in it. I placed them according to families, and they stood guard with swords and spears and with bows and arrows.

¹⁴Then I looked things over and told the leaders, the officials, and the rest of the people, Don't be afraid of your enemies!

The Lord is great and fearsome. So think of him and fight for your relatives and children, your wives and homes!

¹⁵Our enemies found out that we knew about their plot against us, but God kept them from doing what they had planned. So we went back to work on the wall.

¹⁶From then on, I let half of the young men work while the other half stood guard. They wore armour and had spears and shields, as well as bows and arrows. The leaders helped the workers

¹⁷who were rebuilding the wall. Everyone who hauled building materials kept one hand free to carry a weapon.

¹⁸Even the workers who were rebuilding the wall strapped on a sword. The worker who was to blow the signal trumpet stayed with me.

¹⁹I told the people and their officials and leaders, Our work is so spread out, that we are a long way from one another.

²⁰If you hear the sound of the trumpet, come quickly and gather around me. Our God will help us fight.

²¹Every day from dawn to dark, half of the workers rebuilt the walls, while the rest stood guard with their spears.

²²I asked the men in charge and their workers to stay inside Jerusalem and stand guard at night. So they guarded the city at night and worked during the day.

²³I even slept in my work clothes at night; my children, the workers, and the guards slept in theirs as well. And we always kept our weapons close by.

5¹ Some of the men and their wives complained about the Jews in power ²and said, We have large families, and it takes a lot of grain merely to keep them alive.

³Others said, During the famine we even had to mortgage our fields, vineyards, and homes to them in order to buy grain.

⁴Then others said, We had to borrow money from those in power to pay the government tax on our fields and vineyards.

⁵We are Jews just as they are, and our children are as good as theirs. But we still have to sell our children as slaves, and some of our daughters have already been raped. We are completely helpless;

our fields and vineyards have even been taken from us.

⁶When I heard their complaints and their charges, I became very angry.

⁷So I thought it over and said to the leaders and officials, How can you charge your own people interest? Then I called a public meeting and accused the leaders

⁸by saying, We have tried to buy back all of our people who were sold into exile. But here you are, selling more of them for us to buy back! The officials and leaders did not say a word, because they knew this was true.

⁹I continued, What you have done is wrong! We must honour our God by the way we live, so the Gentiles can't find fault with us.

¹⁰My relatives, my friends, and I are also lending money and grain, but we must no longer demand payment in return.

¹¹Now give back the fields, vineyards, olive orchards, and houses you have taken and also the interest you have been paid.

¹²The leaders answered, We will do whatever you say and return their

property, without asking to be repaid. So I made the leaders promise in front of the priests to give back the property.

¹³Then I emptied my pockets and said, If you don't keep your promise, that's what God will do to you. He will empty out everything you own, even taking away your houses. The people answered, We will keep our promise. Then they praised the LORD and did as they had promised.

¹⁴I was governor of Judah from the twentieth year that Artaxerxes was king until the thirty-second year. And during these entire twelve years, my relatives and I refused to accept the food that I was allowed.

¹⁵Each governor before me had been a burden to the people by making them pay for his food and wine and by demanding forty silver coins a day. Even their officials had been a burden to the people. But I respected God, and I didn't think it was right to be so hard on them.

¹⁶I spent all my time getting the wall rebuilt and did not buy any property. Everyone working for me did the same thing.

¹⁷I usually fed a hundred and fifty of our own Jewish people and their leaders, as well as foreign visitors from surrounding lands.

¹⁸Each day one ox, six of the best sheep, and lots of chickens were prepared. Then every ten days, a large supply of wine was brought in. I knew what a heavy burden this would have been for the people, and so I did not ask for my food allowance as governor.

¹⁹I pray that God will bless me for everything I have done for my people.

6¹Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and our other enemies learnt that I had completely rebuilt the wall. All I lacked was hanging the doors in the gates.

²Then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message, asking me to meet with them in one of the villages in Ono Valley. I knew they were planning to harm me in some way.

³So I sent messengers to tell them, My work is too important to stop now and go there. I can't afford to slow down the work just to visit you.

⁴They invited me four times, but each time I refused to go.

⁵ Finally, Sanballat sent an official to me with an unsealed letter,

⁶ which said: A rumour is going around among the nations that you and the other Jews are rebuilding the wall and planning to rebel, because you want to be their king. And Geshem says it's true!

⁷ You even have prophets in Jerusalem, claiming you are now the king of Judah. You know the Persian king will hear about this, so let's get together and talk it over.

⁸ I sent a message back to Sanballat, saying, None of this is true! You are making it all up.

⁹ Our enemies were trying to frighten us and to keep us from our work. But I asked God to give me strength.

¹⁰ One day I went to visit Shemaiah. He was looking very worried, and he said, Let's hurry to the holy place of the temple and hide there. We will lock the temple doors, because your enemies are planning to kill you tonight.

¹¹ I answered, Why should someone like me have to run and hide in the temple to save my life? I won't go!

¹² Suddenly I realized that God had not given Shemaiah this message. But Tobiah and Sanballat had paid him to trick me

¹³ and to frighten me into doing something wrong, because they wanted to ruin my good name.

¹⁴ Then I asked God to punish Tobiah and Sanballat for what they had done. I prayed that God would punish the prophet Noadiah and the other prophets who, together with her, had tried to frighten me.

¹⁵ On the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, the wall was completely rebuilt. It had taken fifty-two days.

¹⁶ When our enemies in the surrounding nations learnt that the work was finished, they felt helpless, because they knew that our God had helped us rebuild the wall.

¹⁷ All this time the Jewish leaders and Tobiah had been writing letters back and forth.

¹⁸ Many people in Judah were loyal to Tobiah for two reasons: Shecaniah son of Arah was his father-in-law, and

Tobiah's son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah.

¹⁹The people would always tell me about the good things Tobiah had done, and then they would tell Tobiah everything I had said. So Tobiah kept sending letters, trying to frighten me.

7 ¹After the wall had been rebuilt and the gates hung, then the temple guards, the singers, and the other Levites were assigned their work.

²I put my brother Hanani in charge of Jerusalem, along with Hananiah, the commander of the fortress, because Hananiah could be trusted, and he respected God more than most people did.

³I said to them, Don't let the gates to the city be opened until the sun has been up for a while. And make sure that they are closed and barred before the guards go off duty at sunset. Choose people from Jerusalem to stand guard at different places around the wall and others to stand guard near their own houses.

⁴ Although Jerusalem covered a large area, not many people lived there, and no new houses had been built.

⁵ So God gave me the idea to bring together the people, their leaders, and officials and to check the family records of those who had returned from captivity in Babylonia, after having been taken there by King Nebuchadnezzar. About this same time, I found records of those who had been the first to return to Jerusalem from Babylon Province. By reading these records, I learnt that they settled in their own home towns,

⁶ (7:5)

⁷ and that they had come with Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

⁸ Here is how many had returned from each family group: 2,172 from Parosh; 372 from Shephatiah; 652 from Arah; 2,818 from Pahath Moab, who were all descendants of Jeshua and Joab; 1,254 from Elam; 845 from Zattu; 760 from Zaccai; 648 from Binnui; 628 from Bebai; 2,322 from Azgad; 667 from Adonikam; 2,067 from Bigvai; 655

from Adin; 98 from Ater, also known as Hezekiah; 328 from Hashum; 324 from Bezai; 112 from Hariph; and 95 from Gibeon.

⁹ (7: 8)

¹⁰ (7: 8)

¹¹ (7: 8)

¹² (7: 8)

¹³ (7: 8)

¹⁴ (7: 8)

¹⁵ (7: 8)

¹⁶ (7: 8)

¹⁷ (7: 8)

¹⁸ (7: 8)

¹⁹ (7: 8)

²⁰ (7: 8)

²¹ (7: 8)

²² (7: 8)

²³ (7: 8)

²⁴ (7: 8)

²⁵ (7: 8)

²⁶ Here is how many people returned whose ancestors had come from the following towns: 188 from Bethlehem and Netophah; 128 from Anathoth; 42 from Beth-Azmaveth; 743 from Kiriath-Jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth; 621 from Ramah and Geba; 122 from

Michmas; 123 from Bethel and Ai; 52 from Nebo; 1,254 from Elam; 320 from Harim; 345 from Jericho; 721 from Lod, Hadid, and Ono; and 3,930 from Senaah.

²⁷ (7: 26)

²⁸ (7: 26)

²⁹ (7: 26)

³⁰ (7: 26)

³¹ (7: 26)

³² (7: 26)

³³ (7: 26)

³⁴ (7: 26)

³⁵ (7: 26)

³⁶ (7: 26)

³⁷ (7: 26)

³⁸ (7: 26)

³⁹ Here is how many returned from each family of priests: 973 descendants of Jeshua from Jedaiah; 1,052 from Immer; 1,247 from Pashhur; and 1,017 from Harim.

⁴⁰ (7: 39)

⁴¹ (7: 39)

⁴² (7: 39)

⁴³ Here is how many returned from the families of Levites: 74 descendants of Hodevah from the families of Jeshua and Kadmiel; 148 descendants of Asaph

from the temple musicians; and 138 descendants of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai from the temple guards.

⁴⁴ (7: 43)

⁴⁵ (7: 43)

⁴⁶ Here are the names of the families of temple workers whose descendants returned: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, Keros, Sia, Padon, Lebana, Hagaba, Shalmal, Hanan, Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah, Besai, Meunim, Nephushesim, Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur, Bazlith, Mehida, Harsha, Barkos, Sisera, Temah, Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁴⁷ (7: 46)

⁴⁸ (7: 46)

⁴⁹ (7: 46)

⁵⁰ (7: 46)

⁵¹ (7: 46)

⁵² (7: 46)

⁵³ (7: 46)

⁵⁴ (7: 46)

⁵⁵ (7: 46)

⁵⁶ (7: 46)

⁵⁷ Here are the names of Solomon's servants whose descendants returned:

Sotai, Sophereth, Perida, Jaala, Darkon, Giddel, Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth Hazzebaim, and Amon.

⁵⁸ (7: 57)

⁵⁹ (7: 57)

⁶⁰ A total of 392 descendants of temple workers and of Solomon's servants returned.

⁶¹ There were 642 who returned from the families of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, though they could not prove they were Israelites. They had lived in the Babylonian towns of Tel-Melah, Tel-Harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer.

⁶² (7: 61)

⁶³ The families of Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai could not prove they were priests. The ancestor of the family of Barzillai had married the daughter of Barzillai from Gilead and had taken his wife's family name. But the records of these three families could not be found, and none of them were allowed to serve as priests.

⁶⁴ (7: 63)

⁶⁵ In fact, the governor told them, You cannot eat the food offered to God until he lets us know if you really are priests.

⁶⁶There were 42,360 who returned, in addition to 7,337 servants, and 245 musicians. Altogether, they brought with them 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁶⁷ (7: 66)

⁶⁸ (7: 66)

⁶⁹ (7: 66)

⁷⁰Many people gave gifts to help pay for the materials to rebuild the temple. The governor himself gave 8 kilogrammes of gold, 50 bowls to be used in the temple, and 530 robes for the priests. Family leaders gave 153 kilogrammes of gold and 1,458 kilogrammes of silver. The rest of the people gave 153 kilogrammes of gold, 1,325 kilogrammes of silver, and 67 robes for the priests.

⁷¹ (7: 70)

⁷² (7: 70)

⁷³And so, by the seventh month, priests, Levites, temple guards, musicians, workers, and many of the ordinary people had settled in the towns of Judah.

8¹On the first day of the seventh month, the people came together in the open area in front of the Water

Gate. Then they asked Ezra, who was a teacher of the Law of Moses, to read to them from this Law that the LORD had given his people. Ezra the priest came with the Law and stood before the crowd of men, women, and the children who were old enough to understand.

² (8: 1)

³ From early morning till midday, he read the Law of Moses to them, and they listened carefully.

⁴ Ezra stood on a high wooden platform that had been built for this occasion. Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah were standing to his right, while Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash Baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam were standing to his left.

⁵ Ezra was up on the high platform, where he could be seen by everyone, and when he opened the book, they all stood up.

⁶ Ezra praised the great LORD God, and the people shouted, Amen! Amen! Then they bowed with their faces to the ground and worshipped the LORD.

⁷ After this, the Levites Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah went among the people, explaining the meaning of what Ezra had read.

⁸ (8: 7)

⁹ The people started crying when God's Law was read to them. Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher, and the Levites who had been teaching the people all said, This is a special day for the LORD your God. So don't be sad and don't cry!

¹⁰ Nehemiah told the people, Enjoy your good food and wine and share some with those who didn't have anything to bring. Don't be sad! This is a special day for the LORD, and he will make you happy and strong.

¹¹ The Levites encouraged the people by saying, This is a sacred day, so don't worry or mourn!

¹² When the people returned to their homes, they celebrated by eating and drinking and by sharing their food with those in need, because they had understood what had been read to them.

¹³On the second day of the seventh month, the leaders of all the family groups came together with the priests and the Levites, so Ezra could teach them the Law

¹⁴that the LORD had given to Moses. They learnt from the Law that the people of Israel were to live in shelters when they celebrated the festival in the seventh month of the year.

¹⁵They also learnt that they were to go into the woods and gather branches of leafy trees such as olives, myrtles, and palms for making these shelters.

¹⁶So the people gathered branches and made shelters on the flat roofs of their houses, in their yards, in the courtyard of the temple, and in the open areas around the Water Gate and Ephraim Gate.

¹⁷Everyone who had returned from Babylonia built shelters. They lived in them and joyfully celebrated the Festival of Shelters for the first time since the days of Joshua son of Nun.

¹⁸On each of the first seven days of the festival, Ezra read to the people from God's Law. Then on the eighth day,

everyone gathered for worship, just as the Law had said they must.

9¹ On the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month, the people of Israel went without eating, and they dressed in sackcloth and threw dust on their heads to show their sorrow.

² They refused to let foreigners join them, as they met to confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors.

³ For three hours they stood and listened to the Law of the LORD their God, and then for the next three hours they confessed their sins and worshipped the LORD.

⁴ Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the special platform for the Levites and prayed aloud to the LORD their God.

⁵ Then the Levites Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah said: Stand and shout praises to your LORD, the eternal God! Praise his wonderful name, though he is greater than words can express.

⁶You alone are the LORD, Creator of the heavens and all the stars, Creator of the earth and those who live on it, Creator of the ocean and all its creatures. You are the source of life, praised by the stars that fill the heavens.

⁷You are the LORD our God, the one who chose Abram you brought him from Ur in Babylonia and named him Abraham.

⁸Because he was faithful, you made an agreement to give his descendants the land of the Canaanites and Hittites, of the Amorites and Perizzites, and of the Jebusites and Girgashites. Now you have kept your promise, just as you always do.

⁹When our ancestors were in Egypt, you saw their suffering; when they were at the Red Sea, you heard their cry for help.

¹⁰You knew that the King of Egypt and his officials and his nation had ill-treated your people. So you worked fearsome miracles against the Egyptians and earned a reputation that still remains.

¹¹You divided the deep sea, and your people walked through on dry land. But

you tossed their enemies in, and they sank down like a heavy stone.

¹²Each day you led your people with a thick cloud, and at night you showed the way with a flaming fire.

¹³At Sinai you came down from heaven, and you gave your people good laws and teachings that are fair and honest.

¹⁴You commanded them to respect your holy Sabbath, and you instructed your servant Moses to teach them your laws.

¹⁵When they were hungry, you sent bread from heaven, and when they were thirsty, you let water flow from a rock. Then you commanded them to capture the land that you had solemnly promised.

¹⁶Our stubborn ancestors refused to obey they forgot about the miracles you had worked for them, and they were determined to return to Egypt and become slaves again. But, our God, you are merciful and quick to forgive; you are loving, kind, and very patient. So you never turned away from them

¹⁷(9:16)

¹⁸not even when they made an idol shaped like a calf and insulted you by claiming, This is the god who rescued us from Egypt.

¹⁹Because of your great mercy, you never abandoned them in the desert. And you always guided them with a cloud by day and a fire at night.

²⁰Your gentle Spirit instructed them, and you gave them manna to eat and water to drink.

²¹You took good care of them, and for forty years they never lacked a thing. Their shoes didn't wear out, and their feet were never swollen.

²²You let them conquer kings and take their land, including King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan.

²³You brought them into the land that you had promised their ancestors, and you blessed their nation with people who outnumbered the stars in the sky.

²⁴Then their descendants conquered the land. You helped them defeat the kings and nations and treat their enemies however they wished.

²⁵They captured strong cities and rich farmland; they took furnished houses,

as well as cisterns, vineyards, olive orchards, and numerous fruit trees. They ate till they were satisfied, and they celebrated your abundant blessings.

²⁶In spite of this, they rebelled and disobeyed your laws. They killed your prophets, who warned them to turn back to you, and they cursed your name.

²⁷So you handed them over to their enemies, who treated them terribly. But in their sufferings, they begged you to help. From heaven you listened to their prayers and because of your great mercy, you sent leaders to rescue them.

²⁸But when they were at peace, they would turn against you, and you would hand them over to their enemies. Then they would beg for help, and because you are merciful, you rescued them over and over again.

²⁹You warned them to turn back and discover true life by obeying your laws. But they stubbornly refused and continued to sin.

³⁰For years, you were patient, and your Spirit warned them with messages spoken by your prophets. Still they

refused to listen, and you handed them over to their enemies.

³¹ But you are merciful and kind, and so you never forgot them or let them be destroyed.

³² Our God, you are powerful, fearsome, and faithful, always true to your word. So please keep in mind the terrible sufferings of our people, kings, leaders, priests, and prophets, from the time Assyria ruled until this very day.

³³ You have always been fair when you punished us for our sins.

³⁴ Our kings, leaders, and priests have never obeyed your commands or heeded your warnings.

³⁵ You blessed them with a kingdom and with an abundance of rich, fertile land, but they refused to worship you or turn from their evil.

³⁶ Now we are slaves in this fruitful land you gave to our ancestors.

³⁷ Its plentiful harvest is taken by kings you placed over us because of our sins. Our suffering is unbearable, because they do as they wish to us and our livestock.

³⁸And so, a firm agreement was made that had the official approval of the leaders, the Levites, and priests.

10¹As governor, I signed the agreement together with Zedekiah and the following priests:

²Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah.

³(10: 2)

⁴(10: 2)

⁵(10: 2)

⁶(10: 2)

⁷(10: 2)

⁸(10: 2)

⁹The Levites who signed were: Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui from the clan of Henadad, Kadmiel,

¹⁰Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

¹¹Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

¹²Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

¹³Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

¹⁴The leaders who signed were: Parosh, Pahath Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

¹⁵ Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,

¹⁶ Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

¹⁷ Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,

¹⁸ Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,

¹⁹ Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

²⁰ Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,

²¹ Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,

²² Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,

²³ Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,

²⁴ Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,

²⁵ Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,

²⁶ Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,

²⁷ Malluch, Harim, and Baanah.

²⁸ All of us, including priests, Levites, temple guards, singers, temple workers and leaders, together with our wives and children, have separated ourselves from the foreigners in this land and now enter into an agreement with a complete understanding of what we are doing. And so, we now place ourselves under the curse of the LORD our God, if we fail to obey his laws and teachings that were given to us by his servant Moses.

²⁹ (10: 28)

³⁰ We won't let our sons and daughters marry foreigners.

³¹ We won't buy goods or grain on the Sabbath or on any other sacred day, not even from foreigners. Every seven years we will let our fields rest, and we will cancel all debts.

³² Once a year we will each donate a small amount of silver to the temple of our God.

³³ This is to pay for the sacred bread, as well as for the daily sacrifices and special sacrifices such as those offered on the Sabbath and during the New Moon Festival and the other festivals. It will also pay for the sacrifices to forgive our sins and for all expenses connected with the worship of God in the temple.

³⁴ We have decided that the families of priests, Levites, and ordinary people will supply firewood for the temple each year, so that sacrifices can be offered on the altar, just as the LORD our God has commanded.

³⁵ Each year we will bring to the temple the first part of our harvest of grain and fruit.

³⁶ We will bring our firstborn sons and the firstborn males of our herds and flocks and offer them to the priests who

serve in the temple, because this is what is written in God's Law.

³⁷To the priests in the temple of our God, we will bring the bread dough from the first harvest, together with our best fruit, and an offering of new wine and olive oil. We will bring ten per cent of our grain harvest to those Levites who are responsible for collecting it in our towns.

³⁸A priest from the family of Aaron must be there when we give this to the Levites. Then the Levites will put one tenth of this part in the temple storeroom,

³⁹which is also the place for the sacred objects used by the priests, the temple guards, and the singers. Levites and everyone else must bring their gifts of grain, wine, and olive oil to this room. We will not neglect the temple of our God.

11 ¹The nation's leaders and their families settled in Jerusalem. But there was room for only one out of every ten of the remaining families, and so they asked God to show them who would live there.

²Then everyone else asked God to bless those who were willing to live in Jerusalem.

³Some of the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple workers, and the descendants of Solomon's servants lived on their own property in the towns of Judah. But the leaders of the province lived in Jerusalem with their families.

⁴From the Judah tribe, two leaders settled in Jerusalem with their relatives. One of them was Athaiah son of Uzziah. His ancestors were Zechariah, Amariah, Shephatiah, Mahalalel, and Perez, the son of Judah. From the descendants of Perez, four hundred and sixty-eight of the best men lived in Jerusalem. The other leader from Judah was Maaseiah the son of Baruch. His ancestors were Colhozeh, Hazaiah, Adaiah, Joiarib, Zechariah, and Shelah, the son of Judah.

⁵(11: 4)

⁶(11: 4)

⁷From the Benjamin tribe, three leaders settled in Jerusalem. The first was Sallu son of Meshullam, and the others were Gabbai and Sallai. Sallu's ancestors were

Joed, Pedaiah, Kolaiah, Maaseiah, Ithiel, and Jeshaiiah. Altogether, there were nine hundred and twenty-eight men of the Benjamin tribe living in Jerusalem.

⁸(11: 7)

⁹Joel son of Zichri was their leader, and Judah son of Hassenuah was second in command.

¹⁰Four priests settled in Jerusalem. The first was Jedaiah; he was the son of Joiarib and the uncle of Jachin.

¹¹The second priest to settle there was Seraiah son of Hilkiah. His ancestors were Meshullam, Zadok, Meraioth, and Ahitub, who had been a high priest.

¹²Altogether, there were eight hundred and twenty-two from his clan who served in the temple. The third priest to settle there was Adaiah son of Jeroham. His ancestors were Pelaliah, Amzi, Zechariah, Pashhur, and Malchijah.

¹³Altogether, there were two hundred and forty-two clan leaders among his relatives. The fourth priest to settle there was Amashsai son of Azarel. His ancestors were Ahzai, Meshillemoth, and Immer.

¹⁴Altogether, there were one hundred and twenty-eight brave warriors from their clans, and their leader was Zabdiel son of Haggadolim.

¹⁵Several Levites settled in Jerusalem. First, there was Shemaiah son of Hasshub. His ancestors were Azrikam, Hashabiah, and Bunni.

¹⁶Next, there were Shabbethai and Jozabad, who were in charge of the work outside the temple.

¹⁷Then there was Mattaniah son of Mica. His ancestors were Zabdi and Asaph. Mattaniah led the temple choir in the prayer of praise. Bakbukiah, who also settled in Jerusalem, was his assistant. Finally, there was Abda son of Shammua; his grandfather was Galal, and his great-grandfather was Jeduthun.

¹⁸Altogether, two hundred and eighty-four Levites settled in the holy city.

¹⁹One hundred and seventy-two temple guards settled in Jerusalem; their leaders were Akkub and Talmon.

²⁰The rest of the Israelites, including priests and Levites, lived on their own property in the other towns of Judah.

²¹ But the temple workers lived in the section of Jerusalem known as Ophel, and the two men in charge of them were Ziha and Gishpa.

²² Uzzi son of Bani was the leader of the Levites in Jerusalem. His grandfather was Hashabiah, his great-grandfather was Mattaniah, and his great-great-grandfather was Mica. He belonged to the Asaph clan that was in charge of the music for the temple services,

²³ though the daily choice of music and musicians was decided by royal decree of the Persian king.

²⁴ The people of Israel were represented at the Persian court by Pethahiah son of Meshezabel from the Zerah clan of the Judah tribe.

²⁵ Some of the people of Judah lived in the following towns near their farms:

Kiriath-Arba, Dibon, Jekabzeel,

²⁶ Jeshua, Moladah, Beth-Pelet,

²⁷ Hazar-Shual, Beersheba,

²⁸ Ziklag, Meconah,

²⁹ Enrimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth,

³⁰ Zanoah, Adullam, Lachish, and Azekah. In fact, they settled the towns

from Beersheba in the south to Hinnom Valley in the north.

³¹ The people of Benjamin lived in the towns of Geba, Michmash, Aija, Bethel with its nearby villages,

³² Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,

³³ Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,

³⁴ Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,

³⁵ Lod, and Ono, as well as in Craft Valley.

³⁶ Several groups of Levites from the territory of Judah were sent to live among the people of Benjamin.

12¹ Many priests and Levites had returned from Babylonia with Zerubbabel and Joshua as their leaders. Those priests were Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

² Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

³ Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

⁴ Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah,

⁵ Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,

⁶ Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,

⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and another Jedaiah. These were the leading priests and their assistants during the time of Joshua.

⁸The Levites who returned were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah. They and their assistants were responsible for the songs of praise, ⁹while Bakbukiah and Unno, together with their assistants, were responsible for the choral responses.

¹⁰Joshua was the father of Joiakim, the grandfather of Eliashib, and the great-grandfather of Joiada.

¹¹Joiada was the father of Jonathan and the grandfather of Jaddua.

¹²When Joiakim was high priest, the following priests were leaders of their clans: Meraiah of the Seraiah clan, Hananiah of Jeremiah,

¹³Meshullam of Ezra, Jehohanan of Amariah,

¹⁴Jonathan of Malluchi, Joseph of Shebaniah,

¹⁵Adna of Harim, Helkai of Meraioth,

¹⁶Zechariah of Iddo, Meshullam of Ginnethon,

¹⁷Zichri of Abijah, Piltai of Moadiah,

¹⁸Shammua of Bilgah, Jehonathan of Shemaiah,

¹⁹Mattenai of Joiarib, Uzzi of Jedaiah,

²⁰Kallai of Sallai, Eber of Amok,

²¹ Hashabiah of Hilkiah, and Nethanel of Jedaiah.

²² During the time of the high priests Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, and including the time that Darius was king of Persia, a record was kept of the heads of the Levite and priestly families.

²³ However, no official record was kept of the heads of the Levite clans after the death of Johanan, the grandson of Eliashib.

²⁴ Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua son of Kadmiel, and their assistants organized two choirs of Levites to offer praises to God, just as King David, the man of God, had commanded.

²⁵ Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were responsible for guarding the storerooms near the temple gates.

²⁶ All these men lived during the time of Joiakim and during the time that I was governor and Ezra, a teacher of the Law of Moses, was priest.

²⁷ When the city wall was dedicated, Levites from everywhere in Judah were invited to join in the celebration with songs of praise and with the music of

cymbals, small harps, and other stringed instruments.

²⁸The Levite singers lived in villages around Jerusalem, and so they came from there, as well as from the villages around Netophah, Beth-Gilgal, Geba, and Azmaveth.

²⁹ (12: 28)

³⁰The priests and Levites held special ceremonies to make themselves holy, and then they did the same for the rest of the people and for the gates and walls of the city.

³¹I brought the leaders of Judah to the top of the city wall and put them in charge of the two groups that were to march around on top of the wall, singing praises to God. One group marched to the right in the direction of Rubbish Gate.

³²Hoshaiah and half of the leaders followed them.

³³Then came the priests Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,

³⁴Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,

³⁵all of them blowing trumpets. Next, there was Zechariah of the Asaph clan

³⁶and his relatives, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They played musical instruments like those that had been played by David, the man of God. And they marched behind Ezra, the teacher of the Law.

³⁷When they reached Fountain Gate, they climbed the steps to David's City and went past his palace, before stopping at the Water Gate near the eastern wall of the city.

³⁸The second group of singers marched along the wall in the opposite direction, and I followed them, together with the other half of the leaders of Judah. We went past Oven Tower, Broad Wall,

³⁹Ephraim Gate, Old Gate, Fish Gate, Hananel Tower, Hundred Tower, and on to Sheep Gate. Finally, we stopped at Gate of the Guard,

⁴⁰where we stood in front of the temple with the other group, praising God. In the group with me were half of the leaders,

⁴¹as well as the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai,

Zechariah, and Hananiah, who were blowing trumpets.

⁴²Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer also stood there, as Jezrahiah led the singers.

⁴³God had made the people very happy, and so on that day they celebrated and offered many sacrifices. The women and children joined in the festivities, and joyful shouts could be heard far from the city of Jerusalem.

⁴⁴On that same day, some leaders were appointed to be responsible for the safekeeping of gifts for the temple and to be in charge of receiving the first part of the harvest and the ten per cent of the crops and livestock that was offered to God. These same leaders also collected the part of crops that the Law of Moses taught was to be given to the Levites. Everyone was pleased with the work of the priests and Levites,

⁴⁵when they performed the ceremonies to make people acceptable to worship God. And the singers and the temple guards did their jobs according to the

instructions given by David and his son Solomon.

⁴⁶In fact, ever since the days of David and Asaph, there had been song leaders and songs of praise and worship.

⁴⁷During the time when Zerubbabel and I were in charge, everyone in Israel gave what they were supposed to give for the daily needs of the singers and temple guards from the Levi tribe. Then the Levites would give the priests their share from what they had received.

13¹On that day when the Law of Moses was read aloud to everyone, it was discovered that Ammonites and Moabites were forbidden to belong to the people of God.

²This was because they had refused to give food and water to Israel and had hired Balaam to call down a curse on them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

³Following the reading of the Law of Moses, the people of Israel started sending away anyone who had any foreign ancestors.

⁴The priest Eliashib was a relative of Tobiah and had earlier been put in charge of the temple storerooms.

⁵So he let Tobiah live in one of these rooms, where all kinds of things had been stored—the grain offerings, incense, utensils for the temple, as well as the tenth of the grain, wine, and olive oil that had been given for the use of the Levites, singers, and temple guards, and the gifts for the priests.

⁶This happened in the thirty-second year that Artaxerxes ruled Babylonia. I was away from Jerusalem at the time, because I was visiting him. Later I received permission from the king

⁷to return to Jerusalem. Only then did I find out that Eliashib had done this terrible thing of letting Tobiah have a room in the temple.

⁸It upset me so much that I threw out every bit of Tobiah's furniture.

⁹Then I ordered the room to be cleaned and the temple utensils, the grain offerings, and the incense to be brought back into the room.

¹⁰I also found out that the temple singers and several other Levites had

returned to work on their farms, because they had not been given their share of the harvest.

¹¹I called the leaders together and angrily asked them, Why is the temple neglected? Then I told them to start doing their jobs.

¹²After this, everyone in Judah brought a tenth of their grain, wine, and olive oil to the temple storeroom.

¹³Finally, I appointed three men with good reputations to be in charge of what was brought there and to distribute it to the others. They were Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the teacher of the Law, and Pedaiah the Levite. Their assistant was Hanan, the son of Zaccur and the grandson of Mattaniah.

¹⁴I pray that my God will remember these good things that I have done for his temple and for those who worship there.

¹⁵I also noticed what the people of Judah were doing on the Sabbath. Not only were they trampling grapes to make wine, but they were harvesting their grain, grapes, figs, and other crops, and then loading these on donkeys to sell in

Jerusalem. So I warned them not to sell food on the Sabbath.

¹⁶People who had moved to Jerusalem from the city of Tyre were bringing in fish and other things to sell there on the Sabbath.

¹⁷I got angry and said to the leaders of Judah, This evil you are doing is an insult to the Sabbath!

¹⁸Didn't God punish us and this city because our ancestors did these very same things? And here you are, about to make God furious again by disgracing the Sabbath!

¹⁹I ordered the gates of Jerusalem to be closed on the eve of the Sabbath and not to be opened until after the Sabbath had ended. Then I put some of my own men in charge of the gates to make certain that nothing was brought in on the Sabbath.

²⁰Once or twice some merchants spent the night outside Jerusalem with their goods.

²¹But I warned them, If you do this again, I'll have you arrested. From then on, they did not come on the Sabbath.

²²I ordered the Levites to make themselves holy and to guard the gates on the Sabbath, so that it would be kept holy. God is truly merciful, and I pray that he will treat me with kindness and bless me for doing this.

²³I discovered that some Jewish men had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

²⁴About half of their children could not speak Hebrew they spoke only the language of Ashdod or some other foreign language.

²⁵So in my anger, I called down curses on those men. I had them beaten and even pulled out the hair of some of them. Then I made them promise: In the name of God we solemnly promise not to let our sons and daughters marry foreigners.

²⁶God dearly loved King Solomon of Israel and made him the greatest king on earth, but Solomon's foreign wives led him into sin.

²⁷So we will obey you and not rebel against our God by marrying foreign women.

²⁸Jehoiada, the son of the high priest Eliashib, had a son who had married a daughter of Sanballat from Horon, and I forced his son to leave.

²⁹I pray that God will punish them for breaking their priestly vows and disgracing the Levi tribe.

³⁰Then I made sure that the people were free from every foreign influence, and I assigned duties for the priests and Levites.

³¹I also arranged for the people to bring firewood to the altar each day and for them to bring the first part of their harvest to the temple. I pray that God will bless me for the good I have done.

Esther

1 ¹ King Xerxes of Persia lived in his capital city of Susa and ruled one hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia.

² (1: 1)

³ During the third year of his rule, Xerxes gave a big dinner for all his officials and officers. The governors and leaders of the provinces were also invited, and even the commanders of the Persian and Median armies came.

⁴ For one hundred and eighty days he showed off his wealth and spent a lot of money to impress his guests with the greatness of his kingdom.

⁵ King Xerxes soon gave another dinner and invited everyone in the city of Susa, no matter who they were. The eating and drinking lasted seven days in the beautiful palace gardens.

⁶ The area was decorated with blue and white cotton curtains tied back with purple linen cords that ran through silver rings fastened to marble columns.

Couches of gold and silver rested on pavement that had all kinds of designs made from costly bright-coloured stones and marble and mother-of-pearl.

⁷The guests drank from gold cups, and each cup had a different design. The king was generous

⁸and said to them, Drink all you want! Then he told his servants, Keep their cups full.

⁹While the men were enjoying themselves, Queen Vashti gave the women a big dinner inside the royal palace.

¹⁰By the seventh day, King Xerxes was feeling happy because of so much wine. And he asked his seven personal servants, Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas,

¹¹to bring Queen Vashti to him. The king wanted her to wear her crown and let his people and his officials see how beautiful she was.

¹²The king's servants told Queen Vashti what he had said, but she refused to go to him, and this made him terribly angry.

¹³The king called in the seven highest officials of Persia and Media. They were

Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. These men were very wise and understood all the laws and customs of the country, and the king always asked them what they thought about such matters.

¹⁴(1:13)

¹⁵The king said to them, Queen Vashti refused to come to me when I sent my servants for her. What does the law say I should do about that?

¹⁶Then Memucan told the king and the officials: Your Majesty, Queen Vashti has not only embarrassed you, but she has insulted your officials and everyone else in all the provinces.

¹⁷The women in the kingdom will hear about this, and they will refuse to respect their husbands. They will say, If Queen Vashti doesn't obey her husband, why should we?

¹⁸Before this day is over, the wives of the officials of Persia and Media will find out what Queen Vashti has done, and they will refuse to obey their husbands. They won't respect their husbands, and their husbands will be angry with them.

¹⁹Your Majesty, if you agree, you should write for the Medes and Persians a law that can never be changed. This law would keep Queen Vashti from ever seeing you again. Then you could let someone who respects you be queen in her place.

²⁰When the women in your great kingdom hear about this new law, they will respect their husbands, no matter if they are rich or poor.

²¹King Xerxes and his officials liked what Memucan had said,

²²and he sent letters to all his provinces. Each letter was written in the language of the province to which it was sent, and it said that husbands should have complete control over their wives and children.

2¹After a while, King Xerxes got over being angry. But he kept thinking about what Vashti had done and the law that he had written because of her.

²Then the king's personal servants said: Your Majesty, a search must be made to find you some beautiful young women.

³You can select officers in every province to bring them to the place where you keep your wives in the capital city of Susa. Put your servant Hegai in charge of them since that is his job. He can see to it that they are given the proper beauty treatments.

⁴Then let the young woman who pleases you most take Vashti's place as queen. King Xerxes liked these suggestions, and he followed them.

⁵At this time a Jew named Mordecai was living in Susa. His father was Jair, and his grandfather Shimei was the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin.

⁶Kish was one of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem, when he took King Jeconiah of Judah to Babylonia.

⁷Mordecai had a very beautiful cousin named Esther, whose Hebrew name was Hadassah. He had raised her as his own daughter, after her father and mother died.

⁸When the king ordered the search for beautiful women, many were taken to the king's palace in Susa, and Esther was

one of them. Hegai was put in charge of all the women,

⁹and from the first day, Esther was his favourite. He began her beauty treatments at once. He also gave her plenty of food and seven special maids from the king's palace, and they had the best rooms.

¹⁰Mordecai had warned Esther not to tell anyone that she was a Jew, and she obeyed him.

¹¹He was anxious to see how Esther was getting on and to learn what had happened to her. So each day he would walk back and forth in front of the court where the women lived.

¹²The young women were given beauty treatments for one whole year. The first six months their skin was rubbed with olive oil and myrrh, and the last six months it was treated with perfumes and cosmetics. Then each of them spent the night alone with King Xerxes.

¹³When a young woman went to the king, she could wear whatever clothes or jewellery she chose from the women's living quarters.

¹⁴In the evening she would go to the king, and the following morning she would go to the place where his wives stayed after being with him. There a man named Shaashgaz was in charge of the king's wives. Only the ones the king wanted and asked for by name could go back to the king.

¹⁵Xerxes had been king for seven years when Esther's turn came to go to him during Tebeth, the tenth month of the year. Everyone liked Esther. The king's personal servant Hegai was in charge of the women, and Esther trusted Hegai and asked him what she ought to take with her.

¹⁶(2: 15)

¹⁷Xerxes liked Esther more than he did any of the other young women. None of them pleased him as much as she did, and straight away he fell in love with her and crowned her queen in place of Vashti.

¹⁸In honour of Esther he gave a big dinner for his leaders and officials. Then he declared a holiday everywhere in his kingdom and gave expensive gifts.

¹⁹When the young women were brought together again, Esther's cousin Mordecai had become a palace official.

²⁰He had told Esther never to tell anyone that she was a Jew, and she obeyed him, just as she had always done.

²¹Bigthana and Teresh were the two men who guarded King Xerxes' rooms, but they got angry with the king and decided to kill him.

²²Mordecai found out about their plans and asked Queen Esther to tell the king what he had found out.

²³King Xerxes learnt that Mordecai's report was true, and he had the two men hanged. Then the king had all of this written down in his record book as he watched.

3¹ Later, King Xerxes promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha to the highest position in his kingdom. Haman was a descendant of Agag,

²and the king had given orders for his officials at the royal gate to honour Haman by kneeling down to him. All of them obeyed except Mordecai.

³When the other officials asked Mordecai why he disobeyed the king's command,

⁴he said, Because I am a Jew. They spoke to him for several days about kneeling down, but he still refused to obey. Finally, they reported this to Haman, to find out if he would let Mordecai get away with it.

⁵Haman was furious to learn that Mordecai refused to kneel down and honour him.

⁶And when he found out that Mordecai was a Jew, he knew that killing only Mordecai was not enough. Every Jew in the whole kingdom had to be killed.

⁷It was now the twelfth year of the rule of King Xerxes. During Nisan, the first month of the year, Haman said, Find out the best time for me to do this. The time chosen was Adar, the twelfth month.

⁸Then Haman went to the king and said: Your Majesty, there are some people who live all over your kingdom and won't have a thing to do with anyone else. They have customs that are different from everyone else's, and they

refuse to obey your laws. We would be better off to get rid of them!

⁹Why not give orders for all of them to be killed? I can promise that you will get a great deal of silver for your treasury.

¹⁰The king handed his official ring to Haman, who hated the Jews, and the king told him,

¹¹Do what you want with those people! You can keep their money.

¹²On the thirteenth day of Nisan, Haman called in the king's secretaries and ordered them to write letters in every language used in the kingdom. The letters were written in the name of the king and sealed by using the king's own ring. At once they were sent to the king's highest officials, the governors of each province, and the leaders of the different nations in the kingdom of Xerxes.

¹³The letters were taken by messengers to every part of the kingdom, and this is what was said in the letters: On the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month, all Jewish men, women, and children are to be killed. And their property is to be taken.

¹⁴ King Xerxes gave orders for these letters to be posted where they could be seen by everyone all over the kingdom. The king's command was obeyed, and one of the letters was read aloud to the people in the walled city of Susa. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink together, but no one in the city could work out what was going on.

¹⁵ (3: 14)

4¹ When Mordecai heard about the letter, he tore his clothes in sorrow and put on sackcloth. Then he covered his head with ashes and went through the city, crying and weeping.

² But he could go only as far as the palace gate, because no one wearing sackcloth was allowed inside the palace.

³ In every province where the king's orders were read, the Jews cried and mourned, and they went without eating. Many of them even put on sackcloth and sat in ashes.

⁴ When Esther's servant girls and her other servants told her what Mordecai was doing, she became very upset and sent Mordecai some clothes to wear in

place of the sackcloth. But he refused to take them.

⁵ Esther had a servant named Hathach, who had been given to her by the king. So she called him in and said, Find out what's wrong with Mordecai and why he's acting this way.

⁶ Hathach went to Mordecai in the city square in front of the palace gate,

⁷ and Mordecai told him everything that had happened. He also told him how much money Haman had promised to add to the king's treasury, if all the Jews were killed.

⁸ Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the orders for the murder of the Jews and told him that these had been read in Susa. He said, Show this to Esther and explain what it means. Ask her to go to the king and beg him to have pity on her people, the Jews!

⁹ Hathach went back to Esther and told her what Mordecai had said.

¹⁰ She answered, Tell Mordecai

¹¹ there is a law about going in to see the king, and all his officials and his people know about this law. Anyone who goes in to see the king without being

invited by him will be put to death. The only way that anyone can be saved is for the king to hold out the gold sceptre to that person. And it's been thirty days since he has asked for me.

¹²When Mordecai was told what Esther had said,

¹³he sent back this reply, Don't think that you will escape being killed with the rest of the Jews, just because you live in the king's palace.

¹⁴If you don't speak up now, we will somehow get help, but you and your family will be killed. It could be that you were made queen for a time like this!

¹⁵Esther sent a message to Mordecai, saying,

¹⁶Bring together all the Jews in Susa and tell them to go without eating for my sake! Don't eat or drink for three days and nights. My servant girls and I will do the same. Then I will go in to see the king, even if it means I must die.

¹⁷Mordecai did everything Esther told him to do.

5¹ Three days later, Esther dressed in her royal robes and went to the inner court of the palace in front of the throne.

The king was sitting there, facing the open doorway.

²He was happy to see Esther, and he held out the gold sceptre to her. When Esther came up and touched the tip of the sceptre,

³the king said, Esther, what brings you here? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom.

⁴Esther answered, Your Majesty, please come with Haman to a dinner I will prepare for you later today.

⁵The king said to his servants, Hurry and get Haman, so we can accept Esther's invitation. The king and Haman went to Esther's dinner,

⁶and while they were drinking wine, the king asked her, What can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom.

⁷Esther replied, Your Majesty, if you really care for me and are willing to do what I want, please come again tomorrow with Haman to the dinner I will prepare for you. At that time I will answer Your Majesty's question.

⁸(5: 7)

⁹Haman was feeling great as he left. But when he saw Mordecai at the palace gate, he noticed that Mordecai did not stand up or show him any respect. This made Haman really angry,

¹⁰but he did not say a thing. When Haman got home, he called together his friends and his wife Zeresh

¹¹and started boasting about his great wealth and all his sons. He told them the many ways that the king had honoured him and how all the other officials and leaders had to respect him.

¹²Haman added, That's not all! Besides the king himself, I'm the only person Queen Esther invited for dinner. She has also invited the king and me to dinner tomorrow.

¹³But none of this makes me happy, as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the palace gate.

¹⁴Haman's wife and friends said to him, Have a tower built about twenty-two metres high, and tomorrow morning ask the king to hang Mordecai there. Then later, you can have dinner with the king and enjoy yourself. This seemed like a

good idea to Haman, and he had the tower built.

6¹ That night the king could not sleep, and he got a servant to read him the records of what had happened since he had been king.

² When the servant read how Mordecai had kept Bigthana and Teresh from killing the king,

³ the king asked, What has been done to reward Mordecai for this? Nothing, Your Majesty! the king's servants replied.

⁴ About this time, Haman came in to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on the tower he had built. The king saw him and asked, Who is that man waiting in front of the throne room?

⁵ The king's servants answered, Your Majesty, it is Haman. Tell him to come in, the king commanded.

⁶ When Haman entered the room, the king asked him, What should I do for a man I want to honour? Haman was sure that he was the one the king wanted to honour.

⁷ So he replied, Your Majesty, if you wish to honour a man,

⁸get someone to bring him one of your own robes and one of your own horses with a fancy head-dress.

⁹Tell one of your highest officials to place your robe on this man and lead him through the streets on your horse, while someone shouts, This is how the king honours a man!

¹⁰The king replied, Hurry and do just what you have said! Don't forget a thing. Get the robe and the horse for Mordecai the Jew, who is on duty at the palace gate!

¹¹Haman got the king's robe and put it on Mordecai. He led him through the city on the horse and shouted as he went, This is how the king honours a man!

¹²Afterwards, Mordecai returned to his duties at the palace gate, and Haman hurried home, hiding his face in shame.

¹³Haman told his wife and friends what had happened. Then his wife and his advisers said, If Mordecai is a Jew, this is just the beginning of your troubles! You will end up a ruined man.

¹⁴They were still talking, when the king's servants came and quickly took

Haman to the dinner that Esther had prepared.

7¹ The king and Haman were dining with Esther

² and drinking wine during the second dinner, when the king again said, Esther, what can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom!

³ Esther answered, Your Majesty, if you really care for me and are willing to help, you can save me and my people. That's what I really want,

⁴ because a reward has been promised to anyone who kills my people. Your Majesty, if we were merely going to be sold as slaves, I would not have bothered you.

⁵ Who would dare to do such a thing? the king asked.

⁶ Esther replied, That evil Haman is the one out to get us! Haman was terrified, as he looked at the king and the queen.

⁷ The king was so angry that he got up, left his wine, and went out into the palace garden. Haman realized that the king had already decided what to do with

him, and he stayed and begged Esther to save his life.

⁸Just as the king came back into the room, Haman got down on his knees beside Esther, who was lying on the couch. The king shouted, Now you're even trying to rape my queen here in my own palace! As soon as the king said this, his servants covered Haman's head.

⁹Then Harbona, one of the king's personal servants, said, Your Majesty, Haman built a tower twenty-two metres high beside his house, so he could hang Mordecai on it. And Mordecai is the very one who spoke up and saved your life. Hang Haman from his own tower! the king commanded.

¹⁰Straight away, Haman was hanged on the tower he had built to hang Mordecai, and the king calmed down.

8¹ Before the end of the day, King Xerxes gave Esther everything that had belonged to Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Esther told the king that Mordecai was her cousin. So the king made Mordecai one of his highest officials

²and gave him the royal ring that Haman had worn. Then Esther put Mordecai in charge of Haman's property.

³Once again Esther went to speak to the king. This time she fell down at his feet, crying and begging, Please stop Haman's evil plan to have the Jews killed!

⁴King Xerxes held out the golden sceptre to Esther,

⁵and she got up and said, Your Majesty, I know that you will do the right thing and that you really love me. Please stop what Haman has planned. He has already sent letters demanding that the Jews in all your provinces be killed,

⁶and I can't bear to see my people and my own relatives destroyed.

⁷King Xerxes then said to Esther and Mordecai, I have already ordered Haman to be hanged and his house given to Esther, because of his evil plans to kill the Jews.

⁸I now give you permission to make a law that will save the lives of your people. You may use my ring to seal the law, so that it can never be changed.

⁹On the twenty-third day of Sivan, the third month, the king's secretaries wrote the law. They obeyed Mordecai and wrote to the Jews, the rulers, the governors, and the officials of all one hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia. The letters were written in every language used in the kingdom, including the Jewish language.

¹⁰They were written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with his ring. Then they were taken by messengers who rode the king's finest and fastest horses.

¹¹In these letters the king said: On the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month, the Jews in every city and province will be allowed to get together and defend themselves. They may destroy any army that attacks them, and they may kill all their enemies, including women and children. They may also take everything that belongs to their enemies. A copy of this law is to be posted in every province and read by everyone.

¹²(8: 11)

¹³(8: 11)

¹⁴ Then the king ordered his messengers to take their fastest horses and deliver the law as quickly as possible to every province. When Mordecai left, he was wearing clothes fit for a king. He wore blue and white robes, a large gold crown, and a cape made of fine linen and purple cloth. After the law was announced in Susa, everyone shouted and cheered,
¹⁵ (8:14)

¹⁶ and the Jews were no longer afraid. In fact, they were very happy and felt that they had won a victory.

¹⁷ In every province and city where the law was sent, the Jews had parties and celebrated. Many of the people in the provinces accepted the Jewish religion, because they were now afraid of the Jews.

9¹ The first law that the king had made was to be followed on the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month. This was the very day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to do away with them. But the Jews turned things around,
² and in the cities of every province they came together to attack their enemies.

Everyone was afraid of the Jews, and no one could do anything to oppose them.

³The leaders of the provinces, the rulers, the governors, and the court officials were afraid of Mordecai and took sides with the Jews.

⁴Everyone in the provinces knew that the king had promoted him and had given him a lot of power.

⁵The Jews took their swords and did away with their enemies, without showing any mercy.

⁶They killed five hundred people in Susa, but they did not take anything that belonged to the ones they killed. Haman had been one of the worst enemies of the Jews, and ten of his sons were among those who were killed. Their names were Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha.

⁷ (9: 6)

⁸ (9: 6)

⁹ (9: 6)

¹⁰ (9: 6)

¹¹ Later that day, someone told the king how many people had been killed in Susa.

¹²Then he told Esther, Five hundred people, including Haman's ten sons, have been killed in Susa alone. If that many were killed here, what must have happened in the provinces? Is there anything else you want done? Just tell me, and it will be done.

¹³Esther answered, Your Majesty, please let the Jews in Susa fight to defend themselves tomorrow, just as they did today. And order the bodies of Haman's ten sons to be hanged in public.

¹⁴King Xerxes did what Esther had requested, and the bodies of Haman's sons were hung in Susa.

¹⁵Then on the fourteenth day of Adar the Jews of the city got together and killed three hundred more people. But they still did not take anything that belonged to their enemies.

¹⁶On the thirteenth day of Adar, the Jews in the provinces had come together to defend themselves. They killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies, but the Jews did not take anything that belonged to the ones they killed. Then on the fourteenth day of the month the Jews celebrated with a feast.

¹⁷ (9:16)

¹⁸ On the fifteenth day of the month the Jews in Susa held a holiday and celebrated, after killing their enemies on the thirteenth and the fourteenth.

¹⁹ This is why the Jews in the villages now celebrate on the fourteenth day of the month. It is a joyful holiday that they celebrate by feasting and sending gifts of food to each other.

²⁰ Mordecai wrote down everything that had happened. Then he sent letters to the Jews everywhere in the provinces

²¹ and told them: Each year you must celebrate on both the fourteenth and the fifteenth of Adar,

²² the days when we Jews defeated our enemies. Remember this month as a time when our sorrow was turned to joy, and celebration took the place of crying. Celebrate by having parties and by giving to the poor and by sharing gifts of food with each other.

²³ They followed Mordecai's instructions and set aside these two days every year as a time of celebration.

²⁴ Haman was the son of Hammedatha and a descendant of Agag. He hated the

Jews so much that he planned to destroy them, but he wanted to find out the best time to do it. So he cast lots.

²⁵ Esther went to King Xerxes and asked him to save her people. Then the king gave written orders for Haman and his sons to be punished in the same terrible way that Haman had in mind for the Jews. So they were hanged.

²⁶ Mordecai's letter had said that the Jews must celebrate for two days because of what had happened to them. This time of celebration is called Purim, which is the Hebrew word for the lots that were cast.

²⁷ Now every year the Jews set aside these two days for having parties and celebrating, just as they were told to do.

²⁸ From now on, all Jewish families must remember to celebrate Purim on these two days each year.

²⁹ Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, wanted to give full authority to Mordecai's letter about the Festival of Purim, and with his help she wrote a letter about the feast.

³⁰ Copies of this letter were sent to Jews in the one hundred and twenty-seven

provinces of King Xerxes. In the letter they said: We pray that all of you will live in peace and safety.

³¹You and your descendants must always remember to celebrate Purim at the time and in the way that we have said. You must also follow the instructions that we have given you about mourning and going without eating.

³²These laws about Purim are written by the authority of Queen Esther.

10¹King Xerxes made everyone in his kingdom pay taxes, even those in lands across the sea.

²All the great and famous things that King Xerxes did are written in the record books of the kings of Media and Persia. These records also tell about the honours that the king gave to Mordecai.

³Next to the king himself, Mordecai was the highest official in the kingdom. He was a popular leader of the Jews, because he helped them in many ways and would even speak to the king for them.

Job

1 ¹ Many years ago, a man named Job lived in the land of Uz. He was a truly good person, who respected God and refused to do evil.

² Job had seven sons and three daughters.

³ He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred pair of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and a large number of servants. He was the richest person in the East.

⁴ Job's sons took turns having feasts in their homes, and they always invited their three sisters to join in the eating and drinking.

⁵ After each feast, Job would send for his children and perform a ceremony, as a way of asking God to forgive them for any wrongs they might have done. He would get up early the next morning and offer a sacrifice for each of them, just in case they had sinned or silently cursed God.

⁶One day, when the angels had gathered around the LORD, and Satan was there with them,

⁷the LORD asked, Satan, where have you been? Satan replied, I have been going all over the earth.

⁸Then the LORD asked, What do you think of my servant Job? No one on earth is like him he is a truly good person, who respects me and refuses to do evil.

⁹Why shouldn't he respect you? Satan remarked.

¹⁰You are like a wall protecting not only him, but his entire family and all his property. You make him successful in whatever he does, and his flocks and herds are everywhere.

¹¹Try taking away everything he owns, and he will curse you to your face.

¹²The LORD replied, All right, Satan, do what you want with anything that belongs to him, but don't harm Job. Then Satan left.

¹³Job's sons and daughters were having a feast in the home of his eldest son,

¹⁴when someone rushed up to Job and said, While your servants were ploughing

with your oxen, and your donkeys were nearby eating grass,

¹⁵a gang of Sabeans attacked and stole the oxen and donkeys! Your other servants were killed, and I was the only one who escaped to tell you.

¹⁶That servant was still speaking, when a second one came running up and saying, God sent down a fire that killed your sheep and your servants. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.

¹⁷Before that servant finished speaking, a third one raced up and said, Three gangs of Chaldeans attacked and stole your camels! All your other servants were killed, and I am the only one who escaped to tell you.

¹⁸That servant was still speaking, when a fourth one dashed up and said, Your children were having a feast and drinking wine at the home of your eldest son,

¹⁹when suddenly a storm from the desert blew the house down, crushing all your children. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.

²⁰When Job heard this, he tore his clothes and shaved his head because of

his great sorrow. He knelt on the ground, then worshipped God

²¹ and said: We bring nothing at birth; we take nothing with us at death. The LORD alone gives and takes. Praise the name of the LORD!

²² In spite of everything, Job did not sin or accuse God of doing wrong.

2¹ When the angels gathered around the LORD again, Satan was there with them,

² and the LORD asked, Satan, where have you been? Satan replied, I have been going all over the earth.

³ Then the LORD asked, What do you think of my servant Job? No one on earth is like him; he is a truly good person, who respects me and refuses to do evil. And he hasn't changed, even though you persuaded me to destroy him for no reason.

⁴ Satan answered, There's no pain like your own. People will do anything to stay alive.

⁵ Try striking Job's own body with pain, and he will curse you to your face.

⁶All right! the LORD replied. Make Job suffer as much as you want, but just don't kill him.

⁷Satan left and caused painful sores to break out all over Job's body from head to toe.

⁸Then Job sat on the ash-heap to show his sorrow. And while he was scraping his sores with a broken piece of pottery,

⁹his wife asked, Why do you still trust God? Why don't you curse him and die?

¹⁰Job replied, Don't talk like a fool! If we accept blessings from God, we must accept trouble as well. In all that happened, Job never once said anything against God.

¹¹Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuah, and Zophar from Naamah were three of Job's friends, and they heard about his troubles. So they agreed to visit Job and comfort him.

¹²When they came near enough to see Job, they could hardly recognize him. And in their great sorrow, they tore their clothes, then sprinkled dust on their heads and cried bitterly.

¹³For seven days and nights, they sat silently on the ground beside him,

because they realized what terrible pain he was in.

3¹ Finally, Job cursed the day of his birth

² by saying to God:

³ Blot out the day of my birth and the night when my parents created a son.

⁴ Forget about that day, cover it with darkness,

⁵ and send thick, gloomy shadows to fill it with dread.

⁶ Erase that night from the calendar and conceal it with darkness.

⁷ Don't let children be created or joyful shouts be heard ever again in that night.

⁸ Let those with magic powers place a curse on that day.

⁹ Darken its morning stars and remove all hope of light,

¹⁰ because it let me be born into a world of trouble.

¹¹ Why didn't I die at birth?

¹² Why was I accepted and allowed to nurse at my mother's breast?

¹³ Now I would be at peace in the silent world below

¹⁴ with kings and their advisers whose palaces lie in ruins,

¹⁵and with rulers once rich with silver and gold.

¹⁶I wish I had been born dead and then buried, never to see the light of day.

¹⁷In the world of the dead, the wicked and the weary rest without a worry.

¹⁸Everyone is there where captives and slaves are free at last.

¹⁹(3: 18)

²⁰Why does God let me live when life is miserable and so bitter?

²¹I keep longing for death more than I would seek a valuable treasure.

²²Nothing could make me happier than to be in the grave.

²³Why do I go on living when God has me surrounded, and I can't see the road?

²⁴Moaning and groaning are my food and drink,

²⁵and my worst fears have all come true.

²⁶I have no peace or rest only troubles and worries.

4¹ Eliphaz from Teman said:

²Please be patient and listen to what I have to say.

³Remember how your words have guided and encouraged many in need.

⁴ (4: 3)

⁵ But now you feel discouraged when struck by trouble.

⁶ You respect God and live right, so don't lose hope!

⁷ No truly innocent person has ever died young.

⁸ In my experience, only those who plant seeds of evil harvest trouble,

⁹ and then they are swept away by the angry breath of God.

¹⁰ They may roar and growl like powerful lions. But when God breaks their teeth,

¹¹ they starve, and their children are scattered.

¹² A secret was told to me in a faint whisper

¹³ I was overcome by sleep, but disturbed by dreams;

¹⁴ I trembled with fear,

¹⁵ and my hair stood on end, as a wind blew past my face.

¹⁶ It stopped and stood still. Then a form appeared a shapeless form. And from the silence, I heard a voice say,

¹⁷ No humans are innocent in the eyes of God their Creator.

¹⁸He finds fault with his servants and even with his angels.

¹⁹Humans are formed from clay and are fragile as moths, so what chance do you have?

²⁰Born after daybreak, you die before nightfall and disappear for ever.

²¹Your tent pegs are pulled up, and you leave this life, having gained no wisdom.

5¹ Job, call out for help and see if an angel comes!

²Envy and jealousy will kill a stupid fool.

³I have seen fools take root. But God sends a curse, suddenly uprooting them

⁴and leaving their children helpless in court.

⁵Then hungry and greedy people gobble up their crops and grab their wealth.

⁶Our suffering isn't caused by the failure of crops;

⁷it's all part of life, like sparks shooting skyward.

⁸Job, if I were you, I would ask God for help.

⁹His miracles are marvellous, more than we can count.

¹⁰ God sends showers on earth and waters the fields.

¹¹ He protects the sorrowful and lifts up those who have been disgraced.

¹² God swiftly traps the wicked in their own evil schemes, and their wisdom fails.

¹³ (5: 12)

¹⁴ Darkness is their only companion, hiding their path at midday.

¹⁵ God rescues the needy from the words of the wicked and the fist of the mighty.

¹⁶ The poor are filled with hope, and injustice is silenced.

¹⁷ Consider yourself fortunate if God All-Powerful chooses to correct you.

¹⁸ He may cause injury and pain, but he will bandage and heal your cuts and bruises.

¹⁹ God will protect you from harm, no matter how often trouble may strike.

²⁰ In times of war and famine, God will keep you safe.

²¹ You will be sheltered, without fear of hurtful words or any other weapon.

²²You will laugh at the threat of destruction and famine. And you won't be afraid of wild animals

²³they will no longer be fierce, and your rocky fields will become friendly.

²⁴Your home will be secure, and your sheep will be safe.

²⁵You will have more descendants than there are blades of grass on the face of the earth.

²⁶You will live a long life, and your body will be strong until the day you die.

²⁷Our experience has proved these things to be true, so listen and learn.

¹Job said:

6 ²It's impossible to weigh my misery and grief!

³They outweigh the sand along the beach, and that's why I have spoken without thinking first.

⁴The fearsome arrows of God All-Powerful have filled my soul with their poison.

⁵Do oxen and wild donkeys cry out in distress unless they are hungry?

⁶What is food without salt? What is more tasteless than the white of an egg?

⁷ That's how my food tastes, and my appetite is gone.

⁸ How I wish that God would answer my prayer and do away with me.

⁹ (6: 8)

¹⁰ Then I would be comforted, knowing that in all my pain I have never disobeyed God.

¹¹ Why should I patiently hope when my strength is gone?

¹² I am not strong as stone or bronze,

¹³ and I have finally reached the end of my rope.

¹⁴ My friends, I am desperate, and you should help me, even if I no longer respect God All-Powerful.

¹⁵ But you are treacherous as streams that swell with melting snow,

¹⁶ (6: 15)

¹⁷ then suddenly disappear in the summer heat.

¹⁸ I am like a caravan, lost in the desert while searching for water.

¹⁹ Caravans from Tema and Sheba

²⁰ thought they would find water. But they were disappointed,

²¹ just as I am with you. Only one look at my suffering, and you run away scared.

²² Have I ever asked any of you to give me a gift

²³ or to purchase my freedom from brutal enemies?

²⁴ What have I done wrong? Show me, and I will keep quiet.

²⁵ The truth is always painful, but your arguments prove nothing.

²⁶ Here I am desperate, and you consider my words as worthless as wind.

²⁷ Why, you would sell an orphan or your own neighbour!

²⁸ Look me straight in the eye; I won't lie to you.

²⁹ Stop accusing me falsely; my reputation is at stake.

³⁰ I know right from wrong, and I am not telling lies.

7 ¹ Why is life so hard? Why do we suffer?

² We are slaves in search of shade; we are labourers longing for our wages.

³ God has made my days drag on and my nights miserable.

⁴ I pray for night to end, but it stretches out while I toss and turn.

⁵ My parched skin is covered with worms, dirt, and sores,

⁶ and my days are running out quicker than the thread of a fast-moving needle.

⁷ I beg you, God, don't forget! My life is just a breath, and trouble lies ahead.

⁸ I will vanish from sight, and no one, including you, will ever see me again.

⁹ I will disappear in the grave or vanish from sight like a passing cloud.

¹⁰ Never will I return home; soon I will be forgotten.

¹¹ And so, I cry out to you in agony and distress.

¹² Am I the sea or a sea monster? Is that why you imprison me?

¹³ I go to bed, hoping for rest,

¹⁴ but you torture me with terrible dreams.

¹⁵ I'd rather choke to death than live in this body. Leave me alone and let me die; my life has no meaning.

¹⁶ (7: 15)

¹⁷ What makes you so concerned about us humans?

¹⁸Why do you test us from sunrise to sunset?

¹⁹Won't you look away just long enough for me to swallow?

²⁰Why do you watch us so closely? What's it to you, if I sin? Why am I your target and such a heavy burden?

²¹Why do you refuse to forgive? Soon you won't find me, because I'll be dead.

8¹ Bildad from Shuah said:

²How long will you talk and keep saying nothing?

³Does God All-Powerful stand in the way of justice?

⁴He made your children pay for their sins.

⁵So why don't you turn to him

⁶and start living right? Then he will decide to rescue and restore you to your place of honour.

⁷Your future will be brighter by far than your past.

⁸Our ancestors were wise, so learn from them.

⁹Our own time has been short, like a fading shadow, and we know very little.

¹⁰But they will instruct you with great understanding.

¹¹ Papyrus reeds grow healthy only in a swamp,

¹² and if the water dries up, they die sooner than grass.

¹³ Such is the hopeless future of all who turn from God

¹⁴ and trust in something as frail as a spider's web

¹⁵ they take hold and fall because it's so flimsy.

¹⁶ Sinful people are like plants with spreading roots and plenty of sun and water.

¹⁷ They wrap their roots tightly around rocks.

¹⁸ But once they are pulled up, they have no more place;

¹⁹ their life slips away, and other plants grow there.

²⁰ We know God doesn't reject an innocent person or help a sinner.

²¹ And so, he will make you happy and give you something to smile about.

²² But your evil enemies will be put to shame and disappear for ever.

9¹ Job said:

² What you say is true. No human is innocent in the sight of God.

³ Not once in a thousand times could we win our case if we took him to court.

⁴ God is wise and powerful who could possibly oppose him and win?

⁵ When God becomes angry, he can move mountains before they even know it.

⁶ God can shake the earth loose from its foundations

⁷ or command the sun and stars to hold back their light.

⁸ God alone stretched out the sky, stepped on the sea,

⁹ and set the stars in place the Great Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the stars in the southern sky.

¹⁰ Of all the miracles God works, we cannot understand a single one.

¹¹ God walks right past me, without making a sound.

¹² And if he grabs something, who can stop him or raise a question?

¹³ When God showed his anger, the servants of the sea monster fell at his feet.

¹⁴ How, then, could I possibly argue my case with God?

¹⁵Even though I am innocent, I can only beg for mercy.

¹⁶And if God came into court when I called him, he would not hear my case.

¹⁷He would strike me with a storm and increase my injuries for no reason at all.

¹⁸Before I could get my breath, my miseries would multiply.

¹⁹God is much stronger than I am, and who would call me into court to give me justice?

²⁰Even if I were innocent, God would prove me wrong.

²¹I am not guilty, but I no longer care what happens to me.

²²What difference does it make? God destroys the innocent along with the guilty.

²³When a good person dies a sudden death, God sits back and laughs.

²⁴And who else but God blindfolds the judges, then lets the wicked take over the earth?

²⁵My life is speeding by, without a hope of happiness.

²⁶Each day passes swifter than a sailing ship or an eagle swooping down.

²⁷ Sometimes I try to be cheerful and to stop complaining,

²⁸ but my sufferings frighten me, because I know that God still considers me guilty.

²⁹ So what's the use of trying to prove my innocence?

³⁰ Even if I washed myself with the strongest soap,

³¹ God would throw me into a pit of stinking slime, leaving me disgusting to my clothes.

³² God isn't a mere human like me. I can't put him on trial.

³³ Who could possibly judge between the two of us?

³⁴ Can someone snatch away the stick God carries to frighten me?

³⁵ Then I could speak up without fear of him, but for now, I cannot speak.

10¹ I am sick of life! And from my deep despair, I complain to you, my God.

² Don't just condemn me! Point out my sin.

³ Why do you take such delight in destroying those you created and in smiling on sinners?

⁴ Do you look at things the way we humans do?

⁵ Is your life as short as ours?

⁶ Is that why you are so quick to find fault with me?

⁷ You know I am innocent, but who can defend me against you?

⁸ Will you now destroy someone you created?

⁹ Remember that you moulded me like a piece of clay. So don't turn me back into dust once again.

¹⁰ As cheese is made from milk, you created my body from a tiny drop.

¹¹ Then you tied my bones together with muscles and covered them with flesh and skin.

¹² You, the source of my life, showered me with kindness and watched over me.

¹³ You have not explained all your mysteries,

¹⁴ but you catch and punish me each time I sin.

¹⁵ Guilty or innocent, I am condemned and ashamed because of my troubles.

¹⁶ No matter how hard I try, you keep hunting me down like a powerful lion.

¹⁷You never stop accusing me; you become furious and attack over and over again.

¹⁸Why did you let me be born? I would rather have died before birth

¹⁹and been carried to the grave without ever breathing.

²⁰I have only a few days left. Why don't you leave me alone? Let me find some relief,

²¹before I travel to the land of darkness and despair, the place of no return.

²²(10: 21)

11 ¹Zophar from Naamah said:
²So much foolish talk cannot go unanswered.

³Your words have silenced others and made them ashamed; now it is only right for you to be put to shame.

⁴You claim to be innocent and argue that your beliefs are acceptable to God.

⁵But I wish he would speak

⁶and let you know that wisdom has many different sides. You would then discover that God has punished you less than you deserve.

⁷Can you understand the mysteries surrounding God All-Powerful?

⁸They are higher than the heavens and deeper than the grave. So what can you do when you know so little,

⁹and these mysteries outreach the earth and the sea?

¹⁰If God puts you in prison or drags you to court, what can you do?

¹¹God has the wisdom to know when someone is worthless and sinful,

¹²but it's easier to tame a wild donkey than to make a fool wise.

¹³Surrender your heart to God, turn to him in prayer,

¹⁴and give up your sins even those you do in secret.

¹⁵Then you won't be ashamed; you will be confident and fearless.

¹⁶Your troubles will go away like water beneath a bridge,

¹⁷and your darkest night will be brighter than midday.

¹⁸You will rest safe and secure, filled with hope and emptied of worry.

¹⁹You will sleep without fear and be greatly respected.

²⁰But those who are evil will go blind and lose their way. Their only escape is death!

12¹ Job said to his friends: You think you are so great, with all the answers.

² (12:1)

³ But I know as much as you do, and so does everyone else.

⁴ I have always lived right, and God answered my prayers; now friends make fun of me.

⁵ It's easy to condemn those who are suffering, when you have no troubles.

⁶ Robbers and other godless people live safely at home and say, God is in our hands!

⁷ If you want to learn, then go and ask the wild animals and the birds,

⁸ the flowers and the fish.

⁹ Any of them can tell you what the LORD has done.

¹⁰ Every living creature is in the hands of God.

¹¹ We hear with our ears, taste with our tongues,

¹² and gain some wisdom from those who have lived a long time.

¹³ But God is the real source of wisdom and strength.

¹⁴No one can rebuild what he destroys,
or release those he has imprisoned.

¹⁵God can hold back the rain or send a
flood,

¹⁶just as he rules over liars and those
they lie to.

¹⁷God destroys counsellors, turns
judges into fools,

¹⁸and makes slaves of kings.

¹⁹God removes priests and others who
have great power

²⁰he confuses wise, experienced
advisers,

²¹puts mighty kings to shame, and
takes away their power.

²²God turns darkness to light;

²³he makes nations strong, then
shatters their strength.

²⁴God strikes their rulers senseless,
then leaves them to roam through
barren deserts,

²⁵lost in the dark, staggering like
someone drunk.

13¹ I know and understand every bit
of this.

²None of you are cleverer than I am;
there's nothing you know that I don't.

³ But I prefer to argue my case with
God All-Powerful

⁴ you are merely useless doctors, who
treat me with lies.

⁵ The wisest thing you can do is to keep
quiet

⁶ and listen to my argument.

⁷ Are you telling lies for God

⁸ and not telling the whole truth when
you argue his case?

⁹ If he took you to court, could you fool
him, just as you fool others?

¹⁰ If you were secretly unfair, he would
correct you,

¹¹ and his glorious splendour would
make you terrified.

¹² Your wisdom and arguments are as
delicate as dust.

¹³ Be quiet while I speak, then say what
you will.

¹⁴ I will be responsible for what happens
to me.

¹⁵ God may kill me, but still I will trust
him and offer my defence.

¹⁶ This may be what saves me, because
no guilty person would come to his court.

¹⁷ Listen carefully to my words!

¹⁸I have prepared my case well, and I am certain to win.

¹⁹If you can prove me guilty, I will give up and die.

²⁰I ask only two things of you, my God, and I will no longer hide from you

²¹stop punishing and terrifying me!

²²Then speak, and I will reply; or else let me speak, and you reply.

²³Please point out my sins, so I will know them.

²⁴Why have you turned your back and count me your enemy?

²⁵Do you really enjoy frightening a fallen leaf?

²⁶Why do you accuse me of horrible crimes and make me pay for sins I did in my youth?

²⁷You have tied my feet down and keep me surrounded;

²⁸I am rotting away like cloth eaten by worms.

14¹Life is short and sorrowful for every living soul.

²We are flowers that fade and shadows that vanish.

³And so, I ask you, God, why pick on me?

⁴ There's no way a human can be completely pure.

⁵ Our time on earth is brief; the number of our days is already decided by you.

⁶ Why don't you leave us alone and let us find some happiness while we toil and labour?

⁷ When a tree is chopped down, there is always the hope that it will sprout again.

⁸ Its roots and stump may rot,

⁹ but at the touch of water, fresh twigs shoot up.

¹⁰ Humans are different we die, and that's the end.

¹¹ We are like streams and lakes after the water has gone;

¹² we fall into the sleep of death, never to rise again, until the sky disappears.

¹³ Please hide me, God, deep in the ground and when you are angry no more, remember to rescue me.

¹⁴ Will we humans live again? I would gladly suffer and wait for my time.

¹⁵ My Creator, you would want me; you would call out, and I would answer.

¹⁶ You would take care of me, but not count my sins

¹⁷ you would put them in a bag, tie it tight, and toss them away.

¹⁸ But in the real world, mountains tumble, and rocks crumble;

¹⁹ streams wear away stones and wash away soil. And you destroy our hopes!

²⁰ You change the way we look, then send us away, wiped out for ever.

²¹ We never live to know if our children are praised or disgraced.

²² We feel no pain but our own, and when we mourn, it's only for ourselves.

15 ¹ Eliphaz from Teman said:

² Job, if you had any sense, you would stop spreading all this hot air.

³ (15: 2)

⁴ Your words are enough to make others turn from God and lead them to doubt.

⁵ And your sinful, scheming mind is the source of all you say.

⁶ I am not here as your judge; your own words are witnesses against you.

⁷ Were you the first human? Are you older than the hills?

⁸ Have you ever been present when God's council meets? Do you alone have wisdom?

⁹Do you know and understand something we don't?

¹⁰We have the benefit of wisdom older than your father.

¹¹And you have been offered comforting words from God. Isn't this enough?

¹²Your emotions are out of control, making you look fierce;

¹³that's why you attack God with everything you say.

¹⁴No human is pure and innocent,

¹⁵and neither are angels not in the sight of God. If God doesn't trust his angels,

¹⁶what chance do humans have? We are so terribly evil that we thirst for sin.

¹⁷Just listen to what I know, and you will learn

¹⁸wisdom known by others since ancient times.

¹⁹Those who gained such insights also gained the land, and they were not influenced by foreign teachings.

²⁰But suffering is in store each day for those who sin.

²¹Even in times of success, they constantly hear the threat of doom.

²² Darkness, despair, and death are their destiny.

²³ They scrounge around for food, all the while dreading the approaching darkness.

²⁴ They are overcome with despair, like a terrified king about to go into battle.

²⁵ This is because they rebelled against God All-Powerful

²⁶ and have attacked him with their weapons.

²⁷ They may be rich and fat,

²⁸ but they will live in the ruins of deserted towns.

²⁹ Their property and wealth will shrink and disappear.

³⁰ They won't escape the darkness, and the blazing breath of God will set their future aflame.

³¹ They have put their trust in something worthless; now they will become worthless like a date palm tree without a leaf.

³² (15: 31)

³³ Or like vineyards or orchards whose blossoms and unripe fruit drop to the ground.

³⁴Yes, the godless and the greedy will have nothing but flames feasting on their homes,

³⁵because they are the parents of trouble and vicious lies.

16 ¹Job said:
²I have often heard this, and it offers no comfort.

³So why don't you keep quiet? What's bothering you?

⁴If I were in your place, it would be easy to criticize or to give advice.

⁵But I would offer hope and comfort instead.

⁶If I speak, or if I don't, I suffer all the same. My torment continues.

⁷God has worn me down and destroyed my family;

⁸my shrivelled up skin proves that I am his prisoner.

⁹God is my hateful enemy, glaring at me and attacking with his sharp teeth.

¹⁰Everyone is against me; they sneer and slap my face.

¹¹And God is the one who handed me over to this merciless mob.

¹² Everything was going well, until God grabbed my neck and shook me to pieces. God set me up as the target

¹³ for his arrows, and without showing mercy, he slashed my stomach open, spilling out my insides.

¹⁴ God never stops attacking,

¹⁵ and so, in my sorrow I dress in sackcloth and sit in the dust.

¹⁶ My face is red with tears, and dark shadows circle my eyes,

¹⁷ though I am not violent, and my prayers are sincere.

¹⁸ If I should die, I beg the earth not to cover my cry for justice.

¹⁹ Even now, God in heaven is both my witness and my protector.

²⁰ My friends have rejected me, but God is the one I beg

²¹ to show that I am right, just as a friend should.

²² Because in only a few years, I will be dead and gone.

17 ¹ My hopes have died, my time is up, and the grave is ready.

² All I can see are angry crowds, making fun of me.

³If you, LORD, don't help, who will pay the price for my release?

⁴My friends won't really listen, all because of you, and so you must be the one to prove them wrong.

⁵They have condemned me, just to benefit themselves; now blind their children.

⁶You, God, are the reason I am insulted and spat on.

⁷I am almost blind with grief; my body is a mere shadow.

⁸People who are truly good would feel so alarmed, that they would become angry with my worthless friends.

⁹They would do the right thing and because they did, they would grow stronger.

¹⁰But none of my friends show any sense.

¹¹My life is drawing to an end; hope has disappeared.

¹²But all my friends can do is offer empty hopes.

¹³I could tell the world below to prepare me a bed.

¹⁴Then I could greet the grave as my father and say to the worms, Hello, mother and sisters!

¹⁵But what kind of hope is that?

¹⁶Will it keep me company in the world of the dead?

18¹ Bildad from Shuah said:
²How long will you talk? Be sensible! Let us speak.

³Or do you think that we are dumb animals?

⁴You cut yourself in anger. Will that shake the earth or even move the rocks?

⁵The lamps of sinful people soon are snuffed out, leaving their tents dark.

⁶(18: 5)

⁷Their powerful legs become weak, and they stumble on schemes of their own doing.

⁸Before they know it, they are trapped in a net, hidden along the path.

⁹(18: 8)

¹⁰(18: 8)

¹¹Terror strikes and pursues from every side.

¹²Starving, they run, only to meet disaster,

¹³ then afterwards to be eaten alive by death itself.

¹⁴ Those sinners are dragged from the safety of their tents to die a gruesome death.

¹⁵ Then their tents and possessions are burnt to ashes,

¹⁶ and they are left like trees, dried up from the roots.

¹⁷ They are gone and forgotten,

¹⁸ thrown far from the light into a world of darkness,

¹⁹ without any children to carry on their name.

²⁰ Everyone, from east to west, is overwhelmed with horror.

²¹ Such is the fate of sinners and their families who don't know God.

19¹ Job said:
² How long will you torture me with your words?

³ Isn't ten times enough for you to accuse me? Aren't you ashamed?

⁴ Even if I have sinned, you haven't been harmed.

⁵ You boast of your goodness, claiming I am suffering because I am guilty.

⁶But God is the one at fault for finding fault with me.

⁷Though I pray to be rescued from this torment, no whisper of justice answers me.

⁸God has me trapped with a wall of darkness

⁹and stripped of respect.

¹⁰God rips me apart, uproots my hopes,

¹¹and attacks with fierce anger, as though I were his enemy.

¹²His entire army advances, then surrounds my tent.

¹³God has turned relatives and friends against me, and I am forgotten.

¹⁴(19: 13)

¹⁵My guests and my servants consider me a stranger,

¹⁶and when I call my servants, they pay no attention.

¹⁷My breath disgusts my wife; everyone in my family turns away.

¹⁸Young children can't stand me, and when I come near, they make fun.

¹⁹My best friends and loved ones have turned from me.

²⁰I am skin and bones just barely alive.

²¹ My friends, I beg you for pity! God has made me his target.

²² Hasn't he already done enough? Why do you join the attack?

²³ I wish that my words could be written down

²⁴ or chiselled into rock.

²⁵ I know that my Saviour lives, and at the end he will stand on this earth.

²⁶ My flesh may be destroyed, yet from this body I will see God.

²⁷ Yes, I will see him for myself, and I long for that moment.

²⁸ My friends, you think up ways to blame and torment me, saying I brought it on myself.

²⁹ But watch out for the judgment, when God will punish you!

20¹ Zophar from Naamah said:
² Your words are disturbing; now I must speak.

³ You have accused and insulted me, and reason requires a reply.

⁴ Since the time of creation, everyone has known

⁵ that sinful people are happy for only a while.

⁶Though their pride and power may reach to the sky,

⁷they will disappear like dust, and those who knew them will wonder what happened.

⁸They will be forgotten like a dream

⁹and vanish from the sight of family and friends.

¹⁰Their children will have to repay what the parents took from the poor.

¹¹Indeed, the wicked will die and go to their graves in the prime of life.

¹²Sinners love the taste of sin; they relish every bite

¹³and swallow it slowly.

¹⁴But their food will turn sour and poison their stomachs.

¹⁵Then God will make them lose the wealth they gobbled up.

¹⁶They will die from the fangs of poisonous snakes

¹⁷and never enjoy rivers flowing with milk and honey.

¹⁸Their hard work will result in nothing gained,

¹⁹because they cheated the poor and took their homes.

²⁰ Greedy people want everything and are never satisfied.

²¹ But when nothing remains for them to grab, they will be nothing.

²² Once they have everything, distress and despair will strike them down,

²³ and God will make them swallow his blazing anger.

²⁴ While running from iron spears, they will be killed by arrows of bronze,

²⁵ whose shining tips go straight through their bodies. They will be trapped by terror,

²⁶ and what they treasure most will be lost in the dark. God will send flames to destroy them in their tents with all their property.

²⁷ The heavens and the earth will testify against them,

²⁸ and all their possessions will be dragged off when God becomes angry.

²⁹ This is what God has decided for those who are evil.

21 ¹ Job said:

² If you want to offer comfort, then listen to me.

³ And when I have finished, you can start your insults all over again.

⁴ My complaint is against God; that's why I am impatient.

⁵ Just looking at me is enough to make you sick,

⁶ and the very thought of myself fills me with disgust.

⁷ Why do evil people live so long and gain such power?

⁸ Why are they allowed to see their children grow up?

⁹ They have no worries at home, and God never punishes them.

¹⁰ Their cattle have lots of calves without ever losing one;

¹¹ their children play and dance safely by themselves.

¹² These people sing and celebrate to the sound of tambourines, small harps, and flutes,

¹³ and they are successful, without a worry, until the day they die.

¹⁴ Those who are evil say to God All-Powerful, Leave us alone! Don't bother us with your teachings.

¹⁵ What do we gain from praying and worshipping you?

¹⁶We succeeded all on our own. And so, I keep away from them and their evil schemes.

¹⁷How often does God become angry and send disaster and darkness to punish sinners?

¹⁸How often does he strike them like a storm that scatters straw?

¹⁹You say, God will punish those sinners' children in place of those sinners. But I say, Let him punish those sinners themselves until they really feel it.

²⁰Let God All-Powerful force them to drink their own destruction from the cup of his anger.

²¹Because after they are dead, they won't care what happens to their children.

²²Who can tell God what to do? He judges powerful rulers.

²³Some of us die prosperous, enjoying good health,

²⁴(21: 23)

²⁵while others die in poverty, having known only pain.

²⁶But we all end up dead, beneath a blanket of worms.

²⁷ My friends, I know that you are plotting against me.

²⁸ You ask, Where is the home of that important person who does so much evil?

²⁹ Everyone, near and far, agrees

³⁰ that those who do wrong never suffer disaster, when God becomes angry.

³¹ No one points out their sin or punishes them.

³² Then at their funerals, they are highly praised;

³³ the earth welcomes them home, while crowds mourn.

³⁴ But empty, meaningless words are the comfort you offer me.

22 ¹ Eliphaz from Teman said:
² What use are we humans to God, even the wisest of us?

³ If you were completely sinless, that would still mean nothing to God All-Powerful.

⁴ Is he correcting you for worshipping him?

⁵ No! It's because of your terrible sins.

⁶ To guarantee payment of a debt, you have taken clothes from the poor.

⁷ And you refused bread and water to the hungry and thirsty,

⁸ although you were rich, respected, and powerful.

⁹ You have turned away widows and have broken the arms of orphans.

¹⁰ That's why you were suddenly trapped by terror,

¹¹ blinded by darkness, and drowned in a flood.

¹² God lives in the heavens above the highest stars, where he sees everything.

¹³ Do you think the deep darkness hides you from God?

¹⁴ Do thick clouds cover his eyes, as he walks around heaven's dome high above the earth?

¹⁵ Give up those ancient ideas believed by sinners,

¹⁶ who were swept away without warning.

¹⁷ They rejected God All-Powerful, feeling he was helpless,

¹⁸ although he had been kind to their families. The beliefs of these sinners are truly disgusting.

¹⁹ When God's people see the godless swept away, they celebrate,

²⁰saying, Our enemies are gone, and fire has destroyed their possessions.

²¹Surrender to God All-Powerful! You will find peace and prosperity.

²²Listen to his teachings and take them to heart.

²³If you return to God and turn from sin, all will go well for you.

²⁴So get rid of your finest gold, as though it were sand.

²⁵Let God All-Powerful be your silver and gold,

²⁶and you will find happiness by worshipping him.

²⁷God will answer your prayers, and you will keep the promises you made to him.

²⁸He will do whatever you ask, and life will be bright.

²⁹When others are disgraced, God will clear their names in answer to your prayers.

³⁰Even those who are guilty will be forgiven, because you obey God.

23¹ Job said:

²Today I complain bitterly, because God has been cruel and made me suffer.

³If I knew where to find God, I would go there

⁴and argue my case.

⁵Then I would discover what he wanted to say.

⁶Would he overwhelm me with his greatness? No! He would listen

⁷because I am innocent, and he would say, I now set you free!

⁸I cannot find God anywhere in front of or behind me,

⁹to my left or my right. God is always at work, though I never see him.

¹⁰But he knows what I am doing, and when he tests me, I will be pure as gold.

¹¹I have never refused to follow any of his commands, and I have always treasured his teachings.

¹²(23: 11)

¹³But he alone is God, and who can oppose him? God does as he pleases,

¹⁴and he will do exactly what he intends with me.

¹⁵Merely the thought of God All-Powerful makes me tremble with fear.

¹⁶(23: 15)

¹⁷ God has covered me with darkness,
but I refuse to be silent.

24 ¹ Why doesn't God set a time for
court? Why don't his people know
where he can be found?

² Sinners remove boundary markers
and take care of sheep they have stolen.

³ They cheat orphans and widows by
taking their donkeys and oxen.

⁴ The poor are trampled and forced to
hide

⁵ in the desert, where they and their
children must live like wild donkeys and
search for food.

⁶ If they want grain or grapes, they
must go to the property of these sinners.

⁷ They sleep naked in the cold, because
they have no cover,

⁸ and during a storm their only shelters
are caves among the rocky cliffs.

⁹ Children whose fathers have died are
taken from their mothers as payment for
a debt.

¹⁰ Then they are forced to work naked
in the grain fields because they have no
clothes, and they go hungry.

¹¹ They crush olives to make oil and grapes to make wine but still they go thirsty.

¹² And along the city streets, the wounded and dying cry out, yet God does nothing.

¹³ Some rebel and refuse to follow the light.

¹⁴ Soon after sunset they murder the poor and the needy, and at night they steal.

¹⁵ Others wait for the dark, thinking they won't be seen if they sleep with the wife or husband of someone else.

¹⁶ Robbers hide during the day, then break in after dark because they reject the light.

¹⁷ They prefer night to day, since the terrors of the night are their friends.

¹⁸ Those sinners are filthy foam on the surface of the water. And so, their fields and vineyards will fall under a curse and won't produce.

¹⁹ Just as the heat of summer swallows the snow, the world of the dead swallows those who sin.

²⁰Forgotten here on earth, and with their power broken, they taste sweet to worms.

²¹Sinners take advantage of widows and other helpless women.

²²But God's mighty strength destroys those in power. Even if they seem successful, they are doomed to fail.

²³God may let them feel secure, but they are never out of his sight.

²⁴Great for a while; gone for ever! Sinners are mowed down like weeds, then they wither and die.

²⁵If I haven't spoken the truth, then prove me wrong.

25 ¹Bildad from Shuah said:
²God is the one to fear, because God is in control and rules the heavens.

³Who can count his army of stars? Isn't God the source of light?

⁴How can anyone be innocent in the sight of God?

⁵To him, not even the light of the moon and stars can ever be pure.

⁶So how can we humans, when we are merely worms?

26 ¹ Job said:

² You have really been helpful to someone weak and weary.

³ You have given great advice and wonderful wisdom to someone truly in need.

⁴ How can anyone possibly speak with such understanding?

⁵ Remember the terrible trembling of those in the world of the dead below the mighty ocean.

⁶ Nothing in that land of death and destruction is hidden from God,

⁷ who hung the northern sky and suspended the earth on empty space.

⁸ God stores water in clouds, but they don't burst,

⁹ and he wraps them around the face of the moon.

¹⁰ On the surface of the sea, God has drawn a boundary line between light and darkness.

¹¹ And columns supporting the sky tremble at his command.

¹² By his power and wisdom, God conquered the force of the mighty ocean.

¹³The heavens became bright when he breathed, and the escaping sea monster died at the hands of God.

¹⁴These things are merely a whisper of God's power at work. How little we would understand if this whisper ever turned into thunder!

27 ¹Job said:
²I am desperate because God All-Powerful refuses to do what is right.

As surely as God lives,

³and while he gives me breath,

⁴I will tell only the truth.

⁵Until the day I die, I will refuse to do wrong by saying you are right,

⁶because each day my conscience agrees that I am innocent.

⁷I pray that my enemies will suffer no less than the wicked.

⁸Such people are hopeless, and God All-Powerful will cut them down,

⁹without listening when they beg for mercy.

¹⁰And that is what God should do, because they don't like him or ever pray.

¹¹Now I will explain in detail what God All-Powerful does.

¹²All of you have seen these things for yourselves. So you have no excuse.

¹³Here is how God All-Powerful treats those who are wicked and brutal.

¹⁴They may have many children, but most of them will go hungry or suffer a violent death.

¹⁵Others will die of disease, and their widows won't be able to weep.

¹⁶The wicked may collect riches and clothes in abundance as easily as clay.

¹⁷But God's people will wear clothes taken from them and divide up their riches.

¹⁸No homes built by the wicked will outlast a cocoon or a shack.

¹⁹Those sinners may go to bed rich, but they will wake up poor.

²⁰Terror will strike at night like a flood or a storm.

²¹Then a scorching wind will sweep them away

²²without showing mercy, as they try to escape.

²³At last, the wind will celebrate because they are gone.

28¹Gold and silver are mined, then purified;

² the same is done with iron and copper.

³ Miners carry lanterns deep into the darkness to search for these metals.

⁴ They dig tunnels in distant, unknown places, where they dangle by ropes.

⁵ Far beneath the grain fields, fires are built to break loose those rocks

⁶ that have jewels or gold.

⁷ Miners go to places unseen by the eyes of hawks;

⁸ they walk on soil unknown to the proudest lions.

⁹ With their own hands they remove sharp rocks and uproot mountains.

¹⁰ They dig through the rocks in search of jewels and precious metals.

¹¹ They also uncover the sources of rivers and discover secret places.

¹² But where is wisdom found?

¹³ No human knows the way.

¹⁴ Nor can it be discovered in the deepest sea.

¹⁵ It is worth much more than silver or pure gold or precious stones.

¹⁶ (28: 15)

¹⁷ Nothing is its equal not gold or costly glass.

¹⁸Wisdom is worth much more than coral, jasper, or rubies.

¹⁹All the topaz of Ethiopia and the finest gold cannot compare with it.

²⁰Where then is wisdom?

²¹It is hidden from human eyes and even from birds.

²²Death and destruction have merely heard rumours about where it is found.

²³God is the only one who knows the way to wisdom,

²⁴because he sees everything beneath the heavens.

²⁵When God divided out the wind and the water,

²⁶and when he decided the path for rain and lightning,

²⁷he also determined the truth and defined wisdom.

²⁸God told us, Wisdom means that you respect me, the Lord, and turn from sin.

29¹ Job said:

²I long for the past, when God took care of me,

³and the light from his lamp showed me the way through the dark.

⁴I was in the prime of life, God All-Powerful was my closest friend,

⁵and all my children were nearby.

⁶My herds gave enough milk to bathe my feet, and from my olive harvest flowed rivers of oil.

⁷When I sat down at the meeting of the city council, the young leaders stepped aside, while the older ones stood

⁸(29: 7)

⁹and remained silent.

¹⁰(29: 9)

¹¹Everyone was pleased with what I said and did.

¹²When poor people or orphans cried out for help, I came to their rescue.

¹³And I was highly praised for my generosity to widows and others in poverty.

¹⁴Kindness and justice were my coat and hat;

¹⁵I was good to the blind and to the lame.

¹⁶I was a father to the needy, and I defended them in court, even if they were strangers.

¹⁷When criminals attacked, I broke their teeth and set their victims free.

¹⁸I felt certain that I would live a long and happy life, then die in my own bed.

¹⁹In those days I was strong like a tree
with deep roots and with plenty of water,
²⁰or like an archer's new bow.

²¹Everyone listened in silence to my
welcome advice,

²²and when I finished speaking, nothing
needed to be said.

²³My words were eagerly accepted like
the showers of spring,

²⁴and the smile on my face renewed
everyone's hopes.

²⁵My advice was followed as though
I were a king leading my troops, or
someone comforting those in sorrow.

30¹Young people now insult me,
although their fathers would have
been a disgrace to my sheep dogs.

²And those who insult me are helpless
themselves.

³They must claw the desert sand in
the dark for something to satisfy their
hunger.

⁴They gather tasteless shrubs for food
and firewood,

⁵and they are driven out of towns, as
though they were thieves.

⁶Their only homes are ditches or holes
between rocks,

⁷ where they bray like donkeys
gathering around shrubs.

⁸ And like senseless donkeys they are
chased away.

⁹ Those worthless nobodies make up
jokes and songs to disgrace me.

¹⁰ They are hateful and keep their
distance, even while spitting in my
direction.

¹¹ God has destroyed me, and so they
don't care what they do.

¹² Their attacks never stop, though I am
defenceless, and my feet are trapped.

¹³ Without any help, they prevent my
escape, destroying me completely

¹⁴ and leaving me crushed.

¹⁵ Terror has me surrounded; my
reputation and my riches have vanished
like a cloud.

¹⁶ I am sick at heart! Pain has taken its
toll.

¹⁷ Night chews on my bones, causing
endless torment,

¹⁸ and God has shrunk my skin, choking
me to death.

¹⁹ I have been thrown in the dirt and
now am dirt myself.

²⁰I beg God for help, but there is no answer; and when I stand up, he simply stares.

²¹God has turned brutal,

²²stirring up a storm to toss me about.

²³Soon he will send me home to the world of the dead, where we all must go.

²⁴No one refuses help to others, when disaster strikes.

²⁵I mourned for the poor and those who suffered.

²⁶But when I beg for relief and light, all I receive are disaster and darkness.

²⁷My stomach is tied in knots; pain is my daily companion.

²⁸Suffering has scorched my skin, and in the city council I stand and cry out,

²⁹making mournful sounds like jackals and owls.

³⁰My skin is so parched, that it peels right off, and my bones are burning.

³¹My only songs are sorrow and sadness.

31 ¹I promised myself never to stare with desire at a young woman.

²God All-Powerful punishes men who do that.

³In fact, God sends disaster on all who sin,

⁴and he keeps a close watch on everything I do.

⁵I am not dishonest or deceitful,

⁶and I beg God to prove my innocence.

⁷If I have disobeyed him or even wanted to,

⁸then others can eat my harvest and uproot my crops.

⁹If I have desired someone's wife and chased after her,

¹⁰then let some stranger steal my wife from me.

¹¹If I took someone's wife, it would be a horrible crime,

¹²sending me to destruction and my crops to the flames.

¹³When my servants complained against me, I was fair to them.

¹⁴Otherwise, what answer would I give to God when he judges me?

¹⁵After all, God is the one who gave life to each of us before we were born.

¹⁶I have never cheated widows or others in need,

¹⁷and I have always shared my food with orphans.

¹⁸ Since the time I was young, I have cared for orphans and helped widows.

¹⁹ I provided clothes for the poor,

²⁰ and I was praised for supplying woollen garments to keep them warm.

²¹ If I have ever raised my arm to threaten an orphan when the power was mine,

²² I hope that arm will fall from its socket.

²³ I could not have been abusive; I was terrified at the thought that God might punish me.

²⁴ I have never trusted the power of wealth,

²⁵ or taken pride in owning many possessions.

²⁶ I have never openly or secretly worshipped the sun or moon.

²⁷ (31: 26)

²⁸ Such horrible sins would have deserved punishment from God.

²⁹ I have never laughed when my enemies were struck by disaster.

³⁰ Neither have I sinned by asking God to send down on them the curse of death.

³¹ No one ever went hungry at my house,

³² and travellers were always welcome.

³³ Many have attempted to hide their sins from others but I refused.

³⁴ And the fear of public disgrace never forced me to keep silent about what I had done.

³⁵ Why doesn't God All-Powerful listen and answer? If God has something against me, let him speak up or put it in writing!

³⁶ Then I would wear his charges on my clothes and forehead.

³⁷ And with my head held high, I would tell him everything I have ever done.

³⁸ I have never ill-treated the land I farmed and made it mourn.

³⁹ Nor have I cheated my workers and caused them pain.

⁴⁰ If I had, I would pray for weeds instead of wheat to grow in my fields. After saying these things, Job was silent.

32¹ Finally, these three men stopped arguing with Job, because he refused to admit that he was guilty.

²Elihu from Buz was there, and he had become upset with Job for blaming God instead of himself.

³He was also angry with Job's three friends for not being able to prove that Job was wrong.

⁴Elihu was younger than these three, and he let them speak first.

⁵But he became irritated when they could not answer Job,

⁶and he said to them: I am much younger than you, so I have shown respect by keeping silent.

⁷I once believed age was the source of wisdom;

⁸now I truly realize wisdom comes from God.

⁹Age is no guarantee of wisdom and understanding.

¹⁰That's why I ask you to listen to me.

¹¹I eagerly listened to each of your arguments, but not one of you proved Job to be wrong.

¹²(32: 11)

¹³You shouldn't say, We know what's right! Let God punish him.

¹⁴Job hasn't spoken against me, and so I won't answer him with your arguments.

¹⁵All of you are shocked; you don't know what to say.

¹⁶But am I to remain silent, just because you have stopped speaking?

¹⁷No! I will give my opinion,

¹⁸because I have so much to say, that I can't keep quiet.

¹⁹I am like a swollen wineskin, and I will burst

²⁰if I don't speak.

²¹I don't know how to be unfair or to flatter anyone if I did, my Creator would quickly destroy me!

²²(32: 21)

33¹ Job, listen to me! Pay close attention.

²Everything I will say is true and sincere,

³(33: 2)

⁴just as surely as the Spirit of God All-Powerful gave me the breath of life.

⁵Now line up your arguments and prepare to face me.

⁶We were each made from clay, and God has no favourites,

⁷so don't be afraid of me or what I might do.

⁸I have heard you argue

⁹ that you are innocent, guilty of nothing.

¹⁰ You claim that God has made you his enemy,

¹¹ that he has bound your feet and blocked your path.

¹² But, Job, you're wrong God is greater than any human.

¹³ So why do you challenge God to answer you?

¹⁴ God speaks in different ways, and we don't always recognize his voice.

¹⁵ Sometimes in the night, he uses terrifying dreams to give us warnings.

¹⁶ (33: 15)

¹⁷ God does this to make us turn from sin and pride

¹⁸ and to protect us from being swept away to the world of the dead.

¹⁹ Sometimes we are punished with a serious illness and aching joints.

²⁰ Merely the thought of our favourite food makes our stomachs sick,

²¹ and we become so skinny that our bones stick out.

²² We feel death and the grave taking us in their grip.

²³ One of a thousand angels then comes to our rescue by saying we are innocent.

²⁴ The angel shows kindness, commanding death to release us, because the price was paid.

²⁵ Our health is restored, we feel young again,

²⁶ and we ask God to accept us. Then we joyfully worship God, and we are rewarded because we are innocent.

²⁷ When that happens, we tell everyone, I sinned and did wrong, but God forgave me

²⁸ and rescued me from death! Now I will see the light.

²⁹ God gives each of us chance after chance

³⁰ to be saved from death and brought into the light that gives life.

³¹ So, Job, pay attention and don't interrupt,

³² though I would gladly listen to anything you say that proves you are right.

³³ Otherwise, listen in silence to my wisdom.

34 ¹Elihu said:

²You men think you are wise,
but just listen to me!

³Think about my words, as you would
taste food.

⁴Then we can decide the case and give
a just verdict.

⁵Job claims he is innocent and God is
guilty of ill-treating him.

⁶Job also argues that God considers
him a liar and that he is suffering
severely in spite of his innocence.

⁷But to tell the truth, Job is shameless!

⁸He spends his time with sinners,

⁹because he has said, It doesn't pay to
please God.

¹⁰If any of you are clever, you will listen
and learn that God All-Powerful does
what is right.

¹¹God always treats everyone the way
they deserve,

¹²and he is never unfair.

¹³From the very beginning, God has
been in control of all the world.

¹⁴If God took back the breath that he
breathed into us,

¹⁵we humans would die and return to
the soil.

¹⁶ So be wise and listen!

¹⁷ The mighty God is the one who brings about justice, and you are condemning him.

¹⁸ Indeed, God is the one who condemns unfair rulers.

¹⁹ And God created us all; he has no favourites, whether rich or poor.

²⁰ Even powerful rulers die in the darkness of night when they least expect it, just like the rest of us.

²¹ God watches everything we do.

²² No evil person can hide in the deepest darkness.

²³ And so, God doesn't need to set a time for judgment.

²⁴ Without asking for advice, God removes mighty leaders and puts others in their place.

²⁵ He knows what they are like, and he wipes them out in the middle of the night.

²⁶ And while others look on, he punishes them because they were evil

²⁷ and refused to obey him.

²⁸ The persons they ill-treated had prayed for help, until God answered their prayers.

²⁹When God does nothing, can any person or nation find fault with him?

³⁰But still, he punishes rulers who abuse their people.

³¹Job, you should tell God that you are guilty and promise to do better.

³²Then ask him to point out what you did wrong, so you won't do it again.

³³Do you make the rules, or does God? You have to decide I can't do it for you; now make up your mind.

³⁴Job, anyone with good sense can easily see

³⁵that you are speaking nonsense and lack good judgment.

³⁶So I pray for you to suffer as much as possible for talking like a sinner.

³⁷You have rebelled against God, time after time, and have even insulted us.

35 ¹Elihu said:

²Job, are you really innocent in the sight of God?

³Don't you honestly believe it pays to obey him?

⁴I will give the answers to you and your friends.

⁵Look up to the heavens and think! Do your sins hurt God?

⁶ (35:5)

⁷ Is any good you may have done at all helpful to him?

⁸ The evil or good you do only affects other humans.

⁹ In times of trouble, everyone begs the mighty God to have mercy.

¹⁰ But after their Creator helps them through hard times, they forget about him,

¹¹ though he makes us wiser than animals or birds.

¹² God won't listen to the prayers of proud and evil people.

¹³ If God All-Powerful refuses to answer their empty prayers,

¹⁴ he will surely deny your impatient request to face him in court.

¹⁵ Job, you were wrong to say God doesn't punish sin.

¹⁶ Everything you have said adds up to nonsense.

36 ¹ Elihu said:

² Be patient a while longer; I have something else to say in God's defence.

³ God always does right and this knowledge comes straight from God.

⁴You can rest assured that what I say is true.

⁵Although God is mighty, he cares about everyone and makes fair decisions.

⁶The wicked are cut down, and those who are wronged receive justice.

⁷God watches over good people and places them in positions of power and honour for ever.

⁸But when people are prisoners of suffering and pain,

⁹God points out their sin and their pride, then he warns them to turn back to him.

¹⁰(36: 9)

¹¹And if they obey, they will be successful and happy from then on.

¹²But if they foolishly refuse, they will be rewarded with a violent death.

¹³Godless people are too angry to ask God for help when he punishes them.

¹⁴So they die young in shameful disgrace.

¹⁵Hard times and trouble are God's way of getting our attention!

¹⁶And at this very moment, God deeply desires to lead you from trouble and to

spread your table with your favourite food.

¹⁷ Now that the judgment for your sins has fallen upon you,

¹⁸ don't let your anger and the pain you endured make you sneer at God.

¹⁹ Your reputation and riches cannot protect you from distress,

²⁰ nor can you find safety in the dark world below.

²¹ Be on guard! Don't turn to evil as a way of escape.

²² God's power is unlimited. He needs no teachers

²³ to guide or correct him.

²⁴ Others have praised God for what he has done, so join with them.

²⁵ From down here on earth, everyone has looked up and seen

²⁶ how great God is God is more than we imagine; no one can count the years he has lived.

²⁷ God gathers moisture into the clouds and supplies us with rain.

²⁸ (36: 27)

²⁹ Who can understand how God scatters the clouds and speaks from his home in the thunderstorm?

³⁰ And when God sends lightning, it can be seen at the bottom of the sea.

³¹ By producing such rainstorms, God rules the world and provides us with food.

³² Each flash of lightning is one of his arrows striking its target,

³³ and the thunder tells of his anger against sin.

37 ¹ I am frightened and tremble all over,

² when I hear the roaring voice of God in the thunder,

³ and when I see his lightning flash across the sky.

⁴ God's majestic voice thunders his commands,

⁵ creating miracles too marvellous for us to understand.

⁶ Snow and heavy rainstorms

⁷ make us stop and think about God's power,

⁸ and they force animals to seek shelter.

⁹ The storms of winter strike,

¹⁰ and the breath of God freezes streams and rivers.

¹¹ Rain clouds filled with lightning appear at God's command,

¹²travelling across the sky

¹³to release their cargo sometimes as punishment for sin, sometimes as kindness.

¹⁴Job, consider carefully the many wonders of God.

¹⁵Can you explain why lightning flashes at the orders

¹⁶of God who knows all things? Or how he hangs the clouds in empty space?

¹⁷You almost melt in the heat of fierce desert winds when the sky is like brass.

¹⁸God can spread out the clouds to get relief from the heat, but can you?

¹⁹Tell us what to say to God! Our minds are in the dark, and we don't know how to argue our case.

²⁰Should I risk my life by telling God that I want to speak?

²¹No one can stare at the sun after a breeze has blown the clouds from the sky.

²²Yet the glorious splendour of God All-Powerful is brighter by far.

²³God cannot be seen but his power is great, and he is always fair.

²⁴ And so we humans fear God, because he shows no respect for those who are proud and think they know so much.

38 ¹ From out of a storm, the LORD said to Job:

² Why do you talk so much when you know so little?

³ Now get ready to face me! Can you answer the questions I ask?

⁴ How did I lay the foundation for the earth? Were you there?

⁵ Doubtless you know who decided its length and width.

⁶ What supports the foundation? Who placed the cornerstone,

⁷ while morning stars sang, and angels rejoiced?

⁸ When the ocean was born, I set its boundaries

⁹ and wrapped it in blankets of thickest fog.

¹⁰ Then I built a wall around it, locked the gates,

¹¹ and said, Your powerful waves stop here! They can go no further.

¹² Did you ever tell the sun to rise? And did it obey?

¹³ Did it take hold of the earth and shake out the wicked like dust from a rug?

¹⁴ Early dawn outlines the hills like stitches on clothing or sketches on clay.

¹⁵ But its light is too much for those who are evil, and their power is broken.

¹⁶ Job, have you ever walked on the ocean floor?

¹⁷ Have you seen the gate to the world of the dead?

¹⁸ And how large is the earth? Tell me, if you know!

¹⁹ Where is the home of light, and where does darkness live?

²⁰ Can you lead them home?

²¹ I'm certain you must be able to, since you were already born when I created everything.

²² Have you been to the places where I keep snow and hail,

²³ until I use them to punish and conquer nations?

²⁴ From where does lightning leap, or the east wind blow?

²⁵ Who carves out a path for thunderstorms? Who sends torrents of rain

²⁶ on empty deserts where no one lives?

²⁷ Rain that changes barren land to meadows green with grass.

²⁸ Who is the father of the dew and of the rain?

²⁹ Who gives birth to the sleet and the frost

³⁰ that fall in winter, when streams and lakes freeze solid as a rock?

³¹ Can you arrange stars in groups such as Orion and the Pleiades?

³² Do you control the stars or set in place the Great Bear and the Little Bear?

³³ Do you know the laws that govern the heavens, and can you make them rule the earth?

³⁴ Can you order the clouds to send a downpour,

³⁵ or will lightning flash at your command?

³⁶ Did you teach birds to know that rain or floods are on their way?

³⁷ Can you count the clouds or pour out their water

³⁸ on the dry, lumpy soil?

³⁹ When lions are hungry, do you help them hunt?

⁴⁰ Do you send an animal into their den?

⁴¹ And when starving young ravens cry out to me for food, do you satisfy their hunger?

39 ¹ When do mountain goats and deer give birth? Have you been there when their young are born?

² How long are they pregnant before they deliver?

³ (39: 2)

⁴ Soon their young grow strong and then leave to be on their own.

⁵ Who set wild donkeys free?

⁶ I alone help them survive in salty desert sand.

⁷ They stay far from crowded cities and refuse to be tamed.

⁸ Instead, they roam the hills, searching for pasture land.

⁹ Would a wild ox agree to live in your barn and labour for you?

¹⁰ Could you force him to plough or to drag a heavy log to smooth out the soil?

¹¹ Can you depend on him to use his great strength and do your heavy work?

¹² Can you trust him to harvest your grain or take it to your barn from the threshing place?

¹³ An ostrich proudly flaps her wings,
but not because she loves her young.

¹⁴ She abandons her eggs and lets the
dusty ground keep them warm.

¹⁵ And she doesn't seem to worry that
the feet of an animal could crush them
all.

¹⁶ She treats her eggs as though they
were not her own, unconcerned that her
work might be for nothing.

¹⁷ I myself made her foolish and without
common sense.

¹⁸ But once she starts running, she
laughs at a rider on the fastest horse.

¹⁹ Did you give horses their strength
and the flowing hair along their necks?

²⁰ Did you make them able to jump like
grasshoppers or to frighten people with
their snorting?

²¹ Before horses are ridden into battle,
they paw at the ground, proud of their
strength.

²² Laughing at fear, they rush towards
the fighting,

²³ while the weapons of their riders
rattle and flash in the sun.

²⁴ Unable to stand still, they gallop
eagerly into battle when trumpets blast.

²⁵ Stirred by the distant smells and sounds of war, they snort in reply to the trumpet.

²⁶ Did you teach hawks to fly south for the winter?

²⁷ Did you train eagles to build their nests on rocky cliffs,

²⁸ (39: 27)

²⁹ where they can look down to spot their next meal?

³⁰ Then their young gather to feast wherever the victim lies.

40¹ I am the LORD All-Powerful, but you have argued that I am wrong. Now you must answer me.

² (40: 1)

³ Job said to the LORD:

⁴ Who am I to answer you?

⁵ I did speak once or twice, but never again.

⁶ Then out of the storm the LORD said to Job:

⁷ Face me and answer the questions I ask!

⁸ Are you trying to prove that you are innocent by accusing me of injustice?

⁹Do you have a powerful arm and a thundering voice that compare with mine?

¹⁰If so, then surround yourself with glory and majesty.

¹¹Show your furious anger! Throw down and crush all who are proud and evil.

¹²(40: 11)

¹³Wrap them in grave clothes and bury them together in the dusty soil.

¹⁴Do this, and I will agree that you have won this argument.

¹⁵I created both you and the hippopotamus. It eats only grass like an ox,

¹⁶but look at the mighty muscles in its body

¹⁷and legs. Its tail is like a cedar tree, and its thighs are thick.

¹⁸The bones in its legs are like bronze or iron.

¹⁹I made it more powerful than any other creature, yet I am stronger still.

²⁰Undisturbed, it eats grass while the other animals play nearby.

²¹ It rests in the shade of trees along the river bank or hides among reeds in the swamp.

²² (40: 21)

²³ It remains calm and unafraid with the River Jordan rushing and splashing in its face.

²⁴ There is no way to capture a hippopotamus not even by hooking its nose or blinding its eyes.

41 ¹ Can you catch a sea monster by using a fish-hook? Can you tie its mouth shut with a rope?

² Can it be led around by a ring in its nose or a hook in its jaw?

³ Will it beg for mercy?

⁴ Will it surrender as a slave for life?

⁵ Can it be tied by the leg like a pet bird for little girls?

⁶ Is it ever chopped up and its pieces bargained for in the fish-market?

⁷ Can it be killed with harpoons or spears?

⁸ Wrestle with it just once that will be the end.

⁹ Merely a glimpse of this monster makes all courage melt.

¹⁰And if it is too fierce for anyone to attack, who would dare oppose me?

¹¹I am in command of the world and in debt to no one.

¹²What powerful legs, what a stout body this monster possesses!

¹³Who could strip off its armour or bring it under control with a harness?

¹⁴Who would try to open its jaws, full of fearsome teeth?

¹⁵Its back is covered with shield after shield, firmly bound and closer together than breath to breath.

¹⁶(41: 15)

¹⁷(41: 15)

¹⁸When this monster sneezes, lightning flashes, and its eyes glow like the dawn.

¹⁹Sparks and fiery flames explode from its mouth.

²⁰And smoke spews from its nose like steam from a boiling pot,

²¹while its blazing breath scorches everything in sight.

²²Its neck is so tremendous that everyone trembles,

²³the weakest parts of its body are harder than iron,

²⁴and its heart is stone.

²⁵When this noisy monster appears,
even the most powerful turn and run in
fear.

²⁶No sword or spear can harm it,

²⁷and weapons of bronze or iron are as
useless as straw or rotten wood.

²⁸Stones thrown from a sling cause it
no more harm than husks of grain. This
monster fears no arrows,

²⁹it simply smiles at spears, and
striking it with a stick is like slapping it
with straw.

³⁰As it crawls through the mud, its
sharp and spiny hide tears the ground
apart.

³¹And when it swims down deep, the
sea starts churning like boiling oil,

³²and it leaves behind a trail of shining
white foam.

³³No other creature on earth is so
fearless.

³⁴It is king of all proud creatures, and
it looks upon the others as nothing.

42 ¹Job said:

²No one can oppose you,
because you have the power to do what
you want.

³You asked why I talk so much when I know so little. I have talked about things that are far beyond my understanding.

⁴You told me to listen and answer your questions.

⁵I heard about you from others; now I have seen you with my own eyes.

⁶That's why I hate myself and sit here in dust and ashes to show my sorrow.

⁷The LORD said to Eliphaz: What my servant Job has said about me is true, but I am angry with you and your two friends for not telling the truth.

⁸So I want you to go over to Job and offer seven bulls and seven goats on an altar as a sacrifice to please me. After this, Job will pray, and I will agree not to punish you for your foolishness.

⁹Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar obeyed the LORD, and he answered Job's prayer.

¹⁰After Job had prayed for his three friends, the LORD made Job twice as rich as he had been before.

¹¹Then Job gave a feast for his brothers and sisters and for his old friends. They expressed their sorrow for the suffering the LORD had brought on him, and they

each gave Job some silver and a gold ring.

¹²The LORD now blessed Job more than ever; he gave him fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand pair of oxen, and a thousand donkeys.

¹³In addition to seven sons, Job had three daughters,

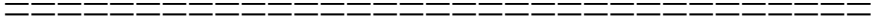
¹⁴whose names were Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren Happuch.

¹⁵They were the most beautiful women in that part of the world, and Job gave them shares of his property, along with their brothers.

¹⁶Job lived for another one hundred and forty yearslong enough to see his great-grandchildren have children of their own

¹⁷and when he finally died, he was very old.

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