

New Living Translation

Old Testament
(Genesis – Job)

Genesis

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

² The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface.

³ Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

⁴ And God saw that it was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness.

⁵ God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." Together these made up one day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be space between the waters, to separate water from water."

⁷ And so it was. God made this space to separate the waters above from the waters below.

⁸ And God called the space "sky." This happened on the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky be gathered into one place so dry ground may appear." And so it was.

¹⁰ God named the dry ground "land" and the water "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land burst forth with every sort of grass and seed-bearing plant. And let there be trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. The seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And so it was.

¹² The land was filled with seed-bearing plants and trees, and their seeds produced plants and trees of like kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³ This all happened on the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let bright lights appear in the sky to separate the day

from the night. They will be signs to mark off the seasons, the days, and the years.

¹⁵ Let their light shine down upon the earth." And so it was.

¹⁶ For God made two great lights, the sun and the moon, to shine down upon the earth. The greater one, the sun, presides during the day; the lesser one, the moon, presides through the night. He also made the stars.

¹⁷ God set these lights in the heavens to light the earth,

¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ This all happened on the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind."

²¹ So God created great sea creatures and every sort of fish and every kind of bird. And God saw that it was good.

²² Then God blessed them, saying, "Let the fish multiply and fill the oceans. Let the birds increase and fill the earth."

²³ This all happened on the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of animal—livestock, small animals, and wildlife." And so it was.

²⁵ God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to reproduce more of its own kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals."

²⁷ So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals."

²⁹ And God said, "Look! I have given you the seed-bearing plants throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.

³⁰ And I have given all the grasses and other green plants to the animals and birds for their food." And so it was.

³¹ Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was excellent in every way. This all happened on the sixth day.

2¹ So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed.

² On the seventh day, having finished his task, God rested from all his work.

³ And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from his work of creation.

⁴ This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth. When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth,

⁵ there were no plants or grain growing on the earth, for the LORD God had not sent any rain. And no one was there to cultivate the soil.

⁶ But water came up out of the ground and watered all the land.

⁷ And the LORD God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person.

⁸ Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had created.

⁹ And the LORD God planted all sorts of trees in the garden—beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. At the center of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches.

¹¹ One of these branches is the Pishon, which flows around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found.

¹² The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there.

¹³ The second branch is the Gihon, which flows around the entire land of Cush.

¹⁴ The third branch is the Tigris, which flows to the east of Asshur. The fourth branch is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it.

¹⁶ But the LORD God gave him this warning: "You may freely eat any fruit in the garden

¹⁷ except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die."

¹⁸ And the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him."

¹⁹ So the LORD God formed from the soil every kind of animal and bird. He brought them to Adam to see what he would call them, and Adam chose a name for each one.

²⁰ He gave names to all the livestock, birds, and wild animals. But still there was no companion suitable for him.

²¹ So the LORD God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam's ribs and closed up the place from which he had taken it.

²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam.

²³ "At last!" Adam exclaimed. "She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken out of a man."

²⁴ This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵ Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame.

3¹ Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the LORD God had made. "Really?" he asked the woman. "Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?"

² "Of course we may eat it," the woman told him.

³ "It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die."

⁴ "You won't die!" the serpent hissed.

⁵ "God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil."

⁶ The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too.

⁷ At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves.

⁸ Toward evening they heard the LORD God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees.

⁹ The LORD God called to Adam, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹ "Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹² "Yes," Adam admitted, "but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God asked the woman, "How could you do such a thing?" "The serpent tricked me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you will be punished. You are singled out from all the domestic and wild animals of the whole earth to be cursed. You will grovel

in the dust as long as you live, crawling along on your belly.

¹⁵ From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶ Then he said to the woman, "You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband, he will be your master."

¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you

came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return."

²⁰ Then Adam named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all people everywhere.

²¹ And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²² Then the LORD God said, "The people have become as we are, knowing everything, both good and evil. What if they eat the fruit of the tree of life? Then they will live forever!"

²³ So the LORD God banished Adam and his wife from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made.

²⁴ After banishing them from the garden, the LORD God stationed mighty angelic beings to the east of Eden. And a flaming sword flashed back and forth, guarding the way to the tree of life.

4 ¹ Now Adam slept with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When the time came, she gave birth to Cain, and she said, "With the LORD's help, I have brought forth a man!"

² Later she gave birth to a second son and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain was a farmer.

³ At harvesttime Cain brought to the LORD a gift of his farm produce,

⁴ while Abel brought several choice lambs from the best of his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his offering,

⁵ but he did not accept Cain and his offering. This made Cain very angry and dejected.

⁶ "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked him. "Why do you look so dejected?"

⁷ You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to

respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it."

⁸ Later Cain suggested to his brother, Abel, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were there, Cain attacked and killed his brother.

⁹ Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "I don't know!" Cain retorted. "Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?"

¹⁰ But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen—your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!

¹¹ You are hereby banished from the ground you have defiled with your brother's blood.

¹² No longer will it yield abundant crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless

fugitive on the earth, constantly wandering from place to place."

¹³ Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment is too great for me to bear!

¹⁴ You have banished me from my land and from your presence; you have made me a wandering fugitive. All who see me will try to kill me!"

¹⁵ The LORD replied, "They will not kill you, for I will give seven times your punishment to anyone who does." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him.

¹⁶ So Cain left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

¹⁷ Then Cain's wife became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and they named him Enoch. When Cain founded a city, he named it Enoch after his son.

¹⁸ Enoch was the father of Irad. Irad was the father of Mehujael. Mehujael was

the father of Methushael. Methushael was the father of Lamech.

¹⁹ Lamech married two women—Adah and Zillah.

²⁰ Adah gave birth to a baby named Jabal. He became the first of the herdsmen who live in tents.

²¹ His brother's name was Jubal, the first musician—the inventor of the harp and flute.

²² To Lamech's other wife, Zillah, was born Tubal-cain. He was the first to work with metal, forging instruments of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah.

²³ One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, "Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me.

²⁴ If anyone who kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes

revenge against me will be punished seventy–seven times!"

²⁵ Adam slept with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth, for she said, "God has granted me another son in place of Abel, the one Cain killed."

²⁶ When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. It was during his lifetime that people first began to worship the LORD.

5 ¹ This is the history of the descendants of Adam. When God created people, he made them in the likeness of God.

² He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them "human."

³ When Adam was 130 years old, his son Seth was born, and Seth was the very image of his father.

⁴ After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

⁵ He died at the age of 930.

⁶ When Seth was 105 years old, his son Enosh was born.

⁷ After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

⁸ He died at the age of 912.

⁹ When Enosh was 90 years old, his son Kenan was born.

¹⁰ After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

¹¹ He died at the age of 905.

¹² When Kenan was 70 years old, his son Mahalalel was born.

¹³ After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴ He died at the age of 910.

¹⁵ When Mahalalel was 65 years old, his son Jared was born.

¹⁶ After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

¹⁷ He died at the age of 895.

¹⁸ When Jared was 162 years old, his son Enoch was born.

¹⁹ After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

²⁰ He died at the age of 962.

²¹ When Enoch was 65 years old, his son Methuselah was born.

²² After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived another 300 years in close fellowship with God, and he had other sons and daughters.

²³ Enoch lived 365 years in all.

²⁴ He enjoyed a close relationship with God throughout his life. Then suddenly, he disappeared because God took him.

²⁵ When Methuselah was 187 years old, his son Lamech was born.

²⁶ After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

²⁷ He died at the age of 969.

²⁸ When Lamech was 182 years old, his son Noah was born.

²⁹ Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, "He will bring us relief from the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed."

³⁰ After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

³¹ He died at the age of 777.

³² By the time Noah was 500 years old, he had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6¹ When the human population began to grow rapidly on the earth,

² the sons of God saw the beautiful women of the human race and took any they wanted as their wives.

³ Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, they will live no more than 120 years."

⁴ In those days, and even afterward, giants lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with human women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes mentioned in legends of old.

⁵ Now the LORD observed the extent of the people's wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil.

⁶ So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart.

⁷ And the LORD said, "I will completely wipe out this human race that I have

created. Yes, and I will destroy all the animals and birds, too. I am sorry I ever made them."

⁸ But Noah found favor with the LORD.

⁹ This is the history of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless man living on earth at the time. He consistently followed God's will and enjoyed a close relationship with him.

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

¹¹ Now the earth had become corrupt in God's sight, and it was filled with violence.

¹² God observed all this corruption in the world, and he saw violence and depravity everywhere.

¹³ So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for the earth is filled with violence because of

them. Yes, I will wipe them all from the face of the earth!

¹⁴ "Make a boat from resinous wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior.

¹⁵ Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

¹⁶ Construct an opening all the way around the boat, 18 inches below the roof. Then put three decks inside the boat—bottom, middle, and upper—and put a door in the side.

¹⁷ "Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing. Everything on earth will die!

¹⁸ But I solemnly swear to keep you safe in the boat, with your wife and your sons and their wives.

¹⁹ Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood.

²⁰ Pairs of each kind of bird and each kind of animal, large and small alike, will come to you to be kept alive.

²¹ And remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals."

²² So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

7 ¹ Finally, the day came when the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I consider you alone to be righteous.

² Take along seven pairs of each animal that I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others.

³ Then select seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that every kind of living creature will survive the flood.

⁴ One week from today I will begin forty days and forty nights of rain. And I will wipe from the earth all the living things I have created."

⁵ So Noah did exactly as the LORD had commanded him.

⁶ He was 600 years old when the flood came,

⁷ and he went aboard the boat to escape—he and his wife and his sons and their wives.

⁸ With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and other small animals.

⁹ They came into the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah.

¹⁰ One week later, the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹ When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, the underground waters burst forth on the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky.

¹² The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³ But Noah had gone into the boat that very day with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives.

¹⁴ With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of breathing animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds and flying insects of every kind.

¹⁵ Two by two they came into the boat,

¹⁶ male and female, just as God had commanded. Then the LORD shut them in.

¹⁷ For forty days the floods prevailed, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth.

¹⁸ As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface.

¹⁹ Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth,

²⁰ standing more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks.

²¹ All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all kinds of small animals, and all the people.

²² Everything died that breathed and lived on dry land.

²³ Every living thing on the earth was wiped out—people, animals both large and small, and birds. They were all destroyed, and only Noah was left alive, along with those who were with him in the boat.

²⁴ And the water covered the earth for 150 days.

8 ¹ But God remembered Noah and all the animals in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the waters, and the floods began to disappear.

² The underground water sources ceased their gushing, and the torrential rains stopped.

³ So the flood gradually began to recede. After 150 days,

⁴ exactly five months from the time the flood began, the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

⁵ Two and a half months later, as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks began to appear.

⁶ After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat

⁷ and released a raven that flew back and forth until the earth was dry.

⁸ Then he sent out a dove to see if it could find dry ground.

⁹ But the dove found no place to land because the water was still too high. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside.

¹⁰ Seven days later, Noah released the dove again.

¹¹ This time, toward evening, the bird returned to him with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Noah now knew that the water was almost gone.

¹² A week later, he released the dove again, and this time it did not come back.

¹³ Finally, when Noah was 601 years old, ten and a half months after the flood began, Noah lifted back the cover to look. The water was drying up.

¹⁴ Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry!

¹⁵ Then God said to Noah,

¹⁶ "Leave the boat, all of you.

¹⁷ Release all the animals and birds so they can breed and reproduce in great numbers."

¹⁸ So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat.

¹⁹ And all the various kinds of animals and birds came out, pair by pair.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and sacrificed on it the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose.

²¹ And the LORD was pleased with the sacrifice and said to himself, "I will never again curse the earth, destroying all living things, even though people's thoughts and actions are bent toward evil from childhood.

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

9¹ God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth.

² All the wild animals, large and small, and all the birds and fish will be afraid of you. I have placed them in your power.

³ I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables.

⁴ But you must never eat animals that still have their lifeblood in them.

⁵ And murder is forbidden. Animals that kill people must die, and any person who murders must be killed.

⁶ Yes, you must execute anyone who murders another person, for to kill a person is to kill a living being made in God's image.

⁷ Now you must have many children and repopulate the earth. Yes, multiply and fill the earth!"

⁸ Then God told Noah and his sons,

⁹ "I am making a covenant with you and your descendants,

¹⁰ and with the animals you brought with you—all these birds and livestock and wild animals.

¹¹ I solemnly promise never to send another flood to kill all living creatures and destroy the earth."

¹² And God said, "I am giving you a sign as evidence of my eternal covenant with you and all living creatures.

¹³ I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my permanent promise to you and to all the earth.

¹⁴ When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds,

¹⁵ and I will remember my covenant with you and with everything that lives. Never again will there be a flood that will destroy all life.

¹⁶ When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant

between God and every living creature on earth."

¹⁷ Then God said to Noah, "Yes, this is the sign of my covenant with all the creatures of the earth."

¹⁸ Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah, survived the Flood with their father. (Ham is the ancestor of the Canaanites.)

¹⁹ From these three sons of Noah came all the people now scattered across the earth.

²⁰ After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard.

²¹ One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent.

²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers.

²³ Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backward

into the tent, and covered their father's naked body. As they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked.

²⁴ When Noah woke up from his drunken stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done.

²⁵ Then he cursed the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham: "A curse on the Canaanites! May they be the lowest of servants to the descendants of Shem and Japheth."

²⁶ Then Noah said, "May Shem be blessed by the LORD my God; and may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge the territory of Japheth, and may he share the prosperity of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant."

²⁸ Noah lived another 350 years after the Flood.

²⁹ He was 950 years old when he died.

10 ¹ This is the history of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the Flood.

² The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³ The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴ The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.

⁵ Their descendants became the seafaring peoples in various lands, each tribe with its own language.

⁶ The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷ The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ One of Cush's descendants was Nimrod, who became a heroic warrior.

⁹ He was a mighty hunter in the LORD's sight. His name became proverbial, and people would speak of someone as being "like Nimrod, a mighty hunter in the LORD's sight."

¹⁰ He built the foundation for his empire in the land of Babylonia, with the cities of Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh.

¹¹ From there he extended his reign to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah,

¹² and Resen—the main city of the empire, located between Nineveh and Calah.

¹³ Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites,

¹⁴ Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.

¹⁵ Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites,

¹⁶ Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites,

¹⁷ Hivites, Arkites, Sinites,

¹⁸ Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites.

¹⁹ Eventually the territory of Canaan spread from Sidon to Gerar, near Gaza, and to Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

²⁰ These were the descendants of Ham, identified according to their tribes, languages, territories, and nations.

²¹ Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth. Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.

²² The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴ Arphaxad was the father of Shelah, and Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵ Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg—"division"—for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups and dispersed. His brother's name was Joktan.

²⁶ Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba,

²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

³⁰ The descendants of Joktan lived in the area extending from Mesha toward the eastern hills of Sephar.

³¹ These were the descendants of Shem, identified according to their tribes, languages, territories, and nations.

³² These are the families that came from Noah's sons, listed nation by nation

according to their lines of descent. The earth was populated with the people of these nations after the Flood.

11 ¹ At one time the whole world spoke a single language and used the same words.

² As the people migrated eastward, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there.

³ They began to talk about construction projects. "Come," they said, "let's make great piles of burnt brick and collect natural asphalt to use as mortar.

⁴ Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies—a monument to our greatness! This will bring us together and keep us from scattering all over the world."

⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building.

⁶ "Look!" he said. "If they can accomplish this when they have just begun to take advantage of their common language and political unity, just think of what they will do later. Nothing will be impossible for them!

⁷ Come, let's go down and give them different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

⁸ In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the earth; and that ended the building of the city.

⁹ That is why the city was called Babel, because it was there that the LORD confused the people by giving them many languages, thus scattering them across the earth.

¹⁰ This is the history of Shem's family. When Shem was 100 years old, his son Arphaxad was born. This happened two years after the Flood.

¹¹ After the birth of Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹² When Arphaxad was 35 years old, his son Shelah was born.

¹³ After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴ When Shelah was 30 years old, his son Eber was born.

¹⁵ After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶ When Eber was 34 years old, his son Peleg was born.

¹⁷ After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸ When Peleg was 30 years old, his son Reu was born.

¹⁹ After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰ When Reu was 32 years old, his son Serug was born.

²¹ After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²² When Serug was 30 years old, his son Nahor was born.

²³ After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴ When Nahor was 29 years old, his son Terah was born.

²⁵ After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶ When Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

²⁷ This is the history of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran had a son named Lot.

²⁸ But while Haran was still young, he died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the place of his birth. He was survived by Terah, his father.

²⁹ Meanwhile, Abram married Sarai, and his brother Nahor married Milcah, the daughter of their brother Haran. (Milcah had a sister named Iscah.)

³⁰ Now Sarai was not able to have any children.

³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai, and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and left Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But they stopped instead at the village of Haran and settled there.

³² Terah lived for 205 years and died while still at Haran.

12 ¹ Then the LORD told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you.

² I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others.

³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you."

⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people who had joined his household at Haran—and finally arrived in Canaan.

⁶ Traveling through Canaan, they came to a place near Shechem and set up camp beside the oak at Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I am going to give this land to your offspring." And Abram built an altar there to commemorate the LORD's visit.

⁸ After that, Abram traveled southward and set up camp in the hill country between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar and worshiped the LORD.

⁹ Then Abram traveled south by stages toward the Negev.

¹⁰ At that time there was a severe famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to wait it out.

¹¹ As he was approaching the borders of Egypt, Abram said to Sarai, "You are a very beautiful woman.

¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!'

¹³ But if you say you are my sister, then the Egyptians will treat me well because of their interest in you, and they will spare my life."

¹⁴ And sure enough, when they arrived in Egypt, everyone spoke of her beauty.

¹⁵ When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to their king, the pharaoh, and she was taken into his harem.

¹⁶ Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, cattle, donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷ But the LORD sent a terrible plague upon Pharaoh's household because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

¹⁸ So Pharaoh called for Abram and accused him sharply. "What is this you

have done to me?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?"

¹⁹ Why were you willing to let me marry her, saying she was your sister? Here is your wife! Take her and be gone!"

²⁰ Pharaoh then sent them out of the country under armed escort—Abram and his wife, with all their household and belongings.

13 ¹ So they left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev—Abram with his wife and Lot and all that they owned,

² for Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

³ Then they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where they had camped before.

⁴ This was the place where Abram had built the altar, and there he again worshiped the LORD.

⁵ Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, was also very wealthy with sheep, cattle, and many tents.

⁶ But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. There were too many animals for the available pastureland.

⁷ So an argument broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.

⁸ Then Abram talked it over with Lot. "This arguing between our herdsmen has got to stop," he said. "After all, we are close relatives!

⁹ I'll tell you what we'll do. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want that area over there, then I'll stay here. If you want to stay in this area, then I'll move on to another place."

¹⁰ Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

¹¹ Lot chose that land for himself—the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram.

¹² So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain.

¹³ The people of this area were unusually wicked and sinned greatly against the LORD.

¹⁴ After Lot was gone, the LORD said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction.

¹⁵ I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring as a permanent possession.

¹⁶ And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted!

¹⁷ Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you."

¹⁸ Then Abram moved his camp to the oak grove owned by Mamre, which is at Hebron. There he built an altar to the LORD.

14 ¹ About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim

² fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (now called Zoar).

³ The kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela formed an alliance and mobilized their armies in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea).

⁴ For twelve years they had all been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but now in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

⁵ One year later, Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived. They conquered the Rephaites in Ashteroth–karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites in the plain of Kiriathaim,

⁶ and the Horites in Mount Seir, as far as El–paran at the edge of the wilderness.

⁷ Then they swung around to En–mishpat (now called Kadesh) and destroyed the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon–tamar.

⁸ But now the army of the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim,

and Bela (now called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea

⁹ against King Kedorlaomer of Elam and the kings of Goiim, Babylonia, and Ellasar—four kings against five.

¹⁰ As it happened, the valley was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some slipped into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains.

¹¹ The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and began their long journey home, taking all the wealth and food with them.

¹² They also captured Lot—Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom—and took everything he owned.

¹³ One of the men who escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was camped at the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his

relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

¹⁴ When Abram learned that Lot had been captured, he called together the men born into his household, 318 of them in all. He chased after Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them in Dan.

¹⁵ There he divided his men and attacked during the night from several directions. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them to Hobah, north of Damascus.

¹⁶ Abram and his allies recovered everything—the goods that had been taken, Abram's nephew Lot with his possessions, and all the women and other captives.

¹⁷ As Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and his allies, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in

the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought him bread and wine.

¹⁹ Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, who has helped you conquer your enemies." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

²¹ The king of Sodom told him, "Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered."

²² Abram replied, "I have solemnly promised the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth,

²³ that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from you.

Otherwise you might say, 'I am the one who made Abram rich!'

²⁴ All I'll accept is what these young men of mine have already eaten. But give a share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre."

15 ¹ Afterward the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great."

² But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since I don't have a son, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth.

³ You have given me no children, so one of my servants will have to be my heir."

⁴ Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you

will have a son of your own to inherit everything I am giving you."

⁵ Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that—too many to count!"

⁶ And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith.

⁷ Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land."

⁸ But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that you will give it to me?"

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

¹⁰ Abram took all these and killed them. He cut each one down the middle and

laid the halves side by side. He did not, however, divide the birds in half.

¹¹ Some vultures came down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

¹² That evening, as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. He saw a terrifying vision of darkness and horror.

¹³ Then the LORD told Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will be oppressed as slaves for four hundred years.

¹⁴ But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth.

¹⁵ (But you will die in peace, at a ripe old age.)

¹⁶ After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, when the sin of the Amorites has run its course."

¹⁷ As the sun went down and it became dark, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses.

¹⁸ So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River—

¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites,

²⁰ Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,

²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

16 ¹ But Sarai, Abram's wife, had no children. So Sarai took her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar,

² and gave her to Abram so she could bear his children. "The LORD has kept me from having any children," Sarai said to Abram. "Go and sleep with my

servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed.

³ So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram first arrived in the land of Canaan.)

⁴ So Abram slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress Sarai with contempt.

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's all your fault! Now this servant of mine is pregnant, and she despises me, though I myself gave her the privilege of sleeping with you. The LORD will make you pay for doing this to me!"

⁶ Abram replied, "Since she is your servant, you may deal with her as you see fit." So Sarai treated her harshly, and Hagar ran away.

⁷ The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a desert spring along the road to Shur.

⁸ The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I am running away from my mistress," she replied.

⁹ Then the angel of the LORD said, "Return to your mistress and submit to her authority."

¹⁰ The angel added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."

¹¹ And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard about your misery.

¹² This son of yours will be a wild one—free and untamed as a wild donkey! He will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live at odds with the rest of his brothers."

¹³ Thereafter, Hagar referred to the LORD, who had spoken to her, as "the God who sees me," for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me!"

¹⁴ Later that well was named Beer-lahairoi, and it can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael.

¹⁶ Abram was eighty–six years old at that time.

17 ¹ When Abram was ninety–nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.

² I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to make you into a mighty nation."

³ At this, Abram fell face down in the dust. Then God said to him,

⁴ "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of not just one nation, but a multitude of nations!

⁵ What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram; now you will be known as Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations.

⁶ I will give you millions of descendants who will represent many nations. Kings will be among them!

⁷ "I will continue this everlasting covenant between us, generation after generation. It will continue between me and your offspring forever. And I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

⁸ Yes, I will give all this land of Canaan to you and to your offspring forever. And I will be their God.

⁹ "Your part of the agreement," God told Abraham, "is to obey the terms of the

covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility.

¹⁰ This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised;

¹¹ the flesh of his foreskin must be cut off. This will be a sign that you and they have accepted this covenant.

¹² Every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family, but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased.

¹³ All must be circumcised. Your bodies will thus bear the mark of my everlasting covenant.

¹⁴ Anyone who refuses to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for violating the covenant."

¹⁵ Then God added, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai; from now on you will call her Sarah.

¹⁶ And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings will be among her descendants!"

¹⁷ Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of one hundred?" he wondered. "Besides, Sarah is ninety; how could she have a baby?"

¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, "Yes, may Ishmael enjoy your special blessing!"

¹⁹ But God replied, "Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my everlasting covenant with him and his descendants.

²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes will be among his descendants.

²¹ But my covenant is with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year."

²² That ended the conversation, and God left Abraham.

²³ On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and every other male in his household and circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, exactly as God had told him.

²⁴ Abraham was ninety–nine years old at that time,

²⁵ and Ishmael his son was thirteen.

²⁶ Both were circumcised the same day,

²⁷ along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants.

18 ¹The LORD appeared again to Abraham while he was camped near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day about noon, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent,

² he suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, welcoming them by bowing low to the ground.

³ "My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while.

⁴ Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet.

⁵ Let me prepare some food to refresh you. Please stay awhile before continuing on your journey." "All right," they said. "Do as you have said."

⁶ So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Get three measures of your best flour, and bake some bread."

⁷ Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a fat calf and told a servant to hurry and butcher it.

⁸ When the food was ready, he took some cheese curds and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them there beneath the trees.

⁹ "Where is Sarah, your wife?" they asked him. "In the tent," Abraham replied.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, "About this time next year I will return, and your wife Sarah will have a son." Now Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent nearby.

¹¹ And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children,

¹² she laughed silently to herself. "How could a worn-out woman like me have

a baby?" she thought. "And when my master—my husband—is also so old?"

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?'"

¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? About a year from now, just as I told you, I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she denied that she had laughed. But he said, "That is not true. You did laugh."

¹⁶ Then the men got up from their meal and started on toward Sodom. Abraham went with them part of the way.

¹⁷ "Should I hide my plan from Abraham?" the LORD asked.

¹⁸ "For Abraham will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.

¹⁹ I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD and do what is right

and just. Then I will do for him all that I have promised."

²⁰ So the LORD told Abraham, "I have heard that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are extremely evil, and that everything they do is wicked.

²¹ I am going down to see whether or not these reports are true. Then I will know."

²² The two other men went on toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham for a while.

²³ Abraham approached him and said, "Will you destroy both innocent and guilty alike?

²⁴ Suppose you find fifty innocent people there within the city—will you still destroy it, and not spare it for their sakes?

²⁵ Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the innocent with the guilty. Why, you would be treating the innocent

and the guilty exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

²⁶ And the LORD replied, "If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake."

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke again. "Since I have begun, let me go on and speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes.

²⁸ Suppose there are only forty-five? Will you destroy the city for lack of five?" And the LORD said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five."

²⁹ Then Abraham pressed his request further. "Suppose there are only forty?" And the LORD replied, "I will not destroy it if there are forty."

³⁰ "Please don't be angry, my Lord," Abraham pleaded. "Let me speak—suppose only thirty are found?" And the

LORD replied, "I will not destroy it if there are thirty."

³¹ Then Abraham said, "Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?" And the LORD said, "Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty."

³² Finally, Abraham said, "Lord, please do not get angry; I will speak but once more! Suppose only ten are found there?" And the LORD said, "Then, for the sake of the ten, I will not destroy it."

³³ The LORD went on his way when he had finished his conversation with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his tent.

19 ¹ That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom, and Lot was sitting there as they arrived. When he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he

welcomed them and bowed low to the ground.

² "My lords," he said, "come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up in the morning as early as you like and be on your way again." "Oh no," they said, "we'll just spend the night out here in the city square."

³ But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. He set a great feast before them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast. After the meal,

⁴ as they were preparing to retire for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house.

⁵ They shouted to Lot, "Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out so we can have sex with them."

⁶ Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him.

⁷ "Please, my brothers," he begged, "don't do such a wicked thing.

⁸ Look—I have two virgin daughters. Do with them as you wish, but leave these men alone, for they are under my protection."

⁹ "Stand back!" they shouted. "Who do you think you are? We let you settle among us, and now you are trying to tell us what to do! We'll treat you far worse than those other men!" And they lunged at Lot and began breaking down the door.

¹⁰ But the two angels reached out and pulled Lot in and bolted the door.

¹¹ Then they blinded the men of Sodom so they couldn't find the doorway.

¹² "Do you have any other relatives here in the city?" the angels asked. "Get them

out of this place—sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else.

¹³ For we will destroy the city completely. The stench of the place has reached the LORD, and he has sent us to destroy it."

¹⁴ So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters' fianc,s, "Quick, get out of the city! The LORD is going to destroy it." But the young men thought he was only joking.

¹⁵ At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. "Hurry," they said to Lot. "Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out of here right now, or you will be caught in the destruction of the city."

¹⁶ When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful.

¹⁷ "Run for your lives!" the angels warned. "Do not stop anywhere in the valley. And don't look back! Escape to the mountains, or you will die."

¹⁸ "Oh no, my lords, please," Lot begged.

¹⁹ "You have been so kind to me and saved my life, and you have granted me such mercy. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die.

²⁰ See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don't you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved."

²¹ "All right," the angel said, "I will grant your request. I will not destroy that little village.

²² But hurry! For I can do nothing until you are there." From that time on, that village was known as Zoar.

²³ The sun was rising as Lot reached the village.

²⁴ Then the LORD rained down fire and burning sulfur from the heavens on Sodom and Gomorrah.

²⁵ He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, eliminating all life—people, plants, and animals alike.

²⁶ But Lot's wife looked back as she was following along behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ The next morning Abraham was up early and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the LORD's presence.

²⁸ He looked out across the plain to Sodom and Gomorrah and saw columns of smoke and fumes, as from a furnace, rising from the cities there.

²⁹ But God had listened to Abraham's request and kept Lot safe, removing him

from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.

³⁰ Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters.

³¹ One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There isn't a man anywhere in this entire area for us to marry. And our father will soon be too old to have children.

³² Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will sleep with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

³³ So that night they got him drunk, and the older daughter went in and slept with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁴ The next morning the older daughter said to her younger sister, "I slept with our father last night. Let's get him drunk

with wine again tonight, and you go in and sleep with him. That way our family line will be preserved."

³⁵ So that night they got him drunk again, and the younger daughter went in and slept with him. As before, he was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁶ So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father.

³⁷ When the older daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Moab. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Moabites.

³⁸ When the younger daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Ben-ammi. He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Ammonites.

20 ¹ Now Abraham moved south to the Negev and settled for a while between Kadesh and Shur at a place called Gerar.

² Abraham told people there that his wife, Sarah, was his sister. So King Abimelech sent for her and had her brought to him at his palace.

³ But one night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you took is married."

⁴ But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent man?"

⁵ Abraham told me, 'She is my sister,' and she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence!"

⁶ "Yes, I know you are innocent," God replied. "That is why I kept you from sinning against me; I did not let you touch her."

⁷ Now return her to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return

her to him, you can be sure that you and your entire household will die."

⁸ Abimelech got up early the next morning and hastily called a meeting of all his servants. When he told them what had happened, great fear swept through the crowd.

⁹ Then Abimelech called for Abraham. "What is this you have done to us?" he demanded. "What have I done to you that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? This kind of thing should not be done!

¹⁰ "Why have you done this to us?"

¹¹ "Well," Abraham said, "I figured this to be a godless place. I thought, 'They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.'

¹² Besides, she is my sister—we both have the same father, though different mothers—and I married her.

¹³ When God sent me to travel far from my father's home, I told her, 'Wherever we go, have the kindness to say that you are my sister.'

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen and servants—both men and women—and gave them to Abraham, and he returned his wife, Sarah, to him.

¹⁵ "Look over my kingdom, and choose a place where you would like to live," Abimelech told him.

¹⁶ Then he turned to Sarah. "Look," he said, "I am giving your 'brother' a thousand pieces of silver to compensate for any embarrassment I may have caused you. This will settle any claim against me in this matter."

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and the other women of the household, so they could have children.

¹⁸ For the LORD had stricken all the women with infertility as a warning to Abimelech for having taken Abraham's wife.

21 ¹ Then the LORD did exactly what he had promised.

² Sarah became pregnant, and she gave a son to Abraham in his old age. It all happened at the time God had said it would.

³ And Abraham named his son Isaac.

⁴ Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded.

⁵ Abraham was one hundred years old at the time.

⁶ And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter! All who hear about this will laugh with me.

⁷ For who would have dreamed that I would ever have a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!"

⁸ As time went by and Isaac grew and was weaned, Abraham gave a big party to celebrate the happy occasion.

⁹ But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of Isaac.

¹⁰ So she turned to Abraham and demanded, "Get rid of that servant and her son. He is not going to share the family inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won't have it!"

¹¹ This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son.

¹² But God told Abraham, "Do not be upset over the boy and your servant wife. Do just as Sarah says, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.

¹³ But I will make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he also is your son."

¹⁴ So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food for the journey, and strapped a container of water to Hagar's shoulders. He sent her away with their son, and she walked out into the wilderness of Beersheba, wandering aimlessly.

¹⁵ When the water was gone, she left the boy in the shade of a bush.

¹⁶ Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears.

¹⁷ Then God heard the boy's cries, and the angel of God called to Hagar from the sky, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy's cries from the place where you laid him.

¹⁸ Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants."

¹⁹ Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well. She immediately filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness of Paran. He became an expert archer,

²¹ and his mother arranged a marriage for him with a young woman from Egypt.

²² About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. "It is clear that God helps you in everything you do," Abimelech said.

²³ "Swear to me in God's name that you won't deceive me, my children, or my grandchildren. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country in which you are living."

²⁴ Abraham replied, "All right, I swear to it!"

²⁵ Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had taken violently from Abraham's servants.

²⁶ "This is the first I've heard of it," Abimelech said. "And I have no idea who is responsible. Why didn't you say something about this before?"

²⁷ Then Abraham gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech, and they made a treaty.

²⁸ But when Abraham took seven additional ewe lambs and set them off by themselves,

²⁹ Abimelech asked, "Why are you doing that?"

³⁰ Abraham replied, "They are my gift to you as a public confirmation that I dug this well."

³¹ So ever since, that place has been known as Beersheba—"well of the oath"—because that was where they had sworn an oath.

³² After making their covenant, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines.

³³ Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and he worshiped the LORD, the Eternal God, at that place.

³⁴ And Abraham lived in Philistine country for a long time.

22 ¹ Later on God tested Abraham's faith and obedience. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

² "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will point out to you."

³ The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took

two of his servants with him, along with his son Isaac. Then he chopped wood to build a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place where God had told him to go.

⁴ On the third day of the journey, Abraham saw the place in the distance.

⁵ "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the young men. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

⁶ Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the knife and the fire. As the two of them went on together,

⁷ Isaac said, "Father?" "Yes, my son," Abraham replied. "We have the wood and the fire," said the boy, "but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

⁸ "God will provide a lamb, my son," Abraham answered. And they both went on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place where God had told Abraham to go, he built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then he tied Isaac up and laid him on the altar over the wood.

¹⁰ And Abraham took the knife and lifted it up to kill his son as a sacrifice to the LORD.

¹¹ At that moment the angel of the LORD shouted to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," he answered. "I'm listening."

¹² "Lay down the knife," the angel said. "Do not hurt the boy in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld even your beloved son from me."

¹³ Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering on the altar in place of his son.

¹⁴ Abraham named the place "The LORD Will Provide." This name has now become a proverb: "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven,

¹⁶ "This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your beloved son, I swear by my own self that

¹⁷ I will bless you richly. I will multiply your descendants into countless millions, like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. They will conquer their enemies,

¹⁸ and through your descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

¹⁹ Then they returned to Abraham's young men and traveled home again

to Beersheba, where Abraham lived for quite some time.

²⁰ Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor's wife, had borne Nahor eight sons.

²¹ The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the father of Aram),

²² Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

²³ Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.

²⁴ In addition to his eight sons from Milcah, Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

23 ¹ When Sarah was 127 years old, ² she died at Kiriath–arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

³ Then, leaving her body, he went to the Hittite elders and said,

⁴ "Here I am, a stranger in a foreign land, with no place to bury my wife. Please let me have a piece of land for a burial plot."

⁵ The Hittites replied to Abraham,

⁶ "Certainly, for you are an honored prince among us. It will be a privilege to have you choose the finest of our tombs so you can bury her there."

⁷ Then Abraham bowed low before them and said,

⁸ "Since this is how you feel, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar

⁹ to let me have the cave of Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I want to pay the full price, of course, whatever is publicly agreed upon, so I may have a permanent burial place for my family."

¹⁰ Ephron was sitting there among the others, and he answered Abraham as

the others listened, speaking publicly before all the elders of the town.

¹¹ "No, sir," he said to Abraham, "please listen to me. I will give you the cave and the field. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead."

¹² Abraham bowed again to the people of the land,

¹³ and he replied to Ephron as everyone listened. "No, listen to me," he insisted. "I will buy it from you. Let me pay the full price for the field so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴ "Well," Ephron answered,

¹⁵ "the land is worth four hundred pieces of silver, but what is that between friends? Go ahead and bury your dead."

¹⁶ So Abraham paid Ephron the amount he had suggested, four hundred pieces of silver, as was publicly agreed.

¹⁷ He bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field, the cave that was in it, and all the trees nearby.

¹⁸ They became Abraham's permanent possession by the agreement made in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate.

¹⁹ So Abraham buried Sarah there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, which is at Hebron.

²⁰ The field and the cave were sold to Abraham by the Hittites as a permanent burial place.

24 ¹ Abraham was now a very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in every way.

² One day Abraham said to the man in charge of his household, who was his oldest servant,

³ "Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not

let my son marry one of these local Canaanite women.

⁴ Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac."

⁵ The servant asked, "But suppose I can't find a young woman who will travel so far from home? May I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives?"

⁶ "No!" Abraham warned. "Be careful never to take my son there.

⁷ For the LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my offspring. He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to it that you find a young woman there to be my son's wife.

⁸ If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there."

⁹ So the servant took a solemn oath that he would follow Abraham's instructions.

¹⁰ He loaded ten of Abraham's camels with gifts and set out, taking with him the best of everything his master owned. He traveled to Aram—naharaim and went to the village where Abraham's brother Nahor had settled.

¹¹ There the servant made the camels kneel down beside a well just outside the village. It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water.

¹² "O LORD, God of my master," he prayed. "Give me success and show kindness to my master, Abraham. Help me to accomplish the purpose of my journey.

¹³ See, here I am, standing beside this spring, and the young women of the village are coming out to draw water.

¹⁴ This is my request. I will ask one of them for a drink. If she says, 'Yes,

certainly, and I will water your camels, too!'—let her be the one you have appointed as Isaac's wife. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."

¹⁵ As he was still praying, a young woman named Rebekah arrived with a water jug on her shoulder. Her father was Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah.

¹⁶ Now Rebekah was very beautiful, and she was a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up again.

¹⁷ Running over to her, the servant asked, "Please give me a drink."

¹⁸ "Certainly, sir," she said, and she quickly lowered the jug for him to drink.

¹⁹ When he had finished, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough!"

²⁰ So she quickly emptied the jug into the watering trough and ran down to the well again. She kept carrying water to the camels until they had finished drinking.

²¹ The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not she was the one the LORD intended him to meet.

²² Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he gave her a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets for her wrists.

²³ "Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "Would your father have any room to put us up for the night?"

²⁴ "My father is Bethuel," she replied. "My grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.

²⁵ Yes, we have plenty of straw and food for the camels, and we have a room for guests."

²⁶ The man fell down to the ground and worshiped the LORD.

²⁷ "Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham," he said. "The LORD has been so kind and faithful to Abraham, for he has led me straight to my master's relatives."

²⁸ The young woman ran home to tell her family about all that had happened.

²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban.

³⁰ When he saw the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard her story, he rushed out to the spring, where the man was still standing beside his camels. Laban said to him,

³¹ "Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the LORD. Why do you stand here outside the village when we have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels!"

³² So the man went home with Laban, and Laban unloaded the camels, gave him straw to bed them down, fed them,

and provided water for the camel drivers to wash their feet.

³³ Then supper was served. But Abraham's servant said, "I don't want to eat until I have told you why I have come." "All right," Laban said, "tell us your mission."

³⁴ "I am Abraham's servant," he explained.

³⁵ "And the LORD has blessed my master richly; he has become a great man. The LORD has given him flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many servants and camels and donkeys.

³⁶ When Sarah, my master's wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master's son, and my master has given him everything he owns.

³⁷ And my master made me swear that I would not let Isaac marry one of the local Canaanite women.

³⁸ Instead, I was to come to his relatives here in this far-off land, to his father's home. I was told to bring back a young woman from here to marry his son.

³⁹ "But suppose I can't find a young woman willing to come back with me?' I asked him.

⁴⁰ 'You will,' he told me, 'for the LORD, in whose presence I have walked, will send his angel with you and will make your mission successful. Yes, you must get a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father's family.'

⁴¹ But if you go to my relatives and they refuse to let her come, you will be free from your oath.'

⁴² "So this afternoon when I came to the spring I prayed this prayer: 'O LORD, the God of my master, Abraham, if you are planning to make my mission a success, please guide me in a special way.'

⁴³ Here I am, standing beside this spring. I will say to some young woman who comes to draw water, "Please give me a drink of water!"

⁴⁴ And she will reply, "Certainly! And I'll water your camels, too!" LORD, let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master's son.'

⁴⁵ "Before I had finished praying these words, I saw Rebekah coming along with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water and filled the jug. So I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'

⁴⁶ She quickly lowered the jug from her shoulder so I could drink, and she said, 'Certainly, sir, and I will water your camels, too!' And she did.

⁴⁷ When I asked her whose daughter she was, she told me, 'My father is Bethuel, the son of Nahor and his wife,

Milcah.' So I gave her the ring and the bracelets.

⁴⁸ "Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me along the right path to find a wife from the family of my master's relatives.

⁴⁹ So tell me—will you or won't you show true kindness to my master? When you tell me, then I'll know what my next step should be, whether to move this way or that."

⁵⁰ Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The LORD has obviously brought you here, so what can we say?

⁵¹ Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."

⁵² At this reply, Abraham's servant bowed to the ground and worshiped the LORD.

⁵³ Then he brought out silver and gold jewelry and lovely clothing for Rebekah. He also gave valuable presents to her mother and brother.

⁵⁴ Then they had supper, and the servant and the men with him stayed there overnight. But early the next morning, he said, "Send me back to my master."

⁵⁵ "But we want Rebekah to stay at least ten days," her brother and mother said. "Then she can go."

⁵⁶ But he said, "Don't hinder my return. The LORD has made my mission successful, and I want to report back to my master."

⁵⁷ "Well," they said, "we'll call Rebekah and ask her what she thinks."

⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah. "Are you willing to go with this man?" they asked her. And she replied, "Yes, I will go."

⁵⁹ So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham's servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah's childhood nurse went along with her.

⁶⁰ They blessed her with this blessing as she parted: "Our sister, may you become the mother of many millions! May your descendants overcome all their enemies."

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her servants mounted the camels and left with Abraham's servant.

⁶² Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahairoi.

⁶³ One evening as he was taking a walk out in the fields, meditating, he looked up and saw the camels coming.

⁶⁴ When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted.

⁶⁵ "Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?" she asked the servant. And he replied, "It is my master." So Rebekah covered her face with her veil.

⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac the whole story.

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother's tent, and she became his wife. He loved her very much, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

25 ¹ Now Abraham married again. Keturah was his new wife,

² and she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

³ Jokshan's two sons were Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites.

⁴ Midian's sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. These were

all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

⁵ Abraham left everything he owned to his son Isaac.

⁶ But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to the east, away from Isaac.

⁷ Abraham lived for 175 years,

⁸ and he died at a ripe old age, joining his ancestors in death.

⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite.

¹⁰ This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites, where he had buried his wife Sarah.

¹¹ After Abraham's death, God poured out rich blessings on Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahairoi in the Negev.

¹² This is the history of the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant.

¹³ Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Abdeel, Mibsam,

¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa,

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

¹⁶ These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes that bore their names, listed according to the places they settled and camped.

¹⁷ Ishmael finally died at the age of 137 and joined his ancestors in death.

¹⁸ Ishmael's descendants were scattered across the country from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. The clans descended from Ishmael camped close to one another.

¹⁹ This is the history of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham.

²⁰ When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban.

²¹ Isaac pleaded with the LORD to give Rebekah a child because she was childless. So the LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and his wife became pregnant with twins.

²² But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the LORD about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

²³ And the LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two rival nations. One nation will be stronger than the other; the descendants of your older son will serve the descendants of your younger son."

²⁴ And when the time came, the twins were born.

²⁵ The first was very red at birth. He was covered with so much hair that one would think he was wearing a piece of clothing. So they called him Esau.

²⁶ Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they called him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

²⁷ As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open fields, while Jacob was the kind of person who liked to stay at home.

²⁸ Isaac loved Esau in particular because of the wild game he brought home, but Rebekah favored Jacob.

²⁹ One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home exhausted and hungry from a hunt.

³⁰ Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew you've made."

(This was how Esau got his other name, Edom—"Red.")

³¹ Jacob replied, "All right, but trade me your birthright for it."

³² "Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

³³ So Jacob insisted, "Well then, swear to me right now that it is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his younger brother.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and drank and went on about his business, indifferent to the fact that he had given up his birthright.

26 ¹ Now a severe famine struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

² The LORD appeared to him there and said, "Do not go to Egypt.

³ Do as I say, and stay here in this land. If you do, I will be with you and bless you. I will give all this land to you and your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father.

⁴ I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

⁵ I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, regulations, and laws."

⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷ And when the men there asked him about Rebekah, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to admit that she was his wife. He thought they would kill him to get her, because she was very beautiful.

⁸ But some time later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out a window and saw Isaac fondling Rebekah.

⁹ Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, "She is obviously your wife! Why did you say she was your sister?" "Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me," Isaac replied.

¹⁰ "How could you treat us this way!" Abimelech exclaimed. "Someone might have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin."

¹¹ Then Abimelech made a public proclamation: "Anyone who harms this man or his wife will die!"

¹² That year Isaac's crops were tremendous! He harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him.

¹³ He became a rich man, and his wealth only continued to grow.

¹⁴ He acquired large flocks of sheep and goats, great herds of cattle, and many servants. Soon the Philistines became jealous of him,

¹⁵ and they filled up all of Isaac's wells with earth. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

¹⁶ And Abimelech asked Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he said, "for you have become too rich and powerful for us."

¹⁷ So Isaac moved to the Gerar Valley and lived there instead.

¹⁸ He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death. Isaac renamed them, using the names Abraham had given them.

¹⁹ His shepherds also dug in the Gerar Valley and found a gushing spring.

²⁰ But then the local shepherds came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it with Isaac's herdsmen. So Isaac named the well "Argument," because they had argued about it with him.

²¹ Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a fight over it. So Isaac named it "Opposition."

²² Abandoning that one, he dug another well, and the local people finally left him alone. So Isaac called it "Room Enough," for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be able to thrive."

²³ From there Isaac moved to Beersheba,

²⁴ where the LORD appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will give you many descendants,

and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant."

²⁵ Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the LORD. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug a well.

²⁶ One day Isaac had visitors from Gerar. King Abimelech arrived with his adviser, Ahuzzath, and also Phicol, his army commander.

²⁷ "Why have you come?" Isaac asked them. "This is obviously no friendly visit, since you sent me from your land in a most unfriendly way."

²⁸ They replied, "We can plainly see that the LORD is with you. So we decided we should have a treaty, a covenant between us.

²⁹ Swear that you will not harm us, just as we did not harm you. We have always treated you well, and we sent you away

from us in peace. And now look how the LORD has blessed you!"

³⁰ So Isaac prepared a great feast for them, and they ate and drank in preparation for the treaty ceremony.

³¹ Early the next morning, they each took a solemn oath of nonaggression. Then Isaac sent them home again in peace.

³² That very day Isaac's servants came and told him about a well they had dug. "We've found water!" they said.

³³ So Isaac named the well "Oath," and from that time to this, the town that grew up there has been called Beersheba—"well of the oath."

³⁴ At the age of forty, Esau married a young woman named Judith, the daughter of Beerli the Hittite. He also married Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

³⁵ But Esau's wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

27 ¹ When Isaac was old and almost blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son?" "Yes, Father?" Esau replied.

² "I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I expect every day to be my last.

³ Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows out into the open country, and hunt some wild game for me.

⁴ Prepare it just the way I like it so it's savory and good, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

⁵ But Rebekah overheard the conversation. So when Esau left to hunt for the wild game,

⁶ she said to her son Jacob, "I overheard your father asking Esau

⁷ to prepare him a delicious meal of wild game. He wants to bless Esau in the LORD's presence before he dies.

⁸ Now, my son, do exactly as I tell you.

⁹ Go out to the flocks and bring me two fine young goats. I'll prepare your father's favorite dish from them.

¹⁰ Take the food to your father; then he can eat it and bless you instead of Esau before he dies."

¹¹ "But Mother!" Jacob replied. "He won't be fooled that easily. Think how hairy Esau is and how smooth my skin is!

¹² What if my father touches me? He'll see that I'm trying to trick him, and then he'll curse me instead of blessing me."

¹³ "Let the curse fall on me, dear son," said Rebekah. "Just do what I tell you. Go out and get the goats."

¹⁴ So Jacob followed his mother's instructions, bringing her the two goats.

She took them and cooked a delicious meat dish, just the way Isaac liked it.

¹⁵ Then she took Esau's best clothes, which were there in the house, and dressed Jacob with them.

¹⁶ She made him a pair of gloves from the hairy skin of the young goats, and she fastened a strip of the goat's skin around his neck.

¹⁷ Then she gave him the meat dish, with its rich aroma, and some freshly baked bread.

¹⁸ Jacob carried the platter of food to his father and said, "My father?" "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it—Esau or Jacob?"

¹⁹ Jacob replied, "It's Esau, your older son. I've done as you told me. Here is the wild game, cooked the way you like it. Sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing."

²⁰ Isaac asked, "How were you able to find it so quickly, my son?" "Because the LORD your God put it in my path!" Jacob replied.

²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come over here. I want to touch you to make sure you really are Esau."

²² So Jacob went over to his father, and Isaac touched him. "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's," Isaac said to himself.

²³ But he did not recognize Jacob because Jacob's hands felt hairy just like Esau's. So Isaac pronounced his blessing on Jacob.

²⁴ "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "Yes, of course," Jacob replied.

²⁵ Then Isaac said, "Now, my son, bring me the meat. I will eat it, and then I will give you my blessing." So Jacob took the food over to his father, and Isaac ate it.

He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. Then Isaac said,

²⁶ "Come here and kiss me, my son."

²⁷ So Jacob went over and kissed him.

And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He said, "The smell of my son is the good smell of the open fields that the LORD has blessed.

²⁸ May God always give you plenty of dew for healthy crops and good harvests of grain and wine.

²⁹ May many nations become your servants. May you be the master of your brothers. May all your mother's sons bow low before you. All who curse you are cursed, and all who bless you are blessed."

³⁰ As soon as Isaac had blessed Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunting trip.

³¹ Esau prepared his father's favorite meat dish and brought it to him. Then he said, "I'm back, Father, and I have the wild game. Sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing."

³² But Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "Why, it's me, of course!" he replied. "It's Esau, your older son."

³³ Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, "Then who was it that just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him with an irrevocable blessing before you came."

³⁴ When Esau understood, he let out a loud and bitter cry. "O my father, bless me, too!" he begged.

³⁵ But Isaac said, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has carried away your blessing."

³⁶ Esau said bitterly, "No wonder his name is Jacob, for he has deceived me twice, first taking my birthright and now

stealing my blessing. Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?"

³⁷ Isaac said to Esau, "I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is there left to give?"

³⁸ Esau pleaded, "Not one blessing left for me? O my father, bless me, too!" Then Esau broke down and wept.

³⁹ His father, Isaac, said to him, "You will live off the land and what it yields,
⁴⁰ and you will live by your sword. You will serve your brother for a time, but then you will shake loose from him and be free."

⁴¹ Esau hated Jacob because he had stolen his blessing, and he said to himself, "My father will soon be dead and gone. Then I will kill Jacob."

⁴² But someone got wind of what Esau was planning and reported it to Rebekah. She sent for Jacob and told him, "Esau is threatening to kill you.

⁴³ This is what you should do. Flee to your uncle Laban in Haran.

⁴⁴ Stay there with him until your brother's fury is spent.

⁴⁵ When he forgets what you have done, I will send for you. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

⁴⁶ Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm sick and tired of these local Hittite women. I'd rather die than see Jacob marry one of them."

28 ¹ So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, "Do not marry any of these Canaanite women.

² Instead, go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban's daughters.

³ May God Almighty bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants become a great assembly of nations!

⁴ May God pass on to you and your descendants the blessings he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where we now are foreigners, for God gave it to Abraham."

⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother's brother, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

⁶ Esau heard that his father had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to find a wife, and that he had warned Jacob not to marry a Canaanite woman.

⁷ He also knew that Jacob had obeyed his parents and gone to Paddan-aram.

⁸ It was now very clear to Esau that his father despised the local Canaanite women.

⁹ So he visited his uncle Ishmael's family and married one of Ishmael's daughters, in addition to the wives he already had. His new wife's name was Mahalath. She was the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son.

¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran.

¹¹ At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone for a pillow and lay down to sleep.

¹² As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down on it.

¹³ At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants.

¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will cover the land from east to west and from north to south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants.

¹⁵ What's more, I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised."

¹⁶ Then Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it."

¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God—the gateway to heaven!"

¹⁸ The next morning he got up very early. He took the stone he had used as

a pillow and set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it.

¹⁹ He named the place Bethel—"house of God"—though the name of the nearby village was Luz.

²⁰ Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing,

²¹ and if he will bring me back safely to my father, then I will make the LORD my God.

²² This memorial pillar will become a place for worshiping God, and I will give God a tenth of everything he gives me."

29 ¹ Jacob hurried on, finally arriving in the land of the east.

² He saw in the distance three flocks of sheep lying in an open field beside a well, waiting to be watered. But a heavy stone covered the mouth of the well.

³ It was the custom there to wait for all the flocks to arrive before removing the

stone. After watering them, the stone would be rolled back over the mouth of the well.

⁴ Jacob went over to the shepherds and asked them, "Where do you live?" "At Haran," they said.

⁵ "Do you know a man there named Laban, the grandson of Nahor?" "Yes, we do," they replied.

⁶ "How is he?" Jacob asked. "He's well and prosperous. Look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep."

⁷ "Why don't you water the flocks so they can get back to grazing?" Jacob asked. "They'll be hungry if you stop so early in the day."

⁸ "We don't roll away the stone and begin the watering until all the flocks and shepherds are here," they replied.

⁹ As this conversation was going on, Rachel arrived with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherd.

¹⁰ And because she was his cousin, the daughter of his mother's brother, and because the sheep were his uncle's, Jacob went over to the well and rolled away the stone and watered his uncle's flock.

¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and tears came to his eyes.

¹² He explained that he was her cousin on her father's side, her aunt Rebekah's son. So Rachel quickly ran and told her father, Laban.

¹³ As soon as Laban heard about Jacob's arrival, he rushed out to meet him and greeted him warmly. Laban then brought him home, and Jacob told him his story.

¹⁴ "Just think, my very own flesh and blood!" Laban exclaimed. After Jacob had been there about a month,

¹⁵ Laban said to him, "You shouldn't work for me without pay just because we are relatives. How much do you want?"

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters: Leah, who was the oldest, and her younger sister, Rachel.

¹⁷ Leah had pretty eyes, but Rachel was beautiful in every way, with a lovely face and shapely figure.

¹⁸ Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, "I'll work for you seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife."

¹⁹ "Agreed!" Laban replied. "I'd rather give her to you than to someone outside the family."

²⁰ So Jacob spent the next seven years working to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

²¹ Finally, the time came for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my contract," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me my wife so we can be married."

²² So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood to celebrate with Jacob at a wedding feast.

²³ That night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her.

²⁴ And Laban gave Leah a servant, Zilpah, to be her maid.

²⁵ But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! "What sort of trick is this?" Jacob raged at Laban. "I worked seven years for Rachel. What do you mean by this trickery?"

²⁶ "It's not our custom to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn," Laban replied.

²⁷ "Wait until the bridal week is over, and you can have Rachel, too—that is, if you promise to work another seven years for me."

²⁸ So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too.

²⁹ And Laban gave Rachel a servant, Bilhah, to be her maid.

³⁰ So Jacob slept with Rachel, too, and he loved her more than Leah. He then stayed and worked the additional seven years.

³¹ But because Leah was unloved, the LORD let her have a child, while Rachel was childless.

³² So Leah became pregnant and had a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "The LORD has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me."

³³ She soon became pregnant again and had another son. She named him Simeon, for she said, "The LORD heard that I was unloved and has given me another son."

³⁴ Again she became pregnant and had a son. She named him Levi, for she said, "Surely now my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!"

³⁵ Once again she became pregnant and had a son. She named him Judah, for she said, "Now I will praise the LORD!" And then she stopped having children.

30 ¹ When Rachel saw that she wasn't having any children, she became jealous of her sister. "Give me children, or I'll die!" she exclaimed to Jacob.

² Jacob flew into a rage. "Am I God?" he asked. "He is the only one able to give you children!"

³ Then Rachel told him, "Sleep with my servant, Bilhah, and she will bear children for me."

⁴ So Rachel gave him Bilhah to be his wife, and Jacob slept with her.

⁵ Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son.

⁶ Rachel named him Dan, for she said, "God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son."

⁷ Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son.

⁸ Rachel named him Naphtali, for she said, "I have had an intense struggle with my sister, and I am winning!"

⁹ Meanwhile, Leah realized that she wasn't getting pregnant anymore, so she gave her servant, Zilpah, to Jacob to be his wife.

¹⁰ Soon Zilpah presented him with another son.

¹¹ Leah named him Gad, for she said, "How fortunate I am!"

¹² Then Zilpah produced a second son,

¹³ and Leah named him Asher, for she said, "What joy is mine! The other women will consider me happy indeed!"

¹⁴ One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought the roots to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah to give some of them to her.

¹⁵ But Leah angrily replied, "Wasn't it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son's mandrake roots, too?" Rachel said, "I will let him sleep with you tonight in exchange for the mandrake roots."

¹⁶ So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. "You must sleep with me tonight!" she said. "I have paid for you with some mandrake roots my son has found." So Jacob slept with her.

¹⁷ And God answered her prayers. She became pregnant again and gave birth to her fifth son.

¹⁸ She named him Issachar, for she said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife."

¹⁹ Then she became pregnant again and had a sixth son.

²⁰ She named him Zebulun, for she said, "God has given me good gifts for my husband. Now he will honor me, for I have given him six sons."

²¹ Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²² Then God remembered Rachel's plight and answered her prayers by giving her a child.

²³ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. "God has removed my shame," she said.

²⁴ And she named him Joseph, for she said, "May the LORD give me yet another son."

²⁵ Soon after Joseph was born to Rachel, Jacob said to Laban, "I want to go back home.

²⁶ Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them from you, and let me be on my way. You know I have fully paid for them with my service to you."

²⁷ "Please don't leave me," Laban replied, "for I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because you are here.

²⁸ How much do I owe you? Whatever it is, I'll pay it."

²⁹ Jacob replied, "You know how faithfully I've served you through these many years, and how your flocks and herds have grown.

³⁰ You had little indeed before I came, and your wealth has increased enormously. The LORD has blessed you from everything I do! But now, what

about me? When should I provide for my own family?"

³¹ "What wages do you want?" Laban asked again. Jacob replied, "Don't give me anything at all. Just do one thing, and I'll go back to work for you.

³² Let me go out among your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the dark-colored sheep. Give them to me as my wages.

³³ This will make it easy for you to see whether or not I have been honest. If you find in my flock any white sheep or goats that are not speckled, you will know that I have stolen them from you."

³⁴ "All right," Laban replied. "It will be as you have said."

³⁵ But that very day Laban went out and removed all the male goats that were speckled and spotted, the females that were speckled and spotted with any

white patches, and all the dark-colored sheep. He placed them in the care of his sons,

³⁶ and they took them three days' distance from where Jacob was.

Meanwhile, Jacob stayed and cared for Laban's flock.

³⁷ Now Jacob took fresh shoots from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of the bark to make white streaks on them.

³⁸ Then he set up these peeled branches beside the watering troughs so Laban's flocks would see them as they came to drink, for that was when they mated.

³⁹ So when the flocks mated in front of the white-streaked branches, all of their offspring were streaked, speckled, and spotted.

⁴⁰ Jacob added them to his own flock, thus separating the lambs from Laban's flock. Then at mating time, he turned

the flocks toward the streaked and dark-colored rams in Laban's flock. This is how he built his flock from Laban's.

⁴¹ Whenever the stronger females were ready to mate, Jacob set up the peeled branches in front of them.

⁴² But he didn't do this with the weaker ones, so the weaker lambs belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones were Jacob's.

⁴³ As a result, Jacob's flocks increased rapidly, and he became very wealthy, with many servants, camels, and donkeys.

31 ¹ But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were beginning to grumble. "Jacob has robbed our father!" they said. "All his wealth has been gained at our father's expense."

² And Jacob began to notice a considerable cooling in Laban's attitude toward him.

³ Then the LORD said to Jacob,
"Return to the land of your father and
grandfather and to your relatives there,
and I will be with you."

⁴ Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to
the field where he was watching the
flocks,

⁵ so he could talk things over with
them. "Your father has turned against
me and is not treating me like he used
to," he told them. "But the God of my
father has been with me.

⁶ You know how hard I have worked for
your father,

⁷ but he has tricked me, breaking his
wage agreement with me again and
again. But God has not allowed him to
do me any harm.

⁸ For if he said the speckled animals
were mine, the whole flock began to
produce speckled lambs. And when he
changed his mind and said I could have

the streaked ones, then all the lambs were born streaked.

⁹ In this way, God has made me wealthy at your father's expense.

¹⁰ During the mating season, I had a dream and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, and spotted.

¹¹ Then in my dream, the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' And I replied, 'Yes, I'm listening!'

¹² The angel said, 'Look, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females of your flock. For I have seen all that Laban has done to you.

¹³ I am the God you met at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made a vow to serve me. Now leave this country and return to the land you came from.'"

¹⁴ Rachel and Leah said, "That's fine with us! There's nothing for us here—none of our father's wealth will come to us anyway.

¹⁵ He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women. He sold us, and what he received for us has disappeared.

¹⁶ The riches God has given you from our father are legally ours and our children's to begin with. So go ahead and do whatever God has told you."

¹⁷ So Jacob put his wives and children on camels.

¹⁸ He drove the flocks in front of him—all the livestock he had acquired at Paddan-aram—and set out on his journey to the land of Canaan, where his father, Isaac, lived.

¹⁹ At the time they left, Laban was some distance away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole her father's household gods and took them with her.

²⁰ They set out secretly and never told Laban they were leaving.

²¹ Jacob took all his possessions with him and crossed the Euphrates River, heading for the territory of Gilead.

²² Laban didn't learn of their flight for three days.

²³ But when he did, he gathered a group of his relatives and set out in hot pursuit. He caught up with them seven days later in the hill country of Gilead.

²⁴ But the previous night God had appeared to Laban in a dream. "Be careful about what you say to Jacob!" he was told.

²⁵ So when Laban caught up with Jacob as he was camped in the hill country of Gilead, he set up his camp not far from Jacob's.

²⁶ "What do you mean by sneaking off like this?" Laban demanded. "Are my daughters prisoners, the plunder of war,

that you have stolen them away like this?

²⁷ Why did you slip away secretly? I would have given you a farewell party, with joyful singing accompanied by tambourines and harps.

²⁸ Why didn't you let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren and tell them good-bye? You have acted very foolishly!

²⁹ I could destroy you, but the God of your father appeared to me last night and told me, 'Be careful about what you say to Jacob!'

³⁰ I know you feel you must go, and you long intensely for your childhood home, but why have you stolen my household gods?"

³¹ "I rushed away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I said to myself, 'He'll take his daughters from me by force.'

³² But as for your household gods, let the person who has taken them die! If you find anything that belongs to you, I swear before all these relatives of ours, I will give it back without question." But Jacob didn't know that Rachel had taken them.

³³ Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then he searched the tents of the two concubines, but he didn't find the gods. Finally, he went into Rachel's tent.

³⁴ Rachel had taken the household gods and had stuffed them into her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. So although Laban searched all the tents, he couldn't find them.

³⁵ "Forgive my not getting up, Father," Rachel explained. "I'm having my monthly period." So despite his thorough search, Laban didn't find them.

³⁶ Then Jacob became very angry. "What did you find?" he demanded of Laban. "What is my crime? You have chased me as though I were a criminal.

³⁷ You have searched through everything I own. Now show me what you have found that belongs to you! Set it out here in front of us, before our relatives, for all to see. Let them decide who is the real owner!

³⁸ "Twenty years I have been with you, and all that time I cared for your sheep and goats so they produced healthy offspring. In all those years I never touched a single ram of yours for food.

³⁹ If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, did I show them to you and ask you to reduce the count of your flock? No, I took the loss! You made me pay for every animal stolen from the flocks, whether the loss was my fault or not.

⁴⁰ I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights.

⁴¹ Yes, twenty years—fourteen of them earning your two daughters, and six years to get the flock. And you have reduced my wages ten times!

⁴² In fact, except for the grace of God—the God of my grandfather Abraham, the awe-inspiring God of my father, Isaac—you would have sent me off without a penny to my name. But God has seen your cruelty and my hard work. That is why he appeared to you last night and vindicated me."

⁴³ Then Laban replied to Jacob, "These women are my daughters, and these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks and all that you have—all are mine. But what can I do now to my own daughters and grandchildren?"

⁴⁴ Come now, and we will make a peace treaty, you and I, and we will live by its terms."

⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument.

⁴⁶ He also told his men to gather stones and pile them up in a heap. Jacob and Laban then sat down beside the pile of stones to share a meal.

⁴⁷ They named it "Witness Pile," which is Jegar-sahadutha in Laban's language and Galeed in Jacob's.

⁴⁸ "This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of our agreement," Laban said.

⁴⁹ This place was also called Mizpah, for Laban said, "May the LORD keep watch between us to make sure that we keep this treaty when we are out of each other's sight.

⁵⁰ I won't know about it if you are harsh to my daughters or if you take other wives, but God will see it.

⁵¹ This heap of stones and this pillar

⁵² stand between us as a witness of our vows. I will not cross this line to harm you, and you will not cross it to harm me.

⁵³ I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of my grandfather Nahor—to punish either one of us who harms the other." So Jacob took an oath before the awesome God of his father, Isaac, to respect the boundary line.

⁵⁴ Then Jacob presented a sacrifice to God and invited everyone to a feast. Afterward they spent the night there in the hills.

⁵⁵ Laban got up early the next morning, and he kissed his daughters and

grandchildren and blessed them. Then he returned home.

32 ¹ As Jacob and his household started on their way again, angels of God came to meet him.

² When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, "This is God's camp!" So he named the place Mahanaim.

³ Jacob now sent messengers to his brother, Esau, in Edom, the land of Seir.

⁴ He told them, "Give this message to my master Esau: 'Humble greetings from your servant Jacob! I have been living with Uncle Laban until recently,

⁵ and now I own oxen, donkeys, sheep, goats, and many servants, both men and women. I have sent these messengers to inform you of my coming, hoping that you will be friendly to us.'"

⁶ The messengers returned with the news that Esau was on his way to meet

Jacob—with an army of four hundred men!

⁷ Jacob was terrified at the news. He divided his household, along with the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps.

⁸ He thought, "If Esau attacks one group, perhaps the other can escape."

⁹ Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac—O LORD, you told me to return to my land and to my relatives, and you promised to treat me kindly.

¹⁰ I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and unfailing love you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home, I owned nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps!

¹¹ O LORD, please rescue me from my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to kill me, along with my wives and children.

¹² But you promised to treat me kindly and to multiply my descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count."

¹³ Jacob stayed where he was for the night and prepared a present for Esau:

¹⁴ two hundred female goats, twenty male goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams,

¹⁵ thirty female camels with their young, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten male donkeys.

¹⁶ He told his servants to lead them on ahead, each group of animals by itself, separated by a distance in between.

¹⁷ He gave these instructions to the men leading the first group: "When you meet Esau, he will ask, 'Where are you going? Whose servants are you? Whose animals are these?'

¹⁸ You should reply, 'These belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present for his master Esau! He is coming right behind us.'

¹⁹ Jacob gave the same instructions to each of the herdsmen and told them, "You are all to say the same thing to Esau when you see him.

²⁰ And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is right behind us.'" Jacob's plan was to appease Esau with the presents before meeting him face to face. "Perhaps," Jacob hoped, "he will be friendly to us."

²¹ So the presents were sent on ahead, and Jacob spent that night in the camp.

²² But during the night Jacob got up and sent his two wives, two concubines, and eleven sons across the Jabbok River.

²³ After they were on the other side, he sent over all his possessions.

²⁴ This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until dawn.

²⁵ When the man saw that he couldn't win the match, he struck Jacob's hip and knocked it out of joint at the socket.

²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is dawn." But Jacob panted, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷ "What is your name?" the man asked. He replied, "Jacob."

²⁸ "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "It is now Israel, because you have struggled with both God and men and have won."

²⁹ "What is your name?" Jacob asked him. "Why do you ask?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

³⁰ Jacob named the place Peniel—"face of God"—for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."

³¹ The sun rose as he left Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

³² That is why even today the people of Israel don't eat meat from near the hip, in memory of what happened that night.

33 ¹ Then, in the distance, Jacob saw Esau coming with his four hundred men.

² Jacob now arranged his family into a column, with his two concubines and their children at the front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.

³ Then Jacob went on ahead. As he approached his brother, he bowed low seven times before him.

⁴ Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him affectionately and kissed him. Both of them were in tears.

⁵ Then Esau looked at the women and children and asked, "Who are these people with you?" "These are the

children God has graciously given to me," Jacob replied.

⁶ Then the concubines came forward with their children and bowed low before him.

⁷ Next Leah came with her children, and they bowed down. Finally, Rachel and Joseph came and made their bows.

⁸ "And what were all the flocks and herds I met as I came?" Esau asked. Jacob replied, "They are gifts, my lord, to ensure your goodwill."

⁹ "Brother, I have plenty," Esau answered. "Keep what you have."

¹⁰ "No, please accept them," Jacob said, "for what a relief it is to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the smile of God!

¹¹ Please take my gifts, for God has been very generous to me. I have more than enough." Jacob continued to insist, so Esau finally accepted them.

¹² "Well, let's be going," Esau said. "I will stay with you and lead the way."

¹³ But Jacob replied, "You can see, my lord, that some of the children are very young, and the flocks and herds have their young, too. If they are driven too hard, they may die.

¹⁴ So go on ahead of us. We will follow at our own pace and meet you at Seir."

¹⁵ "Well," Esau said, "at least let me leave some of my men to guide and protect you." "There is no reason for you to be so kind to me," Jacob insisted.

¹⁶ So Esau started back to Seir that same day.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, Jacob and his household traveled on to Succoth. There he built himself a house and made shelters for his flocks and herds. That is why the place was named Succoth.

¹⁸ Then they arrived safely at Shechem, in Canaan, and they set up camp just outside the town.

¹⁹ Jacob bought the land he camped on from the family of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of silver.

²⁰ And there he built an altar and called it El–Elohe–Israel.

34 ¹ One day Dinah, Leah's daughter, went to visit some of the young women who lived in the area.

² But when the local prince, Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, saw her, he took her and raped her.

³ But Shechem's love for Dinah was strong, and he tried to win her affection.

⁴ He even spoke to his father about it. "Get this girl for me," he demanded. "I want to marry her."

⁵ Word soon reached Jacob that his daughter had been defiled, but his sons

were out in the fields herding cattle so he did nothing until they returned.

⁶ Meanwhile, Hamor, Shechem's father, came out to discuss the matter with Jacob.

⁷ He arrived just as Jacob's sons were coming in from the fields. They were shocked and furious that their sister had been raped. Shechem had done a disgraceful thing against Jacob's family, a thing that should never have been done.

⁸ Hamor told Jacob and his sons, "My son Shechem is truly in love with your daughter, and he longs for her to be his wife. Please let him marry her.

⁹ We invite you to let your daughters marry our sons, and we will give our daughters as wives for your young men.

¹⁰ And you may live among us; the land is open to you! Settle here and trade with us. You are free to acquire property among us."

¹¹ Then Shechem addressed Dinah's father and brothers. "Please be kind to me, and let me have her as my wife," he begged. "I will give whatever you require.

¹² No matter what dowry or gift you demand, I will pay it—only give me the girl as my wife."

¹³ But Dinah's brothers deceived Shechem and Hamor because of what Shechem had done to their sister.

¹⁴ They said to them, "We couldn't possibly allow this, because you aren't circumcised. It would be a disgrace for her to marry a man like you!

¹⁵ But here is a solution. If every man among you will be circumcised like we are,

¹⁶ we will intermarry with you and live here and unite with you to become one people.

¹⁷ Otherwise we will take her and be on our way."

¹⁸ Hamor and Shechem gladly agreed,

¹⁹ and Shechem lost no time in acting on this request, for he wanted Dinah desperately. Shechem was a highly respected member of his family,

²⁰ and he appeared with his father before the town leaders to present this proposal.

²¹ "Those men are our friends," they said. "Let's invite them to live here among us and ply their trade. For the land is large enough to hold them, and we can intermarry with them.

²² But they will consider staying here only on one condition. Every one of us men must be circumcised, just as they are.

²³ But if we do this, all their flocks and possessions will become ours. Come,

let's agree to this so they will settle here among us."

²⁴ So all the men agreed and were circumcised.

²⁵ But three days later, when their wounds were still sore, two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, took their swords, entered the town without opposition, and slaughtered every man there,

²⁶ including Hamor and Shechem. They rescued Dinah from Shechem's house and returned to their camp.

²⁷ Then all of Jacob's sons plundered the town because their sister had been defiled there.

²⁸ They seized all the flocks and herds and donkeys—everything they could lay their hands on, both inside the town and outside in the fields.

²⁹ They also took all the women and children and wealth of every kind.

³⁰ Afterward Jacob said to Levi and Simeon, "You have made me stink among all the people of this land—among all the Canaanites and Perizzites. We are so few that they will come and crush us. We will all be killed!"

³¹ "Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?" they retorted angrily.

35 ¹ God said to Jacob, "Now move on to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to worship me—the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau."

² So Jacob told everyone in his household, "Destroy your idols, wash yourselves, and put on clean clothing.

³ We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. He has stayed with me wherever I have gone."

⁴ So they gave Jacob all their idols and their earrings, and he buried them beneath the tree near Shechem.

⁵ When they set out again, terror from God came over the people in all the towns of that area, and no one attacked them.

⁶ Finally, they arrived at Luz (now called Bethel) in Canaan.

⁷ Jacob built an altar there and named it El-bethel, because God had appeared to him there at Bethel when he was fleeing from Esau.

⁸ Soon after this, Rebekah's old nurse, Deborah, died. She was buried beneath the oak tree in the valley below Bethel. Ever since, the tree has been called the "Oak of Weeping."

⁹ God appeared to Jacob once again when he arrived at Bethel after traveling from Paddan-aram. God blessed him

¹⁰ and said, "Your name is no longer Jacob; you will now be called Israel."

¹¹ Then God said, "I am God Almighty. Multiply and fill the earth! Become a great nation, even many nations. Kings will be among your descendants!

¹² And I will pass on to you the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac. Yes, I will give it to you and your descendants."

¹³ Then God went up from the place where he had spoken to Jacob.

¹⁴ Jacob set up a stone pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. He then poured wine over it as an offering to God and anointed the pillar with olive oil.

¹⁵ Jacob called the place Bethel—"house of God"—because God had spoken to him there.

¹⁶ Leaving Bethel, they traveled on toward Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). But

Rachel's pains of childbirth began while they were still some distance away.

¹⁷ After a very hard delivery, the midwife finally exclaimed, "Don't be afraid—you have another son!"

¹⁸ Rachel was about to die, but with her last breath she named him Ben-oni; the baby's father, however, called him Benjamin.

¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

²⁰ Jacob set up a stone monument over her grave, and it can be seen there to this day.

²¹ Jacob then traveled on and camped beyond the tower of Eder.

²² While he was there, Reuben slept with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and someone told Jacob about it. These are the names of the twelve sons of Jacob:

²³ The sons of Leah were Reuben (Jacob's oldest son), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

²⁴ The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁵ The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's servant, were Dan and Naphtali.

²⁶ The sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons born to Jacob at Paddan-aram.

²⁷ So Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, which is near Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron), where Abraham had also lived.

²⁸ Isaac lived for 180 years,

²⁹ and he died at a ripe old age, joining his ancestors in death. Then his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him.

36 ¹ This is the history of the descendants of Esau (also known as Edom).

² Esau married two young women from Canaan: Adah, the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite.

³ He also married his cousin Basemath, who was the daughter of Ishmael and the sister of Nebaioth.

⁴ Esau and Adah had a son named Eliphaz. Esau and Basemath had a son named Reuel.

⁵ Esau and Oholibamah had sons named Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. All these sons were born to Esau in the land of Canaan.

⁶ Then Esau took his wives, children, household servants, cattle, and flocks—all the wealth he had gained in the land of Canaan—and moved away from his brother, Jacob.

⁷ There was not enough land to support them both because of all their cattle and livestock.

⁸ So Esau (also known as Edom) settled in the hill country of Seir.

⁹ This is a list of Esau's descendants, the Edomites, who lived in the hill country of Seir.

¹⁰ Among Esau's sons were Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah; and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹¹ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

¹² Eliphaz had another son named Amalek, born to Timna, his concubine. These were all grandchildren of Esau's wife Adah.

¹³ The sons of Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were all grandchildren of Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴ Esau also had sons through Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon. Their names were Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵ Esau's children and grandchildren became the leaders of different clans. The sons of Esau's oldest son, Eliphaz, became the leaders of the clans of Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,

¹⁶ Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. These clans in the land of Edom were descended from Eliphaz, the son of Esau and Adah.

¹⁷ The sons of Esau's son Reuel became the leaders of the clans of Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These clans in the land of Edom were descended from Reuel, the son of Esau and Basemath.

¹⁸ The sons of Esau and his wife Oholibamah became the leaders of the clans of Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These

are the clans descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

¹⁹ These are all the clans descended from Esau (also known as Edom).

²⁰ These are the names of the tribes that descended from Seir the Horite, one of the families native to the land of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,

²¹ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These were the Horite clans, the descendants of Seir, who lived in the land of Edom.

²² The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman. Lotan's sister was named Timna.

²³ The sons of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

²⁴ The sons of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs in the wilderness while he was grazing his father's donkeys.

²⁵ The son of Anah was Dishon, and Oholibamah was his daughter.

²⁶ The sons of Dishon were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

²⁷ The sons of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸ The sons of Dishan were Uz and Aran.

²⁹ So the leaders of the Horite clans were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,

³⁰ Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. The Horite clans are named after their clan leaders, who lived in the land of Seir.

³¹ These are the kings who ruled in Edom before there were kings in Israel:

³² Bela son of Beor, who ruled from his city of Dinhabah.

³³ When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king.

³⁴ When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites became king.

³⁵ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad became king and ruled from the city of Avith. He was the one who

destroyed the Midianite army in the land of Moab.

³⁶ When Hadad died, Samlah from the city of Masrekah became king.

³⁷ When Samlah died, Shaul from the city of Rehoboth on the Euphrates River became king.

³⁸ When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Acbor became king.

³⁹ When Baal-hanan died, Hadad became king and ruled from the city of Pau. Hadad's wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Me-zahab.

⁴⁰ These are the leaders of the clans of Esau, who lived in the places named for them: Timna, Alvah, Jetheth,

⁴¹ Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,

⁴² Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,

⁴³ Magdiel, and Iram. These are the names of the clans of Esau, the ancestor

of the Edomites, each clan giving its name to the area it occupied.

37 ¹ So Jacob settled again in the land of Canaan, where his father had lived.

² This is the history of Jacob's family. When Joseph was seventeen years old, he often tended his father's flocks with his half brothers, the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. But Joseph reported to his father some of the bad things his brothers were doing.

³ Now Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day he gave Joseph a special gift—a beautiful robe.

⁴ But his brothers hated Joseph because of their father's partiality. They couldn't say a kind word to him.

⁵ One night Joseph had a dream and promptly reported the details to his

brothers, causing them to hate him even more.

⁶ "Listen to this dream," he announced.

⁷ "We were out in the field tying up bundles of grain. My bundle stood up, and then your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before it!"

⁸ "So you are going to be our king, are you?" his brothers taunted. And they hated him all the more for his dream and what he had said.

⁹ Then Joseph had another dream and told his brothers about it. "Listen to this dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

¹⁰ This time he told his father as well as his brothers, and his father rebuked him. "What do you mean?" his father asked. "Will your mother, your brothers, and I actually come and bow before you?"

¹¹ But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father gave it some thought and wondered what it all meant.

¹² Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem.

¹³ When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph, "Your brothers are over at Shechem with the flocks. I'm going to send you to them." "I'm ready to go," Joseph replied.

¹⁴ "Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along," Jacob said. "Then come back and bring me word." So Jacob sent him on his way, and Joseph traveled to Shechem from his home in the valley of Hebron.

¹⁵ When he arrived there, a man noticed him wandering around the countryside. "What are you looking for?" he asked.

¹⁶ "For my brothers and their flocks," Joseph replied. "Have you seen them?"

¹⁷ "Yes," the man told him, "but they are no longer here. I heard your brothers say they were going to Dothan." So Joseph followed his brothers to Dothan and found them there.

¹⁸ When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they recognized him in the distance and made plans to kill him.

¹⁹ "Here comes that dreamer!" they exclaimed.

²⁰ "Come on, let's kill him and throw him into a deep pit. We can tell our father that a wild animal has eaten him. Then we'll see what becomes of all his dreams!"

²¹ But Reuben came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said.

²² "Why should we shed his blood? Let's just throw him alive into this pit here. That way he will die without our having

to touch him." Reuben was secretly planning to help Joseph escape, and then he would bring him back to his father.

²³ So when Joseph arrived, they pulled off his beautiful robe

²⁴ and threw him into the pit. This pit was normally used to store water, but it was empty at the time.

²⁵ Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they noticed a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking spices, balm, and myrrh from Gilead to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to the others, "What can we gain by killing our brother? That would just give us a guilty conscience.

²⁷ Let's sell Joseph to those Ishmaelite traders. Let's not be responsible for his death; after all, he is our brother!" And his brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the traders came by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmaelite traders took him along to Egypt.

²⁹ Some time later, Reuben returned to get Joseph out of the pit. When he discovered that Joseph was missing, he tore his clothes in anguish and frustration.

³⁰ Then he went back to his brothers and lamented, "The boy is gone! What can I do now?"

³¹ Then Joseph's brothers killed a goat and dipped the robe in its blood.

³² They took the beautiful robe to their father and asked him to identify it. "We found this in the field," they told him. "It's Joseph's robe, isn't it?"

³³ Their father recognized it at once. "Yes," he said, "it is my son's robe. A

wild animal has attacked and eaten him. Surely Joseph has been torn in pieces!"

³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes and put on sackcloth. He mourned deeply for his son for many days.

³⁵ His family all tried to comfort him, but it was no use. "I will die in mourning for my son," he would say, and then begin to weep.

³⁶ Meanwhile, in Egypt, the traders sold Joseph to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was captain of the palace guard.

38 ¹ About this time, Judah left home and moved to Adullam, where he visited a man named Hirah.

² There he met a Canaanite woman, the daughter of Shua, and he married her.

³ She became pregnant and had a son, and Judah named the boy Er.

⁴ Then Judah's wife had another son, and she named him Onan.

⁵ And when she had a third son, she named him Shelah. At the time of Shelah's birth, they were living at Kezib.

⁶ When his oldest son, Er, grew up, Judah arranged his marriage to a young woman named Tamar.

⁷ But Er was a wicked man in the LORD's sight, so the LORD took his life.

⁸ Then Judah said to Er's brother Onan, "You must marry Tamar, as our law requires of the brother of a man who has died. Her first son from you will be your brother's heir."

⁹ But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with Tamar, he spilled the semen on the ground to keep her from having a baby who would belong to his brother.

¹⁰ But the LORD considered it a wicked thing for Onan to deny a child to his

dead brother. So the LORD took Onan's life, too.

¹¹ Then Judah told Tamar, his daughter-in-law, not to marry again at that time but to return to her parents' home. She was to remain a widow until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her. (But Judah didn't really intend to do this because he was afraid Shelah would also die, like his two brothers.) So Tamar went home to her parents.

¹² In the course of time Judah's wife died. After the time of mourning was over, Judah and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went to Timnah to supervise the shearing of his sheep.

¹³ Someone told Tamar that her father-in-law had left for the sheep-shearing at Timnah.

¹⁴ Tamar was aware that Shelah had grown up, but they had not called her to come and marry him. So she changed

out of her widow's clothing and covered herself with a veil to disguise herself. Then she sat beside the road at the entrance to the village of Enaim, which is on the way to Timnah.

¹⁵ Judah noticed her as he went by and thought she was a prostitute, since her face was veiled.

¹⁶ So he stopped and propositioned her to sleep with him, not realizing that she was his own daughter-in-law. "How much will you pay me?" Tamar asked.

¹⁷ "I'll send you a young goat from my flock," Judah promised. "What pledge will you give me so I can be sure you will send it?" she asked.

¹⁸ "Well, what do you want?" he inquired. She replied, "I want your identification seal, your cord, and the walking stick you are carrying." So Judah gave these items to her. She then let

him sleep with her, and she became pregnant.

¹⁹ Afterward she went home, took off her veil, and put on her widow's clothing as usual.

²⁰ Judah asked his friend Hirah the Adullamite to take the young goat back to her and to pick up the pledges he had given her, but Hirah couldn't find her.

²¹ So he asked the men who lived there, "Where can I find the prostitute who was sitting beside the road at the entrance to the village?" "We've never had a prostitute here," they replied.

²² So Hirah returned to Judah and told him that he couldn't find her anywhere and that the men of the village had claimed they didn't have a prostitute there.

²³ "Then let her keep the pledges!" Judah exclaimed. "We tried our best to send her the goat. We'd be the

laughingstock of the village if we went back again."

²⁴ About three months later, word reached Judah that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, was pregnant as a result of prostitution. "Bring her out and burn her!" Judah shouted.

²⁵ But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: "The man who owns this identification seal and walking stick is the father of my child. Do you recognize them?"

²⁶ Judah admitted that they were his and said, "She is more in the right than I am, because I didn't keep my promise to let her marry my son Shelah." But Judah never slept with Tamar again.

²⁷ In due season the time of Tamar's delivery arrived, and she had twin sons.

²⁸ As they were being born, one of them reached out his hand, and the

midwife tied a scarlet thread around the wrist of the child who appeared first, saying, "This one came out first."

²⁹ But then he drew back his hand, and the other baby was actually the first to be born. "What!" the midwife exclaimed. "How did you break out first?" And ever after, he was called Perez.

³⁰ Then the baby with the scarlet thread on his wrist was born, and he was named Zerah.

39 ¹ Now when Joseph arrived in Egypt with the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, a member of the personal staff of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar was the captain of the palace guard.

² The LORD was with Joseph and blessed him greatly as he served in the home of his Egyptian master.

³ Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did.

⁴ So Joseph naturally became quite a favorite with him. Potiphar soon put Joseph in charge of his entire household and entrusted him with all his business dealings.

⁵ From the day Joseph was put in charge, the LORD began to bless Potiphar for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs began to run smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished.

⁶ So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't have a worry in the world, except to decide what he wanted to eat! Now Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man.

⁷ And about this time, Potiphar's wife began to desire him and invited him to sleep with her.

⁸ But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household.

⁹ No one here has more authority than I do! He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I ever do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

¹⁰ She kept putting pressure on him day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible.

¹¹ One day, however, no one else was around when he was doing his work inside the house.

¹² She came and grabbed him by his shirt, demanding, "Sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but as he did,

his shirt came off. She was left holding it as he ran from the house.

¹³ When she saw that she had his shirt and that he had fled,

¹⁴ she began screaming. Soon all the men around the place came running.

"My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to insult us!" she sobbed. "He tried to rape me, but I screamed.

¹⁵ When he heard my loud cries, he ran and left his shirt behind with me."

¹⁶ She kept the shirt with her, and when her husband came home that night,

¹⁷ she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've had around here tried to make a fool of me," she said.

¹⁸ "I was saved only by my screams. He ran out, leaving his shirt behind!"

¹⁹ After hearing his wife's story, Potiphar was furious!

²⁰ He took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held.

²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph there, too, and he granted Joseph favor with the chief jailer.

²² Before long, the jailer put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison.

²³ The chief jailer had no more worries after that, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him, making everything run smoothly and successfully.

40 ¹ Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended him.

² Pharaoh became very angry with these officials,

³ and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of Potiphar, the captain of the guard.

⁴ They remained in prison for quite some time, and Potiphar assigned Joseph to take care of them.

⁵ One night the cup-bearer and the baker each had a dream, and each dream had its own meaning.

⁶ The next morning Joseph noticed the dejected look on their faces.

⁷ "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked.

⁸ And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but there is no one here to tell us what they mean." "Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Tell me what you saw."

⁹ The cup-bearer told his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a vine in front of me.

¹⁰ It had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon there were clusters of ripe grapes.

¹¹ I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took the grapes and squeezed the juice into it. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

¹² "I know what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches mean three days.

¹³ Within three days Pharaoh will take you out of prison and return you to your position as his chief cup-bearer.

¹⁴ And please have some pity on me when you are back in his favor. Mention me to Pharaoh, and ask him to let me out of here.

¹⁵ For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in jail, but I did nothing to deserve it."

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that the first dream had such a good meaning, he told his dream to Joseph, too. "In my dream," he said, "there were three baskets of pastries on my head.

¹⁷ In the top basket were all kinds of bakery goods for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them."

¹⁸ "I'll tell you what it means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets mean three days.

¹⁹ Three days from now Pharaoh will cut off your head and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."

²⁰ Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he gave a banquet for all his officials and household staff. He sent for his chief cup-bearer and chief baker, and they were brought to him from the prison.

²¹ He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position,

²² but he sentenced the chief baker to be impaled on a pole, just as Joseph had predicted.

²³ Pharaoh's cup-bearer, however, promptly forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

41 ¹ Two years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River.

² In his dream, seven fat, healthy-looking cows suddenly came up out of the river and began grazing along its bank.

³ Then seven other cows came up from the river, but these were very ugly and gaunt. These cows went over and stood beside the fat cows.

⁴ Then the thin, ugly cows ate the fat ones! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

⁵ Soon he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain on one stalk, with every kernel well formed and plump.

⁶ Then suddenly, seven more heads appeared on the stalk, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind.

⁷ And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream.

⁸ The next morning, as he thought about it, Pharaoh became very concerned as to what the dreams might mean. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt and told them about his dreams, but not one of them could suggest what they meant.

⁹ Then the king's cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he said.

¹⁰ "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard.

¹¹ One night the chief baker and I each had a dream, and each dream had a meaning.

¹² We told the dreams to a young Hebrew man who was a servant of the captain of the guard. He told us what each of our dreams meant,

¹³ and everything happened just as he said it would. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."

¹⁴ Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was brought hastily from the dungeon. After a quick shave and change of clothes, he went in and stood in Pharaoh's presence.

¹⁵ "I had a dream last night," Pharaoh told him, "and none of these men can tell me what it means. But I have heard that you can interpret dreams, and that is why I have called for you."

¹⁶ "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God will tell you what it means and will set you at ease."

¹⁷ So Pharaoh told him the dream. "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River," he said.

¹⁸ "Suddenly, seven fat, healthy-looking cows came up out of the river and began grazing along its bank.

¹⁹ But then seven other cows came up from the river. They were very thin and gaunt—in fact, I've never seen such ugly animals in all the land of Egypt.

²⁰ These thin, ugly cows ate up the seven fat ones that had come out of the river first,

²¹ but afterward they were still as ugly and gaunt as before! Then I woke up.

²² "A little later I had another dream. This time there were seven heads of grain on one stalk, and all seven heads were plump and full.

²³ Then out of the same stalk came seven withered heads, shriveled by the east wind.

²⁴ And the withered heads swallowed up the plump ones! I told these dreams to my magicians, but not one of them could tell me what they mean."

²⁵ "Both dreams mean the same thing," Joseph told Pharaoh. "God was telling you what he is about to do.

²⁶ The seven fat cows and the seven plump heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity.

²⁷ The seven thin, ugly cows and the seven withered heads of grain represent seven years of famine.

²⁸ This will happen just as I have described it, for God has shown you what he is about to do.

²⁹ The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt.

³⁰ But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten and wiped out. Famine will destroy the land.

³¹ This famine will be so terrible that even the memory of the good years will be erased.

³² As for having the dream twice, it means that the matter has been decreed by God and that he will make these events happen soon.

³³ "My suggestion is that you find the wisest man in Egypt and put him in charge of a nationwide program.

³⁴ Let Pharaoh appoint officials over the land, and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years.

³⁵ Have them gather all the food and grain of these good years into the royal storehouses, and store it away so there will be food in the cities.

³⁶ That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come. Otherwise disaster will surely strike the land, and all the people will die."

³⁷ Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his advisers.

³⁸ As they discussed who should be appointed for the job, Pharaoh said, "Who could do it better than Joseph? For he is a man who is obviously filled with the spirit of God."

³⁹ Turning to Joseph, Pharaoh said, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, you are the wisest man in the land!

⁴⁰ I hereby appoint you to direct this project. You will manage my household and organize all my people. Only I will have a rank higher than yours."

⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt."

⁴² Then Pharaoh placed his own signet ring on Joseph's finger as a symbol of his authority. He dressed him in beautiful clothing and placed the royal gold chain about his neck.

⁴³ Pharaoh also gave Joseph the chariot of his second-in-command, and wherever he went the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Joseph was put in charge of all Egypt.

⁴⁴ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am the king, but no one will move a hand or a foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval."

⁴⁵ Pharaoh renamed him Zaphenath-paneah and gave him a wife—a young woman named Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt.

⁴⁶ He was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he made a tour of inspection throughout the land.

⁴⁷ And sure enough, for the next seven years there were bumper crops everywhere.

⁴⁸ During those years, Joseph took a portion of all the crops grown in Egypt and stored them for the government in nearby cities.

⁴⁹ After seven years, the granaries were filled to overflowing. There was so much grain, like sand on the seashore, that the people could not keep track of the amount.

⁵⁰ During this time, before the arrival of the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis.

⁵¹ Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles and the family of my father."

⁵² Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, "God has made me fruitful in this land of my suffering."

⁵³ At last the seven years of plenty came to an end.

⁵⁴ Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. There were crop failures in all the surrounding countries, too, but in Egypt there was plenty of grain in the storehouses.

⁵⁵ Throughout the land of Egypt the people began to starve. They pleaded

with Pharaoh for food, and he told them, "Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you."

⁵⁶ So with severe famine everywhere in the land, Joseph opened up the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians.

⁵⁷ And people from surrounding lands also came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

42 ¹ When Jacob heard that there was grain available in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why are you standing around looking at one another?"

² I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down and buy some for us before we all starve to death."

³ So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain.

⁴ Jacob wouldn't let Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin, go with them,

however, for fear some harm might come to him.

⁵ So Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine had reached Canaan as well.

⁶ Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of the sale of the grain, it was to him that his brothers came. They bowed low before him, with their faces to the ground.

⁷ Joseph recognized them instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger. "Where are you from?" he demanded roughly. "From the land of Canaan," they replied. "We have come to buy grain."

⁸ Joseph's brothers didn't recognize him, but Joseph recognized them.

⁹ And he remembered the dreams he had had many years before. He said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become."

¹⁰ "No, my lord!" they exclaimed. "We have come to buy food.

¹¹ We are all brothers and honest men, sir! We are not spies!"

¹² "Yes, you are!" he insisted. "You have come to discover how vulnerable the famine has made us."

¹³ "Sir," they said, "there are twelve of us brothers, and our father is in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is there with our father, and one of our brothers is no longer with us."

¹⁴ But Joseph insisted, "As I said, you are spies!

¹⁵ This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will not leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here.

¹⁶ One of you go and get your brother! I'll keep the rest of you here, bound in prison. Then we'll find out whether or not your story is true. If it turns out that

you don't have a younger brother, then I'll know you are spies."

¹⁷ So he put them all in prison for three days.

¹⁸ On the third day Joseph said to them, "I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live.

¹⁹ We'll see how honorable you really are. Only one of you will remain in the prison. The rest of you may go on home with grain for your families.

²⁰ But bring your youngest brother back to me. In this way, I will know whether or not you are telling me the truth. If you are, I will spare you." To this they agreed.

²¹ Speaking among themselves, they said, "This has all happened because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his terror and anguish and heard his pleadings, but we wouldn't listen. That's why this trouble has come upon us."

²² "Didn't I tell you not to do it?" Reuben asked. "But you wouldn't listen. And now we are going to die because we murdered him."

²³ Of course, they didn't know that Joseph understood them as he was standing there, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter.

²⁴ Now he left the room and found a place where he could weep. Returning, he talked some more with them. He then chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes.

²⁵ Joseph then ordered his servants to fill the men's sacks with grain, but he also gave secret instructions to return each brother's payment at the top of his sack. He also gave them provisions for their journey.

²⁶ So they loaded up their donkeys with the grain and started for home.

²⁷ But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get some grain to feed the donkeys, he found his money in the sack.

²⁸ "Look!" he exclaimed to his brothers. "My money is here in my sack!" They were filled with terror and said to each other, "What has God done to us?"

²⁹ So they came to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened.

³⁰ "The man who is ruler over the land spoke very roughly to us," they told him. "He took us for spies.

³¹ But we said, 'We are honest men, not spies.

³² We are twelve brothers, sons of one father; one brother has disappeared, and the youngest is with our father in the land of Canaan.'

³³ Then the man, the ruler of the land, told us, 'This is the way I will find out if

you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take grain for your families and go on home.

³⁴ But bring your youngest brother back to me. Then I will know that you are honest men and not spies. If you prove to be what you say, then I will give you back your brother, and you may come as often as you like to buy grain.'"

³⁵ As they emptied out the sacks, there at the top of each one was the bag of money paid for the grain. Terror gripped them, as it did their father.

³⁶ Jacob exclaimed, "You have deprived me of my children! Joseph has disappeared, Simeon is gone, and now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!"

³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, "You may kill my two sons if I don't bring Benjamin back to you. I'll be responsible for him."

³⁸ But Jacob replied, "My son will not go down with you, for his brother Joseph is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children. If anything should happen to him, you would bring my gray head down to the grave in deep sorrow."

43 ¹ But there was no relief from the terrible famine throughout the land.

² When the grain they had brought from Egypt was almost gone, Jacob said to his sons, "Go again and buy us a little food."

³ But Judah said, "The man wasn't joking when he warned that we couldn't see him again unless Benjamin came along."

⁴ If you let him come with us, we will go down and buy some food.

⁵ But if you don't let Benjamin go, we may as well stay at home. Remember that the man said, 'You won't be allowed

to come and see me unless your brother is with you.'"

⁶ "Why did you ever tell him you had another brother?" Jacob moaned. "Why did you have to treat me with such cruelty?"

⁷ "But the man specifically asked us about our family," they replied. "He wanted to know whether our father was still living, and he asked us if we had another brother so we told him. How could we have known he would say, 'Bring me your brother'?"

⁸ Judah said to his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will be on our way. Otherwise we will all die of starvation—and not only we, but you and our little ones.

⁹ I personally guarantee his safety. If I don't bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame forever.

¹⁰ For we could have gone and returned twice by this time if you had let him come without delay."

¹¹ So their father, Jacob, finally said to them, "If it can't be avoided, then at least do this. Fill your bags with the best products of the land. Take them to the man as gifts—balm, honey, spices, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds.

¹² Take double the money that you found in your sacks, as it was probably someone's mistake.

¹³ Then take your brother and go back to the man.

¹⁴ May God Almighty give you mercy as you go before the man, that he might release Simeon and return Benjamin. And if I must bear the anguish of their deaths, then so be it."

¹⁵ So they took Benjamin and the gifts and double the money and hurried to

Egypt, where they presented themselves to Joseph.

¹⁶ When Joseph saw that Benjamin was with them, he said to the manager of his household, "These men will eat with me this noon. Take them inside and prepare a big feast."

¹⁷ So the man did as he was told and took them to Joseph's palace.

¹⁸ They were badly frightened when they saw where they were being taken. "It's because of the money returned to us in our sacks," they said. "He plans to pretend that we stole it. Then he will seize us as slaves and take our donkeys."

¹⁹ As the brothers arrived at the entrance to the palace, they went over to the man in charge of Joseph's household.

²⁰ They said to him, "Sir, after our first trip to Egypt to buy food,

²¹ as we were returning home, we stopped for the night and opened our sacks. The money we had used to pay for the grain was there in our sacks. Here it is; we have brought it back again.

²² We also have additional money to buy more grain. We have no idea how the money got into our sacks."

²³ "Relax. Don't worry about it," the household manager told them. "Your God, the God of your ancestors, must have put it there. We collected your money all right." Then he released Simeon and brought him out to them.

²⁴ The brothers were then led into the palace and given water to wash their feet and food for their donkeys.

²⁵ They were told they would be eating there, so they prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon.

²⁶ When Joseph came, they gave him their gifts and bowed low before him.

²⁷ He asked them how they had been getting along, and then he said, "How is your father—the old man you spoke about? Is he still alive?"

²⁸ "Yes," they replied. "He is alive and well." Then they bowed again before him.

²⁹ Looking at his brother Benjamin, Joseph asked, "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about? May God be gracious to you, my son."

³⁰ Then Joseph made a hasty exit because he was overcome with emotion for his brother and wanted to cry. Going into his private room, he wept there.

³¹ Then he washed his face and came out, keeping himself under control. "Bring on the food!" he ordered.

³² Joseph ate by himself, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians sat at their own table

because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them.

³³ Joseph told each of his brothers where to sit, and to their amazement, he seated them in the order of their ages, from oldest to youngest.

³⁴ Their food was served to them from Joseph's own table. He gave the largest serving to Benjamin—five times as much as to any of the others. So they all feasted and drank freely with him.

44 ¹ When his brothers were ready to leave, Joseph gave these instructions to the man in charge of his household: "Fill each of their sacks with as much grain as they can carry, and put each man's money back into his sack.

² Then put my personal silver cup at the top of the youngest brother's sack, along with his grain money." So the household manager did as he was told.

³ The brothers were up at dawn and set out on their journey with their loaded donkeys.

⁴ But when they were barely out of the city, Joseph said to his household manager, "Chase after them and stop them. Ask them, 'Why have you repaid an act of kindness with such evil?"

⁵ What do you mean by stealing my master's personal silver drinking cup, which he uses to predict the future? What a wicked thing you have done!"

⁶ So the man caught up with them and spoke to them in the way he had been instructed.

⁷ "What are you talking about?" the brothers responded. "What kind of people do you think we are, that you accuse us of such a terrible thing?"

⁸ Didn't we bring back the money we found in our sacks? Why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house?"

⁹ If you find his cup with any one of us, let that one die. And all the rest of us will be your master's slaves forever."

¹⁰ "Fair enough," the man replied, "except that only the one who stole it will be a slave. The rest of you may go free."

¹¹ They quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them.

¹² Joseph's servant began searching the oldest brother's sack, going on down the line to the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack!

¹³ At this, they tore their clothing in despair, loaded the donkeys again, and returned to the city.

¹⁴ Joseph was still at home when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him.

¹⁵ "What were you trying to do?" Joseph demanded. "Didn't you know

that a man such as I would know who stole it?"

¹⁶ And Judah said, "Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we plead? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves—we and our brother who had your cup in his sack."

¹⁷ "No," Joseph said. "Only the man who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go home to your father."

¹⁸ Then Judah stepped forward and said, "My lord, let me say just this one word to you. Be patient with me for a moment, for I know you could have me killed in an instant, as though you were Pharaoh himself.

¹⁹ "You asked us, my lord, if we had a father or a brother.

²⁰ We said, 'Yes, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, his

youngest son. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him very much.'

²¹ And you said to us, 'Bring him here so I can see him.'

²² But we said to you, 'My lord, the boy cannot leave his father, for his father would die.'

²³ But you told us, 'You may not see me again unless your youngest brother is with you.'

²⁴ So we returned to our father and told him what you had said.

²⁵ And when he said, 'Go back again and buy us a little food,'

²⁶ we replied, 'We can't unless you let our youngest brother go with us. We won't be allowed to see the man in charge of the grain unless our youngest brother is with us.'

²⁷ Then my father said to us, 'You know that my wife had two sons,

²⁸ and that one of them went away and never returned—doubtless torn to pieces by some wild animal. I have never seen him since.

²⁹ If you take away his brother from me, too, and any harm comes to him, you would bring my gray head down to the grave in deep sorrow.'

³⁰ "And now, my lord, I cannot go back to my father without the boy. Our father's life is bound up in the boy's life.

³¹ When he sees that the boy is not with us, our father will die. We will be responsible for bringing his gray head down to the grave in sorrow.

³² My lord, I made a pledge to my father that I would take care of the boy. I told him, 'If I don't bring him back to you, I will bear the blame forever.'

³³ Please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.

³⁴ For how can I return to my father if the boy is not with me? I cannot bear to see what this would do to him."

45 ¹ Joseph could stand it no longer. "Out, all of you!" he cried out to his attendants. He wanted to be alone with his brothers when he told them who he was.

² Then he broke down and wept aloud. His sobs could be heard throughout the palace, and the news was quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

³ "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them.

⁴ "Come over here," he said. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt."

⁵ But don't be angry with yourselves that you did this to me, for God did it. He sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives.

⁶ These two years of famine will grow to seven, during which there will be neither plowing nor harvest.

⁷ God has sent me here to keep you and your families alive so that you will become a great nation.

⁸ Yes, it was God who sent me here, not you! And he has made me a counselor to Pharaoh—manager of his entire household and ruler over all Egypt.

⁹ "Hurry, return to my father and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. Come down to me right away!

¹⁰ You will live in the land of Goshen so you can be near me with all your

children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all that you have.

¹¹ I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you and your household will come to utter poverty.'"

¹² Then Joseph said, "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph!

¹³ Tell my father how I am honored here in Egypt. Tell him about everything you have seen, and bring him to me quickly."

¹⁴ Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin also began to weep.

¹⁵ Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and then they began talking freely with him.

¹⁶ The news soon reached Pharaoh: "Joseph's brothers have come!" Pharaoh was very happy to hear this and so were his officials.

¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers to load their pack animals and return quickly to their homes in Canaan.

¹⁸ Tell them to bring your father and all of their families, and to come here to Egypt to live. Tell them, 'Pharaoh will assign to you the very best territory in the land of Egypt. You will live off the fat of the land!'

¹⁹ And tell your brothers to take wagons from Egypt to carry their wives and little ones and to bring your father here.

²⁰ Don't worry about your belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours."

²¹ So the sons of Jacob did as they were told. Joseph gave them wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he supplied them with provisions for the journey.

²² And he gave each of them new clothes—but to Benjamin he gave five

changes of clothes and three hundred pieces of silver!

²³ He sent his father ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten donkeys loaded with grain and all kinds of other food to be eaten on his journey.

²⁴ So he sent his brothers off, and as they left, he called after them, "Don't quarrel along the way!"

²⁵ And they left Egypt and returned to their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan.

²⁶ "Joseph is still alive!" they told him. "And he is ruler over all the land of Egypt!" Jacob was stunned at the news—he couldn't believe it.

²⁷ But when they had given him Joseph's messages, and when he saw the wagons loaded with the food sent by Joseph, his spirit revived.

²⁸ Then Jacob said, "It must be true! My son Joseph is alive! I will go and see him before I die."

46 ¹ So Jacob set out for Egypt with all his possessions. And when he came to Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac.

² During the night God spoke to him in a vision. "Jacob! Jacob!" he called. "Here I am," Jacob replied.

³ "I am God," the voice said, "the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will see to it that you become a great nation there.

⁴ I will go with you down to Egypt, and I will bring your descendants back again. But you will die in Egypt with Joseph at your side."

⁵ So Jacob left Beersheba, and his sons brought him to Egypt. They carried their little ones and wives in the wagons Pharaoh had provided for them.

⁶ They brought their livestock, too, and all the belongings they had acquired in

the land of Canaan. Jacob and his entire family arrived in Egypt—

⁷ sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters—all his descendants.

⁸ These are the names of the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob, who went with him to Egypt: Reuben was Jacob's oldest son.

⁹ The sons of Reuben were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

¹⁰ The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul. (Shaul's mother was a Canaanite woman.)

¹¹ The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹² The sons of Judah were Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah. (But Er and Onan had died in the land of Canaan.) The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

¹³ The sons of Issachar were Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron.

¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun were Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

¹⁵ These are the sons of Jacob who were born to Leah in Paddan–aram, along with their sister, Dinah. In all, Jacob’s descendants through Leah numbered thirty–three.

¹⁶ The sons of Gad were Zephon, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

¹⁷ The sons of Asher were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. Their sister was named Serah. Beriah’s sons were Heber and Malkiel.

¹⁸ These sixteen were descendants of Jacob through Zilpah, the servant given to Leah by her father, Laban.

¹⁹ The sons of Jacob’s wife Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁰ Joseph’s sons, born in the land of Egypt, were Manasseh and Ephraim.

Their mother was Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest of Heliopolis.

²¹ Benjamin's sons were Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

²² These fourteen were the descendants of Jacob and his wife Rachel.

²³ The son of Dan was Hushim.

²⁴ The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁵ These seven were the descendants of Jacob through Bilhah, the servant given to Rachel by her father, Laban.

²⁶ So the total number of Jacob's direct descendants who went with him to Egypt, not counting his sons' wives, was sixty-six.

²⁷ Joseph also had two sons who had been born in Egypt. So altogether, there were seventy members of Jacob's family in the land of Egypt.

²⁸ Jacob sent Judah on ahead to meet Joseph and get directions to the land of Goshen. And when they all arrived there,

²⁹ Joseph prepared his chariot and traveled to Goshen to meet his father. As soon as Joseph arrived, he embraced his father and wept on his shoulder for a long time.

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Joseph, "Now let me die, for I have seen you with my own eyes and know you are still alive."

³¹ And Joseph said to his brothers and to all their households, "I'll go and tell Pharaoh that you have all come from the land of Canaan to join me.

³² And I will tell him, 'These men are shepherds and livestock breeders. They have brought with them their flocks and herds and everything they own.'

³³ So when Pharaoh calls for you and asks you about your occupation,

³⁴ tell him, 'We have been livestock breeders from our youth, as our ancestors have been for many generations.' When you tell him this, he will let you live here in the land of Goshen, for shepherds are despised in the land of Egypt."

47 ¹ So Joseph went to see Pharaoh and said, "My father and my brothers are here from Canaan. They came with all their flocks and herds and possessions, and they are now in the land of Goshen."

² Joseph took five of his brothers with him and presented them to Pharaoh.

³ Pharaoh asked them, "What is your occupation?" And they replied, "We are shepherds like our ancestors.

⁴ We have come to live here in Egypt, for there is no pasture for our flocks in Canaan. The famine is very severe there.

We request permission to live in the land of Goshen."

⁵ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Now that your family has joined you here,

⁶ choose any place you like for them to live. Give them the best land of

Egypt—the land of Goshen will be fine.

And if any of them have special skills, put them in charge of my livestock, too."

⁷ Then Joseph brought his father, Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

⁸ "How old are you?" Pharaoh asked him.

⁹ Jacob replied, "I have lived for 130 hard years, but I am still not nearly as old as many of my ancestors."

¹⁰ Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again before he left.

¹¹ So Joseph assigned the best land of Egypt—the land of Rameses—to his

father and brothers, just as Pharaoh had commanded.

¹² And Joseph furnished food to his father and brothers in amounts appropriate to the number of their dependents.

¹³ Meanwhile, the famine became worse and worse, and the crops continued to fail throughout Egypt and Canaan.

¹⁴ Joseph collected all the money in Egypt and Canaan in exchange for grain, and he brought the money to Pharaoh's treasure-house.

¹⁵ When the people of Egypt and Canaan ran out of money, they came to Joseph crying again for food. "Our money is gone," they said, "but give us bread. Why should we die?"

¹⁶ "Well, then," Joseph replied, "since your money is gone, give me

your livestock. I will give you food in exchange."

¹⁷ So they gave their livestock to Joseph in exchange for food. Soon all the horses, flocks, herds, and donkeys of Egypt were in Pharaoh's possession. But at least they were able to purchase food for that year.

¹⁸ The next year they came again and said, "Our money is gone, and our livestock are yours. We have nothing left but our bodies and land.

¹⁹ Why should we die before your very eyes? Buy us and our land in exchange for food; we will then become servants to Pharaoh. Just give us grain so that our lives may be saved and so the land will not become empty and desolate."

²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold him their fields because the famine was so severe, and their land then belonged to Pharaoh.

²¹ Thus, all the people of Egypt became servants to Pharaoh.

²² The only land he didn't buy was that belonging to the priests, for they were assigned food from Pharaoh and didn't need to sell their land.

²³ Then Joseph said to the people, "See, I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh. I will provide you with seed, so you can plant the fields.

²⁴ Then when you harvest it, a fifth of your crop will belong to Pharaoh. Keep four-fifths for yourselves, and use it to plant the next year's crop and to feed yourselves, your households, and your little ones."

²⁵ "You have saved our lives!" they exclaimed. "May it please you, sir, to let us be Pharaoh's servants."

²⁶ Joseph then made it a law throughout the land of Egypt—and it is still the law—that Pharaoh should receive

one-fifth of all the crops grown on his land. But since Pharaoh had not taken over the priests' land, they were exempt from this payment.

²⁷ So the people of Israel settled in the land of Goshen in Egypt. And before long, they began to prosper there, and their population grew rapidly.

²⁸ Jacob lived for seventeen years after his arrival in Egypt, so he was 147 years old when he died.

²⁹ As the time of his death drew near, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If you are pleased with me, swear most solemnly that you will honor this, my last request: Do not bury me in Egypt.

³⁰ When I am dead, take me out of Egypt and bury me beside my ancestors." So Joseph promised that he would.

³¹ "Swear that you will do it," Jacob insisted. So Joseph gave his oath, and

Jacob bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff.

48 ¹ One day not long after this, word came to Joseph that his father was failing rapidly. So Joseph went to visit him, and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

² When Jacob heard that Joseph had arrived, he gathered his strength and sat up in bed to greet him.

³ Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me.

⁴ He said to me, 'I will make you a multitude of nations, and I will give this land of Canaan to you and your descendants as an everlasting possession.'

⁵ Now I am adopting as my own sons these two boys of yours, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born here in the land of Egypt before I arrived. They will

inherit from me just as Reuben and Simeon will.

⁶ But the children born to you in the future will be your own. The land they inherit will be within the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh.

⁷ As I was returning from Paddan, Rachel died in the land of Canaan. We were still on the way, just a short distance from Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). So with great sorrow I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath."

⁸ Then Jacob looked over at the two boys. "Are these your sons?" he asked.

⁹ "Yes," Joseph told him, "these are the sons God has given me here in Egypt." And Jacob said, "Bring them over to me, and I will bless them."

¹⁰ Now Jacob was half blind because of his age and could hardly see. So Joseph brought the boys close to him, and Jacob kissed and embraced them.

¹¹ Then Jacob said to Joseph, "I never thought I would see you again, but now God has let me see your children, too."

¹² Joseph took the boys from their grandfather's knees, and he bowed low to him.

¹³ Then he positioned the boys so Ephraim was at Jacob's left hand and Manasseh was at his right hand.

¹⁴ But Jacob crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys' heads. So his right hand was on the head of Ephraim, the younger boy, and his left hand was on the head of Manasseh, the older.

¹⁵ Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May God, the God before whom my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac, walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life,

¹⁶ and the angel who has kept me from all harm—may he bless these boys. May

they preserve my name and the names of my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac. And may they become a mighty nation."

¹⁷ But Joseph was upset when he saw that his father had laid his right hand on Ephraim's head. So he lifted it to place it on Manasseh's head instead.

¹⁸ "No, Father," he said, "this one over here is older. Put your right hand on his head."

¹⁹ But his father refused. "I know what I'm doing, my son," he said. "Manasseh, too, will become a great people, but his younger brother will become even greater. His descendants will become a multitude of nations!"

²⁰ So Jacob blessed the boys that day with this blessing: "The people of Israel will use your names to bless each other. They will say, 'May God make you as prosperous as Ephraim and Manasseh.'"

In this way, Jacob put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to Canaan, the land of your ancestors.

²² And I give you an extra portion beyond what I have given your brothers—the portion that I took from the Amorites with my sword and bow."

49 ¹ Then Jacob called together all his sons and said, "Gather around me, and I will tell you what is going to happen to you in the days to come.

² "Come and listen, O sons of Jacob; listen to Israel, your father.

³ "Reuben, you are my oldest son, the child of my vigorous youth. You are first on the list in rank and honor.

⁴ But you are as unruly as the waves of the sea, and you will be first no longer.

For you slept with one of my wives; you dishonored me in my own bed.

⁵ "Simeon and Levi are two of a kind—men of violence.

⁶ O my soul, stay away from them. May I never be a party to their wicked plans. For in their anger they murdered men, and they crippled oxen just for sport.

⁷ Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; cursed be their wrath, for it is cruel. Therefore, I will scatter their descendants throughout the nation of Israel.

⁸ "Judah, your brothers will praise you. You will defeat your enemies. All your relatives will bow before you.

⁹ Judah is a young lion that has finished eating its prey. Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness—who will dare to rouse him?

¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his

descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will obey.

¹¹ He ties his foal to a grapevine, the colt of his donkey to a choice vine. He washes his clothes in wine because his harvest is so plentiful.

¹² His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk.

¹³ "Zebulun will settle on the shores of the sea and will be a harbor for ships; his borders will extend to Sidon.

¹⁴ "Issachar is a strong beast of burden, resting among the sheepfolds.

¹⁵ When he sees how good the countryside is, how pleasant the land, he will bend his shoulder to the task and submit to forced labor.

¹⁶ "Dan will govern his people like any other tribe in Israel.

¹⁷ He will be a snake beside the road, a poisonous viper along the path, that

bites the horse's heels so the rider is thrown off.

¹⁸ I trust in you for salvation, O LORD!

¹⁹ "Gad will be plundered by marauding bands, but he will turn and plunder them.

²⁰ "Asher will produce rich foods, food fit for kings.

²¹ "Naphtali is a deer let loose, producing magnificent fawns.

²² "Joseph is a fruitful tree, a fruitful tree beside a fountain. His branches reach over the wall.

²³ He has been attacked by archers, who shot at him and harassed him.

²⁴ But his bow remained strong, and his arms were strengthened by the Mighty One of Jacob, the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.

²⁵ May the God of your ancestors help you; may the Almighty bless you with the blessings of the heavens above,

blessings of the earth beneath, and blessings of the breasts and womb.

²⁶ May the blessings of your ancestors be greater than the blessings of the eternal mountains, reaching to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. These blessings will fall on the head of Joseph, who is a prince among his brothers.

²⁷ "Benjamin is a wolf that prowls. He devours his enemies in the morning, and in the evening he divides the plunder."

²⁸ These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and these are the blessings with which Jacob blessed his twelve sons. Each received a blessing that was appropriate to him.

²⁹ Then Jacob told them, "Soon I will die. Bury me with my father and grandfather in the cave in Ephron's field.

³⁰ This is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan,

which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite for a permanent burial place.

³¹ There Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried. There Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, are buried. And there I buried Leah.

³² It is the cave that my grandfather Abraham bought from the Hittites."

³³ Then when Jacob had finished this charge to his sons, he lay back in the bed, breathed his last, and died.

50 ¹ Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him.

² Then Joseph told his morticians to embalm the body.

³ The embalming process took forty days, and there was a period of national mourning for seventy days.

⁴ When the period of mourning was over, Joseph approached Pharaoh's

advisers and asked them to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf.

⁵ He told them, "Tell Pharaoh that my father made me swear an oath. He said to me, 'I am about to die; take my body back to the land of Canaan, and bury me in our family's burial cave.' Now I need to go and bury my father. After his burial is complete, I will return without delay."

⁶ Pharaoh agreed to Joseph's request. "Go and bury your father, as you promised," he said.

⁷ So Joseph went, with a great number of Pharaoh's counselors and advisers—all the senior officers of Egypt.

⁸ Joseph also took his brothers and the entire household of Jacob. But they left their little children and flocks and herds in the land of Goshen.

⁹ So a great number of chariots, cavalry, and people accompanied Joseph.

¹⁰ When they arrived at the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan River, they held a very great and solemn funeral, with a seven-day period of mourning for Joseph's father.

¹¹ The local residents, the Canaanites, renamed the place Abel-mizraim, for they said, "This is a place of very deep mourning for these Egyptians."

¹² So Jacob's sons did as he had commanded them.

¹³ They carried his body to the land of Canaan and buried it there in the cave of Machpelah. This is the cave that Abraham had bought for a permanent burial place in the field of Ephron the Hittite, near Mamre.

¹⁴ Then Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had accompanied him to his father's funeral.

¹⁵ But now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became afraid. "Now

Joseph will pay us back for all the evil we did to him," they said.

¹⁶ So they sent this message to Joseph: "Before your father died, he instructed us

¹⁷ to say to you: 'Forgive your brothers for the great evil they did to you.' So we, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive us." When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept.

¹⁸ Then his brothers came and bowed low before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

¹⁹ But Joseph told them, "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, to judge and punish you?"

²⁰ As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil. He brought me to the high position I have today so I could save the lives of many people.

²¹ No, don't be afraid. Indeed, I myself will take care of you and your families." And he spoke very kindly to them, reassuring them.

²² So Joseph and his brothers and their families continued to live in Egypt. Joseph was 110 years old when he died.

²³ He lived to see three generations of descendants of his son Ephraim and the children of Manasseh's son Makir, who were treated as if they were his own.

²⁴ "Soon I will die," Joseph told his brothers, "but God will surely come for you, to lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he vowed to give to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, and he said, "When God comes to lead us back to Canaan, you must take my body back with you."

²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of 110. They embalmed him, and his body was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Exodus

1 ¹ These are the sons of Jacob who went with their father to Egypt, each with his family:

² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah,

³ Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin,

⁴ Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

⁵ Joseph was already down in Egypt.

In all, Jacob had seventy direct descendants.

⁶ In time, Joseph and each of his brothers died, ending that generation.

⁷ But their descendants had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so quickly that they soon filled the land.

⁸ Then a new king came to the throne of Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done.

⁹ He told his people, "These Israelites are becoming a threat to us because there are so many of them.

¹⁰ We must find a way to put an end to this. If we don't and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country."

¹¹ So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves and put brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down under heavy burdens. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king.

¹² But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more quickly the Israelites multiplied! The Egyptians soon became alarmed

¹³ and decided to make their slavery more bitter still.

¹⁴ They were ruthless with the Israelites, forcing them to make bricks

and mortar and to work long hours in the fields.

¹⁵ Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah:

¹⁶ "When you help the Hebrew women give birth, kill all the boys as soon as they are born. Allow only the baby girls to live."

¹⁷ But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king and allowed the boys to live, too.

¹⁸ Then the king called for the midwives. "Why have you done this?" he demanded. "Why have you allowed the boys to live?"

¹⁹ "Sir," they told him, "the Hebrew women are very strong. They have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time! They are not slow in giving birth like Egyptian women."

²⁰ So God blessed the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful.

²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

²² Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Throw all the newborn Israelite boys into the Nile River. But you may spare the baby girls."

2 ¹ During this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married.

² The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw what a beautiful baby he was and kept him hidden for three months.

³ But when she could no longer hide him, she got a little basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the edge of the Nile River.

⁴ The baby's sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him.

⁵ Soon after this, one of Pharaoh's daughters came down to bathe in the river, and her servant girls walked along the riverbank. When the princess saw the little basket among the reeds, she told one of her servant girls to get it for her.

⁶ As the princess opened it, she found the baby boy. His helpless cries touched her heart. "He must be one of the Hebrew children," she said.

⁷ Then the baby's sister approached the princess. "Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" she asked.

⁸ "Yes, do!" the princess replied. So the girl rushed home and called the baby's mother.

⁹ "Take this child home and nurse him for me," the princess told her. "I will pay you for your help." So the baby's mother took her baby home and nursed him.

¹⁰ Later, when he was older, the child's mother brought him back to the princess, who adopted him as her son. The princess named him Moses, for she said, "I drew him out of the water."

¹¹ Many years later, when Moses had grown up, he went out to visit his people, the Israelites, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrew slaves.

¹² After looking around to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

¹³ The next day, as Moses was out visiting his people again, he saw two Hebrew men fighting. "What are you

doing, hitting your neighbor like that?"

Moses said to the one in the wrong.

¹⁴ "Who do you think you are?" the man replied. "Who appointed you to be our prince and judge? Do you plan to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" Moses was badly frightened because he realized that everyone knew what he had done.

¹⁵ And sure enough, when Pharaoh heard about it, he gave orders to have Moses arrested and killed. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and escaped to the land of Midian. When Moses arrived in Midian, he sat down beside a well.

¹⁶ Now it happened that the priest of Midian had seven daughters who came regularly to this well to draw water and fill the water troughs for their father's flocks.

¹⁷ But other shepherds would often come and chase the girls and their flocks

away. This time, however, Moses came to their aid, rescuing the girls from the shepherds. Then he helped them draw water for their flocks.

¹⁸ When the girls returned to Reuel, their father, he asked, "How did you get the flocks watered so quickly today?"

¹⁹ "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds," they told him. "And then he drew water for us and watered our flocks."

²⁰ "Well, where is he then?" their father asked. "Did you just leave him there? Go and invite him home for a meal!"

²¹ Moses was happy to accept the invitation, and he settled down to live with them. In time, Reuel gave Moses one of his daughters, Zipporah, to be his wife.

²² Later they had a baby boy, and Moses named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

²³ Years passed, and the king of Egypt died. But the Israelites still groaned beneath their burden of slavery. They cried out for help, and their pleas for deliverance rose up to God.

²⁴ God heard their cries and remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

²⁵ He looked down on the Israelites and felt deep concern for their welfare.

3 ¹ One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he went deep into the wilderness near Sinai, the mountain of God.

² Suddenly, the angel of the LORD appeared to him as a blazing fire in a bush. Moses was amazed because the bush was engulfed in flames, but it didn't burn up.

³ "Amazing!" Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go over to see this."

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had caught Moses' attention, God called to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" "Here I am!" Moses replied.

⁵ "Do not come any closer," God told him. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground."

⁶ Then he said, "I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he hid his face in his hands because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the LORD told him, "You can be sure I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries for deliverance from their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering.

⁸ So I have come to rescue them from the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own good and spacious land. It is a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites live.

⁹ The cries of the people of Israel have reached me, and I have seen how the Egyptians have oppressed them with heavy tasks.

¹⁰ Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

¹¹ "But who am I to appear before Pharaoh?" Moses asked God. "How can you expect me to lead the Israelites out of Egypt?"

¹² Then God told him, "I will be with you. And this will serve as proof that I have sent you: When you have brought the Israelites out of Egypt, you will

return here to worship God at this very mountain."

¹³ But Moses protested, "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they won't believe me. They will ask, 'Which god are you talking about? What is his name?' Then what should I tell them?"

¹⁴ God replied, "I AM THE ONE WHO ALWAYS IS. Just tell them, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

¹⁵ God also said, "Tell them, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This will be my name forever; it has always been my name, and it will be used throughout all generations.

¹⁶ "Now go and call together all the leaders of Israel. Tell them, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors—the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—appeared to me in a burning bush. He said, "You can be sure that I am watching over you and have seen what is happening to you in Egypt.

¹⁷ I promise to rescue you from the oppression of the Egyptians. I will lead you to the land now occupied by the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey."

¹⁸ "The leaders of the people of Israel will accept your message. Then all of you must go straight to the king of Egypt and tell him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us go on a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.'

¹⁹ "But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go except under heavy pressure.

²⁰ So I will reach out and strike at the heart of Egypt with all kinds of miracles. Then at last he will let you go.

²¹ And I will see to it that the Egyptians treat you well. They will load you down with gifts so you will not leave empty-handed.

²² The Israelite women will ask for silver and gold jewelry and fine clothing from their Egyptian neighbors and their neighbors' guests. With this clothing, you will dress your sons and daughters. In this way, you will plunder the Egyptians!"

4 ¹ But Moses protested again, "Look, they won't believe me! They won't do what I tell them. They'll just say, 'The LORD never appeared to you.'"

² Then the LORD asked him, "What do you have there in your hand?" "A shepherd's staff," Moses replied.

³ "Throw it down on the ground," the LORD told him. So Moses threw it down, and it became a snake! Moses was terrified, so he turned and ran away.

⁴ Then the LORD told him, "Take hold of its tail." So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it became a shepherd's staff again.

⁵ "Perform this sign, and they will believe you," the LORD told him. "Then they will realize that the LORD, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you."

⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Put your hand inside your robe." Moses did so, and when he took it out again, his hand was white as snow with leprosy.

⁷ "Now put your hand back into your robe again," the LORD said. Moses did, and when he took it out this time, it was as healthy as the rest of his body.

⁸ "If they do not believe the first miraculous sign, they will believe the second," the LORD said.

⁹ "And if they do not believe you even after these two signs, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on the dry ground. When you do, it will turn into blood."

¹⁰ But Moses pleaded with the LORD, "O Lord, I'm just not a good speaker. I never have been, and I'm not now, even after you have spoken to me. I'm clumsy with words."

¹¹ "Who makes mouths?" the LORD asked him. "Who makes people so they can speak or not speak, hear or not hear, see or not see? Is it not I, the LORD?"

¹² Now go, and do as I have told you. I will help you speak well, and I will tell you what to say."

¹³ But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send someone else."

¹⁴ Then the LORD became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? He is a good speaker. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. And when he sees you, he will be very glad.

¹⁵ You will talk to him, giving him the words to say. I will help both of you to speak clearly, and I will tell you what to do.

¹⁶ Aaron will be your spokesman to the people, and you will be as God to him, telling him what to say.

¹⁷ And be sure to take your shepherd's staff along so you can perform the miraculous signs I have shown you."

¹⁸ Then Moses went back home and talked it over with Jethro, his father-in-law. "With your permission," Moses said, "I would like to go back to Egypt to visit my family. I don't even know

whether they are still alive." "Go with my blessing," Jethro replied.

¹⁹ Before Moses left Midian, the LORD said to him, "Do not be afraid to return to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead."

²⁰ So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey, and headed back to the land of Egypt. In his hand he carried the staff of God.

²¹ Then the LORD reminded him, "When you arrive back in Egypt, go to Pharaoh and perform the miracles I have empowered you to do. But I will make him stubborn so he will not let the people go.

²² Then you will tell him, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son.

²³ I commanded you to let him go, so he could worship me. But since you have refused, be warned! I will kill your firstborn son!'"

²⁴ On the journey, when Moses and his family had stopped for the night, the LORD confronted Moses and was about to kill him.

²⁵ But Zipporah, his wife, took a flint knife and circumcised her son. She threw the foreskin at Moses' feet and said, "What a blood-smeared bridegroom you are to me!"

²⁶ (When she called Moses a "blood-smeared bridegroom," she was referring to the circumcision.) After that, the LORD left him alone.

²⁷ Now the LORD had said to Aaron, "Go out into the wilderness to meet Moses." So Aaron traveled to the mountain of God, where he found Moses and greeted him warmly.

²⁸ Moses then told Aaron everything the LORD had commanded them to do and say. And he told him about the miraculous signs they were to perform.

²⁹ So Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called the leaders of Israel to a meeting.

³⁰ Aaron told them everything the LORD had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched.

³¹ The leaders were soon convinced that the LORD had sent Moses and Aaron. And when they realized that the LORD had seen their misery and was deeply concerned for them, they all bowed their heads and worshiped.

5 ¹ After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh. They told him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, for they must go out into the wilderness to hold a religious festival in my honor.'"

² "Is that so?" retorted Pharaoh. "And who is the LORD that I should listen to

him and let Israel go? I don't know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go."

³ But Aaron and Moses persisted. "The God of the Hebrews has met with us," they declared. "Let us take a three-day trip into the wilderness so we can offer sacrifices to the LORD our God. If we don't, we will surely die by disease or the sword."

⁴ "Who do you think you are," Pharaoh shouted, "distracting the people from their tasks? Get back to work!"

⁵ Look, there are many people here in Egypt, and you are stopping them from doing their work."

⁶ That same day Pharaoh sent this order to the slave drivers and foremen he had set over the people of Israel:

⁷ "Do not supply the people with any more straw for making bricks. Let them get it themselves!"

⁸ But don't reduce their production quotas by a single brick. They obviously don't have enough to do. If they did, they wouldn't be talking about going into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to their God.

⁹ Load them down with more work. Make them sweat! That will teach them to listen to these liars!"

¹⁰ So the slave drivers and foremen informed the people: "Pharaoh has ordered us not to provide straw for you.

¹¹ Go and get it yourselves. Find it wherever you can. But you must produce just as many bricks as before!"

¹² So the people scattered throughout the land in search of straw.

¹³ The slave drivers were brutal. "Meet your daily quota of bricks, just as you did before!" they demanded.

¹⁴ Then they whipped the Israelite foremen in charge of the work crews.

"Why haven't you met your quotas either yesterday or today?" they demanded.

¹⁵ So the Israelite foremen went to Pharaoh and pleaded with him. "Please don't treat us like this," they begged.

¹⁶ "We are given no straw, but we are still told to make as many bricks as before. We are beaten for something that isn't our fault! It is the fault of your slave drivers for making such unreasonable demands."

¹⁷ But Pharaoh replied, "You're just lazy! You obviously don't have enough to do. If you did, you wouldn't be saying, 'Let us go, so we can offer sacrifices to the LORD.'"

¹⁸ Now, get back to work! No straw will be given to you, but you must still deliver the regular quota of bricks."

¹⁹ Since Pharaoh would not let up on his demands, the Israelite foremen could see that they were in serious trouble.

²⁰ As they left Pharaoh's court, they met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting outside for them.

²¹ The foremen said to them, "May the LORD judge you for getting us into this terrible situation with Pharaoh and his officials. You have given them an excuse to kill us!"

²² So Moses went back to the LORD and protested, "Why have you mistreated your own people like this, Lord? Why did you send me?"

²³ Since I gave Pharaoh your message, he has been even more brutal to your people. You have not even begun to rescue them!"

6¹ "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh," the LORD told Moses. "When he feels my powerful hand upon

him, he will let the people go. In fact, he will be so anxious to get rid of them that he will force them to leave his land!"

² And God continued, "I am the LORD.

³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, though I did not reveal my name, the LORD, to them.

⁴ And I entered into a solemn covenant with them. Under its terms, I swore to give them the land of Canaan, where they were living.

⁵ You can be sure that I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, who are now slaves to the Egyptians. I have remembered my covenant with them.

⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will free you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with mighty power and great acts of judgment.

⁷ I will make you my own special people, and I will be your God. And you will know

that I am the LORD your God who has rescued you from your slavery in Egypt.

⁸ I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It will be your very own property. I am the LORD!"

⁹ So Moses told the people what the LORD had said, but they wouldn't listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the increasing burden of their slavery.

¹⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹¹ "Go back to Pharaoh, and tell him to let the people of Israel leave Egypt."

¹² "But LORD!" Moses objected. "My own people won't listen to me anymore. How can I expect Pharaoh to listen? I'm no orator!"

¹³ But the LORD ordered Moses and Aaron to return to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and to demand that he let the people of Israel leave Egypt.

¹⁴ These are the ancestors of clans from some of Israel's tribes: The descendants of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, included Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. Their descendants became the clans of Reuben.

¹⁵ The descendants of Simeon included Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul (whose mother was a Canaanite). Their descendants became the clans of Simeon.

¹⁶ These are the descendants of Levi, listed according to their family groups. In the first generation were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (Levi, their father, lived to be 137 years old.)

¹⁷ The descendants of Gershon included Libni and Shimei, each of whom is the ancestor of a clan.

¹⁸ The descendants of Kohath included Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. (Kohath lived to be 133 years old.)

¹⁹ The descendants of Merari included Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites, listed according to their genealogies.

²⁰ Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses. (Amram lived to be 137 years old.)

²¹ The descendants of Izhar included Korah, Nepheg, and Zicri.

²² The descendants of Uzziel included Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

²³ Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

²⁴ The descendants of Korah included Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. Their descendants became the clans of Korah.

²⁵ Eleazar son of Aaron married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the ancestors

of the Levite clans, listed according to their family groups.

²⁶ The Aaron and Moses named in this list are the same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Lead all the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, division by division."

²⁷ They are the ones who went to Pharaoh to ask permission to lead the people from the land of Egypt.

²⁸ At that time, the LORD had said to them,

²⁹ "I am the LORD! Give Pharaoh the message I have given you."

³⁰ This is the same Moses who had argued with the LORD, saying, "I can't do it! I'm no orator. Why should Pharaoh listen to me?"

7¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pay close attention to this. I will make you seem like God to Pharaoh. Your

brother, Aaron, will be your prophet; he will speak for you.

² Tell Aaron everything I say to you and have him announce it to Pharaoh. He will demand that the people of Israel be allowed to leave Egypt.

³ But I will cause Pharaoh to be stubborn so I can multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

⁴ Even then Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you. So I will crush Egypt with a series of disasters, after which I will lead the forces of Israel out with great acts of judgment.

⁵ When I show the Egyptians my power and force them to let the Israelites go, they will realize that I am the LORD."

⁶ So Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded them.

⁷ Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three at the time they made their demands to Pharaoh.

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

⁹ "Pharaoh will demand that you show him a miracle to prove that God has sent you. When he makes this demand, say to Aaron, 'Throw down your shepherd's staff,' and it will become a snake."

¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh, and they performed the miracle just as the LORD had told them. Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his court, and it became a snake.

¹¹ Then Pharaoh called in his wise men and magicians, and they did the same thing with their secret arts.

¹² Their staffs became snakes, too! But then Aaron's snake swallowed up their snakes.

¹³ Pharaoh's heart, however, remained hard and stubborn. He still refused to listen, just as the LORD had predicted.

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh is very stubborn, and he continues to refuse to let the people go.

¹⁵ So go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes down to the river. Stand on the riverbank and meet him there. Be sure to take along the shepherd's staff that turned into a snake.

¹⁶ Say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say, "Let my people go, so they can worship me in the wilderness." Until now, you have refused to listen to him.

¹⁷ Now the LORD says, "You are going to find out that I am the LORD." Look! I will hit the water of the Nile with this staff, and the river will turn to blood.

¹⁸ The fish in it will die, and the river will stink. The Egyptians will not be able to drink any water from the Nile.'" "

¹⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron to point his staff toward the

waters of Egypt—all its rivers, canals, marshes, and reservoirs. Everywhere in Egypt the water will turn into blood, even the water stored in wooden bowls and stone pots in the people's homes."

²⁰ So Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded them. As Pharaoh and all of his officials watched, Moses raised his staff and hit the water of the Nile. Suddenly, the whole river turned to blood!

²¹ The fish in the river died, and the water became so foul that the Egyptians couldn't drink it. There was blood everywhere throughout the land of Egypt.

²² But again the magicians of Egypt used their secret arts, and they, too, turned water into blood. So Pharaoh's heart remained hard and stubborn. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had predicted.

²³ Pharaoh returned to his palace and put the whole thing out of his mind.

²⁴ Then the Egyptians dug wells along the riverbank to get drinking water, for they couldn't drink from the river.

²⁵ An entire week passed from the time the LORD turned the water of the Nile to blood.

8 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh once again and tell him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so they can worship me.

² If you refuse, then listen carefully to this: I will send vast hordes of frogs across your entire land from one border to the other.

³ The Nile River will swarm with them. They will come up out of the river and into your houses, even into your bedrooms and onto your beds! Every home in Egypt will be filled with them.

They will fill even your ovens and your kneading bowls.

⁴ You and your people will be overwhelmed by frogs!"

⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron to point his shepherd's staff toward all the rivers, canals, and marshes of Egypt so there will be frogs in every corner of the land."

⁶ Aaron did so, and frogs covered the whole land of Egypt!

⁷ But the magicians were able to do the same thing with their secret arts. They, too, caused frogs to come up on the land.

⁸ Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and begged, "Plead with the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people. I will let the people go, so they can offer sacrifices to the LORD."

⁹ "You set the time!" Moses replied. "Tell me when you want me to pray for

you, your officials, and your people. I will pray that you and your houses will be rid of the frogs. Then only the frogs in the Nile River will remain alive."

¹⁰ "Do it tomorrow," Pharaoh said. "All right," Moses replied, "it will be as you have said. Then you will know that no one is as powerful as the LORD our God.

¹¹ All the frogs will be destroyed, except those in the river."

¹² So Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, and Moses pleaded with the LORD about the frogs he had sent.

¹³ And the LORD did as Moses had promised. The frogs in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields all died.

¹⁴ They were piled into great heaps, and a terrible stench filled the land.

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that the frogs were gone, he hardened his heart. He refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had predicted.

¹⁶ So the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron to strike the dust with his staff. The dust will turn into swarms of gnats throughout the land of Egypt."

¹⁷ So Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded them. Suddenly, gnats infested the entire land, covering the Egyptians and their animals. All the dust in the land of Egypt turned into gnats.

¹⁸ Pharaoh's magicians tried to do the same thing with their secret arts, but this time they failed. And the gnats covered all the people and animals.

¹⁹ "This is the finger of God!" the magicians exclaimed to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh's heart remained hard and stubborn. He wouldn't listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted.

²⁰ Next the LORD told Moses, "Get up early in the morning and meet Pharaoh as he goes down to the river. Say to

him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so they can worship me.

²¹ If you refuse, I will send swarms of flies throughout Egypt. Your homes will be filled with them, and the ground will be covered with them.

²² But it will be very different in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites live. No flies will be found there. Then you will know that I am the LORD and that I have power even in the heart of your land.

²³ I will make a clear distinction between your people and my people. This miraculous sign will happen tomorrow.'"

²⁴ And the LORD did just as he had said. There were terrible swarms of flies in Pharaoh's palace and in every home in Egypt. The whole country was thrown into chaos by the flies.

²⁵ Pharaoh hastily called for Moses and Aaron. "All right! Go ahead and offer

sacrifices to your God," he said. "But do it here in this land. Don't go out into the wilderness."

²⁶ But Moses replied, "That won't do! The Egyptians would detest the sacrifices that we offer to the LORD our God. If we offer them here where they can see us, they will be sure to stone us.

²⁷ We must take a three-day trip into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, just as he has commanded us."

²⁸ "All right, go ahead," Pharaoh replied. "I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the wilderness. But don't go too far away. Now hurry, and pray for me."

²⁹ "As soon as I go," Moses said, "I will ask the LORD to cause the swarms of flies to disappear from you and all your people. But I am warning you, don't

change your mind again and refuse to let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

³⁰ So Moses left Pharaoh and asked the LORD to remove all the flies.

³¹ And the LORD did as Moses asked and caused the swarms to disappear. Not a single fly remained in the land!

³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart again and refused to let the people go.

9¹ "Go back to Pharaoh," the LORD commanded Moses. "Tell him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so they can worship me.

² If you continue to oppress them and refuse to let them go,

³ the LORD will send a deadly plague to destroy your horses, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep.

⁴ But the LORD will again make a distinction between the property of the

Israelites and that of the Egyptians. Not a single one of Israel's livestock will die!"

⁵ The LORD announced that he would send the plague the very next day,

⁶ and he did it, just as he had said. The next morning all the livestock of the Egyptians began to die, but the Israelites didn't lose a single animal from their flocks and herds.

⁷ Pharaoh sent officials to see whether it was true that none of the Israelites' animals were dead. But even after he found it to be true, his heart remained stubborn. He still refused to let the people go.

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take soot from a furnace, and have Moses toss it into the sky while Pharaoh watches.

⁹ It will spread like fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, causing boils to break out on people and animals alike."

¹⁰ So they gathered soot from a furnace and went to see Pharaoh. As Pharaoh watched, Moses tossed the soot into the air, and terrible boils broke out on the people and animals throughout Egypt.

¹¹ Even the magicians were unable to stand before Moses, because the boils had broken out on them, too.

¹² But the LORD made Pharaoh even more stubborn, and he refused to listen, just as the LORD had predicted.

¹³ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning. Go to Pharaoh and tell him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so they can worship me.

¹⁴ If you don't, I will send a plague that will really speak to you and your officials and all the Egyptian people. I will prove to you that there is no other God like me in all the earth.

¹⁵ I could have killed you all by now. I could have attacked you with a plague that would have wiped you from the face of the earth.

¹⁶ But I have let you live for this reason— that you might see my power and that my fame might spread throughout the earth.

¹⁷ But you are still lording it over my people, and you refuse to let them go.

¹⁸ So tomorrow at this time I will send a hailstorm worse than any in all of Egypt's history.

¹⁹ Quick! Order your livestock and servants to come in from the fields. Every person or animal left outside will die beneath the hail.'"

²⁰ Some of Pharaoh's officials believed what the LORD said. They immediately brought their livestock and servants in from the fields.

²¹ But those who had no respect for the word of the LORD left them out in the open.

²² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Lift your hand toward the sky, and cause the hail to fall throughout Egypt, on the people, the animals, and the crops."

²³ So Moses lifted his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning struck the earth. The LORD sent a tremendous hailstorm against all the land of Egypt.

²⁴ Never in all the history of Egypt had there been a storm like that, with such severe hail and continuous lightning.

²⁵ It left all of Egypt in ruins. Everything left in the fields was destroyed—people, animals, and crops alike. Even all the trees were destroyed.

²⁶ The only spot in all Egypt without hail that day was the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel lived.

²⁷ Then Pharaoh urgently sent for Moses and Aaron. "I finally admit my fault," he confessed. "The LORD is right, and my people and I are wrong.

²⁸ Please beg the LORD to end this terrifying thunder and hail. I will let you go at once."

²⁹ "All right," Moses replied. "As soon as I leave the city, I will lift my hands and pray to the LORD. Then the thunder and hail will stop. This will prove to you that the earth belongs to the LORD.

³⁰ But as for you and your officials, I know that you still do not fear the LORD God as you should."

³¹ All the flax and barley were destroyed because the barley was ripe and the flax was in bloom.

³² But the wheat and the spelt were not destroyed because they had not yet sprouted from the ground.

³³ So Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. As he lifted his hands to the LORD, all at once the thunder and hail stopped, and the downpour ceased.

³⁴ When Pharaoh saw this, he and his officials sinned yet again by stubbornly refusing to do as they had promised.

³⁵ Pharaoh refused to let the people leave, just as the LORD had predicted.

10 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Return to Pharaoh and again make your demands. I have made him and his officials stubborn so I can continue to display my power by performing miraculous signs among them.

² You will be able to tell wonderful stories to your children and grandchildren about the marvelous things I am doing among the Egyptians to prove that I am the LORD."

³ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: How long will you refuse to submit to me? Let my people go, so they can worship me.

⁴ If you refuse, watch out! For tomorrow I will cover the whole country with locusts.

⁵ There will be so many that you won't be able to see the ground. They will devour everything that escaped the hailstorm, including all the trees in the fields.

⁶ They will overrun your palaces and the homes of your officials and all the houses of Egypt. Never in the history of Egypt has there been a plague like this one!" And with that, Moses turned and walked out.

⁷ The court officials now came to Pharaoh and appealed to him. "How long will you let these disasters go on?"

Please let the Israelites go to serve the LORD their God! Don't you realize that Egypt lies in ruins?"

⁸ So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. "All right, go and serve the LORD your God," he said. "But tell me, just whom do you want to take along?"

⁹ "Young and old, all of us will go," Moses replied. "We will take our sons and daughters and our flocks and herds. We must all join together in a festival to the LORD."

¹⁰ Pharaoh retorted, "The LORD will certainly need to be with you if you try to take your little ones along! I can see through your wicked intentions."

¹¹ Never! Only the men may go and serve the LORD, for that is what you requested." And Pharaoh threw them out of the palace.

¹² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the land of Egypt to bring on the locusts. Let them cover the land and eat all the crops still left after the hailstorm."

¹³ So Moses raised his staff, and the LORD caused an east wind to blow all that day and through the night. When morning arrived, the east wind had brought the locusts.

¹⁴ And the locusts swarmed over the land of Egypt from border to border. It was the worst locust plague in Egyptian history, and there has never again been one like it.

¹⁵ For the locusts covered the surface of the whole country, making the ground look black. They ate all the plants and all the fruit on the trees that had survived the hailstorm. Not one green thing remained, neither tree nor plant, throughout the land of Egypt.

¹⁶ Pharaoh quickly sent for Moses and Aaron. "I confess my sin against the LORD your God and against you," he said to them.

¹⁷ "Forgive my sin only this once, and plead with the LORD your God to take away this terrible plague."

¹⁸ So Moses left Pharaoh and pleaded with the LORD.

¹⁹ The LORD responded by sending a strong west wind that blew the locusts out into the Red Sea. Not a single locust remained in all the land of Egypt.

²⁰ But the LORD made Pharaoh stubborn once again, and he did not let the people go.

²¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Lift your hand toward heaven, and a deep and terrifying darkness will descend on the land of Egypt."

²² So Moses lifted his hand toward heaven, and there was deep darkness over the entire land for three days.

²³ During all that time the people scarcely moved, for they could not see. But there was light as usual where the people of Israel lived.

²⁴ Then Pharaoh called for Moses. "Go and worship the LORD," he said. "But let your flocks and herds stay here. You can even take your children with you."

²⁵ "No," Moses said, "we must take our flocks and herds for sacrifices and burnt offerings to the LORD our God.

²⁶ All our property must go with us; not a hoof can be left behind. We will have to choose our sacrifices for the LORD our God from among these animals. And we won't know which sacrifices he will require until we get there."

²⁷ So the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart once more, and he would not let them go.

²⁸ "Get out of here!" Pharaoh shouted at Moses. "Don't ever let me see you again! The day you do, you will die!"

²⁹ "Very well," Moses replied. "I will never see you again."

11 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will send just one more disaster on Pharaoh and the land of Egypt. After that, Pharaoh will let you go. In fact, he will be so anxious to get rid of you that he will practically force you to leave the country.

² Tell all the Israelite men and women to ask their Egyptian neighbors for articles of silver and gold."

³ (Now the LORD had caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the people of Israel, and Moses was considered a very great man in the land

of Egypt. He was respected by Pharaoh's officials and the Egyptian people alike.)

⁴ So Moses announced to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says: About midnight I will pass through Egypt.

⁵ All the firstborn sons will die in every family in Egypt, from the oldest son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the oldest son of his lowliest slave. Even the firstborn of the animals will die.

⁶ Then a loud wail will be heard throughout the land of Egypt; there has never been such wailing before, and there never will be again.

⁷ But among the Israelites it will be so peaceful that not even a dog will bark. Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites.

⁸ All the officials of Egypt will come running to me, bowing low. 'Please leave!' they will beg. 'Hurry! And take all

your followers with you.' Only then will I go!" Then, burning with anger, Moses left Pharaoh's presence.

⁹ Now the LORD had told Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you. But this will give me the opportunity to do even more mighty miracles in the land of Egypt."

¹⁰ Although Moses and Aaron did these miracles in Pharaoh's presence, the LORD hardened his heart so he wouldn't let the Israelites leave the country.

12 ¹ Now the LORD gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron while they were still in the land of Egypt:

² "From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you.

³ Announce to the whole community that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice.

⁴ If a family is too small to eat an entire lamb, let them share the lamb with another family in the neighborhood. Whether or not they share in this way depends on the size of each family and how much they can eat.

⁵ This animal must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no physical defects.

⁶ "Take special care of these lambs until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. Then each family in the community must slaughter its lamb.

⁷ They are to take some of the lamb's blood and smear it on the top and sides of the doorframe of the house where the lamb will be eaten.

⁸ That evening everyone must eat roast lamb with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast.

⁹ The meat must never be eaten raw or boiled; roast it all, including the head, legs, and internal organs.

¹⁰ Do not leave any of it until the next day. Whatever is not eaten that night must be burned before morning.

¹¹ "Wear your traveling clothes as you eat this meal, as though prepared for a long journey. Wear your sandals, and carry your walking sticks in your hands. Eat the food quickly, for this is the LORD's Passover.

¹² On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn sons and firstborn male animals in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the LORD!

¹³ The blood you have smeared on your doorposts will serve as a sign. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This

plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ "You must remember this day forever. Each year you will celebrate it as a special festival to the LORD.

¹⁵ For seven days, you may eat only bread made without yeast. On the very first day you must remove every trace of yeast from your homes. Anyone who eats bread made with yeast at any time during the seven days of the festival will be cut off from the community of Israel.

¹⁶ On the first day of the festival, and again on the seventh day, all the people must gather for a time of special worship. No work of any kind may be done on these days except in the preparation of food.

¹⁷ "Celebrate this Festival of Unleavened Bread, for it will remind you that I brought your forces out of the land of Egypt on this very day. This

festival will be a permanent regulation for you, to be kept from generation to generation.

¹⁸ Only bread without yeast may be eaten from the evening of the fourteenth day of the month until the evening of the twenty-first day of the month.

¹⁹ During those seven days, there must be no trace of yeast in your homes. Anyone who eats anything made with yeast during this week will be cut off from the community of Israel. These same regulations apply to the foreigners living with you, as if they had been born among you.

²⁰ I repeat, during those days you must not eat anything made with yeast. Wherever you live, eat only bread that has no yeast in it."

²¹ Then Moses called for the leaders of Israel and said, "Tell each of your

families to slaughter the lamb they have set apart for the Passover.

²² Drain each lamb's blood into a basin. Then take a cluster of hyssop branches and dip it into the lamb's blood. Strike the hyssop against the top and sides of the doorframe, staining it with the blood. And remember, no one is allowed to leave the house until morning.

²³ For the LORD will pass through the land and strike down the Egyptians. But when he sees the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, the LORD will pass over your home. He will not permit the Destroyer to enter and strike down your firstborn.

²⁴ "Remember, these instructions are permanent and must be observed by you and your descendants forever.

²⁵ When you arrive in the land the LORD has promised to give you, you will continue to celebrate this festival.

²⁶ Then your children will ask, 'What does all this mean? What is this ceremony about?'

²⁷ And you will reply, 'It is the celebration of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the homes of the Israelites in Egypt. And though he killed the Egyptians, he spared our families and did not destroy us.'" Then all the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

²⁸ So the people of Israel did just as the LORD had commanded through Moses and Aaron.

²⁹ And at midnight the LORD killed all the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn son of the captive in the dungeon. Even the firstborn of their livestock were killed.

³⁰ Pharaoh and his officials and all the people of Egypt woke up during the night, and loud wailing was heard

throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died.

³¹ Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron during the night. "Leave us!" he cried. "Go away, all of you! Go and serve the LORD as you have requested.

³² Take your flocks and herds, and be gone. Go, but give me a blessing as you leave."

³³ All the Egyptians urged the people of Israel to get out of the land as quickly as possible, for they thought, "We will all die!"

³⁴ The Israelites took with them their bread dough made without yeast. They wrapped their kneading bowls in their spare clothing and carried them on their shoulders.

³⁵ And the people of Israel did as Moses had instructed and asked the Egyptians

for clothing and articles of silver and gold.

³⁶ The LORD caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the Israelites, and they gave the Israelites whatever they asked for. So, like a victorious army, they plundered the Egyptians!

³⁷ That night the people of Israel left Rameses and started for Succoth. There were about 600,000 men, plus all the women and children. And they were all traveling on foot.

³⁸ Many people who were not Israelites went with them, along with the many flocks and herds.

³⁹ Whenever they stopped to eat, they baked bread from the yeastless dough they had brought from Egypt. It was made without yeast because the people were rushed out of Egypt and had no time to wait for bread to rise.

⁴⁰ The people of Israel had lived in Egypt for 430 years.

⁴¹ In fact, it was on the last day of the 430th year that all the LORD's forces left the land.

⁴² This night had been reserved by the LORD to bring his people out from the land of Egypt, so this same night now belongs to him. It must be celebrated every year, from generation to generation, to remember the LORD's deliverance.

⁴³ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the festival of Passover. No foreigners are allowed to eat the Passover lamb.

⁴⁴ But any slave who has been purchased may eat it if he has been circumcised.

⁴⁵ Hired servants and visiting foreigners may not eat it.

⁴⁶ All who eat the lamb must eat it together in one house. You must not carry any of its meat outside, and you may not break any of its bones.

⁴⁷ The whole community of Israel must celebrate this festival at the same time.

⁴⁸ "If there are foreigners living among you who want to celebrate the LORD's Passover, let all the males be circumcised. Then they may come and celebrate the Passover with you. They will be treated just as if they had been born among you. But an uncircumcised male may never eat of the Passover lamb.

⁴⁹ This law applies to everyone, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner who has settled among you."

⁵⁰ So the people of Israel followed all the LORD's instructions to Moses and Aaron.

⁵¹ And that very day the LORD began to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, division by division.

13 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses,
² "Dedicate to me all the firstborn sons of Israel and every firstborn male animal. They are mine."

³ So Moses said to the people, "This is a day to remember forever—the day you left Egypt, the place of your slavery. For the LORD has brought you out by his mighty power. (Remember, you are not to use any yeast.)

⁴ This day in early spring will be the anniversary of your exodus.

⁵ You must celebrate this day when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites. This is the land he swore to give your ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁶ For seven days you will eat only bread without yeast. Then on the seventh day, you will celebrate a great feast to the LORD.

⁷ Eat only bread without yeast during those seven days. In fact, there must be no yeast in your homes or anywhere within the borders of your land during this time.

⁸ "During these festival days each year, you must explain to your children why you are celebrating. Say to them, 'This is a celebration of what the LORD did for us when we left Egypt.'

⁹ This annual festival will be a visible reminder to you, like a mark branded on your hands or your forehead. Let it remind you always to keep the LORD's instructions in your minds and on your lips. After all, it was the LORD who rescued you from Egypt with great power.

¹⁰ "So celebrate this festival at the appointed time each year.

¹¹ And remember these instructions when the LORD brings you into the land he swore to give your ancestors long ago, the land where the Canaanites are now living.

¹² All firstborn sons and firstborn male animals must be presented to the LORD.

¹³ A firstborn male donkey may be redeemed from the LORD by presenting a lamb in its place. But if you decide not to make the exchange, the donkey must be killed by breaking its neck. However, you must redeem every firstborn son.

¹⁴ "And in the future, your children will ask you, 'What does all this mean?' Then you will tell them, 'With mighty power the LORD brought us out of Egypt from our slavery.'

¹⁵ Pharaoh refused to let us go, so the LORD killed all the firstborn males

throughout the land of Egypt, both people and animals. That is why we now offer all the firstborn males to the LORD—except that the firstborn sons are always redeemed.'

¹⁶ Again I say, this ceremony will be like a mark branded on your hands or your forehead. It is a visible reminder that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt with great power."

¹⁷ When Pharaoh finally let the people go, God did not lead them on the road that runs through Philistine territory, even though that was the shortest way from Egypt to the Promised Land. God said, "If the people are faced with a battle, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."

¹⁸ So God led them along a route through the wilderness toward the Red Sea, and the Israelites left Egypt like a marching army.

¹⁹ Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear that they would take his bones with them when God led them out of Egypt—as he was sure God would.

²⁰ Leaving Succoth, they camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness.

²¹ The LORD guided them by a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. That way they could travel whether it was day or night.

²² And the LORD did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from their sight.

14 ¹ Then the LORD gave these instructions to Moses:

² "Tell the people to march toward Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. Camp there along the shore, opposite Baal-zephon.

³ Then Pharaoh will think, 'Those Israelites are confused. They are trapped between the wilderness and the sea!'

⁴ And once again I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after you. I have planned this so I will receive great glory at the expense of Pharaoh and his armies. After this, the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD!" So the Israelites camped there as they were told.

⁵ When word reached the king of Egypt that the Israelites were not planning to return to Egypt after three days, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds. "What have we done, letting all these slaves get away?" they asked.

⁶ So Pharaoh called out his troops and led the chase in his chariot.

⁷ He took with him six hundred of Egypt's best chariots, along with the rest

of the chariots of Egypt, each with a commander.

⁸ The LORD continued to strengthen Pharaoh's resolve, and he chased after the people of Israel who had escaped so defiantly.

⁹ All the forces in Pharaoh's army—all his horses, chariots, and charioteers—were used in the chase. The Egyptians caught up with the people of Israel as they were camped beside the shore near Pi-hahiroth, across from Baal-zephon.

¹⁰ As Pharaoh and his army approached, the people of Israel could see them in the distance, marching toward them. The people began to panic, and they cried out to the LORD for help.

¹¹ Then they turned against Moses and complained, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness? Weren't there enough graves for us in Egypt? Why did you make us leave?"

¹² Didn't we tell you to leave us alone while we were still in Egypt? Our Egyptian slavery was far better than dying out here in the wilderness!"

¹³ But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand where you are and watch the LORD rescue you. The Egyptians that you see today will never be seen again.

¹⁴ The LORD himself will fight for you. You won't have to lift a finger in your defense!"

¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the people to get moving!"

¹⁶ Use your shepherd's staff—hold it out over the water, and a path will open up before you through the sea. Then all the people of Israel will walk through on dry ground.

¹⁷ Yet I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will follow the

Israelites into the sea. Then I will receive great glory at the expense of Pharaoh and his armies, chariots, and charioteers.

¹⁸ When I am finished with Pharaoh and his army, all Egypt will know that I am the LORD!"

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been leading the people of Israel, moved to a position behind them, and the pillar of cloud also moved around behind them.

²⁰ The cloud settled between the Israelite and Egyptian camps. As night came, the pillar of cloud turned into a pillar of fire, lighting the Israelite camp. But the cloud became darkness to the Egyptians, and they couldn't find the Israelites.

²¹ Then Moses raised his hand over the sea, and the LORD opened up a path through the water with a strong east wind. The wind blew all that night, turning the seabed into dry land.

²² So the people of Israel walked through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on each side!

²³ Then the Egyptians—all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers—followed them across the bottom of the sea.

²⁴ But early in the morning, the LORD looked down on the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw them into confusion.

²⁵ Their chariot wheels began to come off, making their chariots impossible to drive. "Let's get out of here!" the Egyptians shouted. "The LORD is fighting for Israel against us!"

²⁶ When all the Israelites were on the other side, the LORD said to Moses, "Raise your hand over the sea again. Then the waters will rush back over the Egyptian chariots and charioteers."

²⁷ So as the sun began to rise, Moses raised his hand over the sea. The water roared back into its usual place, and the LORD swept the terrified Egyptians into the surging currents.

²⁸ The waters covered all the chariots and charioteers—the entire army of Pharaoh. Of all the Egyptians who had chased the Israelites into the sea, not a single one survived.

²⁹ The people of Israel had walked through the middle of the sea on dry land, as the water stood up like a wall on both sides.

³⁰ This was how the LORD rescued Israel from the Egyptians that day. And the Israelites could see the bodies of the Egyptians washed up on the shore.

³¹ When the people of Israel saw the mighty power that the LORD had displayed against the Egyptians, they

feared the LORD and put their faith in him and his servant Moses.

15 ¹ Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has thrown both horse and rider into the sea.

² The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my victory. He is my God, and I will praise him; he is my father's God, and I will exalt him!

³ The LORD is a warrior; yes, the LORD is his name!

⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and armies, he has thrown into the sea. The very best of Pharaoh's officers have been drowned in the Red Sea.

⁵ The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone.

⁶ "Your right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power. Your right hand, O LORD, dashes the enemy to pieces.

⁷ In the greatness of your majesty, you overthrew those who rose against you. Your anger flashed forth; it consumed them as fire burns straw.

⁸ At the blast of your breath, the waters piled up! The surging waters stood straight like a wall; in the middle of the sea the waters became hard.

⁹ "The enemy said, 'I will chase them, catch up with them, and destroy them. I will divide the plunder, avenging myself against them. I will unsheath my sword; my power will destroy them.'

¹⁰ But with a blast of your breath, the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

¹¹ "Who else among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is glorious in holiness like you—so awesome in splendor, performing such wonders?

¹² You raised up your hand, and the earth swallowed our enemies.

¹³ "With unfailing love you will lead this people whom you have ransomed. You will guide them in your strength to the place where your holiness dwells.

¹⁴ The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia.

¹⁵ The leaders of Edom will be terrified; the nobles of Moab will tremble. All the people of Canaan will melt with fear;

¹⁶ terror and dread will overcome them. Because of your great power, they will be silent like a stone, until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people whom you purchased pass by.

¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain—the place you have made as your home, O LORD, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have made.

¹⁸ The LORD will reign forever and ever!"

¹⁹ When Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and charioteers rushed into the sea, the LORD brought the water crashing down on them. But the people of Israel had walked through on dry land!

²⁰ Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine and led all the women in rhythm and dance.

²¹ And Miriam sang this song: "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; he has thrown both horse and rider into the sea."

²² Then Moses led the people of Israel away from the Red Sea, and they moved out into the Shur Desert. They traveled in this desert for three days without water.

²³ When they came to Marah, they finally found water. But the people couldn't drink it because it was bitter. (That is why the place was called Marah, which means "bitter.")

²⁴ Then the people turned against Moses. "What are we going to drink?" they demanded.

²⁵ So Moses cried out to the LORD for help, and the LORD showed him a branch. Moses took the branch and threw it into the water. This made the water good to drink. It was there at Marah that the LORD laid before them the following conditions to test their faithfulness to him:

²⁶ "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and laws, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you."

²⁷ After leaving Marah, they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees. They camped there beside the springs.

16 ¹ Then they left Elim and journeyed into the Sin Desert, between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there a month after leaving Egypt.

² There, too, the whole community of Israel spoke bitterly against Moses and Aaron.

³ "Oh, that we were back in Egypt," they moaned. "It would have been better if the LORD had killed us there! At least there we had plenty to eat. But now you have brought us into this desert to starve us to death."

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. The people can go out each day and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether they will follow my instructions.

⁵ Tell them to pick up twice as much as usual on the sixth day of each week."

⁶ Then Moses and Aaron called a meeting of all the people of Israel and told them, "In the evening you will realize that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

⁷ In the morning you will see the glorious presence of the LORD. He has heard your complaints, which are against the LORD and not against us.

⁸ The LORD will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread in the morning, for he has heard all your complaints against him. Yes, your complaints are against the LORD, not against us."

⁹ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say this to the entire community of Israel: 'Come into the LORD's presence, and hear his reply to your complaints.'"

¹⁰ And as Aaron spoke to the people, they looked out toward the desert. Within the guiding cloud, they could see the awesome glory of the LORD.

¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹² "I have heard the people's complaints. Now tell them, 'In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'"

¹³ That evening vast numbers of quail arrived and covered the camp. The next morning the desert all around the camp was wet with dew.

¹⁴ When the dew disappeared later in the morning, thin flakes, white like frost, covered the ground.

¹⁵ The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. "What is it?" they asked. And Moses told them, "It is the food the LORD has given you.

¹⁶ The LORD says that each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person."

¹⁷ So the people of Israel went out and gathered this food—some getting more, and some getting less.

¹⁸ By gathering two quarts for each person, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.

¹⁹ Then Moses told them, "Do not keep any of it overnight."

²⁰ But, of course, some of them didn't listen and kept some of it until morning. By then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. And Moses was very angry with them.

²¹ The people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the food they had not picked up melted and disappeared.

²² On the sixth day, there was twice as much as usual on the ground—four quarts for each person instead of two. The leaders of the people came and asked Moses why this had happened.

²³ He replied, "The LORD has appointed tomorrow as a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. On this day we will rest from our normal daily tasks. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow."

²⁴ The next morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor.

²⁵ Moses said, "This is your food for today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD. There will be no food on the ground today.

²⁶ Gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is a Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground for you on that day."

²⁷ Some of the people went out anyway to gather food, even though it was the Sabbath day. But there was none to be found.

²⁸ "How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions?" the LORD asked Moses.

²⁹ "Do they not realize that I have given them the seventh day, the Sabbath, as a day of rest? That is why I give you twice as much food on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must stay in your places. Do not pick up food from the ground on that day."

³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

³¹ In time, the food became known as manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey cakes.

³² Then Moses gave them this command from the LORD: "Take two quarts of

manna and keep it forever as a treasured memorial of the LORD's provision. By doing this, later generations will be able to see the bread that the LORD provided in the wilderness when he brought you out of Egypt."

³³ Moses said to Aaron, "Get a container and put two quarts of manna into it. Then store it in a sacred place as a reminder for all future generations."

³⁴ Aaron did this, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. He eventually placed it for safekeeping in the Ark of the Covenant.

³⁵ So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived in the land of Canaan, where there were crops to eat.

³⁶ (The container used to measure the manna was an omer, which held about two quarts.)

17 ¹ At the LORD's command, the people of Israel left the Sin Desert and moved from place to place. Eventually they came to Rephidim, but there was no water to be found there.

² So once more the people grumbled and complained to Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded.

"Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you arguing with me? And why are you testing the LORD?"

³ But tormented by thirst, they continued to complain, "Why did you ever take us out of Egypt? Why did you bring us here? We, our children, and our livestock will all die!"

⁴ Then Moses pleaded with the LORD, "What should I do with these people? They are about to stone me!"

⁵ The LORD said to Moses, "Take your shepherd's staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile. Then

call some of the leaders of Israel and walk on ahead of the people.

⁶ I will meet you by the rock at Mount Sinai. Strike the rock, and water will come pouring out. Then the people will be able to drink." Moses did just as he was told; and as the leaders looked on, water gushed out.

⁷ Moses named the place Massah—"the place of testing"—and Meribah—"the place of arguing"—because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD going to take care of us or not?"

⁸ While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek came to fight against them.

⁹ Moses commanded Joshua, "Call the Israelites to arms, and fight the army of Amalek. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

¹⁰ So Joshua did what Moses had commanded. He led his men out to fight the army of Amalek. Meanwhile Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of a nearby hill.

¹¹ As long as Moses held up the staff with his hands, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites gained the upper hand.

¹² Moses' arms finally became too tired to hold up the staff any longer. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side, holding up his hands until sunset.

¹³ As a result, Joshua and his troops were able to crush the army of Amalek.

¹⁴ Then the LORD instructed Moses, "Write this down as a permanent record, and announce it to Joshua: I will blot out every trace of Amalek from under heaven."

¹⁵ Moses built an altar there and called it "The LORD Is My Banner."

¹⁶ He said, "They have dared to raise their fist against the LORD's throne, so now the LORD will be at war with Amalek generation after generation."

18 ¹ Word soon reached Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, about all the wonderful things God had done for Moses and his people, the Israelites. He had heard about how the LORD had brought them safely out of Egypt.

² Some time before this, Moses had sent his wife, Zipporah, and his two sons to live with Jethro, his father-in-law.

³ The name of Moses' first son was Gershom, for Moses had said when the boy was born, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

⁴ The name of his second son was Eliezer, for Moses had said at his birth,

"The God of my fathers was my helper; he delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

⁵ Jethro now came to visit Moses, and he brought Moses' wife and two sons with him. They arrived while Moses and the people were camped near the mountain of God.

⁶ Moses was told, "Jethro, your father-in-law, has come to visit you. Your wife and your two sons are with him."

⁷ So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law. He bowed to him respectfully and greeted him warmly. They asked about each other's health and then went to Moses' tent to talk further.

⁸ Moses told his father-in-law about everything the LORD had done to rescue Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He also told him about the problems they had faced along the way and how

the LORD had delivered his people from all their troubles.

⁹ Jethro was delighted when he heard about all that the LORD had done for Israel as he brought them out of Egypt.

¹⁰ "Praise be to the LORD," Jethro said, "for he has saved you from the Egyptians and from Pharaoh. He has rescued Israel from the power of Egypt!

¹¹ I know now that the LORD is greater than all other gods, because his people have escaped from the proud and cruel Egyptians."

¹² Then Jethro presented a burnt offering and gave sacrifices to God. As Jethro was doing this, Aaron and the leaders of Israel came out to meet him. They all joined him in a sacrificial meal in God's presence.

¹³ The next day, Moses sat as usual to hear the people's complaints against

each other. They were lined up in front of him from morning till evening.

¹⁴ When Moses' father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "Why are you trying to do all this alone? The people have been standing here all day to get your help."

¹⁵ Moses replied, "Well, the people come to me to seek God's guidance.

¹⁶ When an argument arises, I am the one who settles the case. I inform the people of God's decisions and teach them his laws and instructions."

¹⁷ "This is not good!" his father-in-law exclaimed.

¹⁸ "You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself.

¹⁹ Now let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people's

representative before God, bringing him their questions to be decided.

²⁰ You should tell them God's decisions, teach them God's laws and instructions, and show them how to conduct their lives.

²¹ But find some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as judges over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten.

²² These men can serve the people, resolving all the ordinary cases. Anything that is too important or too complicated can be brought to you. But they can take care of the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you.

²³ If you follow this advice, and if God directs you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace."

²⁴ Moses listened to his father-in-law's advice and followed his suggestions.

²⁵ He chose capable men from all over Israel and made them judges over the people. They were put in charge of groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten.

²⁶ These men were constantly available to administer justice. They brought the hard cases to Moses, but they judged the smaller matters themselves.

²⁷ Soon after this, Moses said good-bye to his father-in-law, who returned to his own land.

19 ¹ The Israelites arrived in the wilderness of Sinai exactly two months after they left Egypt.

² After breaking camp at Rephidim, they came to the base of Mount Sinai and set up camp there.

³ Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The LORD called

out to him from the mountain and said, "Give these instructions to the descendants of Jacob, the people of Israel:

⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I brought you to myself and carried you on eagle's wings.

⁵ Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the nations of the earth; for all the earth belongs to me.

⁶ And you will be to me a kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' Give this message to the Israelites."

⁷ Moses returned from the mountain and called together the leaders of the people and told them what the LORD had said.

⁸ They all responded together, "We will certainly do everything the LORD asks

of us." So Moses brought the people's answer back to the LORD.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a thick cloud so the people themselves can hear me as I speak to you. Then they will always have confidence in you." Moses told the LORD what the people had said.

¹⁰ Then the LORD told Moses, "Go down and prepare the people for my visit. Purify them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their clothing.

¹¹ Be sure they are ready on the third day, for I will come down upon Mount Sinai as all the people watch.

¹² Set boundary lines that the people may not pass. Warn them, 'Be careful! Do not go up on the mountain or even touch its boundaries. Those who do will certainly die!

¹³ Any people or animals that cross the boundary must be stoned to death

or shot with arrows. They must not be touched by human hands.' The people must stay away from the mountain until they hear one long blast from the ram's horn. Then they must gather at the foot of the mountain."

¹⁴ So Moses went down to the people. He purified them for worship and had them wash their clothing.

¹⁵ He told them, "Get ready for an important event two days from now. And until then, abstain from having sexual intercourse."

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day, there was a powerful thunder and lightning storm, and a dense cloud came down upon the mountain. There was a long, loud blast from a ram's horn, and all the people trembled.

¹⁷ Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

¹⁸ All Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the LORD had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook with a violent earthquake.

¹⁹ As the horn blast grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God thundered his reply for all to hear.

²⁰ The LORD came down on the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses climbed the mountain.

²¹ Then the LORD told Moses, "Go back down and warn the people not to cross the boundaries. They must not come up here to see the LORD, for those who do will die.

²² Even the priests who regularly come near to the LORD must purify themselves, or I will destroy them."

²³ "But LORD, the people cannot come up on the mountain!" Moses protested. "You already told them not to. You told me to set boundaries around the mountain and to declare it off limits."

²⁴ But the LORD said, "Go down anyway and bring Aaron back with you. In the meantime, do not let the priests or the people cross the boundaries to come up here. If they do, I will punish them."

²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them what the LORD had said.

20 ¹ Then God instructed the people as follows:

² "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.

³ "Do not worship any other gods besides me.

⁴ "Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish.

⁵ You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not share your affection with any other god! I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.

⁶ But I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations.

⁷ "Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

⁸ "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

⁹ Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work,

¹⁰ but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you,

your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you.

¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

¹² "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you.

¹³ "Do not murder.

¹⁴ "Do not commit adultery.

¹⁵ "Do not steal.

¹⁶ "Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

¹⁷ "Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else your neighbor owns."

¹⁸ When the people heard the thunder and the loud blast of the horn, and when they saw the lightning and the smoke billowing from the mountain, they stood at a distance, trembling with fear.

¹⁹ And they said to Moses, "You tell us what God says, and we will listen. But don't let God speak directly to us. If he does, we will die!"

²⁰ "Don't be afraid," Moses said, "for God has come in this way to show you his awesome power. From now on, let your fear of him keep you from sinning!"

²¹ As the people stood in the distance, Moses entered into the deep darkness where God was.

²² And the LORD said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: You are witnesses that I have spoken to you from heaven.

²³ Remember, you must not make or worship idols of silver or gold.

²⁴ "The altars you make for me must be simple altars of earth. Offer on such altars your sacrifices to me—your burnt offerings and peace offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Build altars in the places where I remind you who I am, and I will come and bless you there.

²⁵ If you build altars from stone, use only uncut stones. Do not chip or shape the stones with a tool, for that would make them unfit for holy use.

²⁶ And you may not approach my altar by steps. If you do, someone might look up under the skirts of your clothing and see your nakedness.

21 ¹ "Here are some other instructions you must present to Israel:

² "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve for only six years. Set him free in

the seventh year, and he will owe you nothing for his freedom.

³ If he was single when he became your slave and then married afterward, only he will go free in the seventh year. But if he was married before he became a slave, then his wife will be freed with him.

⁴ "If his master gave him a wife while he was a slave, and they had sons or daughters, then the man will be free in the seventh year, but his wife and children will still belong to his master.

⁵ But the slave may plainly declare, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I would rather not go free.'

⁶ If he does this, his master must present him before God. Then his master must take him to the door and publicly pierce his ear with an awl. After that, the slave will belong to his master forever.

⁷ "When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she will not be freed at the end of six years as the men are.

⁸ If she does not please the man who bought her, he may allow her to be bought back again. But he is not allowed to sell her to foreigners, since he is the one who broke the contract with her.

⁹ And if the slave girl's owner arranges for her to marry his son, he may no longer treat her as a slave girl, but he must treat her as his daughter.

¹⁰ If he himself marries her and then takes another wife, he may not reduce her food or clothing or fail to sleep with her as his wife.

¹¹ If he fails in any of these three ways, she may leave as a free woman without making any payment.

¹² "Anyone who hits a person hard enough to cause death must be put to death.

¹³ But if it is an accident and God allows it to happen, I will appoint a place where the slayer can run for safety.

¹⁴ However, if someone deliberately attacks and kills another person, then the slayer must be dragged even from my altar and put to death.

¹⁵ "Anyone who strikes father or mother must be put to death.

¹⁶ "Kidnappers must be killed, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves.

¹⁷ "Anyone who curses father or mother must be put to death.

¹⁸ "Now suppose two people quarrel, and one hits the other with a stone or fist, causing injury but not death.

¹⁹ If the injured person is later able to walk again, even with a crutch, the assailant will be innocent. Nonetheless, the assailant must pay for time lost

because of the injury and must pay for the medical expenses.

²⁰ "If a male or female slave is beaten and dies, the owner must be punished.

²¹ If the slave recovers after a couple of days, however, then the owner should not be punished, since the slave is the owner's property.

²² "Now suppose two people are fighting, and in the process, they hurt a pregnant woman so her child is born prematurely. If no further harm results, then the person responsible must pay damages in the amount the woman's husband demands and the judges approve.

²³ But if any harm results, then the offender must be punished according to the injury. If the result is death, the offender must be executed.

²⁴ If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets

knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it. Similarly, the payment must be hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

²⁶ "If an owner hits a male or female slave in the eye and the eye is blinded, then the slave may go free because of the eye.

²⁷ And if an owner knocks out the tooth of a male or female slave, the slave should be released in payment for the tooth.

²⁸ "If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull must be stoned, and its flesh may not be eaten. In such a case, however, the owner will not be held liable.

²⁹ Suppose, on the other hand, that the owner knew the bull had gored people in the past, yet the bull was not kept under control. If this is true and if the

bull kills someone, it must be stoned, and the owner must also be killed.

³⁰ However, the dead person's relatives may accept payment from the owner of the bull to compensate for the loss of life. The owner will have to pay whatever is demanded.

³¹ "The same principle applies if the bull gores a boy or a girl.

³² But if the bull gores a slave, either male or female, the slave's owner is to be given thirty silver coins in payment, and the bull must be stoned.

³³ "Suppose someone digs or uncovers a well and fails to cover it, and then an ox or a donkey falls into it.

³⁴ The owner of the well must pay in full for the dead animal but then gets to keep it.

³⁵ "If someone's bull injures a neighbor's bull and the injured bull dies, then the two owners must sell the live

bull and divide the money between them. Each will also own half of the dead bull.

³⁶ But if the bull was known from past experience to gore, yet its owner failed to keep it under control, the money will not be divided. The owner of the living bull must pay in full for the dead bull but then gets to keep it.

22 ¹ "A fine must be paid by anyone who steals an ox or sheep and then kills or sells it. For oxen the fine is five oxen for each one stolen. For sheep the fine is four sheep for each one stolen.

² "If a thief is caught in the act of breaking into a house and is killed in the process, the person who killed the thief is not guilty.

³ But if it happens in daylight, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murder. "A thief who is caught must pay in full for

everything that was stolen. If payment is not made, the thief must be sold as a slave to pay the debt.

⁴ If someone steals an ox or a donkey or a sheep and it is recovered alive, then the thief must pay double the value.

⁵ "If an animal is grazing in a field or vineyard and the owner lets it stray into someone else's field to graze, then the animal's owner must pay damages in the form of high-quality grain or grapes.

⁶ "If a fire gets out of control and goes into another person's field, destroying the sheaves or the standing grain, then the one who started the fire must pay for the lost crops.

⁷ "Suppose someone entrusts money or goods to a neighbor, and they are stolen from the neighbor's house. If the thief is found, the fine is double the value of what was stolen.

⁸ But if the thief is not found, God will determine whether or not it was the neighbor who stole the property.

⁹ "Suppose there is a dispute between two people as to who owns a particular ox, donkey, sheep, article of clothing, or anything else. Both parties must come before God for a decision, and the person whom God declares guilty must pay double to the other.

¹⁰ "Now suppose someone asks a neighbor to care for a donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal, but it dies or is injured or gets away, and there is no eyewitness to report just what happened.

¹¹ The neighbor must then take an oath of innocence in the presence of the LORD. The owner must accept the neighbor's word, and no payment will be required.

¹² But if the animal or property was stolen, payment must be made to the owner.

¹³ If it was attacked by a wild animal, the carcass must be shown as evidence, and no payment will be required.

¹⁴ "If someone borrows an animal from a neighbor and it is injured or killed, and if the owner was not there at the time, the person who borrowed it must pay for it.

¹⁵ But if the owner is there, no payment is required. And no payment is required if the animal was rented because this loss was covered by the rental fee.

¹⁶ "If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to anyone and sleeps with her, he must pay the customary dowry and accept her as his wife.

¹⁷ But if her father refuses to let her marry him, the man must still pay the money for her dowry.

18 "A sorceress must not be allowed to live.

19 "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be executed.

20 "Anyone who sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed.

21 "Do not oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

22 "Do not exploit widows or orphans.

23 If you do and they cry out to me, then I will surely help them.

24 My anger will blaze forth against you, and I will kill you with the sword. Your wives will become widows, and your children will become fatherless.

25 "If you lend money to a fellow Hebrew in need, do not be like a money lender, charging interest.

26 If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge of repayment, you must return it by nightfall.

²⁷ Your neighbor will need it to stay warm during the night. If you do not return it and your neighbor cries out to me for help, then I will hear, for I am very merciful.

²⁸ "Do not blaspheme God or curse anyone who rules over you.

²⁹ "Do not hold anything back when you give me the tithe of your crops and your wine. "You must make the necessary payment for redemption of your firstborn sons.

³⁰ "You must also give me the firstborn of your cattle and sheep. Leave the newborn animal with its mother for seven days; then give it to me on the eighth day.

³¹ "You are my own holy people. Therefore, do not eat any animal that has been attacked and killed by a wild animal. Throw its carcass out for the dogs to eat.

23 ¹ "Do not pass along false reports. Do not cooperate with evil people by telling lies on the witness stand.

² "Do not join a crowd that intends to do evil. When you are on the witness stand, do not be swayed in your testimony by the opinion of the majority.

³ And do not slant your testimony in favor of a person just because that person is poor.

⁴ "If you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey that has strayed away, take it back to its owner.

⁵ If you see the donkey of someone who hates you struggling beneath a heavy load, do not walk by. Instead, stop and offer to help.

⁶ "Do not twist justice against people simply because they are poor.

⁷ "Keep far away from falsely charging anyone with evil. Never put an innocent

or honest person to death. I will not allow anyone guilty of this to go free.

⁸ "Take no bribes, for a bribe makes you ignore something that you clearly see. A bribe always hurts the cause of the person who is in the right.

⁹ "Do not oppress the foreigners living among you. You know what it is like to be a foreigner. Remember your own experience in the land of Egypt.

¹⁰ "Plant and harvest your crops for six years,

¹¹ but let the land rest and lie fallow during the seventh year. Then let the poor among you harvest any volunteer crop that may come up. Leave the rest for the animals to eat. The same applies to your vineyards and olive groves.

¹² "Work for six days, and rest on the seventh. This will give your ox and your donkey a chance to rest. It will also allow

the people of your household, including your slaves and visitors, to be refreshed.

¹³ "Be sure to obey all my instructions. And remember, never pray to or swear by any other gods. Do not even mention their names.

¹⁴ "Each year you must celebrate three festivals in my honor.

¹⁵ The first is the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast, just as I commanded you before. This festival will be an annual event at the appointed time in early spring, for that is the anniversary of your exodus from Egypt. Everyone must bring me a sacrifice at that time.

¹⁶ You must also celebrate the Festival of Harvest, when you bring me the first crops of your harvest. Finally, you are to celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season.

¹⁷ At these three times each year, every man in Israel must appear before the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁸ "Sacrificial blood must never be offered together with bread that has yeast in it. And no sacrificial fat may be left unoffered until the next morning.

¹⁹ "As you harvest each of your crops, bring me a choice sample of the first day's harvest. It must be offered to the LORD your God. "You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

²⁰ "See, I am sending my angel before you to lead you safely to the land I have prepared for you.

²¹ Pay attention to him, and obey all of his instructions. Do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive your sins. He is my representative—he bears my name.

²² But if you are careful to obey him, following all my instructions, then I will

be an enemy to your enemies, and I will oppose those who oppose you.

²³ For my angel will go before you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, so you may live there. And I will destroy them.

²⁴ Do not worship the gods of these other nations or serve them in any way, and never follow their evil example. Instead, you must utterly conquer them and break down their shameful idols.

²⁵ "You must serve only the LORD your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will keep you healthy.

²⁶ There will be no miscarriages or infertility among your people, and I will give you long, full lives.

²⁷ "I will send my terror upon all the people whose lands you invade, and they will panic before you.

²⁸ I will send hornets ahead of you to drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites.

²⁹ But I will not do this all in one year because the land would become a wilderness, and the wild animals would become too many to control.

³⁰ I will drive them out a little at a time until your population has increased enough to fill the land.

³¹ And I will fix your boundaries from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and from the southern deserts to the Euphrates River. I will help you defeat the people now living in the land, and you will drive them out ahead of you.

³² "Make no treaties with them and have nothing to do with their gods.

³³ Do not even let them live among you! If you do, they will infect you with their sin of idol worship, and that would be disastrous for you."

24 ¹ Then the LORD instructed Moses: "Come up here to me, and bring along Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel's leaders. All of them must worship at a distance.

² You alone, Moses, are allowed to come near to the LORD. The others must not come too close. And remember, none of the other people are allowed to climb on the mountain at all."

³ When Moses had announced to the people all the teachings and regulations the LORD had given him, they answered in unison, "We will do everything the LORD has told us to do."

⁴ Then Moses carefully wrote down all the LORD's instructions. Early the next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars around the altar, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

⁵ Then he sent some of the young men to sacrifice young bulls as burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD.

⁶ Moses took half the blood from these animals and drew it off into basins. The other half he splashed against the altar.

⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They all responded again, "We will do everything the LORD has commanded. We will obey."

⁸ Then Moses sprinkled the blood from the basins over the people and said, "This blood confirms the covenant the LORD has made with you in giving you these laws."

⁹ Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the leaders of Israel went up the mountain.

¹⁰ There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a

pavement of brilliant sapphire, as clear as the heavens.

¹¹ And though Israel's leaders saw God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they shared a meal together in God's presence!

¹² And the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there while I give you the tablets of stone that I have inscribed with my instructions and commands. Then you will teach the people from them."

¹³ So Moses and his assistant Joshua climbed up the mountain of God.

¹⁴ Moses told the other leaders, "Stay here and wait for us until we come back. If there are any problems while I am gone, consult with Aaron and Hur, who are here with you."

¹⁵ Then Moses went up the mountain, and the cloud covered it.

¹⁶ And the glorious presence of the LORD rested upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from the cloud.

¹⁷ The Israelites at the foot of the mountain saw an awesome sight. The awesome glory of the LORD on the mountaintop looked like a devouring fire.

¹⁸ Then Moses disappeared into the cloud as he climbed higher up the mountain. He stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

25 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Tell the people of Israel that everyone who wants to may bring me an offering.

³ Here is a list of items you may accept on my behalf: gold, silver, and bronze;

⁴ blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen; goat hair for cloth;

⁵ tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather; acacia wood;

⁶ olive oil for the lamps; spices for the anointing oil and the fragrant incense;

⁷ onyx stones, and other stones to be set in the ephod and the chestpiece.

⁸ "I want the people of Israel to build me a sacred residence where I can live among them.

⁹ You must make this Tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the plans I will show you.

¹⁰ "Make an Ark of acacia wood—a sacred chest $3 \frac{3}{4}$ feet long, $2 \frac{1}{4}$ feet wide, and $2 \frac{1}{4}$ feet high.

¹¹ Overlay it inside and outside with pure gold, and put a molding of gold all around it.

¹² Cast four rings of gold for it, and attach them to its four feet, two rings on each side.

¹³ Make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.

¹⁴ Fit the poles into the rings at the sides of the Ark to carry it.

¹⁵ These carrying poles must never be taken from the rings; they are to be left there permanently.

¹⁶ When the Ark is finished, place inside it the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, which I will give to you.

¹⁷ "Then make the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—out of pure gold. It must be 3 3/4 feet long and 2 1/4 feet wide.

¹⁸ Then use hammered gold to make two cherubim, and place them at the two ends of the atonement cover.

¹⁹ Attach the cherubim to each end of the atonement cover, making it all one piece.

²⁰ The cherubim will face each other, looking down on the atonement cover with their wings spread out above it.

²¹ Place inside the Ark the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, which I will give to you. Then put the atonement cover on top of the Ark.

²² I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel.

²³ "Then make a table of acacia wood, 3 feet long, 1 1/2 feet wide, and 2 1/4 feet high.

²⁴ Overlay it with pure gold and run a molding of gold around it.

²⁵ Put a rim about three inches wide around the top edge, and put a gold molding all around the rim.

²⁶ Make four gold rings, and put the rings at the four corners by the four legs, ²⁷ close to the rim around the top.

These rings will support the poles used to carry the table.

²⁸ Make these poles from acacia wood and overlay them with gold.

²⁹ And make gold plates and dishes, as well as pitchers and bowls to be used in pouring out drink offerings.

³⁰ You must always keep the special Bread of the Presence on the table before me.

³¹ "Make a lampstand of pure, hammered gold. The entire lampstand and its decorations will be one piece—the base, center stem, lamp cups, buds, and blossoms.

³² It will have six branches, three branches going out from each side of the center stem.

³³ Each of the six branches will hold a cup shaped like an almond blossom, complete with buds and petals.

³⁴ The center stem of the lampstand will be decorated with four almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals.

³⁵ One blossom will be set beneath each pair of branches where they extend from the center stem.

³⁶ The decorations and branches must all be one piece with the stem, and they must be hammered from pure gold.

³⁷ Then make the seven lamps for the lampstand, and set them so they reflect their light forward.

³⁸ The lamp snuffers and trays must also be made of pure gold.

³⁹ You will need seventy–five pounds of pure gold for the lampstand and its accessories.

⁴⁰ "Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain.

26 ¹ "Make the Tabernacle from ten sheets of fine linen. These sheets are to be decorated with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, with figures of cherubim skillfully embroidered into them.

² Each sheet must be forty–two feet long and six feet wide. All ten sheets must be exactly the same size.

³ Join five of these sheets together into one set; then join the other five sheets into a second set.

⁴ Put loops of blue yarn along the edge of the last sheet in each set.

⁵ The fifty loops along the edge of one set are to match the fifty loops along the edge of the other.

⁶ Then make fifty gold clasps to fasten the loops of the two sets of sheets

together, making the Tabernacle a single unit.

⁷ "Make heavy sheets of cloth from goat hair to cover the Tabernacle. There must be eleven of these sheets,

⁸ each forty–five feet long and six feet wide. All eleven of these sheets must be exactly the same size.

⁹ Join five of these together into one set, and join the other six into a second set. The sixth sheet of the second set is to be doubled over at the entrance of the sacred tent.

¹⁰ Put fifty loops along the edge of the last sheet in each set,

¹¹ and fasten them together with fifty bronze clasps. In this way, the two sets will become a single unit.

¹² An extra half sheet of this roof covering will be left to hang over the back of the Tabernacle,

¹³ and the covering will hang down an extra eighteen inches on each side.

¹⁴ On top of these coverings place a layer of tanned ram skins, and over them put a layer of fine goatskin leather. This will complete the roof covering.

¹⁵ "The framework of the Tabernacle will consist of frames made of acacia wood.

¹⁶ Each frame must be 15 feet high and 2 1/4 feet wide.

¹⁷ There will be two pegs on each frame so they can be joined to the next frame. All the frames must be made this way.

¹⁸ Twenty of these frames will support the south side of the Tabernacle.

¹⁹ They will fit into forty silver bases—two bases under each frame.

²⁰ On the north side there will also be twenty of these frames,

²¹ with their forty silver bases, two bases for each frame.

²² On the west side there will be six frames,

²³ along with an extra frame at each corner.

²⁴ These corner frames will be connected at the bottom and firmly attached at the top with a single ring, forming a single unit. Both of these corner frames will be made the same way.

²⁵ So there will be eight frames on that end of the Tabernacle, supported by sixteen silver bases—two bases under each frame.

²⁶ "Make crossbars of acacia wood to run across the frames, five crossbars for the north side of the Tabernacle

²⁷ and five for the south side. Also make five crossbars for the rear of the Tabernacle, which will face westward.

²⁸ The middle crossbar, halfway up the frames, will run all the way from one end of the Tabernacle to the other.

²⁹ Overlay the frames with gold and make gold rings to support the crossbars. Overlay the crossbars with gold as well.

³⁰ "Set up this Tabernacle according to the design you were shown on the mountain.

³¹ "Across the inside of the Tabernacle hang a special curtain made of fine linen, with cherubim skillfully embroidered into the cloth using blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

³² Hang this inner curtain on gold hooks set into four posts made from acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The posts will fit into silver bases.

³³ When the inner curtain is in place, put the Ark of the Covenant behind it. This curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

³⁴ "Then put the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—on top of the Ark of the Covenant inside the Most Holy Place.

³⁵ Place the table and lampstand across the room from each other outside the inner curtain. The lampstand must be placed on the south side, and the table must be set toward the north.

³⁶ "Make another curtain from fine linen for the entrance of the sacred tent, and embroider exquisite designs into it, using blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

³⁷ Hang this curtain on gold hooks set into five posts made from acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The posts will fit into five bronze bases.

27 ¹ "Using acacia wood, make a square altar 7 1/2 feet wide, 7 1/2 feet long, and 4 1/2 feet high.

² Make a horn at each of the four corners of the altar so the horns and

altar are all one piece. Overlay the altar and its horns with bronze.

³ The ash buckets, shovels, basins, meat hooks, and firepans will all be made of bronze.

⁴ Make a bronze grating, with a metal ring at each corner.

⁵ Fit the grating halfway down into the firebox, resting it on the ledge built there.

⁶ For moving the altar, make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze.

⁷ To carry it, put the poles into the rings at two sides of the altar.

⁸ The altar must be hollow, made from planks. Be careful to build it just as you were shown on the mountain.

⁹ "Then make a courtyard for the Tabernacle, enclosed with curtains made from fine linen. On the south side the curtains will stretch for 150 feet.

¹⁰ They will be held up by twenty bronze posts that fit into twenty bronze bases. The curtains will be held up with silver hooks attached to the silver rods that are attached to the posts.

¹¹ It will be the same on the north side of the courtyard—150 feet of curtains held up by twenty posts fitted into bronze bases, with silver hooks and rods.

¹² The curtains on the west end of the courtyard will be 75 feet long, supported by ten posts set into ten bases.

¹³ The east end will also be 75 feet long.

¹⁴ The courtyard entrance will be on the east end, flanked by two curtains. The curtain on the right side will be 22 1/2 feet long, supported by three posts set into three bases.

¹⁵ The curtain on the left side will also be 22 1/2 feet long, supported by three posts set into three bases.

¹⁶ "For the entrance to the courtyard, make a curtain that is 30 feet long. Fashion it from fine linen, and decorate it with beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. It will be attached to four posts that fit into four bases.

¹⁷ All the posts around the courtyard must be connected by silver rods, using silver hooks. The posts are to be set in solid bronze bases.

¹⁸ So the entire courtyard will be 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, with curtain walls 7 1/2 feet high, made from fine linen. The bases supporting its walls will be made of bronze.

¹⁹ "All the articles used in the work of the Tabernacle, including all the tent pegs used to support the Tabernacle and the courtyard curtains, must be made of bronze.

²⁰ "Tell the people of Israel to bring you pure olive oil for the lampstand, so it can be kept burning continually.

²¹ The lampstand will be placed outside the inner curtain of the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle. Aaron and his sons will keep the lamps burning in the LORD's presence day and night. This is a permanent law for the people of Israel, and it must be kept by all future generations.

28 ¹ "Your brother, Aaron, and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, will be set apart from the common people. They will be my priests and will minister to me.

² Make special clothing for Aaron to show his separation to God—beautiful garments that will lend dignity to his work.

³ Instruct all those who have special skills as tailors to make the garments

that will set Aaron apart from everyone else, so he may serve me as a priest.

⁴ They are to make a chestpiece, an ephod, a robe, an embroidered tunic, a turban, and a sash. They will also make special garments for Aaron's sons to wear when they serve as priests before me.

⁵ These items must be made of fine linen cloth and embroidered with gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

⁶ "The ephod must be made of fine linen cloth and skillfully embroidered with gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

⁷ It will consist of two pieces, front and back, joined at the shoulders with two shoulder-pieces.

⁸ And the sash will be made of the same materials: fine linen cloth embroidered

with gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

⁹ Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the tribes of Israel.

¹⁰ Six names will be on each stone, naming all the tribes in the order of their ancestors' births.

¹¹ Engrave these names in the same way a gemcutter engraves a seal. Mount the stones in gold settings.

¹² Fasten the two stones on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the people of Israel. Aaron will carry these names before the LORD as a constant reminder.

¹³ The settings are to be made of gold filigree,

¹⁴ and two cords made of pure gold will be attached to the settings on the shoulders of the ephod.

¹⁵ "Then, with the most careful workmanship, make a chestpiece that

will be used to determine God's will. Use the same materials as you did for the ephod: fine linen cloth embroidered with gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

¹⁶ This chestpiece will be made of two folds of cloth, forming a pouch nine inches square.

¹⁷ Four rows of gemstones will be attached to it. The first row will contain a red carnelian, a chrysolite, and an emerald.

¹⁸ The second row will contain a turquoise, a sapphire, and a white moonstone.

¹⁹ The third row will contain a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst.

²⁰ The fourth row will contain a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. All these stones will be set in gold.

²¹ Each stone will represent one of the tribes of Israel, and the name of that

tribe will be engraved on it as though it were a seal.

²² "To attach the chestpiece to the ephod, make braided cords of pure gold.

²³ Then make two gold rings and attach them to the top corners of the chestpiece.

²⁴ The two gold cords will go through the rings on the chestpiece,

²⁵ and the ends of the cords will be tied to the gold settings on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod.

²⁶ Then make two more gold rings, and attach them to the two lower inside corners of the chestpiece next to the ephod.

²⁷ And make two more gold rings and attach them to the ephod near the sash.

²⁸ Then attach the bottom rings of the chestpiece to the rings on the ephod with blue cords. This will hold the

chestpiece securely to the ephod above the beautiful sash.

²⁹ In this way, Aaron will carry the names of the tribes of Israel on the chestpiece over his heart when he goes into the presence of the LORD in the Holy Place. Thus, the LORD will be reminded of his people continually.

³⁰ Insert into the pocket of the chestpiece the Urim and Thummim, to be carried over Aaron's heart when he goes into the LORD's presence. Thus, Aaron will always carry the objects used to determine the LORD's will for his people whenever he goes in before the LORD.

³¹ "Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth,

³² with an opening for Aaron's head in the middle of it. The opening will be reinforced by a woven collar so it will not tear.

³³ Make pomegranates out of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and attach them to the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them.

³⁴ The gold bells and pomegranates are to alternate all the way around the hem.

³⁵ Aaron will wear this robe whenever he enters the Holy Place to minister to the LORD, and the bells will tinkle as he goes in and out of the LORD's presence. If he wears it, he will not die.

³⁶ "Next make a medallion of pure gold. Using the techniques of an engraver, inscribe it with these words: SET APART AS HOLY TO THE LORD.

³⁷ This medallion will be attached to the front of Aaron's turban by means of a blue cord.

³⁸ Aaron will wear it on his forehead, thus bearing the guilt connected with any errors regarding the sacred offerings of the people of Israel. He must always

wear it so the LORD will accept the people.

³⁹ "Weave Aaron's patterned tunic from fine linen cloth. Fashion the turban out of this linen as well. Also make him an embroidered sash.

⁴⁰ "Then for Aaron's sons, make tunics, sashes, and headdresses to give them dignity and respect.

⁴¹ Clothe Aaron and his sons with these garments, and then anoint and ordain them. Set them apart as holy so they can serve as my priests.

⁴² Also make linen underclothes for them, to be worn next to their bodies, reaching from waist to thigh.

⁴³ These must be worn whenever Aaron and his sons enter the Tabernacle or approach the altar in the Holy Place to perform their duties. Thus they will not incur guilt and die. This law is permanent for Aaron and his descendants.

29¹ "This is the ceremony for the dedication of Aaron and his sons as priests: Take a young bull and two rams with no physical defects.

² Then using fine wheat flour and no yeast, make loaves of bread, thin cakes mixed with olive oil, and wafers with oil poured over them.

³ Place these various kinds of bread in a single basket, and present them at the entrance of the Tabernacle, along with the young bull and the two rams.

⁴ "Present Aaron and his sons at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and wash them with water.

⁵ Then put Aaron's tunic on him, along with the embroidered robe of the ephod, the ephod itself, the chestpiece, and the sash.

⁶ And place on his head the turban with the gold medallion.

⁷ Then take the anointing oil and pour it over his head.

⁸ Next present his sons, and dress them in their tunics

⁹ with their woven sashes and their headdresses. They will then be priests forever. In this way, you will ordain Aaron and his sons.

¹⁰ "Then bring the young bull to the entrance of the Tabernacle, and Aaron and his sons will lay their hands on its head.

¹¹ You will then slaughter it in the LORD's presence at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

¹² Smear some of its blood on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest at the base of the altar.

¹³ Take all the fat that covers the internal organs, also the long lobe of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat, and burn them on the altar.

¹⁴ Then take the carcass (including the skin and the dung) outside the camp, and burn it as a sin offering.

¹⁵ "Next Aaron and his sons must lay their hands on the head of one of the rams

¹⁶ as it is slaughtered. Its blood will be collected and sprinkled on the sides of the altar.

¹⁷ Cut up the ram and wash off the internal organs and the legs. Set them alongside the head and the other pieces of the body,

¹⁸ and burn them all on the altar. This is a burnt offering to the LORD, which is very pleasing to him.

¹⁹ "Now take the other ram and have Aaron and his sons lay their hands on its head

²⁰ as it is slaughtered. Collect the blood and place some of it on the tip of the right earlobes of Aaron and his sons.

Also put it on their right thumbs and the big toes of their right feet. Sprinkle the rest of the blood on the sides of the altar.

²¹ Then take some of the blood from the altar and mix it with some of the anointing oil. Sprinkle it on Aaron and his sons and on their clothes. In this way, they and their clothing will be set apart as holy to the LORD.

²² "Since this is the ram for the ordination of Aaron and his sons, take the fat of the ram, including the fat tail and the fat that covers the internal organs. Also, take the long lobe of the liver, the two kidneys with their fat, and the right thigh.

²³ Then take one loaf of bread, one cake mixed with olive oil, and one wafer from the basket of yeastless bread that was placed before the LORD.

²⁴ Put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons to be lifted up as a special gift to the LORD.

²⁵ Afterward take the bread from their hands, and burn it on the altar as a burnt offering that will be pleasing to the LORD.

²⁶ Then take the breast of Aaron's ordination ram, and lift it up in the LORD's presence as a special gift to him. Afterward keep it for yourself.

²⁷ "Set aside as holy the parts of the ordination ram that belong to Aaron and his sons. This includes the breast and the thigh that were lifted up before the LORD in the ordination ceremony.

²⁸ In the future, whenever the people of Israel offer up peace offerings or thanksgiving offerings to the LORD, these parts will be the regular share of Aaron and his descendants.

²⁹ "Aaron's sacred garments must be preserved for his descendants who will succeed him, so they can be anointed and ordained in them.

³⁰ Whoever is the next high priest after Aaron will wear these clothes for seven days before beginning to minister in the Tabernacle and the Holy Place.

³¹ "Take the ram used in the ordination ceremony, and boil its meat in a sacred place.

³² Aaron and his sons are to eat this meat, along with the bread in the basket, at the Tabernacle entrance.

³³ They alone may eat the meat and bread used for their atonement in the ordination ceremony. The ordinary people may not eat them, for these things are set apart and holy.

³⁴ If any of the ordination meat or bread remains until the morning, it must

be burned. It may not be eaten, for it is holy.

³⁵ "This is how you will ordain Aaron and his sons to their offices. The ordination ceremony will go on for seven days.

³⁶ Each day you must sacrifice a young bull as an offering for the atonement of sin. Afterward make an offering to cleanse the altar. Purify the altar by making atonement for it; make it holy by anointing it with oil.

³⁷ Make atonement for the altar every day for seven days. After that, the altar will be exceedingly holy, and whatever touches it will become holy.

³⁸ "This is what you are to offer on the altar. Offer two one-year-old lambs each day,

³⁹ one in the morning and the other in the evening.

⁴⁰ With one of them, offer two quarts of fine flour mixed with one quart of olive oil; also, offer one quart of wine as a drink offering.

⁴¹ Offer the other lamb in the evening, along with the same offerings of flour and wine as in the morning. It will be a fragrant offering to the LORD, an offering made by fire.

⁴² "This is to be a daily burnt offering given from generation to generation. Offer it in the LORD's presence at the Tabernacle entrance, where I will meet you and speak with you.

⁴³ I will meet the people of Israel there, and the Tabernacle will be sanctified by my glorious presence.

⁴⁴ Yes, I will make the Tabernacle and the altar most holy, and I will set apart Aaron and his sons as holy, that they may be my priests.

⁴⁵ I will live among the people of Israel and be their God,

⁴⁶ and they will know that I am the LORD their God. I am the one who brought them out of Egypt so that I could live among them. I am the LORD their God.

30 ¹ "Then make a small altar out of acacia wood for burning incense.

² It must be eighteen inches square and three feet high, with horns at the corners carved from the same piece of wood as the altar.

³ Overlay the top, sides, and horns of the altar with pure gold, and run a gold molding around the entire altar.

⁴ Beneath the molding, on opposite sides of the altar, attach two gold rings to support the carrying poles.

⁵ The poles are to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold.

⁶ Place the incense altar just outside the inner curtain, opposite the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—that rests on the Ark of the Covenant. I will meet with you there.

⁷ "Every morning when Aaron trims the lamps, he must burn fragrant incense on the altar.

⁸ And each evening when he tends to the lamps, he must again burn incense in the LORD's presence. This must be done from generation to generation.

⁹ Do not offer any unholy incense on this altar, or any burnt offerings, grain offerings, or drink offerings.

¹⁰ "Once a year Aaron must purify the altar by placing on its horns the blood from the offering made for the atonement of sin. This will be a regular, annual event from generation to generation, for this is the LORD's supremely holy altar."

¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹² "Whenever you take a census of the people of Israel, each man who is counted must pay a ransom for himself to the LORD. Then there will be no plagues among the people as you count them.

¹³ His payment to the LORD will be one-fifth of an ounce of silver.

¹⁴ All who have reached their twentieth birthday must give this offering to the LORD.

¹⁵ When this offering is given to the LORD to make atonement for yourselves, the rich must not give more, and the poor must not give less.

¹⁶ Use this money for the care of the Tabernacle. It will bring you, the Israelites, to the LORD's attention, and it will make atonement for your lives."

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁸ "Make a large bronze washbasin with a bronze pedestal. Put it between the Tabernacle and the altar, and fill it with water.

¹⁹ Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there

²⁰ before they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the LORD and before they approach the altar to burn offerings to the LORD. They must always wash before ministering in these ways, or they will die.

²¹ This is a permanent law for Aaron and his descendants, to be kept from generation to generation."

²² Then the LORD said to Moses,

²³ "Collect choice spices—12 1/2 pounds of pure myrrh, 6 1/4 pounds each of cinnamon and of sweet cane,

²⁴ 12 1/2 pounds of cassia, and one gallon of olive oil.

²⁵ Blend these ingredients into a holy anointing oil.

²⁶ Use this scented oil to anoint the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant,

²⁷ the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and all its accessories, the incense altar,

²⁸ the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the large washbasin with its pedestal.

²⁹ Sanctify them to make them entirely holy. After this, whatever touches them will become holy.

³⁰ Use this oil also to anoint Aaron and his sons, sanctifying them so they can minister before me as priests.

³¹ And say to the people of Israel, 'This will always be my holy anointing oil.

³² It must never be poured on the body of an ordinary person, and you must never make any of it for yourselves. It is holy, and you must treat it as holy.

³³ Anyone who blends scented oil like it or puts any of it on someone who is not a priest will be cut off from the community.’”

³⁴ These were the LORD’s instructions to Moses concerning the incense: "Gather sweet spices—resin droplets, mollusk scent, galbanum, and pure frankincense—weighing out the same amounts of each.

³⁵ Using the usual techniques of the incense maker, refine it to produce a pure and holy incense.

³⁶ Beat some of it very fine and put some of it in front of the Ark of the Covenant, where I will meet with you in the Tabernacle. This incense is most holy.

³⁷ Never make this incense for yourselves. It is reserved for the LORD, and you must treat it as holy.

³⁸ Those who make it for their own enjoyment will be cut off from the community."

31 ¹ The LORD also said to Moses, ² "Look, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

³ I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, intelligence, and skill in all kinds of crafts.

⁴ He is able to create beautiful objects from gold, silver, and bronze.

⁵ He is skilled in cutting and setting gemstones and in carving wood. Yes, he is a master at every craft!

⁶ "And I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be his assistant. Moreover, I have given special skill to all the naturally talented craftsmen so they can make all the things I have instructed you to make:

⁷ the Tabernacle itself; the Ark of the Covenant; the Ark's cover—the place of atonement; all the furnishings of the Tabernacle;

⁸ the table and all its utensils; the gold lampstand with all its accessories; the incense altar;

⁹ the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils; the washbasin and its pedestal;

¹⁰ the beautifully stitched, holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments for his sons to wear as they minister as priests;

¹¹ the anointing oil; and the special incense for the Holy Place. They must follow exactly all the instructions I have given you."

¹² The LORD then gave these further instructions to Moses:

¹³ "Tell the people of Israel to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you

forever. It helps you to remember that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

¹⁴ Yes, keep the Sabbath day, for it is holy. Anyone who desecrates it must die; anyone who works on that day will be cut off from the community.

¹⁵ Work six days only, but the seventh day must be a day of total rest. I repeat: Because the LORD considers it a holy day, anyone who works on the Sabbath must be put to death.

¹⁶ The people of Israel must keep the Sabbath day forever.

¹⁷ It is a permanent sign of my covenant with them. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but he rested on the seventh day and was refreshed."

¹⁸ Then as the LORD finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God.

32 ¹ When Moses failed to come back down the mountain right away, the people went to Aaron. "Look," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. This man Moses, who brought us here from Egypt, has disappeared. We don't know what has happened to him."

² So Aaron said, "Tell your wives and sons and daughters to take off their gold earrings, and then bring them to me."

³ All the people obeyed Aaron and brought him their gold earrings.

⁴ Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded and tooled it into the shape of a calf. The people exclaimed, "O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!"

⁵ When Aaron saw how excited the people were about it, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD!"

⁶ So the people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and indulged themselves in pagan revelry.

⁷ Then the LORD told Moses, "Quick! Go down the mountain! The people you brought from Egypt have defiled themselves.

⁸ They have already turned from the way I commanded them to live. They have made an idol shaped like a calf, and they have worshiped and sacrificed to it. They are saying, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.'"

⁹ Then the LORD said, "I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are.

¹⁰ Now leave me alone so my anger can blaze against them and destroy them all.

Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation instead of them."

¹¹ But Moses pleaded with the LORD his God not to do it. "O LORD!" he exclaimed. "Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and mighty acts?"

¹² The Egyptians will say, 'God tricked them into coming to the mountains so he could kill them and wipe them from the face of the earth.' Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you are planning against your people!

¹³ Remember your covenant with your servants—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You swore by your own self, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. Yes, I will give them all of this land that I have promised to your

descendants, and they will possess it forever.'"

¹⁴ So the LORD withdrew his threat and didn't bring against his people the disaster he had threatened.

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down the mountain. He held in his hands the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back.

¹⁶ These stone tablets were God's work; the words on them were written by God himself.

¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting below them, he exclaimed to Moses, "It sounds as if there is a war in the camp!"

¹⁸ But Moses replied, "No, it's neither a cry of victory nor a cry of defeat. It is the sound of a celebration."

¹⁹ When they came near the camp, Moses saw the calf and the dancing.

In terrible anger, he threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain.

²⁰ He took the calf they had made and melted it in the fire. And when the metal had cooled, he ground it into powder and mixed it with water. Then he made the people drink it.

²¹ After that, he turned to Aaron. "What did the people do to you?" he demanded. "How did they ever make you bring such terrible sin upon them?"

²² "Don't get upset, sir," Aaron replied. "You yourself know these people and what a wicked bunch they are.

²³ They said to me, 'Make us some gods to lead us, for something has happened to this man Moses, who led us out of Egypt.'

²⁴ So I told them, 'Bring me your gold earrings.' When they brought them to

me, I threw them into the fire—and out came this calf!"

²⁵ When Moses saw that Aaron had let the people get completely out of control—and much to the amusement of their enemies—

²⁶ he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, "All of you who are on the LORD's side, come over here and join me." And all the Levites came.

²⁷ He told them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Strap on your swords! Go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other, killing even your brothers, friends, and neighbors."

²⁸ The Levites obeyed Moses, and about three thousand people died that day.

²⁹ Then Moses told the Levites, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD, for you obeyed him even though it meant killing your own sons

and brothers. Because of this, he will now give you a great blessing."

³⁰ The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a terrible sin, but I will return to the LORD on the mountain. Perhaps I will be able to obtain forgiveness for you."

³¹ So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, these people have committed a terrible sin. They have made gods of gold for themselves.

³² But now, please forgive their sin—and if not, then blot me out of the record you are keeping."

³³ The LORD replied to Moses, "I will blot out whoever has sinned against me.

³⁴ Now go, lead the people to the place I told you about. Look! My angel will lead the way before you! But when I call the people to account, I will certainly punish them for their sins."

³⁵ And the LORD sent a great plague upon the people because they had worshiped the calf Aaron had made.

33 ¹ The LORD said to Moses, "Now that you have brought these people out of Egypt, lead them to the land I solemnly promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I told them long ago that I would give this land to their descendants.

² And I will send an angel before you to drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

³ Theirs is a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not travel along with you, for you are a stubborn, unruly people. If I did, I would be tempted to destroy you along the way."

⁴ When the people heard these stern words, they went into mourning and refused to wear their jewelry and ornaments.

⁵ For the LORD had told Moses to tell them, "You are an unruly, stubborn people. If I were there among you for even a moment, I would destroy you. Remove your jewelry and ornaments until I decide what to do with you."

⁶ So from the time they left Mount Sinai, the Israelites wore no more jewelry.

⁷ It was Moses' custom to set up the tent known as the Tent of Meeting far outside the camp. Everyone who wanted to consult with the LORD would go there.

⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in their tent entrances. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside.

⁹ As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at the entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses.

¹⁰ Then all the people would stand and bow low at their tent entrances.

¹¹ Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, stayed behind in the Tent of Meeting.

¹² Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Take these people up to the Promised Land.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. You call me by name and tell me I have found favor with you.

¹³ Please, if this is really so, show me your intentions so I will understand you more fully and do exactly what you want me to do. Besides, don't forget that this nation is your very own people."

¹⁴ And the LORD replied, "I will personally go with you, Moses. I will

give you rest—everything will be fine for you."

¹⁵ Then Moses said, "If you don't go with us personally, don't let us move a step from this place.

¹⁶ If you don't go with us, how will anyone ever know that your people and I have found favor with you? How else will they know we are special and distinct from all other people on the earth?"

¹⁷ And the LORD replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and you are my friend."

¹⁸ Then Moses had one more request. "Please let me see your glorious presence," he said.

¹⁹ The LORD replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, 'the LORD,' to you. I will show kindness to anyone I choose, and I will show mercy to anyone I choose.

²⁰ But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live."

²¹ The LORD continued, "Stand here on this rock beside me.

²² As my glorious presence passes by, I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed.

²³ Then I will remove my hand, and you will see me from behind. But my face will not be seen."

34 ¹ The LORD told Moses, "Prepare two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed.

² Be ready in the morning to come up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me there on the top of the mountain.

³ No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is allowed anywhere on the

mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain."

⁴ So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the LORD had told him, carrying the two stone tablets in his hands.

⁵ Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and called out his own name, "the LORD," as Moses stood there in his presence.

⁶ He passed in front of Moses and said, "I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness.

⁷ I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations."

⁸ Moses immediately fell to the ground and worshiped.

⁹ And he said, "If it is true that I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, then please go with us. Yes, this is an unruly and stubborn people, but please pardon our iniquity and our sins. Accept us as your own special possession."

¹⁰ The LORD replied, "All right. This is the covenant I am going to make with you. I will perform wonders that have never been done before anywhere in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the LORD—the awesome power I will display through you.

¹¹ Your responsibility is to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then I will surely drive out all those who stand in your way—the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

¹² "Be very careful never to make treaties with the people in the land where you are going. If you do, you soon will be following their evil ways.

¹³ Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash the sacred pillars they worship, and cut down their carved images.

¹⁴ You must worship no other gods, but only the LORD, for he is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.

¹⁵ "Do not make treaties of any kind with the people living in the land. They are spiritual prostitutes, committing adultery against me by sacrificing to their gods. If you make peace with them, they will invite you to go with them to worship their gods, and you are likely to do it.

¹⁶ And you will accept their daughters, who worship other gods, as wives for

your sons. Then they will cause your sons to commit adultery against me by worshiping other gods.

¹⁷ You must make no gods for yourselves at all.

¹⁸ "Be sure to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days, just as I instructed you, at the appointed time each year in early spring, for that was when you left Egypt.

¹⁹ "Every firstborn male belongs to me—of both cattle and sheep.

²⁰ A firstborn male donkey may be redeemed from the LORD by presenting a lamb in its place. But if you decide not to make the exchange, you must kill the donkey by breaking its neck. However, you must redeem every firstborn son. No one is allowed to appear before me without a gift.

²¹ "Six days are set aside for work, but on the Sabbath day you must rest,

even during the seasons of plowing and harvest.

²² And you must remember to celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first crop of the wheat harvest, and celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season.

²³ Three times each year all the men of Israel must appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel.

²⁴ No one will attack and conquer your land when you go to appear before the LORD your God those three times each year. I will drive out the nations that stand in your way and will enlarge your boundaries.

²⁵ "You must not offer bread made with yeast as a sacrifice to me. And none of the meat of the Passover lamb may be kept over until the following morning.

²⁶ You must bring the best of the first of each year's crop to the house of the

LORD your God. "You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk."

²⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, "Write down all these instructions, for they represent the terms of my covenant with you and with Israel."

²⁸ Moses was up on the mountain with the LORD forty days and forty nights. In all that time he neither ate nor drank. At that time he wrote the terms of the covenant—the Ten Commandments—on the stone tablets.

²⁹ When Moses came down the mountain carrying the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, he wasn't aware that his face glowed because he had spoken to the LORD face to face.

³⁰ And when Aaron and the people of Israel saw the radiance of Moses' face, they were afraid to come near him.

³¹ But Moses called to them and asked Aaron and the community leaders to come over and talk with him.

³² Then all the people came, and Moses gave them the instructions the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai.

³³ When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

³⁴ But whenever he went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he removed the veil until he came out again. Then he would give the people whatever instructions the LORD had given him,

³⁵ and the people would see his face aglow. Afterward he would put the veil on again until he returned to speak with the LORD.

35 ¹ Now Moses called a meeting of all the people and told them, "You must obey these instructions from the LORD.

² Each week, work for six days only. The seventh day is a day of total rest, a holy day that belongs to the LORD. Anyone who works on that day will die.

³ Do not even light fires in your homes on that day."

⁴ Then Moses said to all the people, "This is what the LORD has commanded.

⁵ Everyone is invited to bring these offerings to the LORD: gold, silver, and bronze;

⁶ blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen; goat hair for cloth;

⁷ tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather; acacia wood;

⁸ olive oil for the lamps; spices for the anointing oil and the fragrant incense;

⁹ onyx stones, and other stones to be set in the ephod and the chestpiece.

¹⁰ "Come, all of you who are gifted craftsmen. Construct everything that the LORD has commanded:

¹¹ the entire Tabernacle, including the sacred tent and its coverings, the clasps, frames, crossbars, posts, and bases;

¹² the Ark and its poles; the Ark's cover—the place of atonement; the inner curtain to enclose the Ark in the Most Holy Place;

¹³ the table, its carrying poles, and all of its utensils; the Bread of the Presence;

¹⁴ the lampstand and its accessories; the lamp cups and the oil for lighting;

¹⁵ the incense altar and its carrying poles; the anointing oil and fragrant incense; the curtain for the entrance of the Tabernacle;

¹⁶ the altar of burnt offering; the bronze grating of the altar and its carrying poles and utensils; the large washbasin with its pedestal;

¹⁷ the curtains for the walls of the courtyard; the posts and their bases;

the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard;

¹⁸ the tent pegs of the Tabernacle and courtyard and their cords;

¹⁹ the beautifully stitched clothing for the priests to wear while ministering in the Holy Place; the sacred garments for Aaron and his sons to wear while officiating as priests."

²⁰ So all the people left Moses and went to their tents to prepare their gifts.

²¹ If their hearts were stirred and they desired to do so, they brought to the LORD their offerings of materials for the Tabernacle and its furnishings and for the holy garments.

²² Both men and women came, all whose hearts were willing. Some brought to the LORD their offerings of gold—medallions, earrings, rings from their fingers, and necklaces. They

presented gold objects of every kind to the LORD.

²³ Others brought blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, fine linen, or goat hair for cloth. Some gave tanned ram skins or fine goatskin leather.

²⁴ Others brought silver and bronze objects as their offering to the LORD. And those who had acacia wood brought it.

²⁵ All the women who were skilled in sewing and spinning prepared blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and fine linen cloth, and they brought them in.

²⁶ All the women who were willing used their skills to spin and weave the goat hair into cloth.

²⁷ The leaders brought onyx stones and the other gemstones to be used for the ephod and the chestpiece.

²⁸ They also brought spices and olive oil for the light, the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense.

²⁹ So the people of Israel—every man and woman who wanted to help in the work the LORD had given them through Moses—brought their offerings to the LORD.

³⁰ And Moses told them, "The LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

³¹ The LORD has filled Bezalel with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, intelligence, and skill in all kinds of crafts.

³² He is able to create beautiful objects from gold, silver, and bronze.

³³ He is skilled in cutting and setting gemstones and in carving wood. In fact, he has every necessary skill.

³⁴ And the LORD has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the

tribe of Dan, the ability to teach their skills to others.

³⁵ The LORD has given them special skills as jewelers, designers, weavers, and embroiderers in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn on fine linen cloth. They excel in all the crafts needed for the work.

36 ¹ "Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other craftsmen whom the LORD has gifted with wisdom, skill, and intelligence will construct and furnish the Tabernacle, just as the LORD has commanded."

² So Moses told Bezalel and Oholiab to begin the work, along with all those who were specially gifted by the LORD.

³ Moses gave them the materials donated by the people for the completion of the sanctuary. Additional gifts were brought each morning.

⁴ But finally the craftsmen left their work to meet with Moses.

⁵ "We have more than enough materials on hand now to complete the job the LORD has given us to do!" they exclaimed.

⁶ So Moses gave the command, and this message was sent throughout the camp: "Bring no more materials! You have already given more than enough." So the people stopped bringing their offerings.

⁷ Their contributions were more than enough to complete the whole project.

⁸ The skilled weavers first made ten sheets from fine linen. One of the craftsmen then embroidered blue, purple, and scarlet cherubim into them.

⁹ Each sheet was exactly the same size—forty-two feet long and six feet wide.

¹⁰ Five of these sheets were joined together to make one set, and a second set was made of the other five.

¹¹ Fifty blue loops were placed along the edge of the last sheet in each set.

¹² The fifty loops along the edge of the first set of sheets matched the loops along the edge of the second set.

¹³ Then fifty gold clasps were made to connect the loops on the edge of each set. Thus the Tabernacle was joined together in one piece.

¹⁴ Above the Tabernacle, a roof covering was made from eleven sheets of cloth made from goat hair.

¹⁵ Each sheet was exactly the same size—forty-five feet long and six feet wide.

¹⁶ The craftsmen joined five of these sheets together to make one set, and the six remaining sheets were joined to make a second set.

¹⁷ Then they made fifty loops along the edge of the last sheet in each set.

¹⁸ They also made fifty small bronze clasps to couple the loops, so the two sets of sheets were firmly attached to each other. In this way, the roof covering was joined together in one piece.

¹⁹ Then they made two more layers for the roof covering. The first was made of tanned ram skins, and the second was made of fine goatskin leather.

²⁰ For the framework of the Tabernacle, they made frames of acacia wood standing on end.

²¹ Each frame was 15 feet high and 2 1/4 feet wide.

²² There were two pegs on each frame so they could be joined to the next frame. All the frames were made this way.

²³ They made twenty frames to support the south side,

²⁴ along with forty silver bases, two for each frame.

²⁵ They also made twenty frames for the north side of the Tabernacle,

²⁶ along with forty silver bases, two for each frame.

²⁷ The west side of the Tabernacle, which was its rear, was made from six frames,

²⁸ plus an extra frame at each corner.

²⁹ These corner frames were connected at the bottom and firmly attached at the top with a single ring, forming a single unit from top to bottom. They made two of these, one for each rear corner.

³⁰ So for the west side they made a total of eight frames, along with sixteen silver bases, two for each frame.

³¹ Then they made five crossbars from acacia wood to tie the frames on the south side together.

³² They made another five for the north side and five for the west side.

³³ The middle crossbar of the five was halfway up the frames, along each side, running from one end to the other.

³⁴ The frames and crossbars were all overlaid with gold. The rings used to hold the crossbars were made of pure gold.

³⁵ The inner curtain was made of fine linen cloth, and cherubim were skillfully embroidered into it with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

³⁶ This curtain was then attached to four gold hooks set into four posts of acacia wood. The posts were overlaid with gold and set into four silver bases.

³⁷ Then they made another curtain for the entrance to the sacred tent. It was made of fine linen cloth and embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

³⁸ This curtain was connected by five hooks to five posts. The posts with their decorated tops and bands were overlaid with gold. The five bases were molded from bronze.

37 ¹ Next Bezalel made the Ark out of acacia wood. It was 3 3/4 feet long, 2 1/4 feet wide, and 2 1/4 feet high.

² It was overlaid with pure gold inside and out, and it had a molding of gold all the way around.

³ Four gold rings were fastened to its four feet, two rings at each side.

⁴ Then he made poles from acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

⁵ He put the poles into the rings at the sides of the Ark to carry it.

⁶ Then, from pure gold, he made the Ark's cover—the place of atonement. It was 3 3/4 feet long and 2 1/4 feet wide.

⁷ He made two figures of cherubim out of hammered gold and placed them at the two ends of the atonement cover.

⁸ They were made so they were actually a part of the atonement cover—it was all one piece.

⁹ The cherubim faced each other as they looked down on the atonement cover, and their wings were stretched out above the atonement cover to protect it.

¹⁰ Then he made a table out of acacia wood, 3 feet long, 1 1/2 feet wide, and 2 1/4 feet high.

¹¹ It was overlaid with pure gold, with a gold molding all around the edge.

¹² A rim about 3 inches wide was attached along the edges of the table, and a gold molding ran around the rim.

¹³ Then he cast four rings of gold and attached them to the four table legs

¹⁴ next to the rim. These were made to hold the carrying poles in place.

¹⁵ He made the carrying poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

¹⁶ Next, using pure gold, he made the plates, dishes, bowls, and pitchers to be placed on the table. These utensils were to be used in pouring out drink offerings.

¹⁷ Then he made the lampstand, again using pure, hammered gold. Its base, center stem, lamp cups, blossoms, and buds were all of one piece.

¹⁸ The lampstand had six branches, three going out from each side of the center stem.

¹⁹ Each of the six branches held a cup shaped like an almond blossom, complete with buds and petals.

²⁰ The center stem of the lampstand was also decorated with four almond blossoms.

²¹ One blossom was set beneath each pair of branches, where they extended from the center stem.

²² The decorations and branches were all one piece with the stem, and they were hammered from pure gold.

²³ He also made the seven lamps, the lamp snuffers, and the trays, all of pure gold.

²⁴ The entire lampstand, along with its accessories, was made from seventy–five pounds of pure gold.

²⁵ The incense altar was made of acacia wood. It was eighteen inches square and three feet high, with its corner horns made from the same piece of wood as the altar itself.

²⁶ He overlaid the top, sides, and horns of the altar with pure gold and ran a gold molding around the edge.

²⁷ Two gold rings were placed on opposite sides, beneath the molding, to hold the carrying poles.

²⁸ The carrying poles were made of acacia wood and were overlaid with gold.

²⁹ Then he made the sacred oil, for anointing the priests, and the fragrant incense, using the techniques of the most skilled incense maker.

38 ¹ The altar for burning animal sacrifices also was constructed of acacia wood. It was 7 1/2 feet square at the top and 4 1/2 feet high.

² There were four horns, one at each of the four corners, all of one piece with the rest. This altar was overlaid with bronze.

³ Then he made all the bronze utensils to be used with the altar—the ash buckets, shovels, basins, meat hooks, and firepans.

⁴ Next he made a bronze grating that rested on a ledge about halfway down into the firebox.

⁵ Four rings were cast for each side of the grating to support the carrying poles.

⁶ The carrying poles themselves were made of acacia wood and were overlaid with bronze.

⁷ These poles were inserted into the rings at the side of the altar. The altar was hollow and was made from planks.

⁸ The bronze washbasin and its bronze pedestal were cast from bronze mirrors donated by the women who served at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

⁹ Then he constructed the courtyard. The south wall was 150 feet long. It consisted of curtains made of fine linen.

¹⁰ There were twenty posts, each with its own bronze base, and there were silver hooks and rods to hold up the curtains.

¹¹ The north wall was also 150 feet long, with twenty bronze posts and bases and with silver hooks and rods.

¹² The west end was 75 feet wide. The walls were made from curtains supported by ten posts and bases and with silver hooks and rods.

¹³ The east end was also 75 feet wide.

¹⁴ The courtyard entrance was on the east side, flanked by two curtains. The curtain on the right side was 22 1/2 feet long and was supported by three posts set into three bases.

¹⁵ The curtain on the left side was also 22 1/2 feet long and was supported by three posts set into three bases.

¹⁶ All the curtains used in the courtyard walls were made of fine linen.

¹⁷ Each post had a bronze base, and all the hooks and rods were silver. The tops of the posts were overlaid with silver,

and the rods to hold up the curtains were solid silver.

¹⁸ The curtain that covered the entrance to the courtyard was made of fine linen cloth and embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. It was 30 feet long and 7 1/2 feet high, just like the curtains of the courtyard walls.

¹⁹ It was supported by four posts set into four bronze bases. The tops of the posts were overlaid with silver, and the hooks and rods were also made of silver.

²⁰ All the tent pegs used in the Tabernacle and courtyard were made of bronze.

²¹ Here is an inventory of the materials used in building the Tabernacle of the Covenant. Moses directed the Levites to compile the figures, and Ithamar son of Aaron the priest served as recorder.

²² Bezalel son of Uri, grandson of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, was in charge of

the whole project, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²³ He was assisted by Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, a craftsman expert at engraving, designing, and embroidering blue, purple, and scarlet yarn on fine linen cloth.

²⁴ The people brought gifts of gold totaling about 2,200 pounds, all of which was used throughout the Tabernacle.

²⁵ The amount of silver that was given was about 7,545 pounds.

²⁶ It came from the tax of one-fifth of an ounce of silver collected from each of those registered in the census. This included all the men who were twenty years old or older, 603,550 in all.

²⁷ The 100 bases for the frames of the sanctuary walls and for the posts supporting the inner curtain required

7,500 pounds of silver, about 75 pounds for each base.

²⁸ The rest of the silver, about 45 pounds, was used to make the rods and hooks and to overlay the tops of the posts.

²⁹ The people also brought 5,310 pounds of bronze,

³⁰ which was used for casting the bases for the posts at the entrance to the Tabernacle, and for the bronze altar with its bronze grating and altar utensils.

³¹ Bronze was also used to make the bases for the posts that supported the curtains around the courtyard, the bases for the curtain at the entrance of the courtyard, and all the tent pegs used to hold the curtains of the courtyard in place.

39 ¹ For the priests, the craftsmen made beautiful garments of blue, purple, and scarlet cloth—clothing to be

worn while ministering in the Holy Place. This same cloth was used for Aaron's sacred garments, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

² The ephod was made from fine linen cloth and embroidered with gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

³ A skilled craftsman made gold thread by beating gold into thin sheets and cutting it into fine strips. He then embroidered it into the linen with the blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

⁴ They made two shoulder-pieces for the ephod, which were attached to its corners so it could be tied down.

⁵ They also made an elaborate woven sash of the same materials: fine linen cloth; blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; and gold thread, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁶ The two onyx stones, attached to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, were

set in gold filigree. The stones were engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel, just as initials are engraved on a seal.

⁷ These stones served as reminders to the LORD concerning the people of Israel. All this was done just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁸ The chestpiece was made in the same style as the ephod, crafted from fine linen cloth and embroidered with gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

⁹ It was doubled over to form a pouch, nine inches square.

¹⁰ Four rows of gemstones were set across it. In the first row were a red carnelian, a chrysolite, and an emerald.

¹¹ In the second row were a turquoise, a sapphire, and a white moonstone.

¹² In the third row were a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst.

¹³ In the fourth row were a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. Each of these gemstones was set in gold.

¹⁴ The stones were engraved like a seal, each with the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹⁵ To attach the chestpiece to the ephod, they made braided cords of pure gold.

¹⁶ They also made two gold rings and attached them to the top corners of the chestpiece.

¹⁷ The two gold cords were put through the gold rings on the chestpiece,

¹⁸ and the ends of the cords were tied to the gold settings on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod.

¹⁹ Two more gold rings were attached to the lower inside corners of the chestpiece next to the ephod.

²⁰ Then two gold rings were attached to the ephod near the sash.

²¹ Blue cords were used to attach the bottom rings of the chestpiece to the rings on the ephod. In this way, the chestpiece was held securely to the ephod above the beautiful sash. All this was done just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²² The robe of the ephod was woven entirely of blue yarn,

²³ with an opening for Aaron's head in the middle of it. The edge of this opening was reinforced with a woven collar, so it would not tear.

²⁴ Pomegranates were attached to the bottom edge of the robe. These were finely crafted of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn.

²⁵ Bells of pure gold were placed between the pomegranates along the hem of the robe,

²⁶ with bells and pomegranates alternating all around the hem. This robe

was to be worn when Aaron ministered to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²⁷ Tunics were then made for Aaron and his sons from fine linen cloth.

²⁸ The turban, the headdresses, and the underclothes were all made of this fine linen.

²⁹ The sashes were made of fine linen cloth and embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁰ Finally, they made the sacred medallion of pure gold to be worn on the front of the turban. Using the techniques of an engraver, they inscribed it with these words: SET APART AS HOLY TO THE LORD.

³¹ This medallion was tied to the turban with a blue cord, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³² And so at last the Tabernacle was finished. The Israelites had done everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³³ And they brought the entire Tabernacle to Moses: the sacred tent with all its furnishings, the clasps, frames, crossbars, posts, and bases;

³⁴ the layers of tanned ram skins and fine goatskin leather; the inner curtain that enclosed the Most Holy Place;

³⁵ the Ark of the Covenant and its carrying poles; the Ark's cover—the place of atonement;

³⁶ the table and all its utensils; the Bread of the Presence;

³⁷ the gold lampstand and its accessories; the lamp cups and the oil for lighting;

³⁸ the gold altar; the anointing oil; the fragrant incense; the curtain for the entrance of the sacred tent;

³⁹ the bronze altar; the bronze grating; its poles and utensils; the large washbasin and its pedestal;

⁴⁰ the curtains for the walls of the courtyard and the posts and bases holding them up; the curtain at the courtyard entrance; the cords and tent pegs; all the articles used in the operation of the Tabernacle;

⁴¹ the beautifully crafted garments to be worn while ministering in the Holy Place—the holy garments for Aaron the priest and for his sons to wear while on duty.

⁴² So the people of Israel followed all of the LORD's instructions to Moses.

⁴³ Moses inspected all their work and blessed them because it had been done as the LORD had commanded him.

40 ¹ The LORD now said to Moses,
² "Set up the Tabernacle on the first day of the new year.

³ Place the Ark of the Covenant inside, and install the inner curtain to enclose the Ark within the Most Holy Place.

⁴ Then bring in the table, and arrange the utensils on it. And bring in the lampstand, and set up the lamps.

⁵ "Place the incense altar just outside the inner curtain, opposite the Ark of the Covenant. Set up the curtain made for the entrance of the Tabernacle.

⁶ Place the altar of burnt offering in front of the Tabernacle entrance.

⁷ Set the large washbasin between the Tabernacle and the altar and fill it with water.

⁸ Then set up the courtyard around the outside of the tent, and hang the curtain for the courtyard entrance.

⁹ "Take the anointing oil and sprinkle it on the Tabernacle and on all its furnishings to make them holy.

¹⁰ Sprinkle the anointing oil on the altar of burnt offering and its utensils, sanctifying them. Then the altar will become most holy.

¹¹ Next anoint the large washbasin and its pedestal to make them holy.

¹² "Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tabernacle, and wash them with water.

¹³ Clothe Aaron with the holy garments and anoint him, setting him apart to serve me as a priest.

¹⁴ Then bring his sons and dress them in their tunics.

¹⁵ Anoint them as you did their father, so they may serve me as priests. With this anointing, Aaron's descendants are set apart for the priesthood forever, from generation to generation."

¹⁶ Moses proceeded to do everything as the LORD had commanded him.

¹⁷ So the Tabernacle was set up on the first day of the new year.

¹⁸ Moses put it together by setting its frames into their bases and attaching the crossbars and raising the posts.

¹⁹ Then he spread the coverings over the Tabernacle framework and put on the roof layers, just as the LORD had commanded him.

²⁰ He placed inside the Ark the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, and then he attached the Ark's carrying poles. He also set the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—on top of it.

²¹ Then he brought the Ark of the Covenant into the Tabernacle and set up the inner curtain to shield it from view, just as the LORD had commanded.

²² Next he placed the table in the Tabernacle, along the north side of the Holy Place, just outside the inner curtain.

²³ And he arranged the Bread of the Presence on the table that stands before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded.

²⁴ He set the lampstand in the Tabernacle across from the table on the south side of the Holy Place.

²⁵ Then he set up the lamps in the LORD's presence, just as the LORD had commanded.

²⁶ He also placed the incense altar in the Tabernacle, in the Holy Place in front of the inner curtain.

²⁷ On it he burned the fragrant incense made from sweet spices, just as the LORD had commanded.

²⁸ He attached the curtain at the entrance of the Tabernacle,

²⁹ and he placed the altar of burnt offering near the Tabernacle entrance. On it he offered a burnt offering and

a grain offering, just as the LORD had commanded.

³⁰ Next he placed the large washbasin between the Tabernacle and the altar. He filled it with water so the priests could use it to wash themselves.

³¹ Moses and Aaron and Aaron's sons washed their hands and feet in the basin.

³² Whenever they walked past the altar to enter the Tabernacle, they were to stop and wash, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³³ Then he hung the curtains forming the courtyard around the Tabernacle and the altar. And he set up the curtain at the entrance of the courtyard. So at last Moses finished the work.

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glorious presence of the LORD filled it.

³⁵ Moses was no longer able to enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had

settled down over it, and the Tabernacle was filled with the awesome glory of the LORD.

³⁶ Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle and moved, the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it.

³⁷ But if the cloud stayed, they would stay until it moved again.

³⁸ The cloud of the LORD rested on the Tabernacle during the day, and at night there was fire in the cloud so all the people of Israel could see it. This continued throughout all their journeys.

Leviticus

1 ¹ The LORD called to Moses from the Tabernacle and said to him,

² "Give the following instructions to the Israelites: Whenever you present offerings to the LORD, you must bring animals from your flocks and herds.

³ "If your sacrifice for a whole burnt offering is from the herd, bring a bull with no physical defects to the entrance of the Tabernacle so it will be accepted by the LORD.

⁴ Lay your hand on its head so the LORD will accept it as your substitute, thus making atonement for you.

⁵ Then slaughter the animal in the LORD's presence, and Aaron's sons, the priests, will present the blood by

sprinkling it against the sides of the altar that stands in front of the Tabernacle.

⁶ When the animal has been skinned and cut into pieces,

⁷ the sons of Aaron the priest will build a wood fire on the altar.

⁸ Aaron's sons will then put the pieces of the animal, including its head and fat, on the wood fire.

⁹ But the internal organs and legs must first be washed with water. Then the priests will burn the entire sacrifice on the altar. It is a whole burnt offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

¹⁰ "If your sacrifice for a whole burnt offering is from the flock, bring a male sheep or goat with no physical defects.

¹¹ Slaughter the animal on the north side of the altar in the LORD's presence. Aaron's sons, the priests, will sprinkle its blood against the sides of the altar.

¹² Then you must cut the animal in pieces, and the priests will lay the pieces of the sacrifice, including the head and fat, on top of the wood fire on the altar.

¹³ The internal organs and legs must first be washed with water. Then the priests will burn the entire sacrifice on the altar. It is a whole burnt offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

¹⁴ "If you bring a bird as a burnt offering to the LORD, choose either a turtledove or a young pigeon.

¹⁵ The priest will take the bird to the altar, twist off its head, and burn the head on the altar. He must then let its blood drain out against the sides of the altar.

¹⁶ The priest must remove the crop and the feathers and throw them to the east side of the altar among the ashes.

¹⁷ Then, grasping the bird by its wings, the priest will tear the bird apart, though

not completely. Then he will burn it on top of the wood fire on the altar. It is a whole burnt offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

2¹ "When you bring a grain offering to the LORD, the offering must consist of choice flour. You are to pour olive oil on it and sprinkle it with incense.

² Bring this offering to one of Aaron's sons, and he will take a handful of the flour mixed with olive oil, together with all the incense, and burn this token portion on the altar fire. It is an offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

³ The rest of the flour will be given to Aaron and his sons. It will be considered a most holy part of the offerings given to the LORD by fire.

⁴ "When you present some kind of baked bread as a grain offering, it must be made of choice flour mixed with olive oil but without any yeast. It may

be presented in the form of cakes mixed with olive oil or wafers spread with olive oil.

⁵ If your grain offering is cooked on a griddle, it must be made of choice flour and olive oil, and it must contain no yeast.

⁶ Break it into pieces and pour oil on it; it is a kind of grain offering.

⁷ If your offering is prepared in a pan, it also must be made of choice flour and olive oil.

⁸ "No matter how a grain offering has been prepared before being offered to the LORD, bring it to the priests who will present it at the altar.

⁹ The priests will take a token portion of the grain offering and burn it on the altar as an offering made by fire, and it will be very pleasing to the LORD.

¹⁰ The rest of the grain offering will be given to Aaron and his sons as their food.

It will be considered a most holy part of the offerings given to the LORD by fire.

¹¹ "Do not use yeast in any of the grain offerings you present to the LORD, because no yeast or honey may be burned as an offering to the LORD by fire.

¹² You may add yeast and honey to the offerings presented at harvesttime, but these must never be burned on the altar as an offering pleasing to the LORD.

¹³ Season all your grain offerings with salt, to remind you of God's covenant. Never forget to add salt to your grain offerings.

¹⁴ "If you present a grain offering to the LORD from the first portion of your harvest, bring kernels of new grain that have been roasted on a fire.

¹⁵ Since it is a grain offering, put olive oil on it and sprinkle it with incense.

¹⁶ The priests will take a token portion of the roasted grain mixed with olive oil, together with all the incense, and burn it as an offering given to the LORD by fire.

3 ¹ "If you want to present a peace offering from the herd, use either a bull or a cow. The animal you offer to the LORD must have no physical defects.

² Lay your hand on the animal's head, and slaughter it at the entrance of the Tabernacle. Aaron's sons, the priests, will then sprinkle the animal's blood against the sides of the altar.

³ Part of this peace offering must be presented to the LORD as an offering made by fire. This includes the fat around the internal organs,

⁴ the two kidneys with the fat around them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys.

⁵ The sons of Aaron will burn these on the altar on top of the burnt offering on the wood fire. It is an offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

⁶ "If you present a peace offering to the LORD from the flock, you may bring either a goat or a sheep. It may be either male or female, and it must have no physical defects.

⁷ If you bring a sheep as your gift, present it to the LORD

⁸ by laying your hand on its head and slaughtering it at the entrance of the Tabernacle. The sons of Aaron will then sprinkle the sheep's blood against the sides of the altar.

⁹ Part of this peace offering must be presented to the LORD as an offering made by fire. This includes the fat of the entire tail cut off near the backbone, the fat around the internal organs,

¹⁰ the two kidneys with the fat around them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys.

¹¹ The priest will burn them on the altar as food, an offering given to the LORD by fire.

¹² "If you bring a goat as your offering to the LORD,

¹³ lay your hand on its head, and slaughter it at the entrance of the Tabernacle. Then the sons of Aaron will sprinkle the goat's blood against the sides of the altar.

¹⁴ Part of this offering must be presented to the LORD as an offering made by fire. This part includes the fat around the internal organs,

¹⁵ the two kidneys with the fat around them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys.

¹⁶ The priest will burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire; these will be very pleasing to the LORD. Remember, all the fat belongs to the LORD.

¹⁷ "You must never eat any fat or blood. This is a permanent law for you and all your descendants, wherever they may live."

4 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses,
² "Give the Israelites the following instructions for dealing with those who sin unintentionally by doing anything forbidden by the LORD's commands.

³ "If the high priest sins, bringing guilt upon the entire community, he must bring to the LORD a young bull with no physical defects.

⁴ He must present the bull to the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle, lay his hand on the bull's head, and slaughter it there in the LORD's presence.

⁵ The priest on duty will then take some of the animal's blood into the Tabernacle,

⁶ dip his finger into the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the inner curtain of the Most Holy Place.

⁷ The priest will put some of the blood on the horns of the incense altar that stands in the LORD's presence in the Tabernacle. The rest of the bull's blood must be poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offerings at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

⁸ The priest must remove all the fat around the bull's internal organs,

⁹ the two kidneys with the fat around them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver.

¹⁰ Then he must burn them on the altar of burnt offerings, just as is done with

the bull or cow sacrificed as a peace offering.

¹¹ But the rest of the bull—its hide, meat, head, legs, internal organs, and dung—

¹² must be carried away to a ceremonially clean place outside the camp, the place where the ashes are thrown. He will burn it all on a wood fire in the ash heap.

¹³ "If the entire Israelite community does something forbidden by the LORD and the matter escapes the community's notice, all the people will be guilty.

¹⁴ When they discover their sin, the leaders of the community must bring a young bull for a sin offering and present it at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

¹⁵ The leaders must then lay their hands on the bull's head and slaughter it there before the LORD.

¹⁶ The priest will bring some of its blood into the Tabernacle,

¹⁷ dip his finger into the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD in front of the inner curtain.

¹⁸ He will then put some of the blood on the horns of the incense altar that stands in the LORD's presence in the Tabernacle. The rest of the blood must then be poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offerings at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

¹⁹ The priest must remove all the animal's fat and burn it on the altar, ²⁰ following the same procedure as with the sin offering for the priest. In this way, the priest will make atonement for the people, and they will be forgiven.

²¹ The priest must then take what is left of the bull outside the camp and burn it there, just as is done with the sin offering for the high priest. This is a

sin offering for the entire community of Israel.

²² "If one of Israel's leaders does something forbidden by the LORD his God, he will be guilty even if he sinned unintentionally.

²³ When he becomes aware of his sin, he must bring as his offering a male goat with no physical defects.

²⁴ He is to lay his hand on the goat's head and slaughter it before the LORD at the place where burnt offerings are slaughtered. This will be his sin offering.

²⁵ Then the priest will dip his finger into the blood of the sin offering, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offerings, and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.

²⁶ He must burn all the goat's fat on the altar, just as is done with the peace offering. In this way, the priest will make

atonement for the leader's sin, and he will be forgiven.

²⁷ "If any of the citizens of Israel do something forbidden by the LORD, they will be guilty even if they sinned unintentionally.

²⁸ When they become aware of their sin, they must bring as their offering a female goat with no physical defects. It will be offered for their sin.

²⁹ They are to lay a hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place where burnt offerings are slaughtered.

³⁰ The priest will then dip his finger into the blood, put the blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offerings, and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.

³¹ Those who are guilty must remove all the goat's fat, just as is done with the peace offering. Then the priest will burn

the fat on the altar, and it will be very pleasing to the LORD. In this way, the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven.

³² "If any of the people bring a sheep as their sin offering, it must be a female with no physical defects.

³³ They are to lay a hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place where the burnt offerings are slaughtered.

³⁴ The priest will then dip his finger into the blood, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offerings, and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.

³⁵ Those who are guilty must remove all the sheep's fat, just as is done with a sheep presented as a peace offering. Then the priest will burn the fat on the altar on top of the offerings given to the LORD by fire. In this way, the priest will

make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven.

5¹ "If any of the people are called to testify about something they have witnessed, but they refuse to testify, they will be held responsible and be subject to punishment.

² "Or if they touch something that is ceremonially unclean, such as the dead body of an animal that is ceremonially unclean—whether a wild animal, a domesticated animal, or an animal that scurries along the ground—they will be considered ceremonially unclean and guilty, even if they are unaware of their defilement.

³ "Or if they come into contact with any source of human defilement, even if they don't realize they have been defiled, they will be considered guilty as soon as they become aware of it.

⁴ "Or if they make a rash vow of any kind, whether its purpose is for good or bad, they will be considered guilty even if they were not fully aware of what they were doing at the time.

⁵ "When any of the people become aware of their guilt in any of these ways, they must confess their sin

⁶ and bring to the LORD as their penalty a female from the flock, either a sheep or a goat. This will be a sin offering to remove their sin, and the priest will make atonement for them.

⁷ "If any of them cannot afford to bring a sheep, they must bring to the LORD two young turtledoves or two young pigeons as the penalty for their sin. One of the birds will be a sin offering, and the other will be a burnt offering.

⁸ They must bring them to the priest, who will offer one of the birds as the sin offering. The priest will wring its neck

but without severing its head from the body.

⁹ Then he will sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the sides of the altar, and the rest will be drained out at the base of the altar.

¹⁰ The priest will offer the second bird as a whole burnt offering, following all the procedures that have been prescribed. In this way, the priest will make atonement for those who are guilty, and they will be forgiven.

¹¹ "If any of the people cannot afford to bring young turtledoves or pigeons, they must bring two quarts of choice flour for their sin offering. Since it is a sin offering, they must not mix it with olive oil or put any incense on it.

¹² They must take the flour to the priest, who will scoop out a handful as a token portion. He will burn this flour on the altar just like any other offering

given to the LORD by fire. This will be their sin offering.

¹³ In this way, the priest will make atonement for those who are guilty, and they will be forgiven. The rest of the flour will belong to the priest, just as with the grain offering."

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁵ "If any of the people sin by unintentionally defiling the LORD's sacred property, they must bring to the LORD a ram from the flock as their guilt offering. The animal must have no physical defects, and it must be of the proper value in silver as measured by the standard sanctuary shekel.

¹⁶ They must then make restitution for whatever holy things they have defiled by paying for the loss, plus an added penalty of 20 percent. When they give their payments to the priest, he will make atonement for them with the ram

sacrificed as a guilt offering, and they will be forgiven.

¹⁷ "If any of them sin by doing something forbidden by the LORD, even if it is done unintentionally, they will be held responsible. When they become aware of their guilt,

¹⁸ they must bring to the priest a ram from the flock as a guilt offering. The animal must have no physical defects, and it must be of the proper value. In this way, the priest will make atonement for those who are guilty, and they will be forgiven.

¹⁹ This is a guilt offering, for they have been guilty of an offense against the LORD."

6 ¹ And the LORD said to Moses,
² "Suppose some of the people sin against the LORD by falsely telling their neighbor that an item entrusted to their safekeeping has been lost or stolen. Or

suppose they have been dishonest with regard to a security deposit, or they have taken something by theft or extortion.

³ Or suppose they find a lost item and lie about it, or they deny something while under oath, or they commit any other similar sin.

⁴ If they have sinned in any of these ways and are guilty, they must give back whatever they have taken by theft or extortion, whether a security deposit, or property entrusted to them, or a lost object that they claimed as their own,

⁵ or anything gained by swearing falsely. When they realize their guilt, they must restore the principal amount plus a penalty of 20 percent to the person they have harmed.

⁶ They must then bring a guilt offering to the priest, who will present it before the LORD. This offering must be a ram

with no physical defects or the animal's equivalent value in silver.

⁷ The priest will then make atonement for them before the LORD, and they will be forgiven."

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses,

⁹ "Give Aaron and his sons the following instructions regarding the whole burnt offering. The burnt offering must be left on the altar until the next morning, and the altar fire must be kept burning all night.

¹⁰ The next morning, after dressing in his special linen clothing and undergarments, the priest on duty must clean out the ashes of the burnt offering and put them beside the altar.

¹¹ Then he must change back into his normal clothing and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean.

¹² Meanwhile, the fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must never go out. Each morning the priest will add fresh wood to the fire and arrange the daily whole burnt offering on it. He must then burn the fat of the peace offerings on top of this daily whole burnt offering.

¹³ Remember, the fire must be kept burning on the altar at all times. It must never go out.

¹⁴ "These are the instructions regarding the grain offering. Aaron's sons must present this offering to the LORD in front of the altar.

¹⁵ The priest on duty will take a handful of the choice flour that has been mixed with olive oil and sprinkled with incense. He will burn this token portion on the altar, and it will be very pleasing to the LORD.

¹⁶ After burning this handful, the rest of the flour will belong to Aaron and his

sons for their food. It must, however, be baked without yeast and eaten in a sacred place within the courtyard of the Tabernacle.

¹⁷ Remember, this flour may never be prepared with yeast. I have given it to the priests as their share of the offerings presented to me by fire. Like the sin offering and the guilt offering, it is most holy.

¹⁸ Any of Aaron's male descendants, from generation to generation, may eat of the grain offering, because it is their regular share of the offerings given to the LORD by fire. Anyone or anything that touches this food will become holy."

¹⁹ And the LORD said to Moses,

²⁰ "On the day Aaron and his sons are anointed, they must bring to the LORD a grain offering of two quarts of choice flour, half to be offered in the morning and half to be offered in the evening.

²¹ It must be cooked on a griddle with olive oil, and it must be well mixed and broken into pieces. You must present this grain offering, and it will be very pleasing to the LORD.

²² As the sons of the priests replace their fathers, they will be inducted into office by offering this same sacrifice on the day they are anointed. It is the LORD's regular share, and it must be completely burned up.

²³ All such grain offerings of the priests must be entirely burned up. None of the flour may be eaten."

²⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses,

²⁵ "Give Aaron and his sons these further instructions regarding the sin offering. The animal given as a sin offering is most holy and must be slaughtered in the LORD's presence at the place where the burnt offerings are slaughtered.

²⁶ The priest who offers the sacrifice may eat his portion in a sacred place within the courtyard of the Tabernacle.

²⁷ Anything or anyone who touches the sacrificial meat will become holy, and if the sacrificial blood splatters anyone's clothing, it must be washed off in a sacred place.

²⁸ If a clay pot is used to boil the sacrificial meat, it must be broken. If a bronze kettle is used, it must be scoured and rinsed thoroughly with water.

²⁹ Only males from a priest's family may eat of this offering, for it is most holy.

³⁰ If, however, the blood of a sin offering has been taken into the Tabernacle to make atonement in the Holy Place for the people's sins, none of that animal's meat may be eaten. It must be completely burned up.

7 ¹ "These are the instructions for the guilt offering, which is most holy.

² The animal sacrificed as a guilt offering must be slaughtered where the burnt offerings are slaughtered, and its blood sprinkled against the sides of the altar.

³ The priest will then offer all its fat on the altar, including the fat from the tail, the fat around the internal organs,

⁴ the two kidneys with the fat around them near the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys.

⁵ The priests will burn these parts on the altar as an offering to the LORD made by fire. It is a guilt offering.

⁶ All males from a priest's family may eat the meat, and it must be eaten in a sacred place, for it is most holy.

⁷ "For both the sin offering and the guilt offering, the meat of the sacrificed animal belongs to the priest in charge of the atonement ceremony.

⁸ In the case of the whole burnt offering, the hide of the sacrificed animal also belongs to the priest.

⁹ Any grain offering that has been baked in an oven, prepared in a pan, or cooked on a griddle belongs to the priest who presents it.

¹⁰ All other grain offerings, whether flour mixed with olive oil or dry flour, are to be shared among all the priests and their sons.

¹¹ "These are the instructions regarding the different kinds of peace offerings that may be presented to the LORD.

¹² If you present your peace offering as a thanksgiving offering, the usual animal sacrifice must be accompanied by various kinds of bread—loaves, wafers, and cakes—all made without yeast and soaked with olive oil.

¹³ This peace offering of thanksgiving must also be accompanied by loaves of yeast bread.

¹⁴ One of each kind of bread must be presented as a gift to the LORD. This bread will then belong to the priest who sprinkles the altar with blood from the sacrificed animal.

¹⁵ The animal's meat must be eaten on the same day it is offered. None of it may be saved for the next morning.

¹⁶ "However, if you bring an offering to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, the meat may be eaten on that same day, and whatever is left over may be eaten on the second day.

¹⁷ But anything left over until the third day must be completely burned up.

¹⁸ If any of the meat from this peace offering is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted by the LORD. It will have no value as a sacrifice, and you

will receive no credit for bringing it as an offering. By then, the meat will be contaminated; if you eat it, you will have to answer for your sin.

¹⁹ "Meat that touches anything ceremonially unclean may not be eaten; it must be completely burned up. And as for meat that may be eaten, it may only be eaten by people who are ceremonially clean.

²⁰ Anyone who is ceremonially unclean but eats meat from a peace offering that was presented to the LORD must be cut off from the community.

²¹ If anyone touches anything that is unclean, whether it is human defilement or an unclean animal, and then eats meat from the LORD's sacrifices, that person must be cut off from the community."

²² Then the LORD said to Moses,

²³ "Give the Israelites these instructions: You must never eat fat, whether from oxen or sheep or goats.

²⁴ The fat of an animal found dead or killed by a wild animal may never be eaten, though it may be used for any other purpose.

²⁵ Anyone who eats fat from an offering given to the LORD by fire must be cut off from the community.

²⁶ Even in your homes, you must never eat the blood of any bird or animal.

²⁷ Anyone who eats blood must be cut off from the community."

²⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses,

²⁹ "Give these further instructions to the Israelites: When you present a peace offering to the LORD, bring part of it as a special gift to the LORD.

³⁰ Present it to him with your own hands as an offering given to the LORD by fire. Bring the fat of the animal,

together with the breast, and present it to the LORD by lifting it up before him.

³¹ Then the priest will burn the fat on the altar, but the breast will belong to Aaron and his sons.

³² You are to give the right thigh of your peace offering to the priest as a gift.

³³ The right thigh must always be given to the priest who sprinkles the blood and offers the fat of the peace offering.

³⁴ For I have designated the breast and the right thigh for the priests. It is their regular share of the peace offerings brought by the Israelites.

³⁵ This is their share. It has been set apart for Aaron and his descendants from the offerings given to the LORD by fire from the time they were appointed to serve the LORD as priests.

³⁶ The LORD commanded that the Israelites were to give these portions to the priests as their regular share

from the time of the priests' anointing. This regulation applies throughout the generations to come."

³⁷ These are the instructions for the whole burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering, and the peace offering.

³⁸ The LORD gave these instructions to Moses on Mount Sinai when he commanded the Israelites to bring their offerings to the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai.

8 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Now bring Aaron and his sons, along with their special clothing, the anointing oil, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread
³ to the entrance of the Tabernacle. Then call the entire community of Israel to meet you there."

⁴ So Moses followed the LORD's instructions, and all the people assembled at the Tabernacle entrance.

⁵ Moses announced to them, "The LORD has commanded what I am now going to do!"

⁶ Then he presented Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.

⁷ He clothed Aaron with the embroidered tunic and tied the sash around his waist. He dressed him in the robe of the ephod, along with the ephod itself, and attached the ephod with its decorative sash.

⁸ Then Moses placed the chestpiece on Aaron and put the Urim and the Thummim inside it.

⁹ He placed on Aaron's head the turban with the gold medallion at its front, just as the LORD had commanded him.

¹⁰ Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the Tabernacle and everything in it, thus making them holy.

¹¹ He sprinkled the altar seven times, anointing it and all its utensils and the washbasin and its pedestal, making them holy.

¹² Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, thus anointing him and making him holy for his work.

¹³ Next Moses presented Aaron's sons and clothed them in their embroidered tunics, their sashes, and their turbans, just as the LORD had commanded him.

¹⁴ Then Moses brought in the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head

¹⁵ as Moses slaughtered it. Moses took some of the blood, and with his finger he put it on the four horns of the altar to purify it. He poured out the rest of

the blood at the base of the altar. In this way, he set the altar apart as holy and made atonement for it.

¹⁶ He took all the fat around the internal organs, the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and he burned them all on the altar.

¹⁷ The rest of the bull, including its hide, meat, and dung, was burned outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁸ Then Moses presented the ram to the LORD for the whole burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head

¹⁹ as Moses slaughtered it. Then Moses took the ram's blood and sprinkled it against the sides of the altar.

²⁰ Next he cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, some of its pieces, and the fat on the altar.

²¹ After washing the internal organs and the legs with water, Moses burned the entire ram on the altar as a whole burnt offering. It was an offering given to the LORD by fire, very pleasing to the LORD. All this was done just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²² Next Moses presented the second ram, which was the ram of ordination. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head

²³ as Moses slaughtered it. Then Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the big toe of his right foot.

²⁴ Next he presented Aaron's sons and put some of the blood on the lobe of their right ears, the thumb of their right hands, and the big toe of their right feet. He then sprinkled the rest of the blood against the sides of the altar.

²⁵ Next he took the fat, including the fat from the tail, the fat around the internal organs, the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat, along with the right thigh.

²⁶ On top of these he placed a loaf of unleavened bread, a cake of unleavened bread soaked with olive oil, and a thin wafer spread with olive oil. All these were taken from the basket of bread made without yeast that was placed in the LORD's presence.

²⁷ He gave all of these to Aaron and his sons, and he presented the portions by lifting them up before the LORD.

²⁸ Moses then took all the offerings back and burned them on the altar on top of the burnt offering as an ordination offering. It was an offering given to the LORD by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

²⁹ Then Moses took the breast and lifted it up in the LORD's presence.

This was Moses' share of the ram of ordination, just as the LORD had commanded him.

³⁰ Next Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar, and he sprinkled them on Aaron and his clothing and on his sons and their clothing. In this way, he made Aaron and his sons and their clothing holy.

³¹ Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the rest of the meat at the Tabernacle entrance, and eat it along with the bread that is in the basket of ordination offerings, just as I commanded you.

³² Any meat or bread that is left over must then be burned up.

³³ Do not leave the Tabernacle entrance for seven days, for that is the time it will take to complete the ordination ceremony.

³⁴ What has been done today was commanded by the LORD in order to make atonement for you.

³⁵ Remember, you must stay at the entrance of the Tabernacle day and night for seven days, doing everything the LORD requires. If you fail in this, you will die. This is what the LORD has said."

³⁶ So Aaron and his sons did everything the LORD had commanded through Moses.

9¹ After the ordination ceremony, on the eighth day, Moses called together Aaron and his sons and the leaders of Israel.

² He said to Aaron, "Take a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a whole burnt offering, both with no physical defects, and present them to the LORD.

³ Then tell the Israelites to take a male goat for a sin offering for themselves and a year–old calf and a year–old lamb

for a whole burnt offering, each with no physical defects.

⁴ Also tell them to take a bull and a ram for a peace offering and flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering. Tell them to present all these offerings to the LORD because the LORD will appear to them today."

⁵ So the people brought all of these things to the entrance of the Tabernacle, just as Moses had commanded, and the whole community came and stood there in the LORD's presence.

⁶ Then Moses told them, "When you have followed these instructions from the LORD, the glorious presence of the LORD will appear to you."

⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Approach the altar and present your sin offering and your whole burnt offering to make atonement for yourself. Then present the offerings to make atonement

for the people, just as the LORD has commanded."

⁸ So Aaron went to the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sin offering for himself.

⁹ His sons brought him the blood, and he dipped his finger into it and put it on the horns of the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.

¹⁰ Then he burned on the altar the fat, the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver from the sin offering, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹¹ The meat and the hide, however, he burned outside the camp.

¹² Next Aaron slaughtered the animal for the whole burnt offering. His sons brought him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the sides of the altar.

¹³ They handed the animal to him piece by piece, including the head, and he burned each part on the altar.

¹⁴ Then he washed the internal organs and the legs and also burned them on the altar as a whole burnt offering.

¹⁵ Next Aaron presented the sacrifices for the people. He slaughtered the people's goat and presented it as their sin offering, just as he had done previously for himself.

¹⁶ Then he brought the whole burnt offering and presented it in the prescribed way.

¹⁷ He also brought the grain offering, burning a handful of the flour on the altar, in addition to the regular morning burnt offering.

¹⁸ Then Aaron slaughtered the bull and the ram for the people's peace offering. His sons brought him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the sides of the altar.

¹⁹ Then he took the fat of the bull and the ram—the fat from the tail and from

around the internal organs—along with the kidneys and the lobe of the liver.

²⁰ He placed these fat parts on top of the breasts of these animals and then burned them on the altar.

²¹ Aaron then lifted up the breasts and right thighs as an offering to the LORD, just as Moses had commanded.

²² After that, Aaron raised his hands toward the people and blessed them. Then, after presenting the sin offering, the whole burnt offering, and the peace offering, he stepped down from the altar.

²³ Next Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle, and when they came back out, they blessed the people again, and the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to the whole community.

²⁴ Fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When

the people saw all this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground.

10¹ Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over it. In this way, they disobeyed the LORD by burning before him a different kind of fire than he had commanded.

² So fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and burned them up, and they died there before the LORD.

³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when he said, 'I will show myself holy among those who are near me. I will be glorified before all the people.'" And Aaron was silent.

⁴ Then Moses called for Mishael and Elzaphan, Aaron's cousins, the sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel. He said to them, "Come and carry the bodies of your

relatives away from the sanctuary to a place outside the camp."

⁵ So they came forward and carried them out of the camp by their tunics as Moses had commanded.

⁶ Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not mourn by letting your hair hang loose or by tearing your clothes. If you do, you will die, and the LORD will be angry with the whole community of Israel. However, the rest of the Israelites, your relatives, may mourn for Nadab and Abihu, whom the LORD has destroyed by fire.

⁷ But you are not to leave the entrance of the Tabernacle, under penalty of death, for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you." So they did as Moses commanded.

⁸ Then the LORD said to Aaron,

⁹ "You and your descendants must never drink wine or any other alcoholic

drink before going into the Tabernacle. If you do, you will die. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be kept by all future generations.

¹⁰ You are to distinguish between what is holy and what is ordinary, what is ceremonially unclean and what is clean.

¹¹ And you must teach the Israelites all the laws that the LORD has given through Moses."

¹² Then Moses said to Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take what is left of the grain offering after the handful has been presented to the LORD by fire. Make sure there is no yeast in it, and eat it beside the altar, for it is most holy.

¹³ It must be eaten in a sacred place, for it has been given to you and your descendants as your regular share of the offerings given to the LORD by fire.

These are the commands I have been given.

¹⁴ But the breast and thigh that were lifted up may be eaten in any place that is ceremonially clean. These parts have been given to you and to your sons and daughters as your regular share of the peace offerings presented by the people of Israel.

¹⁵ The thigh and breast that are lifted up must be lifted up to the LORD along with the fat of the offerings given by fire. Then they will belong to you and your descendants forever, just as the LORD has commanded."

¹⁶ When Moses demanded to know what had happened to the goat of the sin offering, he discovered that it had been burned up. As a result, he became very angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons.

¹⁷ "Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area?" he demanded. "It is a holy offering! It was given to you for removing the guilt of the community and for making atonement for the people before the LORD.

¹⁸ Since the animal's blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the meat in the sanctuary area as I ordered you."

¹⁹ Then Aaron answered Moses on behalf of his sons. "Today my sons presented both their sin offering and their burnt offering to the LORD," he said. "This kind of thing has also happened to me. Would the LORD have approved if I had eaten the sin offering today?"

²⁰ And when Moses heard this, he approved.

11 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

² "Give the following instructions to the Israelites: The animals you may use for food

³ include those that have completely divided hooves and chew the cud.

⁴ You may not, however, eat the animals named here because they either have split hooves or chew the cud, but not both. The camel may not be eaten, for though it chews the cud, it does not have split hooves.

⁵ The same is true of the rock badger

⁶ and the hare, so they also may never be eaten.

⁷ And the pig may not be eaten, for though it has split hooves, it does not chew the cud.

⁸ You may not eat the meat of these animals or touch their dead bodies. They are ceremonially unclean for you.

⁹ "As for marine animals, you may eat whatever has both fins and scales,

whether taken from fresh water or salt water.

¹⁰ You may not, however, eat marine animals that do not have both fins and scales. You are to detest them,

¹¹ and they will always be forbidden to you. You must never eat their meat or even touch their dead bodies.

¹² I repeat, any marine animal that does not have both fins and scales is strictly forbidden to you.

¹³ "These are the birds you must never eat because they are detestable for you: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey,

¹⁴ the buzzard, kites of all kinds,

¹⁵ ravens of all kinds,

¹⁶ the ostrich, the nighthawk, the seagull, hawks of all kinds,

¹⁷ the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl,

¹⁸ the white owl, the pelican, the carrion vulture,

¹⁹ the stork, herons of all kinds, the hoopoe, and the bat.

²⁰ "You are to consider detestable all swarming insects that walk along the ground.

²¹ However, there are some exceptions that you may eat. These include insects that jump with their hind legs:

²² locusts of all varieties, crickets, bald locusts, and grasshoppers. All these may be eaten.

²³ But you are to consider detestable all other swarming insects that walk or crawl.

²⁴ "The following creatures make you ceremonially unclean. If you touch any of their dead bodies, you will be defiled until evening.

²⁵ If you move the dead body of an unclean animal, you must immediately wash your clothes, and you will remain defiled until evening.

²⁶ "Any animal that has divided but unsplit hooves or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you. If you touch the dead body of such an animal, you will be defiled until evening.

²⁷ Of the animals that walk on all fours, those that have paws are unclean for you. If you touch the dead body of such an animal, you will be defiled until evening.

²⁸ If you pick up and move its carcass, you must immediately wash your clothes, and you will remain defiled until evening.

²⁹ "Of the small animals that scurry or creep on the ground, these are unclean for you: the mole, the mouse, the great lizard of all varieties,

³⁰ the gecko, the monitor lizard, the common lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon.

³¹ All these small animals are unclean for you. If you touch the dead body of such an animal, you will be defiled until evening.

³² If such an animal dies and falls on something, that object, whatever its use, will be unclean. This is true whether the object is made of wood, cloth, leather, or sackcloth. It must be put into water, and it will remain defiled until evening. After that, it will be ceremonially clean and may be used again.

³³ "If such an animal dies and falls into a clay pot, everything in the pot will be defiled, and the pot must be smashed.

³⁴ If the water used to cleanse an unclean object touches any food, all of that food will be defiled. And any beverage that is in such an unclean container will be defiled.

³⁵ Any object on which the dead body of such an animal falls will be defiled. If

it is a clay oven or cooking pot, it must be smashed to pieces. It has become defiled, and it will remain that way.

³⁶ "However, if the dead body of such an animal falls into a spring or a cistern, the water will still be clean. But anyone who removes the dead body will be defiled.

³⁷ If the dead body falls on seed grain to be planted in the field, the seed will still be considered clean.

³⁸ But if the seed is wet when the dead body falls on it, the seed will be defiled.

³⁹ "If an animal that is permitted for eating dies and you touch its carcass, you will be defiled until evening.

⁴⁰ If you eat any of its meat or carry away its carcass, you must wash your clothes. Then you will remain defiled until evening.

⁴¹ "Consider detestable any animal that scurries along the ground; such animals may never be eaten.

⁴² This includes all animals that slither along on their bellies, as well as those with four legs and those with many feet. All such animals are to be considered detestable.

⁴³ Never defile yourselves by touching such animals.

⁴⁴ After all, I, the LORD, am your God. You must be holy because I am holy. So do not defile yourselves by touching any of these animals that scurry along the ground.

⁴⁵ I, the LORD, am the one who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God. You must therefore be holy because I am holy.

⁴⁶ "These are the instructions regarding the land animals, the birds, and all the

living things that move through the water or swarm over the earth,

⁴⁷ so you can distinguish between what is unclean and may not be eaten and what is clean and may be eaten."

12 ¹ The LORD said to Moses, "Give these instructions to the Israelites:

² When a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, she will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is defiled during her menstrual period.

³ On the eighth day, the boy must be circumcised.

⁴ Then the woman must wait for thirty–three days until the time of her purification from the blood of childbirth is completed. During this time of purification, she must not touch anything that is holy. And she must not

go to the sanctuary until her time of purification is over.

⁵ If a woman gives birth to a daughter, she will be ceremonially defiled for two weeks, just as she is defiled during her menstrual period. She must then wait another sixty–six days to be purified from the blood of childbirth.

⁶ "When the time of purification is completed for either a son or a daughter, the woman must bring a year–old lamb for a whole burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove for a purification offering. She must take her offerings to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

⁷ The priest will then present them to the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she will be ceremonially clean again after her bleeding at childbirth. These are the instructions to be followed after the birth of a son or a daughter.

⁸ "If a woman cannot afford to bring a sheep, she must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons. One will be for the whole burnt offering and the other for the purification offering. The priest will sacrifice them, thus making atonement for her, and she will be ceremonially clean."

13 ¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

² "If some of the people notice a swelling or a rash or a shiny patch on their skin that develops into a contagious skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons.

³ The priest will then examine the affected area of a person's skin. If the hair in the affected area has turned white and appears to be more than skin-deep, then it is a contagious skin disease, and the priest must pronounce the person ceremonially unclean.

⁴ "But if the affected area of the skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin-deep, and if the hair in the spot has not turned white, the priest will put the infected person in quarantine for seven days.

⁵ On the seventh day the priest will make another examination. If the affected area has not changed or spread on the skin, then the priest will put the person in quarantine for seven more days.

⁶ The priest will examine the skin again on the seventh day. If the affected area has faded and not spread, the priest will pronounce the person ceremonially clean. It was only a temporary rash. So after washing the clothes, the person will be considered free of disease.

⁷ But if the rash continues to spread after this examination and pronouncement by the priest, the

infected person must return to be examined again.

⁸ If the priest notices that the rash has spread, then he must pronounce this person ceremonially unclean, for it is a contagious skin disease.

⁹ "Anyone who develops a contagious skin disease must go to the priest for an examination.

¹⁰ If the priest sees that some hair has turned white and an open sore appears in the affected area,

¹¹ it is clearly a contagious skin disease, and the priest must pronounce that person ceremonially unclean. In such cases, the person need not be quarantined for further observation because it is clear that the skin is defiled by the disease.

¹² "Now suppose the priest discovers after his examination that a rash has

broken out all over someone's skin, covering the body from head to foot.

¹³ In such cases, the priest must examine the infected person to see if the disease covers the entire body. If it does, he will pronounce the person ceremonially clean because the skin has turned completely white.

¹⁴ But if any open sores appear, the infected person will be pronounced ceremonially unclean.

¹⁵ The priest must make this pronouncement as soon as he sees an open sore because open sores indicate the presence of a contagious skin disease.

¹⁶ However, if the open sores heal and turn white like the rest of the skin, the person must return to the priest.

¹⁷ If, after another examination, the affected areas have indeed turned completely white, then the priest will

pronounce the person ceremonially clean.

¹⁸ "If anyone has had a boil on the skin that has started to heal,

¹⁹ but a white swelling or a reddish white spot remains in its place, that person must go to the priest to be examined.

²⁰ If the priest finds the disease to be more than skin-deep, and if the hair in the affected area has turned white, then the priest must pronounce that person ceremonially unclean. It is a contagious skin disease that has broken out in the boil.

²¹ But if the priest sees that there is no white hair in the affected area, and if it doesn't appear to be more than skin-deep and has faded, then the priest is to put the person in quarantine for seven days.

²² If during that time the affected area spreads on the skin, the priest must pronounce the person ceremonially unclean, because it is a contagious skin disease.

²³ But if the area grows no larger and does not spread, it is merely the scar from the boil, and the priest will pronounce that person ceremonially clean.

²⁴ "If anyone has suffered a burn on the skin and the burned area changes color, becoming either a shiny reddish white or white,

²⁵ then the priest must examine it. If the hair in the affected area turns white and the problem appears to be more than skin-deep, a contagious skin disease has broken out in the burn. The priest must then pronounce that person ceremonially unclean, for it is clearly a contagious skin disease.

²⁶ But if the priest discovers that there is no white hair in the affected area and the problem appears to be no more than skin-deep and has faded, then the priest is to put the infected person in quarantine for seven days.

²⁷ If at the end of that time the affected area has spread on the skin, the priest must pronounce that person ceremonially unclean, for it is clearly a contagious skin disease.

²⁸ But if the affected area has not moved or spread on the skin and has faded, it is simply a scar from the burn. The priest must then pronounce the person ceremonially clean.

²⁹ "If anyone, whether a man or woman, has an open sore on the head or chin,

³⁰ the priest must examine the infection. If it appears to be more than skin-deep and fine yellow hair is

found in the affected area, the priest must pronounce the infected person ceremonially unclean. The infection is a contagious skin disease of the head or chin.

³¹ However, if the priest's examination reveals that the infection is only skin-deep and there is no black hair in the affected area, then he must put the person in quarantine for seven days.

³² If at the end of that time the affected area has not spread and no yellow hair has appeared, and if the infection does not appear to be more than skin-deep,

³³ the infected person must shave off all hair except the hair on the affected area. Then the priest must put the person in quarantine for another seven days,

³⁴ and he will examine the infection again on the seventh day. If it has not spread and appears to be no more than skin-deep, the priest must pronounce

that person ceremonially clean. After washing clothes, that person will be clean.

³⁵ But if the infection begins to spread after the person is pronounced clean,

³⁶ the priest must do another examination. If the infection has spread, he must pronounce the infected person ceremonially unclean, even without checking for yellow hair.

³⁷ But if it appears that the infection has stopped spreading and black hair has grown in the affected area, then the infection has healed. The priest will then pronounce the infected person ceremonially clean.

³⁸ "If anyone, whether a man or woman, has shiny white patches on the skin,

³⁹ the priest must examine the affected area. If the patch is only a pale white,

this is a harmless skin rash, and the person is ceremonially clean.

⁴⁰ "If a man loses his hair and his head becomes bald, he is still ceremonially clean.

⁴¹ And if he loses hair on his forehead, he simply has a bald forehead; he is still clean.

⁴² However, if a reddish white infection appears on the front or the back of his head, this is a contagious skin disease.

⁴³ The priest must examine him, and if he finds swelling around the reddish white sore,

⁴⁴ the man is infected with a contagious skin disease and is unclean. The priest must pronounce him ceremonially unclean because of the infection.

⁴⁵ "Those who suffer from any contagious skin disease must tear their clothing and allow their hair to hang loose. Then, as they go from place to

place, they must cover their mouth and call out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'

⁴⁶ As long as the disease lasts, they will be ceremonially unclean and must live in isolation outside the camp.

⁴⁷ "Now suppose an infectious mildew contaminates some woolen or linen clothing,

⁴⁸ some woolen or linen fabric, the hide of an animal, or anything made of leather.

⁴⁹ If the affected area in the clothing, the animal hide, the fabric, or the leather has turned bright green or a reddish color, it is contaminated with an infectious mildew and must be taken to the priest to be examined.

⁵⁰ After examining the affected spot, the priest will put it away for seven days.

⁵¹ On the seventh day the priest must inspect it again. If the affected area has spread, the material is clearly

contaminated by an infectious mildew and is unclean.

⁵² The priest must burn the linen or wool clothing or the piece of leather because it has been contaminated by an infectious mildew. It must be completely destroyed by fire.

⁵³ "But if the priest examines it again and the affected spot has not spread in the clothing, the fabric, or the leather,

⁵⁴ the priest will order the contaminated object to be washed and then isolated for seven more days.

⁵⁵ Then the priest must inspect the object again. If he sees that the affected area has not changed appearance after being washed, even if it did not spread, the object is defiled. It must be completely burned up, whether it is contaminated on the inside or outside.

⁵⁶ But if the priest sees that the affected area has faded after being washed, he

is to cut the spot from the clothing, the fabric, or the leather.

⁵⁷ If the spot reappears at a later time, however, the mildew is clearly spreading, and the contaminated object must be burned up.

⁵⁸ But if the spot disappears after the object is washed, it must be washed again; then it will be ceremonially clean.

⁵⁹ "These are the instructions for dealing with infectious mildew in woolen or linen clothing or fabric, or in anything made of leather. This is how the priest will determine whether these things are ceremonially clean or unclean."

14 ¹ And the LORD said to Moses,
² "The following instructions must be followed by those seeking purification from a contagious skin disease. Those who have been healed must be brought to the priest,

³ who will examine them at a place outside the camp. If the priest finds that someone has been healed of the skin disease,

⁴ he will perform a purification ceremony, using two wild birds of a kind permitted for food, along with some cedarwood, a scarlet cloth, and a hyssop branch.

⁵ The priest will order one of the birds to be slaughtered over a clay pot that is filled with fresh springwater.

⁶ He will then dip the living bird, along with the cedarwood, the scarlet cloth, and the hyssop branch, into the blood of the slaughtered bird.

⁷ The priest will also sprinkle the dead bird's blood seven times over the person being purified, and the priest will pronounce that person to be ceremonially clean. At the end of the ceremony, the priest will set the living

bird free so it can fly away into the open fields.

⁸ "The people being purified must complete the cleansing ceremony by washing their clothes, shaving off all their hair, and bathing themselves in water. Then they will be ceremonially clean and may return to live inside the camp. However, they must still remain outside their tents for seven days.

⁹ On the seventh day, they must again shave off all their hair, including the hair of the beard and eyebrows, and wash their clothes and bathe themselves in water. Then they will be pronounced ceremonially clean.

¹⁰ "On the next day, the eighth day, each person cured of the skin disease must bring two male lambs and one female year-old lamb with no physical defects, along with five quarts of choice flour

mixed with olive oil and three-fifths of a pint of olive oil.

¹¹ Then the officiating priest will present that person for cleansing, along with the offerings, before the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

¹² The priest will take one of the lambs and the olive oil and offer them as a guilt offering by lifting them up before the LORD.

¹³ He will then slaughter the lamb there in the sacred area at the place where sin offerings and burnt offerings are slaughtered. As with the sin offering, the guilt offering will be given to the priest. It is a most holy offering.

¹⁴ The priest will then take some of the blood from the guilt offering and put it on the tip of the healed person's right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot.

¹⁵ "Then the priest will pour some of the olive oil into the palm of his own left hand.

¹⁶ He will dip his right finger into the oil and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD.

¹⁷ The priest will then put some of the oil remaining in his left hand on the tip of the healed person's right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot, in addition to the blood of the guilt offering.

¹⁸ The oil remaining in the priest's hand will then be poured over the healed person's head. In this way, the priest will make atonement before the LORD for the person being cleansed.

¹⁹ "Then the priest must offer the sin offering and again perform the atonement ceremony for the person cured of the skin disease. After that, the

priest will slaughter the whole burnt offering

²⁰ and offer it on the altar along with the grain offering. In this way, the priest will make atonement for the person being cleansed, and the healed person will be ceremonially clean.

²¹ "But anyone who cannot afford two lambs must bring one male lamb for a guilt offering, along with two quarts of choice flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering and three-fifths of a pint of olive oil. The guilt offering will be presented by lifting it up, thus making atonement for the person being cleansed.

²² The person being cleansed must also bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, whichever the person can afford. One of the pair must be used for a sin offering and the other for a whole burnt offering.

²³ On the eighth day, the person being cleansed must bring the offerings to the priest for the cleansing ceremony to be performed in the LORD's presence at the Tabernacle entrance.

²⁴ The priest will take the lamb for the guilt offering, along with the olive oil, and lift them up before the LORD as an offering to him.

²⁵ Then the priest will slaughter the lamb for the guilt offering and put some of its blood on the tip of the person's right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot.

²⁶ "The priest will also pour some of the olive oil into the palm of his own left hand.

²⁷ He will dip his right finger into the oil and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD.

²⁸ The priest will then put some of the olive oil from his hand on the lobe of

the person's right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot, in addition to the blood of the guilt offering.

²⁹ The oil that is still in the priest's hand will then be poured over the person's head. In this way, the priest will make atonement for the person being cleansed.

³⁰ "Then the priest will offer the two turtledoves or the two young pigeons, whichever the person was able to afford.

³¹ One of them is for a sin offering and the other for a whole burnt offering, to be presented along with the grain offering. In this way, the priest will make atonement before the LORD for the person being cleansed.

³² These are the instructions for cleansing those who have recovered from a contagious skin disease but who cannot afford to bring the sacrifices

normally required for the ceremony of cleansing."

³³ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

³⁴ "When you arrive in Canaan, the land I am giving you as an inheritance, I may contaminate some of your houses with an infectious mildew.

³⁵ The owner of such a house must then go to the priest and say, 'It looks like my house has some kind of disease.'

³⁶ Before the priest examines the house, he must have the house emptied so everything inside will not be pronounced unclean. Then the priest will go in and inspect the house.

³⁷ If he finds bright green or reddish streaks on the walls of the house and the contamination appears to go deeper than the wall's surface,

³⁸ he will leave the house and lock it up for seven days.

³⁹ On the seventh day the priest must return for another inspection. If the mildew on the walls of the house has spread,

⁴⁰ the priest must order that the stones from those areas be removed. The contaminated material will then be thrown into an area outside the town designated as ceremonially unclean.

⁴¹ Next the inside walls of the entire house must be scraped thoroughly and the scrapings dumped in the unclean place outside the town.

⁴² Other stones will be brought in to replace the ones that were removed, and the walls will be replastered.

⁴³ "But if the mildew reappears after all these things have been done,

⁴⁴ the priest must return and inspect the house again. If he sees that the affected areas have spread, the walls are

clearly contaminated with an infectious mildew, and the house is defiled.

⁴⁵ It must be torn down, and all its stones, timbers, and plaster must be carried out of town to the place designated as ceremonially unclean.

⁴⁶ Anyone who enters the house while it is closed will be considered ceremonially unclean until evening.

⁴⁷ All who sleep or eat in the house must wash their clothing.

⁴⁸ "But if the priest returns for his inspection and finds that the affected areas have not reappeared after the fresh plastering, then he will pronounce the house clean because the infectious mildew is clearly gone.

⁴⁹ To purify the house the priest will need two birds, some cedarwood, a scarlet cloth, and a hyssop branch.

⁵⁰ He will slaughter one of the birds over a clay pot that is filled with fresh springwater.

⁵¹ Then he will dip the cedarwood, the hyssop branch, the scarlet cloth, and the living bird into the blood of the slaughtered bird, and he will sprinkle the house seven times.

⁵² After he has purified the house in this way,

⁵³ he will release the living bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way, the priest will make atonement for the house, and it will be ceremonially clean.

⁵⁴ "These are the instructions for dealing with the various kinds of contagious skin disease and infectious mildew,*

⁵⁵ whether in clothing, in a house,

⁵⁶ in a swollen area of skin, in a skin rash, or in a shiny patch of skin.

⁵⁷ These instructions must be followed when dealing with any contagious skin disease or infectious mildew, to determine when something is ceremonially clean or unclean."

15 ¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

² "Give these further instructions to the Israelites: Any man who has a genital discharge is ceremonially unclean because of it.

³ This defilement applies whether the discharge continues or is stopped up. In either case the man is unclean.

⁴ Any bedding on which he lies and anything on which he sits will be defiled.

⁵ "So if you touch the man's bedding, you will be required to wash your clothes and bathe in water, and you will remain ceremonially defiled until evening.

⁶ If you sit where the man with the discharge has sat, you will be required

to wash your clothes and bathe in water. You will then remain defiled until evening.

⁷ The same instructions apply if you touch the man who has the unclean discharge.

⁸ And if he spits on you, you must undergo the same procedure.

⁹ Any blanket on which the man rides will be defiled.

¹⁰ If you touch or carry anything that was under him, you will be required to wash your clothes and bathe in water, and you will remain defiled until evening.

¹¹ If the man touches you without first rinsing his hands, then you will be required to wash your clothes and bathe in water, and you will remain defiled until evening.

¹² Any clay pot touched by the man with the discharge must be broken, and

every wooden utensil he touches must be rinsed with water.

¹³ "When the man's discharge heals, he must count off a period of seven days. During that time, he must wash his clothes and bathe in fresh springwater. Then he will be ceremonially clean.

¹⁴ On the eighth day he must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons and present himself to the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle and give his offerings to the priest.

¹⁵ The priest will present the offerings there, one for a sin offering and the other for a whole burnt offering. In this way, the priest will make atonement for the man before the LORD for his discharge.

¹⁶ "Whenever a man has an emission of semen, he must wash his entire body, and he will remain ceremonially defiled until evening.

¹⁷ Any clothing or leather that comes in contact with the semen must be washed, and it will remain defiled until evening.

¹⁸ After having sexual intercourse, both the man and the woman must bathe, and they will remain defiled until evening.

¹⁹ "Whenever a woman has her menstrual period, she will be ceremonially unclean for seven days. If you touch her during that time, you will be defiled until evening.

²⁰ Anything on which she lies or sits during that time will be defiled.

²¹ If you touch her bed, you must wash your clothes and bathe in water, and you will remain defiled until evening.

²² The same applies if you touch an object on which she sits,

²³ whether it is her bedding or any piece of furniture.

²⁴ If a man has sexual intercourse with her during this time, her menstrual impurity will be transmitted to him. He will remain defiled for seven days, and any bed on which he lies will be defiled.

²⁵ "If the menstrual flow of blood continues for many days beyond the normal period, or if she discharges blood unrelated to her menstruation, the woman will be ceremonially unclean as long as the discharge continues.

²⁶ Anything on which she lies or sits during that time will be defiled, just as it would be during her normal menstrual period.

²⁷ If you touch her bed or anything on which she sits, you will be defiled. You will be required to wash your clothes and bathe in water, and you will remain defiled until evening.

²⁸ "When the woman's menstrual discharge stops, she must count off a

period of seven days. After that, she will be ceremonially clean.

²⁹ On the eighth day, she must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons and present them to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

³⁰ The priest will offer one for a sin offering and the other for a whole burnt offering. In this way, the priest will make atonement for her before the LORD for her menstrual discharge.

³¹ "In this way, you will keep the people of Israel separate from things that will defile them, so they will not die as a result of defiling my Tabernacle that is right there among them.

³² These are the instructions for dealing with a man who has been defiled by a genital discharge or an emission of semen;

³³ for dealing with a woman during her monthly menstrual period; for dealing

with anyone, man or woman, who has had a bodily discharge of any kind; and for dealing with a man who has had intercourse with a woman during her period."

16 ¹The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of Aaron's two sons, who died when they burned a different kind of fire than the LORD had commanded.

²The LORD said to Moses, "Warn your brother Aaron not to enter the Most Holy Place behind the inner curtain whenever he chooses; the penalty for intrusion is death. For the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—is there, and I myself am present in the cloud over the atonement cover.

³"When Aaron enters the sanctuary area, he must follow these instructions fully. He must first bring a young bull

for a sin offering and a ram for a whole burnt offering.

⁴ Then he must wash his entire body and put on his linen tunic and the undergarments worn next to his body. He must tie the linen sash around his waist and put the linen turban on his head. These are his sacred garments.

⁵ The people of Israel must then bring him two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a whole burnt offering.

⁶ "Aaron will present the bull as a sin offering, to make atonement for himself and his family.

⁷ Then he must bring the two male goats and present them to the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

⁸ He is to cast sacred lots to determine which goat will be sacrificed to the LORD and which one will be the scapegoat.

⁹ The goat chosen to be sacrificed to the LORD will be presented by Aaron as a sin offering.

¹⁰ The goat chosen to be the scapegoat will be presented to the LORD alive. When it is sent away into the wilderness, it will make atonement for the people.

¹¹ "Then Aaron will present the young bull as a sin offering for himself and his family. After he has slaughtered this bull for the sin offering,

¹² he will fill an incense burner with burning coals from the altar that stands before the LORD. Then, after filling both his hands with fragrant incense, he will carry the burner and incense behind the inner curtain.

¹³ There in the LORD's presence, he will put the incense on the burning coals so that a cloud of incense will rise over the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—that rests on the Ark

of the Covenant. If he follows these instructions, he will not die.

¹⁴ Then he must dip his finger into the blood of the bull and sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover and then seven times against the front of the Ark.

¹⁵ "Then Aaron must slaughter the goat as a sin offering for the people and bring its blood behind the inner curtain. There he will sprinkle the blood on the atonement cover and against the front of the Ark, just as he did with the bull's blood.

¹⁶ In this way, he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place, and he will do the same for the entire Tabernacle, because of the defiling sin and rebellion of the Israelites.

¹⁷ No one else is allowed inside the Tabernacle while Aaron goes in to make atonement for the Most Holy Place. No one may enter until he comes out again

after making atonement for himself, his family, and all the Israelites.

¹⁸ "Then Aaron will go out to make atonement for the altar that stands before the LORD by smearing some of the blood from the bull and the goat on each of the altar's horns.

¹⁹ Then he must dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it seven times over the altar. In this way, he will cleanse it from Israel's defilement and return it to its former holiness.

²⁰ "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle, and the altar, he must bring the living goat forward.

²¹ He is to lay both of his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the sins and rebellion of the Israelites. In this way, he will lay the people's sins on the head of the goat; then he will send it out

into the wilderness, led by a man chosen for this task.

²² After the man sets it free in the wilderness, the goat will carry all the people's sins upon itself into a desolate land.

²³ "As Aaron enters the Tabernacle, he must take off the linen garments he wore when he entered the Most Holy Place, and he must leave the garments there.

²⁴ Then he must bathe his entire body with water in a sacred place, put on his garments, and go out to sacrifice his own whole burnt offering and the whole burnt offering for the people. In this way, he will make atonement for himself and for the people.

²⁵ He must also burn all the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

²⁶ "The man chosen to send the goat out into the wilderness as a scapegoat

must wash his clothes and bathe in water. Then he may return to the camp.

²⁷ "The bull and goat given as sin offerings, whose blood Aaron brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement for Israel, will be carried outside the camp to be burned. This includes the animals' hides, the internal organs, and the dung.

²⁸ The man who does the burning must wash his clothes and bathe himself in water before returning to the camp.

²⁹ "On the appointed day in early autumn, you must spend the day fasting and not do any work. This is a permanent law for you, and it applies to those who are Israelites by birth, as well as to the foreigners living among you.

³⁰ On this day, atonement will be made for you, and you will be cleansed from all your sins in the LORD's presence.

³¹ It will be a Sabbath day of total rest, and you will spend the day in fasting. This is a permanent law for you.

³² In future generations, the atonement ceremony will be performed by the anointed high priest who serves in place of his ancestor Aaron. He will put on the holy linen garments

³³ and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle, the altar, the priests, and the entire community.

³⁴ This is a permanent law for you, to make atonement for the Israelites once each year." Moses followed all these instructions that the LORD had given to him.

17 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses,
² "Give Aaron and his sons and all the Israelites these commands from the LORD:

³ If any Israelite sacrifices a bull or a lamb or a goat anywhere inside or outside the camp

⁴ and does not bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to present it as an offering to the LORD, that person will be guilty of a capital offense. Such a person has shed blood and must be cut off from the community.

⁵ This rule will stop the Israelites from sacrificing animals in the open fields. It will cause them to bring their sacrifices to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle, so he can present them to the LORD as peace offerings.

⁶ That way the priest will be able to sprinkle the blood and burn the fat on the LORD's altar at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and it will be very pleasing to the LORD.

⁷ The people must no longer be unfaithful to the LORD by offering

sacrifices to evil spirits out in the fields. This is a permanent law for them, to be kept generation after generation.

⁸ "Give them this command as well, which applies both to Israelites and to the foreigners living among you. If you offer a whole burnt offering or a sacrifice ⁹ and do not bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to offer it to the LORD, you will be cut off from the community.

¹⁰ "And I will turn against anyone, whether an Israelite or a foreigner living among you, who eats or drinks blood in any form. I will cut off such a person from the community,

¹¹ for the life of any creature is in its blood. I have given you the blood so you can make atonement for your sins. It is the blood, representing life, that brings you atonement.

¹² That is why I said to the Israelites: 'You and the foreigners who live among you must never eat or drink blood.'

¹³ "And this command applies both to Israelites and to the foreigners living among you. If you go hunting and kill an animal or bird that is approved for eating, you must drain out the blood and cover it with earth.

¹⁴ The life of every creature is in the blood. That is why I have told the people of Israel never to eat or drink it, for the life of any bird or animal is in the blood. So whoever eats or drinks blood must be cut off.

¹⁵ "And this command also applies both to Israelites and the foreigners living among you. If you eat from the carcass of an animal that died a natural death or was killed by a wild animal, you must wash your clothes and bathe yourselves in water. Then you will remain

ceremonially unclean until evening; after that, you will be considered clean.

¹⁶ But if you do not wash your clothes and bathe, you will be held responsible."

18 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses,
² "Say this to your people, the Israelites: I, the LORD, am your God.

³ So do not act like the people in Egypt, where you used to live, or like the people of Canaan, where I am taking you. You must not imitate their way of life.

⁴ You must obey all my regulations and be careful to keep my laws, for I, the LORD, am your God.

⁵ If you obey my laws and regulations, you will find life through them. I am the LORD.

⁶ "You must never have sexual intercourse with a close relative, for I am the LORD.

⁷ Do not violate your father by having sexual intercourse with your mother. She

is your mother; you must never have intercourse with her.

⁸ Do not have sexual intercourse with any of your father's wives, for this would violate your father.

⁹ "Do not have sexual intercourse with your sister or half sister, whether she is your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was brought up in the same family or somewhere else.

¹⁰ "Do not have sexual intercourse with your granddaughter, whether your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would violate you.

¹¹ Do not have sexual intercourse with the daughter of any of your father's wives; she is your half sister.

¹² Do not have intercourse with your aunt, your father's sister, because she is your father's close relative.

¹³ Do not have sexual intercourse with your aunt, your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

¹⁴ And do not violate your uncle, your father's brother, by having sexual intercourse with his wife; she also is your aunt.

¹⁵ Do not have sexual intercourse with your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife.

¹⁶ Do not have intercourse with your brother's wife; this would violate your brother.

¹⁷ "Do not have sexual intercourse with both a woman and her daughter or marry both a woman and her granddaughter, whether her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter. They are close relatives, and to do this would be a horrible wickedness.

¹⁸ "Do not marry a woman and her sister because they will be rivals. But if

your wife dies, then it is all right to marry her sister.

¹⁹ "Do not violate a woman by having sexual intercourse with her during her period of menstrual impurity.

²⁰ "Do not defile yourself by having sexual intercourse with your neighbor's wife.

²¹ "Do not give any of your children as a sacrifice to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

²² "Do not practice homosexuality; it is a detestable sin.

²³ "A man must never defile himself by having sexual intercourse with an animal, and a woman must never present herself to a male animal in order to have intercourse with it; this is a terrible perversion.

²⁴ "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the

people I am expelling from the Promised Land have defiled themselves.

²⁵ As a result, the entire land has become defiled. That is why I am punishing the people who live there, and the land will soon vomit them out.

²⁶ You must strictly obey all of my laws and regulations, and you must not do any of these detestable things. This applies both to you who are Israelites by birth and to the foreigners living among you.

²⁷ "All these detestable activities are practiced by the people of the land where I am taking you, and the land has become defiled.

²⁸ Do not give the land a reason to vomit you out for defiling it, as it will vomit out the people who live there now.

²⁹ Whoever does any of these detestable things will be cut off from the community of Israel.

³⁰ So be careful to obey my laws, and do not practice any of these detestable activities. Do not defile yourselves by doing any of them, for I, the LORD, am your God."

19 ¹ The LORD also said to Moses, ² "Say this to the entire community of Israel: You must be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

³ Each of you must show respect for your mother and father, and you must always observe my Sabbath days of rest, for I, the LORD, am your God.

⁴ Do not put your trust in idols or make gods of metal for yourselves. I, the LORD, am your God.

⁵ "When you sacrifice a peace offering to the LORD, offer it properly so it will be accepted on your behalf.

⁶ You must eat it on the same day you offer it or on the next day at the latest. Any leftovers that remain until the third day must be burned.

⁷ If any of the offering is eaten on the third day, it will be contaminated, and I will not accept it.

⁸ If you eat it on the third day, you will answer for the sin of profaning what is holy to the LORD and must be cut off from the community.

⁹ "When you harvest your crops, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop.

¹⁰ It is the same with your grape crop—do not strip every last bunch of grapes from the vines, and do not pick up the grapes that fall to the ground. Leave them for the poor and the foreigners who live among you, for I, the LORD, am your God.

11 "Do not steal. "Do not cheat one another. "Do not lie.

12 "Do not use my name to swear a falsehood and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

13 "Do not cheat or rob anyone. "Always pay your hired workers promptly.

14 "Show your fear of God by treating the deaf with respect and by not taking advantage of the blind. I am the LORD.

15 "Always judge your neighbors fairly, neither favoring the poor nor showing deference to the rich.

16 "Do not spread slanderous gossip among your people. "Do not try to get ahead at the cost of your neighbor's life, for I am the LORD.

17 "Do not nurse hatred in your heart for any of your relatives. "Confront your neighbors directly so you will not be held guilty for their crimes.

¹⁸ "Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

¹⁹ "You must obey all my laws. "Do not breed your cattle with other kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven from two different kinds of fabric.

²⁰ "If a man has sexual intercourse with a slave girl who is committed to become someone else's wife, compensation must be paid. But since she had not been freed at the time, the couple will not be put to death.

²¹ The man, however, must bring a ram as a guilt offering and present it to the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

²² The priest will then make atonement for him before the LORD with the sacrificial ram of the guilt offering, and the man will be forgiven.

²³ "When you enter the land and plant fruit trees, leave the fruit unharvested for the first three years and consider it forbidden.

²⁴ In the fourth year the entire crop will be devoted to the LORD as an outburst of praise.

²⁵ Finally, in the fifth year you may eat the fruit. In this way, its yield will be increased. I, the LORD, am your God.

²⁶ "Never eat meat that has not been drained of its blood. "Do not practice fortune-telling or witchcraft.

²⁷ "Do not trim off the hair on your temples or clip the edges of your beards.

²⁸ "Never cut your bodies in mourning for the dead or mark your skin with tattoos, for I am the LORD.

²⁹ "Do not defile your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will be filled with promiscuity and detestable wickedness.

³⁰ "Keep my Sabbath days of rest and show reverence toward my sanctuary, for I am the LORD.

³¹ "Do not rely on mediums and psychics, for you will be defiled by them. I, the LORD, am your God.

³² "Show your fear of God by standing up in the presence of elderly people and showing respect for the aged. I am the LORD.

³³ "Do not exploit the foreigners who live in your land.

³⁴ They should be treated like everyone else, and you must love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God.

³⁵ "Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight, or volume.

³⁶ Your scales and weights must be accurate. Your containers for measuring

dry goods or liquids must be accurate. I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

³⁷ You must be careful to obey all of my laws and regulations, for I am the LORD."

20 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Give the Israelites these instructions, which apply to those who are Israelites by birth as well as to the foreigners living among you. If any among them devote their children as burnt offerings to Molech, they must be stoned to death by people of the community.

³ I myself will turn against them and cut them off from the community, because they have defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name by giving their children to Molech.

⁴ And if the people of the community ignore this offering of children to Molech and refuse to execute the guilty parents,

⁵ then I myself will turn against them and cut them off from the community, along with all those who commit prostitution by worshiping Molech.

⁶ "If any among the people are unfaithful by consulting and following mediums or psychics, I will turn against them and cut them off from the community.

⁷ So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I, the LORD, am your God.

⁸ Keep all my laws and obey them, for I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

⁹ "All who curse their father or mother must be put to death. They are guilty of a capital offense.

¹⁰ "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife, both the man and the woman must be put to death.

¹¹ If a man has intercourse with his father's wife, both the man and the

woman must die, for they are guilty of a capital offense.

¹² If a man has intercourse with his daughter-in-law, both must be put to death. They have acted contrary to nature and are guilty of a capital offense.

¹³ "The penalty for homosexual acts is death to both parties. They have committed a detestable act and are guilty of a capital offense.

¹⁴ If a man has intercourse with both a woman and her mother, such an act is terribly wicked. All three of them must be burned to death to wipe out such wickedness from among you.

¹⁵ "If a man has sexual intercourse with an animal, he must be put to death, and the animal must be killed.

¹⁶ If a woman approaches a male animal to have intercourse with it, she and the animal must both be put to

death. Both must die, for they are guilty of a capital offense.

¹⁷ "If a man has sexual intercourse with his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, it is a terrible disgrace. Both of them must be publicly cut off from the community. Since the man has had intercourse with his sister, he will suffer the consequences of his guilt.

¹⁸ If a man has intercourse with a woman suffering from a hemorrhage, both of them must be cut off from the community, because he exposed the source of her flow, and she allowed him to do it.

¹⁹ "If a man has sexual intercourse with his aunt, whether his mother's sister or his father's sister, he has violated a close relative. Both parties are guilty of a capital offense.

²⁰ If a man has intercourse with his uncle's wife, he has violated his uncle. Both the man and woman involved are guilty of a capital offense and will die childless.

²¹ If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity. He has violated his brother, and the guilty couple will remain childless.

²² "You must carefully obey all my laws and regulations; otherwise the land to which I am bringing you will vomit you out.

²³ Do not live by the customs of the people whom I will expel before you. It is because they do these terrible things that I detest them so much.

²⁴ But I have promised that you will inherit their land, a land flowing with milk and honey. I, the LORD, am your God, who has set you apart from all other people.

²⁵ "You must therefore make a distinction between ceremonially clean and unclean animals, and between clean and unclean birds. You must not defile yourselves by eating any animal or bird or creeping creature that I have forbidden.

²⁶ You must be holy because I, the LORD, am holy. I have set you apart from all other people to be my very own.

²⁷ "Men and women among you who act as mediums or psychics must be put to death by stoning. They are guilty of a capital offense."

21 ¹ The LORD said to Moses, "Tell the priests to avoid making themselves ceremonially unclean by touching a dead relative

² unless it is a close relative—mother or father, son or daughter, brother

³ or virgin sister who was dependent because she had no husband.

⁴ As a husband among his relatives, he must not defile himself.

⁵ "The priests must never shave their heads, trim the edges of their beards, or cut their bodies.

⁶ They must be set apart to God as holy and must never dishonor his name. After all, they are the ones who present the offerings to the LORD by fire, providing God with his food, and they must remain holy.

⁷ "The priests must not marry women defiled by prostitution or women who have been divorced, for the priests must be set apart to God as holy.

⁸ You must treat them as holy because they offer up food to your God. You must consider them holy because I, the LORD, am holy, and I make you holy.

⁹ If a priest's daughter becomes a prostitute, defiling her father's holiness

as well as herself, she must be burned to death.

¹⁰ "The high priest, who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and has been ordained to wear the special priestly garments, must never let his hair hang loose or tear his clothing.

¹¹ He must never defile himself by going near a dead person, even if it is his father or mother.

¹² He must not desecrate the sanctuary of his God by leaving it to attend his parents' funeral, because he has been made holy by the anointing oil of his God. I am the LORD.

¹³ "The high priest must marry a virgin.

¹⁴ He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution. She must be a virgin from his own clan,

¹⁵ that he may not dishonor his descendants among the members of his

clan, because I, the LORD, have made him holy."

¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁷ "Tell Aaron that in all future generations, his descendants who have physical defects will not qualify to offer food to their God.

¹⁸ No one who has a defect may come near to me, whether he is blind or lame, stunted or deformed,

¹⁹ or has a broken foot or hand,

²⁰ or has a humped back or is a dwarf, or has a defective eye, or has oozing sores or scabs on his skin, or has damaged testicles.

²¹ Even though he is a descendant of Aaron, his physical defects disqualify him from presenting offerings to the LORD by fire. Since he has a blemish, he may not offer food to his God.

²² However, he may eat from the food offered to God, including the holy offerings and the most holy offerings.

²³ Yet because of his physical defect, he must never go behind the inner curtain or come near the altar, for this would desecrate my holy places. I am the LORD who makes them holy."

²⁴ So Moses gave these instructions to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

22 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Tell Aaron and his sons to treat the sacred gifts that the Israelites set apart for me with great care, so they do not profane my holy name. I am the LORD.

³ Remind them that if any of their descendants are ceremonially unclean when they approach the sacred food presented by the Israelites, they must

be cut off from my presence. I am the LORD!

⁴ "If any of the priests have a contagious skin disease or any kind of discharge that makes them ceremonially unclean, they may not eat the sacred offerings until they have been pronounced clean. If any of the priests become unclean by touching a corpse, or are defiled by an emission of semen,

⁵ or by touching a creeping creature that is unclean, or by touching someone who is ceremonially unclean for any reason,

⁶ they will remain defiled until evening. They must not eat any of the sacred offerings until they have purified their bodies with water.

⁷ When the sun goes down, they will be clean again and may eat the sacred offerings. After all, this food has been set aside for them.

⁸ The priests may never eat an animal that has died a natural death or has been torn apart by wild animals, for this would defile them. I am the LORD.

⁹ Warn all the priests to follow these instructions carefully; otherwise they will be subject to punishment and die for violating them. I am the LORD who makes them holy.

¹⁰ "No one outside a priest's family may ever eat the sacred offerings, even if the person lives in a priest's home or is one of his hired servants.

¹¹ However, if the priest buys slaves with his own money, they may eat of his food. And if his slaves have children, they also may share his food.

¹² If a priest's daughter marries someone outside the priestly family, she may no longer eat the sacred offerings.

¹³ But if she becomes a widow or is divorced and has no children to support

her, and she returns to live in her father's home, she may eat her father's food again. But other than these exceptions, only members of the priests' families are allowed to eat the sacred offerings.

¹⁴ "Anyone who eats the sacred offerings without realizing it must pay the priest for the amount eaten, plus an added penalty of 20 percent.

¹⁵ No one may defile the sacred offerings brought to the LORD by the Israelites

¹⁶ by allowing unauthorized people to eat them. The negligent priest would bring guilt upon the people and require them to pay compensation. I am the LORD, who makes them holy."

¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁸ "Give Aaron and his sons and all the Israelites these instructions, which apply to those who are Israelites by birth as well as to the foreigners living among

you. If you offer a whole burnt offering to the LORD, whether to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering,

¹⁹ it will be accepted only if it is a male animal with no physical defects. It may be either a bull, a ram, or a male goat.

²⁰ Do not bring an animal with physical defects, because it won't be accepted on your behalf.

²¹ "If you bring a peace offering to the LORD from the herd or flock, whether to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, you must offer an animal that has no physical defects of any kind.

²² An animal that is blind, injured, mutilated, or that has a growth, an open sore, or a scab must never be offered to the LORD by fire on the altar.

²³ If the bull or lamb is deformed or stunted, it may still be offered as a freewill offering, but it may not be offered to fulfill a vow.

²⁴ If an animal has damaged testicles or is castrated, it may never be offered to the LORD.

²⁵ You must never accept mutilated or defective animals from foreigners to be offered as a sacrifice to your God. Such animals will not be accepted on your behalf because they are defective."

²⁶ And the LORD said to Moses,

²⁷ "When a bull or a ram or a male goat is born, it must be left with its mother for seven days. From the eighth day on, it will be acceptable as an offering given to the LORD by fire.

²⁸ But you must never slaughter a mother animal and her offspring on the same day, whether from the herd or the flock.

²⁹ When you bring a thanksgiving offering to the LORD, it must be sacrificed properly so it will be accepted on your behalf.

³⁰ Eat the entire sacrificial animal on the day it is presented. Don't leave any of it until the second day. I am the LORD.

³¹ "You must faithfully keep all my commands by obeying them, for I am the LORD.

³² Do not treat my holy name as common and ordinary. I must be treated as holy by the people of Israel. It is I, the LORD, who makes you holy.

³³ It was I who rescued you from Egypt, that I might be your very own God. I am the LORD."

23 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Give the Israelites instructions regarding the LORD's appointed festivals, the days when all of you will be summoned to worship me.

³ You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day all work must come to a complete stop. It is the LORD's Sabbath day of complete rest, a holy

day to assemble for worship. It must be observed wherever you live.

⁴ In addition to the Sabbath, the LORD has established festivals, the holy occasions to be observed at the proper time each year.

⁵ "First comes the LORD's Passover, which begins at twilight on its appointed day in early spring.

⁶ Then the day after the Passover celebration, the Festival of Unleavened Bread begins. This festival to the LORD continues for seven days, and during that time all the bread you eat must be made without yeast.

⁷ On the first day of the festival, all the people must stop their regular work and gather for a sacred assembly.

⁸ On each of the next seven days, the people must present an offering to the LORD by fire. On the seventh day, the

people must again stop all their regular work to hold a sacred assembly."

⁹ Then the LORD told Moses

¹⁰ to give these instructions to the Israelites: "When you arrive in the land I am giving you and you harvest your first crops, bring the priest some grain from the first portion of your grain harvest.

¹¹ On the day after the Sabbath, the priest will lift it up before the LORD so it may be accepted on your behalf.

¹² That same day you must sacrifice a year-old male lamb with no physical defects as a whole burnt offering to the LORD.

¹³ A grain offering must accompany it consisting of three quarts of choice flour mixed with olive oil. It will be an offering given to the LORD by fire, and it will be very pleasing to him. Along with this sacrifice, you must also offer one quart of wine as a drink offering.

¹⁴ Do not eat any bread or roasted grain or fresh kernels on that day until after you have brought this offering to your God. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be observed wherever you live.

¹⁵ "From the day after the Sabbath, the day the bundle of grain was lifted up as an offering, count off seven weeks.

¹⁶ Keep counting until the day after the seventh Sabbath, fifty days later, and bring an offering of new grain to the LORD.

¹⁷ From wherever you live, bring two loaves of bread to be lifted up before the LORD as an offering. These loaves must be baked from three quarts of choice flour that contains yeast. They will be an offering to the LORD from the first of your crops.

¹⁸ Along with this bread, present seven one-year-old lambs with no physical

defects, one bull, and two rams as burnt offerings to the LORD. These whole burnt offerings, together with the accompanying grain offerings and drink offerings, will be given to the LORD by fire and will be pleasing to him.

¹⁹ Then you must offer one male goat as a sin offering and two one-year-old male lambs as a peace offering.

²⁰ "The priest will lift up these offerings before the LORD, together with the loaves representing the first of your later crops. These offerings are holy to the LORD and will belong to the priests.

²¹ That same day, you must stop all your regular work and gather for a sacred assembly. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be observed wherever you live.

²² "When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up

what the harvesters drop. Leave it for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I, the LORD, am your God."

²³ The LORD told Moses

²⁴ to give these instructions to the Israelites: "On the appointed day in early autumn, you are to celebrate a day of complete rest. All your work must stop on that day. You will call the people to a sacred assembly—the Festival of Trumpets—with loud blasts from a trumpet.

²⁵ You must do no regular work on that day. Instead, you are to present offerings to the LORD by fire."

²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses,

²⁷ "Remember that the Day of Atonement is to be celebrated on the ninth day after the Festival of Trumpets. On that day you must humble yourselves, gather for a sacred assembly,

and present offerings to the LORD by fire.

²⁸ Do no work during that entire day because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement will be made for you before the LORD your God, and payment will be made for your sins.

²⁹ Anyone who does not spend that day in humility will be cut off from the community.

³⁰ And I will destroy anyone among you who does any kind of work on that day.

³¹ You must do no work at all! This is a permanent law for you, and it must be observed wherever you live.

³² This will be a Sabbath day of total rest for you, and on that day you must humble yourselves. This time of rest and fasting will begin the evening before the Day of Atonement and extend until evening of that day."

³³ And the LORD said to Moses,

³⁴ "Tell the Israelites to begin the Festival of Shelters on the fifth day after the Day of Atonement. This festival to the LORD will last for seven days.

³⁵ It will begin with a sacred assembly on the first day, and all your regular work must stop.

³⁶ On each of the seven festival days, you must present offerings to the LORD by fire. On the eighth day, you must gather again for a sacred assembly and present another offering to the LORD by fire. This will be a solemn closing assembly, and no regular work may be done that day.

³⁷ "These are the LORD's appointed annual festivals. Celebrate them by gathering in sacred assemblies to present all the various offerings to the LORD by fire—whole burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrificial meals and drink offerings—each on its proper day.

³⁸ These festivals must be observed in addition to the LORD's regular Sabbath days. And these offerings must be given in addition to your personal gifts, the offerings you make to accompany your vows, and any freewill offerings that you present to the LORD.

³⁹ "Now, on the first day of the Festival of Shelters, after you have harvested all the produce of the land, you will begin to celebrate this seven-day festival to the LORD. Remember that the first day and closing eighth day of the festival will be days of total rest.

⁴⁰ On the first day, gather fruit from citrus trees, and collect palm fronds and other leafy branches and willows that grow by the streams. Then rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

⁴¹ You must observe this seven-day festival to the LORD every year. This is a

permanent law for you, and it must be kept by all future generations.

⁴² During the seven festival days, all of you who are Israelites by birth must live in shelters.

⁴³ This will remind each new generation of Israelites that their ancestors had to live in shelters when I rescued them from the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God."

⁴⁴ So Moses gave these instructions regarding the annual festivals of the LORD to the Israelites.

24 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Command the people of Israel to provide you with pure olive oil for the lampstand, so it can be kept burning continually.

³ Aaron will set it up outside the inner curtain of the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle and must arrange to have the lamps tended continually, from evening

until morning, before the LORD. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be kept by all future generations.

⁴ The lamps on the pure gold lampstand must be tended continually in the LORD's presence.

⁵ "You must bake twelve loaves of bread from choice flour, using three quarts of flour for each loaf.

⁶ Place the bread in the LORD's presence on the pure gold table, and arrange the loaves in two rows, with six in each row.

⁷ Sprinkle some pure frankincense near each row. It will serve as a token offering, to be burned in place of the bread as an offering given to the LORD by fire.

⁸ Every Sabbath day this bread must be laid out before the LORD on behalf of the Israelites as a continual part of the covenant.

⁹ The loaves of bread belong to Aaron and his male descendants, who must eat them in a sacred place, for they represent a most holy portion of the offerings given to the LORD by fire."

¹⁰ One day a man who had an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father got into a fight with one of the Israelite men.

¹¹ During the fight, this son of an Israelite woman blasphemed the LORD's name. So the man was brought to Moses for judgment. His mother's name was Shelomith. She was the daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan.

¹² They put the man in custody until the LORD's will in the matter should become clear.

¹³ Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁴ "Take the blasphemer outside the camp, and tell all those who heard him to lay their hands on his head. Then

let the entire community stone him to death.

¹⁵ Say to the people of Israel: Those who blaspheme God will suffer the consequences of their guilt and be punished.

¹⁶ Anyone who blasphemes the LORD's name must be stoned to death by the whole community of Israel. Any Israelite or foreigner among you who blasphemes the LORD's name will surely die.

¹⁷ "Anyone who takes another person's life must be put to death.

¹⁸ "Anyone who kills another person's animal must pay it back in full—a live animal for the animal that was killed.

¹⁹ "Anyone who injures another person must be dealt with according to the injury inflicted—

²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Whatever anyone does

to hurt another person must be paid back in kind.

²¹ "Whoever kills an animal must make full restitution, but whoever kills another person must be put to death.

²² "These same regulations apply to Israelites by birth and foreigners who live among you. I, the LORD, am your God."

²³ After Moses gave all these instructions to the Israelites, they led the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

25 ¹ While Moses was on Mount Sinai, the LORD said to him,

² "Give these instructions to the Israelites: When you have entered the land I am giving you as an inheritance, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the LORD every seventh year.

³ For six years you may plant your fields and prune your vineyards and harvest your crops,

⁴ but during the seventh year the land will enjoy a Sabbath year of rest to the LORD. Do not plant your crops or prune your vineyards during that entire year.

⁵ And don't store away the crops that grow naturally or process the grapes that grow on your unpruned vines. The land is to have a year of total rest.

⁶ But you, your male and female slaves, your hired servants, and any foreigners who live with you may eat the produce that grows naturally during the Sabbath year.

⁷ And your livestock and the wild animals will also be allowed to eat of the land's bounty.

⁸ "In addition, you must count off seven Sabbath years, seven years times seven, adding up to forty-nine years in all.

⁹ Then on the Day of Atonement of the fiftieth year, blow the trumpets loud and long throughout the land.

¹⁰ This year will be set apart as holy, a time to proclaim release for all who live there. It will be a jubilee year for you, when each of you returns to the lands that belonged to your ancestors and rejoins your clan.

¹¹ Yes, the fiftieth year will be a jubilee for you. During that year, do not plant any seeds or store away any of the crops that grow naturally, and do not process the grapes that grow on your unpruned vines.

¹² It will be a jubilee year for you, and you must observe it as a special and holy time. You may, however, eat the produce that grows naturally in the fields that year.

¹³ In the Year of Jubilee each of you must return to the lands that belonged to your ancestors.

¹⁴ "When you make an agreement with a neighbor to buy or sell property, you must never take advantage of each other.

¹⁵ When you buy land from your neighbor, the price of the land should be based on the number of years since the last jubilee. The seller will charge you only for the crop years left until the next Year of Jubilee.

¹⁶ The more the years, the higher the price; the fewer the years, the lower the price. After all, the person selling the land is actually selling you a certain number of harvests.

¹⁷ Show your fear of God by not taking advantage of each other. I, the LORD, am your God.

¹⁸ "If you want to live securely in the land, keep my laws and obey my regulations.

¹⁹ Then the land will yield bumper crops, and you will eat your fill and live securely in it.

²⁰ But you might ask, 'What will we eat during the seventh year, since we are not allowed to plant or harvest crops that year?'

²¹ The answer is, 'I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so the land will produce a bumper crop, enough to support you for three years.

²² As you plant the seed in the eighth year, you will still be eating the produce of the previous year. In fact, you will eat from the old crop until the new harvest comes in the ninth year.'

²³ And remember, the land must never be sold on a permanent basis because

it really belongs to me. You are only foreigners and tenants living with me.

²⁴ "With every sale of land there must be a stipulation that the land can be redeemed at any time.

²⁵ If any of your Israelite relatives go bankrupt and are forced to sell some inherited land, then a close relative, a kinsman redeemer, may buy it back for them.

²⁶ If there is no one to redeem the land but the person who sold it manages to get enough money to buy it back,

²⁷ then that person has the right to redeem it from the one who bought it. The price of the land will be based on the number of years until the next Year of Jubilee. After buying it back, the original owner may then return to the land.

²⁸ But if the original owner cannot afford to redeem it, then it will belong to the new owner until the next Year of

Jubilee. In the jubilee year, the land will be returned to the original owner.

²⁹ "Anyone who sells a house inside a walled city has the right to redeem it for a full year after its sale. During that time, the seller retains the right to buy it back.

³⁰ But if it is not redeemed within a year, then the house within the walled city will become the permanent property of the buyer. It will not be returned to the original owner in the Year of Jubilee.

³¹ But a house in a village—a settlement without fortified walls—will be treated like property in the open fields. Such a house may be redeemed at any time and must be returned to the original owner in the Year of Jubilee.

³² "The Levites always have the right to redeem any house they have sold within the cities belonging to them.

³³ And any property that can be redeemed by the Levites—all houses

within the Levitical cities—must be returned in the Year of Jubilee. After all, the cities reserved for the Levites are the only property they own in all Israel.

³⁴ The strip of pastureland around each of the Levitical cities may never be sold. It is their permanent ancestral property.

³⁵ "If any of your Israelite relatives fall into poverty and cannot support themselves, support them as you would a resident foreigner and allow them to live with you.

³⁶ Do not demand an advance or charge interest on the money you lend them. Instead, show your fear of God by letting them live with you as your relatives.

³⁷ Remember, do not charge your relatives interest on anything you lend them, whether money or food.

³⁸ I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

³⁹ "If any of your Israelite relatives go bankrupt and sell themselves to you, do not treat them as slaves.

⁴⁰ Treat them instead as hired servants or as resident foreigners who live with you, and they will serve you only until the Year of Jubilee.

⁴¹ At that time they and their children will no longer be obligated to you, and they will return to their clan and ancestral property.

⁴² The people of Israel are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt, so they must never be sold as slaves.

⁴³ Show your fear of God by treating them well; never exercise your power over them in a ruthless way.

⁴⁴ "However, you may purchase male or female slaves from among the foreigners who live among you.

⁴⁵ You may also purchase the children of such resident foreigners, including

those who have been born in your land. You may treat them as your property, ⁴⁶ passing them on to your children as a permanent inheritance. You may treat your slaves like this, but the people of Israel, your relatives, must never be treated this way.

⁴⁷ "If a resident foreigner becomes rich, and if some of your Israelite relatives go bankrupt and sell themselves to such a foreigner,

⁴⁸ they still retain the right of redemption. They may be bought back by a close relative—

⁴⁹ an uncle, a nephew, or anyone else who is closely related. They may also redeem themselves if they can get the money.

⁵⁰ The price of their freedom will be based on the number of years left until the next Year of Jubilee—whatever it

would cost to hire a servant for that number of years.

⁵¹ If many years still remain, they will repay most of what they received when they sold themselves.

⁵² If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, then they will repay a relatively small amount for their redemption.

⁵³ The foreigner must treat them as servants hired on a yearly basis. You must not allow a resident foreigner to treat any of your Israelite relatives ruthlessly.

⁵⁴ If any Israelites have not been redeemed by the time the Year of Jubilee arrives, then they and their children must be set free at that time.

⁵⁵ For the people of Israel are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God.

26 ¹ "Do not make idols or set up carved images, sacred pillars, or shaped stones to be worshiped in your land. I, the LORD, am your God.

² You must keep my Sabbath days of rest and show reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

³ "If you keep my laws and are careful to obey my commands,

⁴ I will send the seasonal rains. The land will then yield its crops, and the trees will produce their fruit.

⁵ Your threshing season will extend until the grape harvest, and your grape harvest will extend until it is time to plant grain again. You will eat your fill and live securely in your land.

⁶ "I will give you peace in the land, and you will be able to sleep without fear. I will remove the wild animals from your land and protect you from your enemies.

⁷ In fact, you will chase down all your enemies and slaughter them with your swords.

⁸ Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand! All your enemies will fall beneath the blows of your weapons.

⁹ "I will look favorably upon you and multiply your people and fulfill my covenant with you.

¹⁰ You will have such a surplus of crops that you will need to get rid of the leftovers from the previous year to make room for each new harvest.

¹¹ I will live among you, and I will not despise you.

¹² I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people.

¹³ I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt so you would no longer be slaves. I have lifted the yoke of slavery from your neck

so you can walk free with your heads held high.

¹⁴ "However, if you do not listen to me or obey my commands,

¹⁵ and if you break my covenant by rejecting my laws and treating my regulations with contempt,

¹⁶ I will punish you. You will suffer from sudden terrors, with wasting diseases, and with burning fevers, causing your eyes to fail and your life to ebb away. You will plant your crops in vain because your enemies will eat them.

¹⁷ I will turn against you, and you will be defeated by all your enemies. They will rule over you, and you will run even when no one is chasing you!

¹⁸ "And if, in spite of this, you still disobey me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over.

¹⁹ I will break down your arrogant spirit by making the skies above as unyielding

as iron and the earth beneath as hard as bronze.

²⁰ All your work will be for nothing, for your land will yield no crops, and your trees will bear no fruit.

²¹ "If even then you remain hostile toward me and refuse to obey, I will inflict you with seven more disasters for your sins.

²² I will release wild animals that will kill your children and destroy your cattle, so your numbers will dwindle and your roads will be deserted.

²³ "And if you fail to learn a lesson from this and continue your hostility toward me,

²⁴ then I myself will be hostile toward you, and I will personally strike you seven times over for your sins.

²⁵ I will send armies against you to carry out these covenant threats. If you flee to your cities, I will send a plague to destroy

you there, and you will be conquered by your enemies.

²⁶ I will completely destroy your food supply, so the bread from one oven will have to be stretched to feed ten families. They will ration your food by weight, and even if you have food to eat, you will not be satisfied.

²⁷ "If after this you still refuse to listen and still remain hostile toward me,

²⁸ then I will give full vent to my hostility. I will punish you seven times over for your sins.

²⁹ You will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters.

³⁰ I will destroy your pagan shrines and cut down your incense altars. I will leave your corpses piled up beside your lifeless idols, and I will despise you.

³¹ I will make your cities desolate and destroy your places of worship, and I

will take no pleasure in your offerings of incense.

³² Yes, I myself will devastate your land. Your enemies who come to occupy it will be utterly shocked at the destruction they see.

³³ I will scatter you among the nations and attack you with my own weapons. Your land will become desolate, and your cities will lie in ruins.

³⁴ Then at last the land will make up for its missed Sabbath years as it lies desolate during your years of exile in the land of your enemies. Then the land will finally rest and enjoy its Sabbaths.

³⁵ As the land lies in ruins, it will take the rest you never allowed it to take every seventh year while you lived in it.

³⁶ "And for those of you who survive, I will demoralize you in the land of your enemies far away. You will live there in such constant fear that the sound of a

leaf driven by the wind will send you fleeing. You will run as though chased by a warrior with a sword, and you will fall even when no one is pursuing you.

³⁷ Yes, though no one is chasing you, you will stumble over each other in flight, as though fleeing in battle. You will have no power to stand before your enemies.

³⁸ You will die among the foreign nations and be devoured in the land of your enemies.

³⁹ Those still left alive will rot away in enemy lands because of their sins and the sins of their ancestors.

⁴⁰ "But at last my people will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors for betraying me and being hostile toward me.

⁴¹ Finally, when I have given full expression to my hostility and have brought them to the land of their

enemies, then at last their disobedient hearts will be humbled, and they will pay for their sins.

⁴² Then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, with Isaac, and with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

⁴³ And the land will enjoy its years of Sabbath rest as it lies deserted. At last the people will receive the due punishment for their sins, for they rejected my regulations and despised my laws.

⁴⁴ "But despite all this, I will not utterly reject or despise them while they are in exile in the land of their enemies. I will not cancel my covenant with them by wiping them out. I, the LORD, am their God.

⁴⁵ I will remember my ancient covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of Egypt while all the nations watched. I, the LORD, am their God."

⁴⁶ These are the laws, regulations, and instructions that the LORD gave to the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai.

27 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Give the following instructions to the Israelites: If you make a special vow to dedicate someone to the LORD by paying the value of that person,

³ here is the scale of values to be used. A man between the ages of twenty and sixty is valued at fifty pieces of silver;
⁴ a woman of that age is valued at thirty pieces of silver.

⁵ A boy between five and twenty is valued at twenty pieces of silver; a girl of that age is valued at ten pieces of silver.

⁶ A boy between the ages of one month and five years is valued at five pieces of silver; a girl of that age is valued at three pieces of silver.

⁷ A man older than sixty is valued at fifteen pieces of silver; a woman older than sixty is valued at ten pieces of silver.

⁸ If you desire to make such a vow but cannot afford to pay the prescribed amount, go to the priest and he will evaluate your ability to pay. You will then pay the amount decided by the priest.

⁹ "If your vow involves giving a clean animal—one that is acceptable as an offering to the LORD—then your gift to the LORD will be considered holy.

¹⁰ The animal should never be exchanged or substituted for another—neither a good animal for a bad one nor a bad animal for a good one. But if such an exchange is in fact made, then both the original animal and the substitute will be considered holy.

¹¹ But if your vow involves an unclean animal—one that is not acceptable as

an offering to the LORD—then you must bring the animal to the priest.

¹² He will assess its value, and his assessment will be final.

¹³ If you want to redeem the animal, you must pay the value set by the priest, plus 20 percent.

¹⁴ "If you dedicate a house to the LORD, the priest must come to assess its value. The priest's assessment will be final.

¹⁵ If you wish to redeem the house, you must pay the value set by the priest, plus 20 percent. Then the house will again belong to you.

¹⁶ "If you dedicate to the LORD a piece of your ancestral property, its value will be assessed by the amount of seed required to plant it—fifty pieces of silver for an area that produces five bushels of barley seed.

¹⁷ If the field is dedicated to the LORD in the Year of Jubilee, then the entire assessment will apply.

¹⁸ But if the field is dedicated after the Year of Jubilee, the priest must assess the land's value in proportion to the years left until the next Year of Jubilee.

¹⁹ If you decide to redeem the dedicated field, you must pay the land's value as assessed by the priest, plus 20 percent. Then the field will again belong to you.

²⁰ But if you decide not to redeem the field, or if the field is sold to someone else by the priests, it can never be redeemed.

²¹ When the field is released in the Year of Jubilee, it will be holy, a field specially set apart for the LORD. It will become the property of the priests.

²² "If you dedicate to the LORD a field that you have purchased but which is not part of your ancestral property,
²³ the priest must assess its value based on the years until the next Year of Jubilee. You must then give the assessed value of the land as a sacred donation to the LORD.

²⁴ In the Year of Jubilee the field will be released to the original owner from whom you purchased it.

²⁵ All the value assessments must be measured in terms of the standard sanctuary shekel.

²⁶ "You may not dedicate to the LORD the firstborn of your cattle or sheep because the firstborn of these animals already belong to him.

²⁷ However, if it is the firstborn of a ceremonially unclean animal, you may redeem it by paying the priest's assessment of its worth, plus 20 percent.

If you do not redeem it, the priest may sell it to someone else for its assessed value.

²⁸ "However, anything specially set apart by the LORD—whether a person, an animal, or an inherited field—must never be sold or redeemed. Anything devoted in this way has been set apart for the LORD as holy.

²⁹ A person specially set apart by the LORD for destruction cannot be redeemed. Such a person must be put to death.

³⁰ "A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, belongs to the LORD and must be set apart to him as holy.

³¹ If you want to redeem the LORD's tenth of the fruit or grain, you must pay its value, plus 20 percent.

³² The LORD also owns every tenth animal counted off from your herds and flocks. They are set apart to him as holy.

³³ The tenth animal must not be selected on the basis of whether it is good or bad, and no substitutions will be allowed. If any exchange is in fact made, then both the original animal and the substituted one will be considered holy and cannot be redeemed."

³⁴ These are the commands that the LORD gave to the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai.

Numbers

1 ¹ One day in midspring, during the second year after Israel's departure from Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the Tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai. He said,

² "Take a census of the whole community of Israel by their clans and families. List the names of all the men ³ twenty years old or older who are able to go to war. You and Aaron are to direct the project,

⁴ assisted by one family leader from each tribe."

⁵ These are the tribes and the names of the leaders chosen for the task: Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur;

⁶ Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai;

⁷ Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab;

⁸ Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar;

⁹ Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon;

¹⁰ Ephraim son of Joseph, Elishama son of Ammihud; Manasseh son of Joseph, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur;

¹¹ Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni;

¹² Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai;

¹³ Asher, Pagiel son of Ocran;

¹⁴ Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel;

¹⁵ Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.

¹⁶ These tribal leaders, heads of their own families, were chosen from among all the people.

¹⁷ Now Moses and Aaron and the chosen leaders

¹⁸ called together the whole community of Israel on that very day. All the people were registered according to their ancestry by their clans and families. The men of Israel twenty years old or older were registered, one by one,

¹⁹ just as the LORD had commanded Moses. So Moses counted the people there in the wilderness of Sinai.

²⁰ This is the number of men twenty years old or older who were able to go to war, each listed according to his own clan and family:

²¹ Reuben (Jacob's oldest son) 46,500.

²² [[EMPTY]]

²³ Simeon 59,300.

²⁴ [[EMPTY]]

²⁵ Gad 45,650.

²⁶ [[EMPTY]]

²⁷ Judah 74,600.

²⁸ [[EMPTY]]

²⁹ Issachar 54,400.

³⁰ [[EMPTY]]

³¹ Zebulun 57,400.

³² [[EMPTY]]

³³ Ephraim son of Joseph 40,500.

³⁴ [[EMPTY]]

³⁵ Manasseh son of Joseph 32,200.

36 [[EMPTY]]

37 Benjamin 35,400.

38 [[EMPTY]]

39 Dan 62,700.

40 [[EMPTY]]

41 Asher 41,500.

42 [[EMPTY]]

43 Naphtali 53,400.

44 These were the men counted by Moses and Aaron and the twelve leaders of Israel, all listed according to their ancestral descent.

45 They were counted by families—all the men of Israel who were twenty years old or older and able to go to war.

46 The total number was 603,550.

47 But this total did not include the Levites.

48 For the LORD had said to Moses,

49 "Exempt the tribe of Levi from the census; do not include them when you count the rest of the Israelites.

⁵⁰ You must put the Levites in charge of the Tabernacle of the Covenant, along with its furnishings and equipment. They must carry the Tabernacle and its equipment as you travel, and they must care for it and camp around it.

⁵¹ Whenever the Tabernacle is moved, the Levites will take it down and set it up again. Anyone else who goes too near the Tabernacle will be executed.

⁵² Each tribe of Israel will have a designated camping area with its own family banner.

⁵³ But the Levites will camp around the Tabernacle of the Covenant to offer the people of Israel protection from the LORD's fierce anger. The Levites are responsible to stand guard around the Tabernacle."

⁵⁴ So the Israelites did everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

2¹ Then the LORD gave these instructions to Moses and Aaron:

² "Each tribe will be assigned its own area in the camp, and the various groups will camp beneath their family banners. The Tabernacle will be located at the center of these tribal compounds.

³ "The divisions of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun are to camp toward the sunrise on the east side of the Tabernacle, beneath their family banners. These are the names of the tribes, their leaders, and the number of their available troops: Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab

⁴ 74,600.

⁵ Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar

⁶ 54,400.

⁷ Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon

⁸ 57,400.

⁹ So the total of all the troops on Judah's side of the camp is 186,400. These three

tribes are to lead the way whenever the Israelites travel to a new campsite.

¹⁰ "The divisions of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad are to camp on the south side of the Tabernacle, beneath their family banners. These are the names of the tribes, their leaders, and the number of their available troops: Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur

¹¹ 46,500.

¹² Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai

¹³ 59,300.

¹⁴ Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel

¹⁵ 45,650.

¹⁶ So the total of all the troops on Reuben's side of the camp is 151,450. These three tribes will be second in line whenever the Israelites travel.

¹⁷ "Then the Levites will set out from the middle of the camp with the Tabernacle. All the tribes are to travel in the same order that they camp, each in

position under the appropriate family banner.

¹⁸ "The divisions of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin are to camp on the west side of the Tabernacle, beneath their family banners. These are the names of the tribes, their leaders, and the number of their available troops: Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud

¹⁹ 40,500.

²⁰ Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur

²¹ 32,200.

²² Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni

²³ 35,400.

²⁴ So the total of all the troops on Ephraim's side of the camp is 108,100, and they will follow the Levites in the line of march.

²⁵ "The divisions of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali are to camp on the north side of the Tabernacle, beneath their family banners. These are the names of the

tribes, their leaders, and the number of their available troops: Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai

²⁶ 62,700.

²⁷ Asher, Pagiel son of Ocran

²⁸ 41,500.

²⁹ Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan

³⁰ 53,400.

³¹ So the total of all the troops on Dan's side of the camp is 157,600. They are to bring up the rear whenever the Israelites move to a new campsite."

³² In summary, the troops of Israel listed by their families totaled 603,550.

³³ The Levites were exempted from this census by the LORD's command to Moses.

³⁴ So the people of Israel did everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses. Each clan and family set up camp and marched under their banners exactly as the LORD had instructed them.

3 ¹ This is the family line of Aaron and Moses as it was recorded when the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai:

² Aaron's sons were Nadab (the firstborn), Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

³ They were anointed and set apart to minister as priests.

⁴ But Nadab and Abihu died in the LORD's presence in the wilderness of Sinai when they burned before the LORD a different kind of fire than he had commanded. Since they had no sons, this left only Eleazar and Ithamar to serve as priests with their father, Aaron.

⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses,

⁶ "Call forward the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest as his assistants.

⁷ They will serve Aaron and the whole community, performing their sacred duties in and around the Tabernacle.

⁸ They will also maintain all the furnishings of the sacred tent, serving in the Tabernacle on behalf of all the Israelites.

⁹ Assign the Levites to Aaron and his sons as their assistants.

¹⁰ Appoint Aaron and his sons to carry out the duties of the priesthood. Anyone else who comes too near the sanctuary must be executed!"

¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹² "I have chosen the Levites from among the Israelites as substitutes for all the firstborn sons of the people of Israel. The Levites are mine

¹³ because all the firstborn sons are mine. From the day I killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, I set apart for myself all the firstborn in Israel of both men and animals. They are mine; I am the LORD."

¹⁴ The LORD spoke again to Moses, there in the wilderness of Sinai. He said,

¹⁵ "Take a census of the tribe of Levi by its families and clans. Count every male who is one month old or older."

¹⁶ So Moses counted them, just as the LORD had commanded.

¹⁷ Levi had three sons, who were named Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁸ The clans descended from Gershon were named for two of his descendants, Libni and Shimei.

¹⁹ The clans descended from Kohath were named for four of his descendants, Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

²⁰ The clans descended from Merari were named for two of his descendants, Mahli and Mushi. These were the Levite clans, listed according to their family groups.

²¹ The descendants of Gershon were composed of the clans descended from Libni and Shimei.

²² There were 7,500 males one month old or older among these Gershonite clans.

²³ They were assigned the area to the west of the Tabernacle for their camp.

²⁴ The leader of the Gershonite clans was Eliasaph son of Lael.

²⁵ These two clans were responsible to care for the tent of the Tabernacle with its layers of coverings, its entry curtains,

²⁶ the curtains of the courtyard that surrounded the Tabernacle and altar, the curtain at the courtyard entrance, the cords, and all the equipment related to their use.

²⁷ The descendants of Kohath were composed of the clans descended from Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

²⁸ There were 8,600 males one month old or older among these Kohathite clans. They were responsible for the care of the sanctuary.

²⁹ They were assigned the area south of the Tabernacle for their camp.

³⁰ The leader of the Kohathite clans was Elizaphan son of Uzziel.

³¹ These four clans were responsible for the care of the Ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the various utensils used in the sanctuary, the inner curtain, and all the equipment related to their use.

³² Eleazar the priest, Aaron's son, was the chief administrator over all the Levites, with special responsibility for the oversight of the sanctuary.

³³ The descendants of Merari were composed of the clans descended from Mahli and Mushi.

³⁴ There were 6,200 males one month old or older among these Merarite clans.

³⁵ They were assigned the area north of the Tabernacle for their camp. The leader of the Merarite clans was Zuriel son of Abihail.

³⁶ These two clans were responsible for the care of the frames supporting the Tabernacle, the crossbars, the pillars, the bases, and all the equipment related to their use.

³⁷ They were also responsible for the posts of the courtyard and all their bases, pegs, and cords.

³⁸ The area in front of the Tabernacle in the east toward the sunrise was reserved for the tents of Moses and of Aaron and his sons, who had the final responsibility for the sanctuary on behalf of the people of Israel. Anyone other than a priest or Levite who came too near the sanctuary was to be executed.

³⁹ So among the Levite clans counted by Moses and Aaron at the LORD's command, there were 22,000 males one month old or older.

⁴⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now count all the firstborn sons in Israel who are one month old or older, and register each name.

⁴¹ The Levites will be reserved for me as substitutes for the firstborn sons of Israel; I am the LORD. And the Levites' livestock are mine as substitutes for the firstborn livestock of the whole nation of Israel."

⁴² So Moses counted the firstborn sons of the people of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded.

⁴³ The total number of firstborn sons who were one month old or older was 22,273.

⁴⁴ Now the LORD said to Moses,

⁴⁵ "Take the Levites in place of the firstborn sons of the people of Israel. And take the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for the firstborn livestock of the people of Israel. The Levites will be mine; I am the LORD.

⁴⁶ To redeem the 273 firstborn sons of Israel who are in excess of the number of Levites,

⁴⁷ collect five pieces of silver for each person, each piece weighing the same as the standard sanctuary shekel.

⁴⁸ Give the silver to Aaron and his sons as the redemption price for the extra firstborn sons."

⁴⁹ So Moses collected redemption money for the firstborn sons of Israel who exceeded the number of Levites.

⁵⁰ The silver collected on behalf of these firstborn sons of Israel came to about thirty–four pounds in weight.

⁵¹ And Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons as the LORD had commanded.

4 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

² "Take a census of the clans and families of the Kohathite division of the Levite tribe.

³ Count all the men between the ages of thirty and fifty who qualify to work in the Tabernacle.

⁴ "The duties of the Kohathites at the Tabernacle will relate to the most sacred objects.

⁵ When the camp moves, Aaron and his sons must enter the Tabernacle first to take down the inner curtain and cover the Ark of the Covenant with it.

⁶ Then they must cover the inner curtain with fine goatskin leather, and the goatskin leather with a dark blue

cloth. Finally, they must put the carrying poles of the Ark in place.

⁷ "Next they must spread a blue cloth over the table, where the Bread of the Presence is displayed, and place the dishes, spoons, bowls, cups, and the special bread on the cloth.

⁸ They must spread a scarlet cloth over that, and finally a covering of fine goatskin leather on top of the scarlet cloth. Then they must insert the carrying poles into the table.

⁹ "Next they must cover the lampstand with a dark blue cloth, along with its lamps, lamp snuffers, trays, and special jars of olive oil.

¹⁰ The lampstand with its utensils must then be covered with fine goatskin leather, and the bundle must be placed on a carrying frame.

¹¹ "Aaron and his sons must also spread a dark blue cloth over the gold altar and

cover this cloth with a covering of fine goatskin leather. Then they are to attach the carrying poles to the altar.

¹² All the remaining utensils of the sanctuary must be wrapped in a dark blue cloth, covered with fine goatskin leather, and placed on the carrying frame.

¹³ "The ashes must be removed from the altar, and the altar must then be covered with a purple cloth.

¹⁴ All the altar utensils—the firepans, hooks, shovels, basins, and all the containers—are to be placed on the cloth, and a covering of fine goatskin leather must be spread over them. Finally, the carrying poles must be put in place.

¹⁵ When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the sacred utensils, the Kohathites will come and carry these things to the next

destination. But they must not touch the sacred objects, or they will die. So these are the objects of the Tabernacle that the Kohathites must carry.

¹⁶ "Eleazar son of Aaron the priest will be responsible for the oil of the lampstand, the fragrant incense, the daily grain offering, and the anointing oil. In fact, the supervision of the entire Tabernacle and everything in it will be Eleazar's responsibility."

¹⁷ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

¹⁸ "Don't let the Kohathite clans be destroyed from among the Levites!

¹⁹ This is what you must do so they will live and not die when they approach the most sacred objects. Aaron and his sons must always go in with them and assign a specific duty or load to each person.

²⁰ Otherwise they must not approach the sanctuary and look at the sacred

objects for even a moment, or they will die."

²¹ And the LORD said to Moses,

²² "Take a census of the clans and families of the Gershonite division of the tribe of Levi.

²³ Count all the men between the ages of thirty and fifty who are eligible to serve in the Tabernacle.

²⁴ "The duties of the Gershonites will be in the areas of general service and carrying loads.

²⁵ They must carry the curtains of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle itself with its coverings, the outer covering of fine goatskin leather, and the curtain for the Tabernacle entrance.

²⁶ They are also to carry the curtains for the courtyard walls that surround the Tabernacle and altar, the curtain across the courtyard entrance, the necessary cords, and all the altar's accessories.

The Gershonites are responsible for transporting all these items.

²⁷ Aaron and his sons will direct the Gershonites regarding their duties, whether it involves moving or doing other work. They must assign the Gershonites the loads they are to carry.

²⁸ So these are the duties assigned to the Gershonites at the Tabernacle. They will be directly responsible to Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

²⁹ "Now take a census of the clans and families of the Merarite division of the Levite tribe.

³⁰ Count all the men between the ages of thirty and fifty who are eligible to serve in the Tabernacle.

³¹ "Their duties at the Tabernacle will consist of carrying loads. They will be required to carry the frames of the Tabernacle, the crossbars, the pillars with their bases,

³² the posts for the courtyard walls with their bases, pegs, cords, accessories, and everything else related to their use. You must assign the various loads to each man by name.

³³ So these are the duties of the Merarites at the Tabernacle. They are directly responsible to Ithamar son of Aaron the priest."

³⁴ So Moses, Aaron, and the other leaders of the community counted the Kohathite division by its clans and families.

³⁵ The count included all the men between thirty and fifty years of age who were eligible for service in the Tabernacle,

³⁶ and the total number came to 2,750.

³⁷ So this was the total of all those from the Kohathite clans who were eligible to serve at the Tabernacle. Moses and

Aaron counted them, just as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

³⁸ The Gershonite division was also counted by its clans and families.

³⁹ The count included all the men between thirty and fifty years of age who were eligible for service in the Tabernacle,

⁴⁰ and the total number came to 2,630.

⁴¹ So this was the total of all those from the Gershonite clans who were eligible to serve at the Tabernacle. Moses and Aaron counted them, just as the LORD had commanded.

⁴² The Merarite division was also counted by its clans and families.

⁴³ The count included all the men between thirty and fifty years of age who were eligible for service in the Tabernacle,

⁴⁴ and the total number came to 3,200.

⁴⁵ So this was the total of all those from the Merarite clans who were eligible for service. Moses and Aaron counted them, just as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

⁴⁶ So Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel counted all the Levites by their clans and families.

⁴⁷ All the men between thirty and fifty years of age who were eligible for service in the Tabernacle and for its transportation

⁴⁸ numbered 8,580.

⁴⁹ Each man was assigned his task and told what to carry, just as the LORD had commanded through Moses. And so the census was completed, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

5 ¹ The LORD gave these instructions to Moses:

² "Command the people of Israel to remove anyone from the camp who has

a contagious skin disease or a discharge, or who has been defiled by touching a dead person.

³ This applies to men and women alike. Remove them so they will not defile the camp, where I live among you."

⁴ So the Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and removed such people from the camp.

⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses,

⁶ "Give these instructions to the people of Israel: If any of the people—men or women—betray the LORD by doing wrong to another person, they are guilty.

⁷ They must confess their sin and make full restitution for what they have done, adding a penalty of 20 percent and returning it to the person who was wronged.

⁸ But if the person who was wronged is dead, and there are no near relatives to whom restitution can be made, it

belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest, along with a ram for atonement.

⁹ All the sacred gifts that the Israelites bring to a priest will belong to him.

¹⁰ Each priest may keep the sacred donations that he receives."

¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹² "Say to the people of Israel: 'Suppose a man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to her husband.

¹³ Suppose she sleeps with another man, but there is no witness since she was not caught in the act.

¹⁴ If her husband becomes jealous and suspicious of his wife, even if she has not defiled herself,

¹⁵ the husband must bring his wife to the priest with an offering of two quarts of barley flour to be presented on her behalf. Do not mix it with olive oil or frankincense, for it is a jealousy

offering—an offering of inquiry to find out if she is guilty.

¹⁶ "The priest must then present her before the LORD.

¹⁷ He must take some holy water in a clay jar and mix it with dust from the Tabernacle floor.

¹⁸ When he has presented her before the LORD, he must unbind her hair and place the offering of inquiry—the jealousy offering—in her hands to determine whether or not her husband's suspicions are justified. The priest will stand before her, holding the jar of bitter water that brings a curse to those who are guilty.

¹⁹ The priest will put the woman under oath and say to her, "If no other man has slept with you, and you have not defiled yourself by being unfaithful, may you be immune from the effects of this bitter water that causes the curse.

²⁰ But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority and defiled yourself by sleeping with another man"—

²¹ at this point the priest must put the woman under this oath—"then may the people see that the LORD's curse is upon you when he makes you infertile.

²² Now may this water that brings the curse enter your body and make you infertile." And the woman will be required to say, "Yes, let it be so."

²³ Then the priest will write these curses on a piece of leather and wash them off into the bitter water.

²⁴ He will then make the woman drink the bitter water, so it may bring on the curse and cause bitter suffering in cases of guilt.

²⁵ "'Then the priest will take the jealousy offering from the woman's

hand, lift it up before the LORD, and carry it to the altar.

²⁶ He will take a handful as a token portion and burn it on the altar. Then he will require the woman to drink the water.

²⁷ If she has defiled herself by being unfaithful to her husband, the water that brings the curse will cause bitter suffering. She will become infertile, and her name will become a curse word among her people.

²⁸ But if she has not defiled herself and is pure, she will be unharmed and will still be able to have children.

²⁹ "This is the ritual law for dealing with jealousy. If a woman defiles herself by being unfaithful to her husband,

³⁰ or if a man is overcome with jealousy and suspicion that his wife has been unfaithful, the husband must present his

wife before the LORD, and the priest will apply this entire ritual law to her.

³¹ The husband will be innocent of any guilt in this matter, but his wife will be held accountable for her sin."

6 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel and give them these instructions:

² If some of the people, either men or women, take the special vow of a Nazirite, setting themselves apart to the LORD in a special way,

³ they must give up wine and other alcoholic drinks. They must not use vinegar made from wine, they must not drink other fermented drinks or fresh grape juice, and they must not eat grapes or raisins.

⁴ As long as they are bound by their Nazirite vow, they are not allowed to eat or drink anything that comes from a

grapevine, not even the grape seeds or skins.

⁵ "They must never cut their hair throughout the time of their vow, for they are holy and set apart to the LORD. That is why they must let their hair grow long.

⁶ And they may not go near a dead body during the entire period of their vow to the LORD,

⁷ even if their own father, mother, brother, or sister has died. They must not defile the hair on their head, because it is the symbol of their separation to God.

⁸ This applies as long as they are set apart to the LORD.

⁹ "If their hair is defiled because someone suddenly falls dead beside them, they must wait for seven days and then shave their heads. Then they will be cleansed from their defilement.

¹⁰ On the eighth day they must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

¹¹ The priest will offer one of the birds for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way, he will make atonement for the guilt they incurred from the dead body. Then they must renew their vow that day and let their hair begin to grow again.

¹² The days of their vow that were completed before their defilement no longer count. They must rededicate themselves to the LORD for the full term of their vow, and each must bring a one-year-old male lamb for a guilt offering.

¹³ "This is the ritual law of the Nazirites. At the conclusion of their time of separation as Nazirites, they must each go to the entrance of the Tabernacle

¹⁴ and offer these sacrifices to the LORD: a one-year-old male lamb without defect for a burnt offering, a one-year-old female lamb without defect for a sin offering, a ram without defect for a peace offering,

¹⁵ a basket of bread made without yeast—cakes of choice flour mixed with olive oil and wafers spread with olive oil—along with their prescribed grain offerings and drink offerings.

¹⁶ The priest will present these offerings before the LORD: first the sin offering and the burnt offering;

¹⁷ then the ram for a peace offering, along with the basket of bread made without yeast. The priest must also make the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

¹⁸ "Then the Nazirites will shave their hair at the entrance of the Tabernacle

and put it on the fire beneath the peace-offering sacrifice.

¹⁹ After each Nazirite's head has been shaved, the priest will take for each of them the boiled shoulder of the ram, one cake made without yeast, and one wafer made without yeast, and put them all into the Nazirite's hands.

²⁰ The priest will then lift the gifts up before the LORD in a gesture of offering. These are holy portions for the priest, along with the breast and thigh pieces that were lifted up before the LORD. After this ceremony the Nazirites may again drink wine.

²¹ "This is the ritual law of the Nazirites. If any Nazirites have vowed to give the LORD anything else beyond what is required by their normal Nazirite vow, they must fulfill their special vow exactly as they have promised."

²² Then the LORD said to Moses,

²³ "Instruct Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing:

²⁴ 'May the LORD bless you and protect you.

²⁵ May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

²⁶ May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

²⁷ This is how Aaron and his sons will designate the Israelites as my people, and I myself will bless them."

7 ¹ On the day Moses set up the Tabernacle, he anointed it and set it apart as holy, along with all its furnishings and the altar with its utensils.

² Then the leaders of Israel—the tribal leaders who had organized the census—came and brought their offerings.

³ Together they brought six carts and twelve oxen. There was a cart for every

two leaders and an ox for each leader. They presented these to the LORD in front of the Tabernacle.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses,

⁵ "Receive their gifts and use these oxen and carts for the work of the Tabernacle. Distribute them among the Levites according to the work they have to do."

⁶ So Moses presented the carts and oxen to the Levites.

⁷ He gave two carts and four oxen to the Gershonite division for their work,

⁸ and four carts and eight oxen to the Merarite division for their work. All their work was done under the leadership of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

⁹ But he gave none of the carts or oxen to the Kohathite division, since they were required to carry the sacred objects of the Tabernacle on their shoulders.

¹⁰ The leaders also presented dedication gifts for the altar at the time

it was anointed. They each placed their gifts before the altar.

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, "Let each leader bring his gift on a different day for the dedication of the altar."

¹² On the first day Nahshon son of Amminadab, leader of the tribe of Judah, presented his offering.

¹³ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

¹⁴ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

¹⁵ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

¹⁶ a male goat for a sin offering;

¹⁷ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering brought by Nahshon son of Amminadab.

¹⁸ On the second day Nethanel son of Zuar, leader of the tribe of Issachar, presented his offering.

¹⁹ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

²⁰ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

²¹ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

²² a male goat for a sin offering;

²³ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering brought by Nethanel son of Zuar.

²⁴ On the third day Eliab son of Helon, leader of the tribe of Zebulun, presented his offering.

²⁵ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

²⁶ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

²⁷ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

²⁸ a male goat for a sin offering;

²⁹ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering brought by Eliab son of Helon.

³⁰ On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, leader of the tribe of Reuben, presented his offering.

³¹ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

³² He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

³³ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

³⁴ a male goat for a sin offering;

³⁵ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs

for a peace offering. This was the offering brought by Elizur son of Shedeur.

³⁶ On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, leader of the tribe of Simeon, presented his offering.

³⁷ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

³⁸ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

³⁹ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁴⁰ a male goat for a sin offering;

⁴¹ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was the

offering brought by Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

⁴² On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, leader of the tribe of Gad, presented his offering.

⁴³ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

⁴⁴ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

⁴⁵ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁴⁶ a male goat for a sin offering;

⁴⁷ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was

the offering brought by Eliasaph son of Deuel.

⁴⁸ On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, leader of the tribe of Ephraim, presented his offering.

⁴⁹ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

⁵⁰ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

⁵¹ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁵² a male goat for a sin offering;

⁵³ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was

the offering brought by Elishama son of Ammihud.

⁵⁴ On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, leader of the tribe of Manasseh, presented his offering.

⁵⁵ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

⁵⁶ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

⁵⁷ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁵⁸ a male goat for a sin offering;

⁵⁹ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was

the offering brought by Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

⁶⁰ On the ninth day Abidan son of Gideoni, leader of the tribe of Benjamin, presented his offering.

⁶¹ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

⁶² He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

⁶³ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁶⁴ a male goat for a sin offering;

⁶⁵ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was

the offering brought by Abidan son of Gideoni.

⁶⁶ On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, leader of the tribe of Dan, presented his offering.

⁶⁷ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

⁶⁸ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

⁶⁹ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁷⁰ a male goat for a sin offering;

⁷¹ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was

the offering brought by Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

⁷² On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Ocran, leader of the tribe of Asher, presented his offering.

⁷³ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

⁷⁴ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

⁷⁵ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁷⁶ a male goat for a sin offering;

⁷⁷ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering brought by Pagiel son of Ocran.

⁷⁸ On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, leader of the tribe of Naphtali, presented his offering.

⁷⁹ The offering consisted of a silver platter weighing about 3 1/4 pounds and a silver basin of about 1 3/4 pounds. These were both filled with grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil.

⁸⁰ He also brought a gold container weighing about four ounces, which was filled with incense.

⁸¹ He brought a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering;

⁸² a male goat for a sin offering;

⁸³ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs for a peace offering. This was the offering brought by Ahira son of Enan.

⁸⁴ So this was the dedication offering for the altar, brought by the leaders of

Israel at the time it was anointed: twelve silver platters, twelve silver basins, and twelve gold incense containers.

⁸⁵ In all, the silver objects weighed about 60 pounds, about 3 1/4 pounds for each platter and 1 3/4 pounds for each basin.

⁸⁶ The weight of the donated gold came to about three pounds, about four ounces for each of the gold containers that were filled with incense.

⁸⁷ Twelve bulls, twelve rams, and twelve one-year-old male lambs were donated for the burnt offerings, along with their prescribed grain offerings. Twelve male goats were brought for the sin offerings.

⁸⁸ Twenty-four young bulls, sixty rams, sixty male goats, and sixty one-year-old male lambs were donated for the peace offerings. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed.

⁸⁹ Whenever Moses went into the Tabernacle to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—that rests on the Ark of the Covenant. The LORD spoke to him from there.

8 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Tell Aaron that when he sets up the seven lamps in the lampstand, he is to place them so their light shines forward."

³ So Aaron did this. He set up the seven lamps so they reflected their light forward, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁴ The entire lampstand, from its base to its decorative blossoms, was made of beaten gold. It was built according to the exact design the LORD had shown Moses.

⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses,

⁶ "Now set the Levites apart from the rest of the people of Israel and make them ceremonially clean.

⁷ Do this by sprinkling them with the water of purification. And have them shave their entire body and wash their clothing. Then they will be ceremonially clean.

⁸ Have them bring a young bull and a grain offering of choice flour mixed with olive oil, along with a second young bull for a sin offering.

⁹ Then assemble the whole community of Israel and present the Levites at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

¹⁰ When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel must lay their hands on them.

¹¹ Aaron must present the Levites to the LORD as a special offering from the people of Israel, thus dedicating them to the LORD's service.

¹² "Next the Levites will lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls and present them to the LORD. One will be for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, to make atonement for the Levites.

¹³ Then have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons, and present them as a special offering to the LORD.

¹⁴ In this way, you will set the Levites apart from the rest of the people of Israel, and the Levites will belong to me.

¹⁵ After this, they may go in and out of the Tabernacle to do their work, because you have purified them and presented them as a special offering.

¹⁶ "Of all the people of Israel, the Levites are reserved for me. I have claimed them for myself in place of all the firstborn sons of the Israelites; I have taken the Levites as their substitutes.

¹⁷ For all the firstborn males among the people of Israel are mine, both people and animals. I set them apart for myself on the night I killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians.

¹⁸ Yes, I claim the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons of Israel.

¹⁹ And of all the Israelites, I have assigned the Levites to Aaron and his sons. They will serve in the Tabernacle on behalf of the Israelites and make atonement for them so no plague will strike them when they approach the sanctuary."

²⁰ So Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel dedicated the Levites, carefully following all the LORD's instructions to Moses.

²¹ The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes, and Aaron presented them to the LORD as a special

offering. He then performed the rite of atonement over them to purify them.

²² From then on the Levites went into the Tabernacle to perform their duties, helping Aaron and his sons. So they carried out all the commands that the LORD gave Moses concerning the Levites.

²³ The LORD also instructed Moses,

²⁴ "This is the rule the Levites must follow: They must begin serving in the Tabernacle at the age of twenty–five,

²⁵ and they must retire at the age of fifty.

²⁶ After retirement they may assist their fellow Levites by performing guard duty at the Tabernacle, but they may not officiate in the service. This is how you will assign duties to the Levites."

9¹ The LORD gave these instructions to Moses in early spring, during the second year after Israel's departure

from Egypt, while he and the rest of the Israelites were in the wilderness of Sinai:

² "Tell the Israelites to celebrate the Passover at the proper time,

³ at twilight on the appointed day in early spring. Be sure to follow all my laws and regulations concerning this celebration."

⁴ So Moses told the people to celebrate the Passover

⁵ in the wilderness of Sinai as twilight fell on the appointed day. And they celebrated the festival there, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁶ But some of the men had been ceremonially defiled by touching a dead person, so they could not offer their Passover lambs that day. So they came to Moses and Aaron that day

⁷ and said, "We have become ceremonially unclean by touching a dead person. But why should we be excluded

from presenting the LORD's offering at the proper time with the rest of the Israelites?"

⁸ Moses answered, "Wait here until I have received instructions for you from the LORD."

⁹ This was the LORD's reply:

¹⁰ "Say to the Israelites: 'If any of the people now or in future generations are ceremonially unclean at Passover time because of touching a dead body, or if they are on a journey and cannot be present at the ceremony, they may still celebrate the LORD's Passover.

¹¹ They must offer the Passover sacrifice one month later, at twilight on the appointed day. They must eat the lamb at that time with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast.

¹² They must not leave any of the lamb until the next morning, and they must not break any of its bones. They

must follow all the normal regulations concerning the Passover.

¹³ "But those who are ceremonially clean and not away on a trip, yet still refuse to celebrate the Passover at the regular time, will be cut off from the community of Israel for failing to present the LORD's offering at the proper time. They will suffer the consequences of their guilt.

¹⁴ And if foreigners living among you want to celebrate the Passover to the LORD, they must follow these same laws and regulations. The same laws apply both to you and to the foreigners living among you."

¹⁵ The Tabernacle was set up, and on that day the cloud covered it. Then from evening until morning the cloud over the Tabernacle appeared to be a pillar of fire.

¹⁶ This was the regular pattern— at night the cloud changed to the appearance of fire.

¹⁷ When the cloud lifted from over the sacred tent, the people of Israel followed it. And wherever the cloud settled, the people of Israel camped.

¹⁸ In this way, they traveled at the LORD's command and stopped wherever he told them to. Then they remained where they were as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle.

¹⁹ If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time, the Israelites stayed for a long time, just as the LORD commanded.

²⁰ Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days. Then at the LORD's command they would break camp.

²¹ Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight and moved on the next morning. But day or night, when the cloud lifted, the people broke camp and followed.

²² Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days, a month, or a year, the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on. But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on.

²³ So they camped or traveled at the LORD's command, and they did whatever the LORD told them through Moses.

10 ¹ Now the LORD said to Moses,
² "Make two trumpets of beaten silver to be used for summoning the people to assemble and for signaling the breaking of camp.

³ When both trumpets are blown, the people will know that they are to gather before you at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

⁴ But if only one is blown, then only the leaders of the tribes of Israel will come to you.

⁵ "When you sound the signal to move on, the tribes on the east side of the Tabernacle will break camp and move forward.

⁶ When you sound the signal a second time, the tribes on the south will follow. You must sound short blasts to signal moving on.

⁷ But when you call the people to an assembly, blow the trumpets using a different signal.

⁸ Only the priests, Aaron's descendants, are allowed to blow the trumpets. This is a permanent law to be followed from generation to generation.

⁹ "When you arrive in your own land and go to war against your enemies, you must sound the alarm with these trumpets so the LORD your God will

remember you and rescue you from your enemies.

¹⁰ Blow the trumpets in times of gladness, too, sounding them at your annual festivals and at the beginning of each month to rejoice over your burnt offerings and peace offerings. The trumpets will remind the LORD your God of his covenant with you. I am the LORD your God."

¹¹ One day in midspring, during the second year after Israel's departure from Egypt, the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle of the Covenant.

¹² So the Israelites set out from the wilderness of Sinai and traveled on in stages until the cloud stopped in the wilderness of Paran.

¹³ When the time to move arrived, the LORD gave the order through Moses.

¹⁴ The tribes that camped with Judah headed the march with their banner,

under the leadership of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

¹⁵ The tribe of Issachar was led by Nethanel son of Zuar.

¹⁶ The tribe of Zebulun was led by Eliab son of Helon.

¹⁷ Then the Tabernacle was taken down, and the Gershonite and Merarite divisions of the Levites were next in the line of march, carrying the Tabernacle with them.

¹⁸ Then the tribes that camped with Reuben set out with their banner, under the leadership of Elizur son of Shedeur.

¹⁹ The tribe of Simeon was led by Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

²⁰ The tribe of Gad was led by Eliasaph son of Deuel.

²¹ Next came the Kohathite division of the Levites, carrying the sacred objects from the Tabernacle. When they arrived

at the next camp, the Tabernacle would already be set up at its new location.

²² Then the tribes that camped with Ephraim set out with their banner, under the leadership of Elishama son of Ammihud.

²³ The tribe of Manasseh was led by Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

²⁴ The tribe of Benjamin was led by Abidan son of Gideoni.

²⁵ Last of all, the tribes that camped with Dan set out under their banner. They served as the rear guard for all the tribal camps. The tribe of Dan headed this group, under the leadership of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

²⁶ The tribe of Asher was led by Pagiel son of Ocran.

²⁷ The tribe of Naphtali was led by Ahira son of Enan.

²⁸ This was the order in which the tribes marched, division by division.

²⁹ One day Moses said to his brother-in-law, Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, "We are on our way to the Promised Land. Come with us and we will treat you well, for the LORD has given wonderful promises to Israel!"

³⁰ But Hobab replied, "No, I will not go. I must return to my own land and family."

³¹ "Please don't leave us," Moses pleaded. "You know the places in the wilderness where we should camp.

³² Come, be our guide and we will share with you all the good things that the LORD does for us."

³³ They marched for three days after leaving the mountain of the LORD, with the Ark of the LORD's covenant moving ahead of them to show them where to stop and rest.

³⁴ As they moved on each day, the cloud of the LORD hovered over them.

³⁵ And whenever the Ark set out, Moses would cry, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered! Let them flee before you!"

³⁶ And when the Ark was set down, he would say, "Return, O LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel!"

11 ¹ The people soon began to complain to the LORD about their hardships; and when the LORD heard them, his anger blazed against them. Fire from the LORD raged among them and destroyed the outskirts of the camp.

² The people screamed to Moses for help; and when he prayed to the LORD, the fire stopped.

³ After that, the area was known as Taberah—"the place of burning"—because fire from the LORD had burned among them there.

⁴ Then the foreign rabble who were traveling with the Israelites began to

crave the good things of Egypt, and the people of Israel also began to complain. "Oh, for some meat!" they exclaimed.

⁵ "We remember all the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic that we wanted.

⁶ But now our appetites are gone, and day after day we have nothing to eat but this manna!"

⁷ The manna looked like small coriander seeds, pale yellow in color.

⁸ The people gathered it from the ground and made flour by grinding it with hand mills or pounding it in mortars. Then they boiled it in a pot and made it into flat cakes. These cakes tasted like they had been cooked in olive oil.

⁹ The manna came down on the camp with the dew during the night.

¹⁰ Moses heard all the families standing in front of their tents weeping, and the LORD became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated.

¹¹ And Moses said to the LORD, "Why are you treating me, your servant, so miserably? What did I do to deserve the burden of a people like this?"

¹² Are they my children? Am I their father? Is that why you have told me to carry them in my arms—like a nurse carries a baby—to the land you swore to give their ancestors?

¹³ Where am I supposed to get meat for all these people? They keep complaining and saying, 'Give us meat!'

¹⁴ I can't carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy!

¹⁵ I'd rather you killed me than treat me like this. Please spare me this misery!"

¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Summon before me seventy of the

leaders of Israel. Bring them to the Tabernacle to stand there with you.

¹⁷ I will come down and talk to you there. I will take some of the Spirit that is upon you, and I will put the Spirit upon them also. They will bear the burden of the people along with you, so you will not have to carry it alone.

¹⁸ "And tell the people to purify themselves, for tomorrow they will have meat to eat. Tell them, 'The LORD has heard your whining and complaints: "If only we had meat to eat! Surely we were better off in Egypt!" Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will have to eat it.

¹⁹ And it won't be for just a day or two, or for five or ten or even twenty.

²⁰ You will eat it for a whole month until you gag and are sick of it. For you have rejected the LORD, who is here among

you, and you have complained to him, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"

²¹ But Moses said, "There are 600,000 foot soldiers here with me, and yet you promise them meat for a whole month!

²² Even if we butchered all our flocks and herds, would that satisfy them? Even if we caught all the fish in the sea, would that be enough?"

²³ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Is there any limit to my power? Now you will see whether or not my word comes true!"

²⁴ So Moses went out and reported the LORD's words to the people. Then he gathered the seventy leaders and stationed them around the Tabernacle.

²⁵ And the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. He took some of the Spirit that was upon Moses and put it upon the seventy leaders. They prophesied as the Spirit rested upon

them, but that was the only time this happened.

²⁶ Two men, Eldad and Medad, were still in the camp when the Spirit rested upon them. They were listed among the leaders but had not gone out to the Tabernacle, so they prophesied there in the camp.

²⁷ A young man ran and reported to Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!"

²⁸ Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' personal assistant since his youth, protested, "Moses, my master, make them stop!"

²⁹ But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his Spirit upon them all!"

³⁰ Then Moses returned to the camp with the leaders of Israel.

³¹ Now the LORD sent a wind that brought quail from the sea and let them fall into the camp and all around it! For many miles in every direction from the camp there were quail flying about three feet above the ground.

³² So the people went out and caught quail all that day and throughout the night and all the next day, too. No one gathered less than fifty bushels! They spread the quail out all over the camp.

³³ But while they were still eating the meat, the anger of the LORD blazed against the people, and he caused a severe plague to break out among them.

³⁴ So that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah—"the graves of craving"—because they buried the people there who had craved meat from Egypt.

³⁵ From there the Israelites traveled to Hazeroth, where they stayed for some time.

12 ¹ While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because he had married a Cushite woman.

² They said, "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he spoken through us, too?" But the LORD heard them.

³ Now Moses was more humble than any other person on earth.

⁴ So immediately the LORD called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and said, "Go out to the Tabernacle, all three of you!" And the three of them went out.

⁵ Then the LORD descended in the pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle. "Aaron and Miriam!" he called, and they stepped forward.

⁶ And the LORD said to them, "Now listen to me! Even with prophets, I the LORD communicate by visions and dreams.

⁷ But that is not how I communicate with my servant Moses. He is entrusted with my entire house.

⁸ I speak to him face to face, directly and not in riddles! He sees the LORD as he is. Should you not be afraid to criticize him?"

⁹ The LORD was furious with them, and he departed.

¹⁰ As the cloud moved from above the Tabernacle, Miriam suddenly became white as snow with leprosy. When Aaron saw what had happened,

¹¹ he cried out to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please don't punish us for this sin we have so foolishly committed.

¹² Don't let her be like a stillborn baby, already decayed at birth."

¹³ So Moses cried out to the LORD, "Heal her, O God, I beg you!"

¹⁴ And the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had spit in her face, wouldn't she

have been defiled for seven days? Banish her from the camp for seven days, and after that she may return."

¹⁵ So Miriam was excluded from the camp for seven days, and the people waited until she was brought back before they traveled again.

¹⁶ Then they left Hazereth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

13 ¹ The LORD now said to Moses,
² "Send men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to Israel. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes."

³ So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He sent out twelve men, all tribal leaders of Israel, from their camp in the wilderness of Paran.

⁴ These were the tribes and the names of the leaders: Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur;

⁵ Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori;

⁶ Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;

⁷ Issachar, Igal son of Joseph;

⁸ Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun;

⁹ Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu;

¹⁰ Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi;

¹¹ Manasseh son of Joseph, Gaddi son of Susi;

¹² Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli;

¹³ Asher, Sethur son of Michael;

¹⁴ Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi;

¹⁵ Gad, Geuel son of Maki.

¹⁶ These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. By this time Moses had changed Hoshea's name to Joshua.

¹⁷ Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the land: "Go northward through the Negev into the hill country.

¹⁸ See what the land is like and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many.

¹⁹ What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls or are they unprotected?

²⁰ How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there many trees? Enter the land boldly, and bring back samples of the crops you see." (It happened to be the season for harvesting the first ripe grapes.)

²¹ So they went up and explored the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near Lebo—hamath.

²² Going northward, they passed first through the Negev and arrived at Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi—all descendants of Anak—lived. (The ancient town of Hebron was founded seven years before the Egyptian city of Zoan.)

²³ When they came to what is now known as the valley of Eshcol, they cut down a cluster of grapes so large that it

took two of them to carry it on a pole between them! They also took samples of the pomegranates and figs.

²⁴ At that time the Israelites renamed the valley Eshcol—"cluster"—because of the cluster of grapes they had cut there.

²⁵ After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned

²⁶ to Moses, Aaron, and the people of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported to the whole community what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had taken from the land.

²⁷ This was their report to Moses: "We arrived in the land you sent us to see, and it is indeed a magnificent country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is some of its fruit as proof.

²⁸ But the people living there are powerful, and their cities and towns are

fortified and very large. We also saw the descendants of Anak who are living there!

²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev, and the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan Valley."

³⁰ But Caleb tried to encourage the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

³¹ But the other men who had explored the land with him answered, "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!"

³² So they spread discouraging reports about the land among the Israelites: "The land we explored will swallow up any who go to live there. All the people we saw were huge.

³³ We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. We felt like grasshoppers next to them, and that's what we looked like to them!"

14 ¹ Then all the people began weeping aloud, and they cried all night.

² Their voices rose in a great chorus of complaint against Moses and Aaron. "We wish we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!" they wailed.

³ "Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and little ones will be carried off as slaves! Let's get out of here and return to Egypt!"

⁴ Then they plotted among themselves, "Let's choose a leader and go back to Egypt!"

⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the people of Israel.

⁶ Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing.

⁷ They said to the community of Israel, "The land we explored is a wonderful land!

⁸ And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey, and he will give it to us!

⁹ Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"

¹⁰ But the whole community began to talk about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites from above the Tabernacle.

¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people reject me? Will

they never believe me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them?

¹² I will disown them and destroy them with a plague. Then I will make you into a nation far greater and mightier than they are!"

¹³ "But what will the Egyptians think when they hear about it?" Moses pleaded with the LORD. "They know full well the power you displayed in rescuing these people from Egypt.

¹⁴ They will tell this to the inhabitants of this land, who are well aware that you are with this people. They know, LORD, that you have appeared in full view of your people in the pillar of cloud that hovers over them. They know that you go before them in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

¹⁵ Now if you slaughter all these people, the nations that have heard of your fame will say,

¹⁶ 'The LORD was not able to bring them into the land he swore to give them, so he killed them in the wilderness.'

¹⁷ "Please, Lord, prove that your power is as great as you have claimed it to be. For you said,

¹⁸ 'The LORD is slow to anger and rich in unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so he does not leave sin unpunished, but he punishes the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.'

¹⁹ Please pardon the sins of this people because of your magnificent, unfailing love, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt."

²⁰ Then the LORD said, "I will pardon them as you have requested.

²¹ But as surely as I live, and as surely as the earth is filled with the LORD's glory,

²² not one of these people will ever enter that land. They have seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they tested me by refusing to listen.

²³ They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will enter it.

²⁴ But my servant Caleb is different from the others. He has remained loyal to me, and I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will receive their full share of that land.

²⁵ Now turn around and don't go on toward the land where the Amalekites and Canaanites live. Tomorrow you must set out for the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea."

²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

²⁷ "How long will this wicked nation complain about me? I have heard everything the Israelites have been saying.

²⁸ Now tell them this: 'As surely as I live, I will do to you the very things I heard you say. I, the LORD, have spoken!

²⁹ You will all die here in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, none of you who are twenty years old or older and were counted in the census ³⁰ will enter the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

³¹ "'You said your children would be taken captive. Well, I will bring them safely into the land, and they will enjoy what you have despised.

³² But as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness.

³³ And your children will be like shepherds, wandering in the wilderness forty years. In this way, they will pay for your faithlessness, until the last of you lies dead in the wilderness.

³⁴ "'Because the men who explored the land were there for forty days, you must wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins. You will discover what it is like to have me for an enemy.'

³⁵ I, the LORD, have spoken! I will do these things to every member of the community who has conspired against me. They will all die here in this wilderness!"

³⁶ Then the ten scouts who had incited the rebellion against the LORD by

spreading discouraging reports about the land

³⁷ were struck dead with a plague before the LORD.

³⁸ Of the twelve who had explored the land, only Joshua and Caleb remained alive.

³⁹ When Moses reported the LORD's words to the Israelites, there was much sorrow among the people.

⁴⁰ So they got up early the next morning and set out for the hill country of Canaan. "Let's go," they said. "We realize that we have sinned, but now we are ready to enter the land the LORD has promised us."

⁴¹ But Moses said, "Why are you now disobeying the LORD's orders to return to the wilderness? It won't work.

⁴² Do not go into the land now. You will only be crushed by your enemies because the LORD is not with you.

⁴³ When you face the Amalekites and Canaanites in battle, you will be slaughtered. The LORD will abandon you because you have abandoned the LORD."

⁴⁴ But the people pushed ahead toward the hill country of Canaan, despite the fact that neither Moses nor the Ark of the LORD's covenant left the camp.

⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in those hills came down and attacked them and chased them as far as Hormah.

15 ¹ The LORD told Moses to give these instructions to the people of Israel:

² "When you finally settle in the land I am going to give you,

³ and you want to please the LORD with a burnt offering or any other offering given by fire, the sacrifice must be an animal from your flocks of sheep and

goats or from your herds of cattle. When it is an ordinary burnt offering, a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, a freewill offering, or a special sacrifice at any of the annual festivals,

⁴ whoever brings it must also give to the LORD a grain offering of two quarts of choice flour mixed with one quart of olive oil.

⁵ For each lamb offered as a whole burnt offering, you must also present one quart of wine for a drink offering.

⁶ "If the sacrifice is a ram, give three quarts of choice flour mixed with two and a half pints of olive oil,

⁷ and give two and a half pints of wine for a drink offering. This sacrifice will be very pleasing to the LORD.

⁸ "When you present a young bull as a burnt offering or a sacrifice in fulfillment of a special vow or as a peace offering to the LORD,

⁹ then the grain offering accompanying it must include five quarts of choice flour mixed with two quarts of olive oil,

¹⁰ plus two quarts of wine for the drink offering. This will be an offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

¹¹ "These are the instructions for what is to accompany each sacrificial bull, ram, lamb, or young goat.

¹² Each of you must do this with each offering you present.

¹³ If you native Israelites want to present an offering by fire that is pleasing to the LORD, you must follow all these instructions.

¹⁴ And if any foreigners living among you want to present an offering by fire, pleasing to the LORD, they must follow the same procedures.

¹⁵ Native Israelites and foreigners are the same before the LORD and are

subject to the same laws. This is a permanent law for you.

¹⁶ The same instructions and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigners living among you."

¹⁷ The LORD also said to Moses at this time,

¹⁸ "Give the people of Israel the following instructions: When you arrive in the land where I am taking you,

¹⁹ you will eat from the crops that grow there. But you must set some aside as a gift to the LORD.

²⁰ Present a cake from the first of the flour you grind and set it aside as a gift, as you do with the first grain from the threshing floor.

²¹ Throughout the generations to come, you are to present this offering to the LORD each year from the first of your ground flour.

²² "But suppose some of you unintentionally fail to carry out all these commands that the LORD has given you through Moses.

²³ And suppose some of your descendants in the future fail to do everything the LORD has commanded through Moses.

²⁴ If the mistake was done unintentionally, and the community was unaware of it, the whole community must present a young bull for a burnt offering. It will be pleasing to the LORD, and it must be offered along with the prescribed grain offering and drink offering and with one male goat for a sin offering.

²⁵ With it the priest will make atonement for the whole community of Israel, and they will be forgiven. For it was an unintentional sin, and they have

corrected it with their offering given to the LORD by fire and by their sin offering.

²⁶ The whole community of Israel will be forgiven, including the foreigners living among you, for the entire population was involved in the sin.

²⁷ "If the unintentional sin is committed by an individual, the guilty person must bring a one-year-old female goat for a sin offering.

²⁸ The priest will make atonement for the guilty person before the LORD, and that person will be forgiven.

²⁹ This same law applies both to native Israelites and the foreigners living among you.

³⁰ "But those who brazenly violate the LORD's will, whether native Israelites or foreigners, blaspheme the LORD, and they must be cut off from the community.

³¹ Since they have treated the LORD's word with contempt and deliberately disobeyed his commands, they must be completely cut off and suffer the consequences of their guilt."

³² One day while the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they caught a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day.

³³ He was apprehended and taken before Moses, Aaron, and the rest of the community.

³⁴ They held him in custody because they did not know what to do with him.

³⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must be put to death! The whole community must stone him outside the camp."

³⁶ So the whole community took the man outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁷ And the LORD said to Moses,

³⁸ "Say to the people of Israel:

‘Throughout the generations to come you must make tassels for the hems of your clothing and attach the tassels at each corner with a blue cord.

³⁹ The tassels will remind you of the commands of the LORD, and that you are to obey his commands instead of following your own desires and going your own ways, as you are prone to do.

⁴⁰ The tassels will help you remember that you must obey all my commands and be holy to your God.

⁴¹ I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt that I might be your God. I am the LORD your God!"

16 ¹ One day Korah son of Izhar, a descendant of Kohath son of Levi, conspired with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, from the tribe of Reuben.

² They incited a rebellion against Moses, involving 250 other prominent leaders, all members of the assembly.

³ They went to Moses and Aaron and said, "You have gone too far! Everyone in Israel has been set apart by the LORD, and he is with all of us. What right do you have to act as though you are greater than anyone else among all these people of the LORD?"

⁴ When Moses heard what they were saying, he threw himself down with his face to the ground.

⁵ Then he said to Korah and his followers, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show us who belongs to him and who is holy. The LORD will allow those who are chosen to enter his holy presence.

⁶ You, Korah, and all your followers must do this: Take incense burners,

⁷ and burn incense in them tomorrow before the LORD. Then we will see whom the LORD chooses as his holy one. You Levites are the ones who have gone too far!"

⁸ Then Moses spoke again to Korah: "Now listen, you Levites!

⁹ Does it seem a small thing to you that the God of Israel has chosen you from among all the people of Israel to be near him as you serve in the LORD's Tabernacle and to stand before the people to minister to them?

¹⁰ He has given this special ministry only to you and your fellow Levites, but now you are demanding the priesthood as well!

¹¹ The one you are really revolting against is the LORD! And who is Aaron that you are complaining about him?"

¹² Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they replied, "We refuse to come!

¹³ Isn't it enough that you brought us out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us here in this wilderness, and that you now treat us like your subjects?

¹⁴ What's more, you haven't brought us into the land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Are you trying to fool us? We will not come."

¹⁵ Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, "Do not accept their offerings! I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, and I have never hurt a single one of them."

¹⁶ And Moses said to Korah, "Come here tomorrow and present yourself before the LORD with all your followers. Aaron will also be here.

¹⁷ Be sure that each of your 250 followers brings an incense burner with incense on it, so you can present them before the LORD. Aaron will also bring his incense burner."

¹⁸ So these men came with their incense burners, placed burning coals and incense on them, and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle with Moses and Aaron.

¹⁹ Meanwhile, Korah had stirred up the entire community against Moses and Aaron, and they all assembled at the Tabernacle entrance. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to the whole community,

²⁰ and the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

²¹ "Get away from these people so that I may instantly destroy them!"

²² But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground. "O God, the God and

source of all life," they pleaded. "Must you be angry with all the people when only one man sins?"

²³ And the LORD said to Moses,

²⁴ "Then tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

²⁵ So Moses got up and rushed over to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, followed closely by the Israelite leaders.

²⁶ "Quick!" he told the people. "Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and don't touch anything that belongs to them. If you do, you will be destroyed for their sins."

²⁷ So all the people stood back from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrances of their tents with their wives and children and little ones.

²⁸ And Moses said, "By this you will know that the LORD has sent me to do

all these things that I have done—for I have not done them on my own.

²⁹ If these men die a natural death, then the LORD has not sent me.

³⁰ But if the LORD performs a miracle and the ground opens up and swallows them and all their belongings, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have despised the LORD."

³¹ He had hardly finished speaking the words when the ground suddenly split open beneath them.

³² The earth opened up and swallowed the men, along with their households and the followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned.

³³ So they went down alive into the grave, along with their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished.

³⁴ All of the people of Israel fled as they heard their screams, fearing that the earth would swallow them, too.

³⁵ Then fire blazed forth from the LORD and burned up the 250 men who were offering incense.

³⁶ And the LORD said to Moses,

³⁷ "Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to pull all the incense burners from the fire, for they are holy. Also tell him to scatter the burning incense

³⁸ from the burners of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives. He must then hammer the metal of the incense burners into a sheet as a covering for the altar, for these burners have become holy because they were used in the LORD's presence. The altar covering will then serve as a warning to the people of Israel."

³⁹ So Eleazar the priest collected the 250 bronze incense burners that had

been used by the men who died in the fire, and they were hammered out into a sheet of metal to cover the altar.

⁴⁰ This would warn the Israelites that no unauthorized man—no one who was not a descendant of Aaron—should ever enter the LORD's presence to burn incense. If anyone did, the same thing would happen to him as happened to Korah and his followers. Thus, the LORD's instructions to Moses were carried out.

⁴¹ But the very next morning the whole community began muttering again against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You two have killed the LORD's people!"

⁴² As the people gathered to protest to Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the Tabernacle and saw that the cloud had covered it, and the glorious presence of the LORD appeared.

⁴³ Moses and Aaron came and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle,

⁴⁴ and the LORD said to Moses,

⁴⁵ "Get away from these people so that I can instantly destroy them!" But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground.

⁴⁶ And Moses said to Aaron, "Quick, take an incense burner and place burning coals on it from the altar. Lay incense on it and carry it quickly among the people to make atonement for them. The LORD's anger is blazing among them—the plague has already begun."

⁴⁷ Aaron did as Moses told him and ran out among the people. The plague indeed had already begun, but Aaron burned the incense and made atonement for them.

⁴⁸ He stood between the living and the dead until the plague was stopped.

⁴⁹ But 14,700 people died in that plague, in addition to those who had died in the incident involving Korah.

⁵⁰ Then because the plague had stopped, Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

17 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses,
² "Take twelve wooden staffs,
one from each of Israel's ancestral tribes,
and inscribe each tribal leader's name
on his staff.

³ Inscribe Aaron's name on the staff of
the tribe of Levi, for there must be one
staff for the leader of each ancestral
tribe.

⁴ Put these staffs in the Tabernacle in
front of the Ark of the Covenant, where I
meet with you.

⁵ Buds will sprout on the staff belonging
to the man I choose. Then I will finally
put an end to this murmuring and
complaining against you."

⁶ So Moses gave the instructions to the
people of Israel, and each of the twelve

tribal leaders, including Aaron, brought Moses a staff.

⁷ Moses put the staffs in the LORD's presence in the Tabernacle of the Covenant.

⁸ When he went into the Tabernacle of the Covenant the next day, he found that Aaron's staff, representing the tribe of Levi, had sprouted, blossomed, and produced almonds!

⁹ When Moses brought all the staffs out from the LORD's presence, he showed them to the people. Each man claimed his own staff.

¹⁰ And the LORD said to Moses: "Place Aaron's staff permanently before the Ark of the Covenant as a warning to rebels. This should put an end to their complaints against me and prevent any further deaths."

¹¹ So Moses did as the LORD commanded him.

¹² Then the people of Israel said to Moses, "We are as good as dead! We are ruined!

¹³ Everyone who even comes close to the Tabernacle of the LORD dies. We are all doomed!"

18 ¹ The LORD now said to Aaron: "You, your sons, and your relatives from the tribe of Levi will be held responsible for any offenses related to the sanctuary. But you and your sons alone will be held liable for violations connected with the priesthood.

² "Bring your relatives of the tribe of Levi to assist you and your sons as you perform the sacred duties in front of the Tabernacle of the Covenant.

³ But as the Levites go about their duties under your supervision, they must be careful not to touch any of the sacred objects or the altar. If they do, both you and they will die.

⁴ The Levites must join with you to fulfill their responsibilities for the care and maintenance of the Tabernacle, but no one who is not a Levite may officiate with you.

⁵ "You yourselves must perform the sacred duties within the sanctuary and at the altar. If you follow these instructions, the LORD's anger will never again blaze against the people of Israel.

⁶ I myself have chosen your fellow Levites from among the Israelites to be your special assistants. They are dedicated to the LORD for service in the Tabernacle.

⁷ But you and your sons, the priests, must personally handle all the sacred service associated with the altar and everything within the inner curtain. I am giving you the priesthood as your special gift of service. Any other person who

comes too near the sanctuary will be put to death."

⁸ The LORD gave these further instructions to Aaron: "I have put the priests in charge of all the holy gifts that are brought to me by the people of Israel. I have given these offerings to you and your sons as your regular share.

⁹ You are allotted the portion of the most holy offerings that is kept from the fire. From all the most holy offerings—including the grain offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings—that portion belongs to you and your sons.

¹⁰ You must eat it as a most holy offering. All the males may eat of it, and you must treat it as most holy.

¹¹ "All the other offerings presented to me by the Israelites by lifting them up before the altar also belong to you as your regular share. Any member of your family who is ceremonially clean,

male and female alike, may eat of these offerings.

¹² "I also give you the harvest gifts brought by the people as offerings to the LORD—the best of the olive oil, wine, and grain.

¹³ All the firstfruits of the land that the people present to the LORD belong to you. Any member of your family who is ceremonially clean may eat this food.

¹⁴ "Whatever is specially set apart for the LORD also belongs to you.

¹⁵ "The firstborn of every mother, whether human or animal, that is offered to the LORD will be yours. But you must always redeem your firstborn sons and the firstborn males of ritually unclean animals.

¹⁶ Redeem them when they are one month old. The redemption price is five pieces of silver, each piece weighing the same as the standard sanctuary shekel.

¹⁷ "However, you may not redeem the firstborn of cattle, sheep, or goats. They are holy and have been set apart for the LORD. Sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering given by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

¹⁸ The meat of these animals will be yours, just like the breast and right thigh that are presented by lifting them up before the altar.

¹⁹ Yes, I am giving you all these holy offerings that the people of Israel bring to the LORD. They are for you and your sons and daughters, to be eaten as your regular share. This is an unbreakable covenant between the LORD and you and your descendants."

²⁰ And the LORD said to Aaron, "You priests will receive no inheritance of land or share of property among the people of Israel. I am your inheritance and your share.

²¹ As for the tribe of Levi, your relatives, I will pay them for their service in the Tabernacle with the tithes from the entire land of Israel.

²² "From now on, Israelites other than the priests and Levites are to stay away from the Tabernacle. If they come too near, they will be judged guilty and die.

²³ The Levites must serve at the Tabernacle, and they will be held responsible for any offenses against it. This is a permanent law among you. But the Levites will receive no inheritance of land among the Israelites,

²⁴ because I have given them the Israelites' tithes, which have been set apart as offerings to the LORD. This will be the Levites' share. That is why I said they would receive no inheritance of land among the Israelites."

²⁵ The LORD also told Moses,

²⁶ "Say this to the Levites: 'When you receive the tithes from the Israelites, give a tenth of the tithes you receive—a tithe of the tithe—to the LORD as a gift.

²⁷ The LORD will consider this to be your harvest offering, as though it were the first grain from your own threshing floor or wine from your own winepress.

²⁸ You must present one-tenth of the tithe received from the Israelites as a gift to the LORD. From this you must present the LORD's portion to Aaron the priest.

²⁹ Be sure to set aside the best portions of the gifts given to you as your gifts to the LORD.'

³⁰ "Also say to the Levites: 'When you present the best part, it will be considered as though it came from your own threshing floor or winepress.

³¹ You Levites and your families may eat this food anywhere you wish, for it

is your compensation for serving in the Tabernacle.

³² You will not be considered guilty for accepting the LORD's tithes if you give the best portion to the priests. But be careful not to treat the holy gifts of the people of Israel as though they were common. If you do, you will die.'"

19 ¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

² "Here is another ritual law required by the LORD: Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer that has no physical defects and has never been yoked to a plow.

³ Give it to Eleazar the priest, and it will be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence.

⁴ Eleazar will take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the Tabernacle.

⁵ As Eleazar watches, the heifer must be burned—its hide, meat, blood, and dung.

⁶ Eleazar the priest must then take cedarwood, a hyssop branch, and scarlet thread and throw them into the fire where the heifer is burning.

⁷ "Then the priest must wash his clothes and bathe himself in water. Afterward he may return to the camp, though he will remain ceremonially unclean until evening.

⁸ The man who burns the animal must also wash his clothes and bathe in water, and he, too, will remain unclean until evening.

⁹ Then someone who is ceremonially clean will gather up the ashes of the heifer and place them in a purified place outside the camp. They will be kept there for the people of Israel to use in the water for the purification ceremony.

This ceremony is performed for the removal of sin.

¹⁰ The man who gathers up the ashes of the heifer must also wash his clothes, and he will remain ceremonially unclean until evening. This is a permanent law for the people of Israel and any foreigners who live among them.

¹¹ "All those who touch a dead human body will be ceremonially unclean for seven days.

¹² They must purify themselves on the third and seventh days with the water of purification; then they will be purified. But if they do not do this on the third and seventh days, they will continue to be unclean even after the seventh day.

¹³ All those who touch a dead body and do not purify themselves in the proper way defile the LORD's Tabernacle and will be cut off from the community of Israel. Since the water of purification was

not sprinkled on them, their defilement continues.

¹⁴ "This is the ritual law that applies when someone dies in a tent: Those who enter that tent, and those who were inside when the death occurred, will be ceremonially unclean for seven days.

¹⁵ Any container in the tent that was not covered with a lid is also defiled.

¹⁶ And if someone outdoors touches the corpse of someone who was killed with a sword or who died a natural death, or if someone touches a human bone or a grave, that person will be unclean for seven days.

¹⁷ "To remove the defilement, put some of the ashes from the burnt purification offering in a jar and pour fresh water over them.

¹⁸ Then someone who is ceremonially clean must take a hyssop branch and dip it into the water. That person must

sprinkle the water on the tent, on all the furnishings in the tent, and on anyone who was in the tent, or anyone who has touched a human bone, or has touched a person who was killed or who died naturally, or has touched a grave.

¹⁹ On the third and seventh days the ceremonially clean person must sprinkle the water on those who are unclean. Then on the seventh day the people being cleansed must wash their clothes and bathe themselves, and that evening they will be cleansed of their defilement.

²⁰ "But those who become defiled and do not purify themselves will be cut off from the community, for they have defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. Since the water of purification has not been sprinkled on them, they remain defiled.

²¹ This is a permanent law. Those who sprinkle the water of purification must afterward wash their clothes,

and anyone who touches the water of purification will remain defiled until evening.

²² Anything and anyone that a defiled person touches will be ceremonially defiled until evening."

20 ¹ In early spring the people of Israel arrived in the wilderness of Zin and camped at Kadesh. While they were there, Miriam died and was buried.

² There was no water for the people to drink at that place, so they rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

³ The people blamed Moses and said, "We wish we had died in the LORD's presence with our brothers!

⁴ Did you bring the LORD's people into this wilderness to die, along with all our livestock?

⁵ Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us here to this terrible place? This land has no grain, figs, grapes, or

pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"

⁶ Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where they fell face down on the ground. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to them,
⁷ and the LORD said to Moses,

⁸ "You and Aaron must take the staff and assemble the entire community. As the people watch, command the rock over there to pour out its water. You will get enough water from the rock to satisfy all the people and their livestock."

⁹ So Moses did as he was told. He took the staff from the place where it was kept before the LORD.

¹⁰ Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. "Listen, you rebels!" he shouted. "Must we bring you water from this rock?"

¹¹ Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So all the people and their livestock drank their fill.

¹² But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!"

¹³ This place was known as the waters of Meribah, because it was where the people of Israel argued with the LORD, and where he demonstrated his holiness among them.

¹⁴ While Moses was at Kadesh, he sent ambassadors to the king of Edom with this message: "This message is from your relatives, the people of Israel: You know all the hardships we have been through,

¹⁵ and that our ancestors went down to Egypt. We lived there a long time and suffered as slaves to the Egyptians.

¹⁶ But when we cried out to the LORD, he heard us and sent an angel who brought us out of Egypt. Now we are camped at Kadesh, a town on the border of your land.

¹⁷ Please let us pass through your country. We will be careful not to go through your fields and vineyards. We won't even drink water from your wells. We will stay on the king's road and never leave it until we have crossed the opposite border."

¹⁸ But the king of Edom said, "Stay out of my land or I will meet you with an army!"

¹⁹ The Israelites answered, "We will stay on the main road. If any of our livestock drinks your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through your country and nothing else."

²⁰ But the king of Edom replied, "Stay out! You may not pass through our

land." With that he mobilized his army and marched out to meet them with an imposing force.

²¹ Because Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through their country, Israel was forced to turn around.

²² The whole community of Israel left Kadesh as a group and arrived at Mount Hor.

²³ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor on the border of the land of Edom,

²⁴ "The time has come for Aaron to join his ancestors in death. He will not enter the land I am giving the people of Israel, because the two of you rebelled against my instructions concerning the waters of Meribah.

²⁵ Now take Aaron and his son Eleazar up Mount Hor.

²⁶ There you will remove Aaron's priestly garments and put them on

Eleazar, his son. Aaron will die there and join his ancestors."

²⁷ So Moses did as the LORD commanded. The three of them went up Mount Hor together as the whole community watched.

²⁸ At the summit, Moses removed the priestly garments from Aaron and put them on Eleazar, Aaron's son. Then Aaron died there on top of the mountain, and Moses and Eleazar went back down.

²⁹ When the people realized that Aaron had died, all Israel mourned for him thirty days.

21 ¹ The Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that the Israelites were approaching on the road to Atharim. So he attacked the Israelites and took some of them as prisoners.

² Then the people of Israel made this vow to the LORD: "If you will

help us conquer these people, we will completely destroy all their towns."

³ The LORD heard their request and gave them victory over the Canaanites. The Israelites completely destroyed them and their towns, and the place has been called Hormah ever since.

⁴ Then the people of Israel set out from Mount Hor, taking the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient along the way,

⁵ and they began to murmur against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this wretched manna!"

⁶ So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among them, and many of them were bitten and died.

⁷ Then the people came to Moses and cried out, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take away the snakes." So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ Then the LORD told him, "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to the top of a pole. Those who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!"

⁹ So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to the top of a pole. Whenever those who were bitten looked at the bronze snake, they recovered!

¹⁰ The Israelites traveled next to Oboth and camped there.

¹¹ Then they went on to Iye-abarim, in the wilderness on the eastern border of Moab.

¹² From there they traveled to the valley of Zered Brook and set up camp.

¹³ Then they moved to the far side of the Arnon River, in the wilderness

adjacent to the territory of the Amorites. The Arnon is the boundary line between the Moabites and the Amorites.

¹⁴ For this reason The Book of the Wars of the LORD speaks of "the town of Waheb in the area of Suphah, and the ravines; and the Arnon River

¹⁵ and its ravines, which extend as far as the settlement of Ar on the border of Moab."

¹⁶ From there the Israelites traveled to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Assemble the people, and I will give them water."

¹⁷ There the Israelites sang this song: "Spring up, O well! Yes, sing about it!

¹⁸ Sing of this well, which princes dug, which great leaders hollowed out with their scepters and staffs." Then the Israelites left the wilderness and proceeded on through Mattanah,

¹⁹ Nahaliel, and Bamoth.

²⁰ Then they went to the valley in Moab where Pisgah Peak overlooks the wasteland.

²¹ The Israelites now sent ambassadors to King Sihon of the Amorites with this message:

²² "Let us travel through your land. We will stay on the king's road until we have crossed your territory. We will not trample your fields or touch your vineyards or drink your well water."

²³ But King Sihon refused to let them cross his land. Instead, he mobilized his entire army and attacked Israel in the wilderness, engaging them in battle at Jahaz.

²⁴ But the Israelites slaughtered them and occupied their land from the Arnon River to the Jabbok River. They went only as far as the Ammonite border because the boundary of the Ammonites was fortified.

²⁵ So Israel captured all the towns of the Amorites and settled in them, including the city of Heshbon and its surrounding villages.

²⁶ Heshbon had been the capital of King Sihon of the Amorites. He had conquered a former Moabite king and seized all his land as far as the Arnon River.

²⁷ For this reason the ancient poets wrote this about him: "Come to Heshbon, city of Sihon! May it be restored and rebuilt.

²⁸ A fire flamed forth from Heshbon, a blaze from the city of Sihon. It burned the city of Ar in Moab; it destroyed the rulers of the Arnon heights.

²⁹ Your destruction is certain, O people of Moab! You are finished, O worshipers of Chemosh! Chemosh has left his sons as refugees, and his daughters as captives of Sihon, the Amorite king.

³⁰ We have utterly destroyed them, all the way from Heshbon to Dibon. We have completely wiped them out as far away as Nophah and Medeba."

³¹ So the people of Israel occupied the territory of the Amorites.

³² After Moses sent men to explore the Jazer area, they captured all the towns in the region and drove out the Amorites who lived there.

³³ Then they turned and marched toward Bashan, but King Og of Bashan and all his people attacked them at Edrei.

³⁴ The LORD said to Moses, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have given you victory over Og and his entire army, giving you all his land. You will do the same to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon."

³⁵ And Israel was victorious and killed King Og, his sons, and his subjects; not

a single survivor remained. Then Israel occupied their land.

22 ¹ Then the people of Israel traveled to the plains of Moab and camped east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

² Balak son of Zippor, the Moabite king, knew what the Israelites had done to the Amorites.

³ And when they saw how many Israelites there were, he and his people were terrified.

⁴ The king of Moab said to the leaders of Midian, "This mob will devour everything in sight, like an ox devours grass!" So Balak, king of Moab,

⁵ sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor, who was living in his native land of Pethor near the Euphrates River. He sent this message to request that Balaam come to help him: "A vast horde of people has arrived from Egypt. They

cover the face of the earth and are threatening me.

⁶ Please come and curse them for me because they are so numerous. Then perhaps I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land. I know that blessings fall on the people you bless. I also know that the people you curse are doomed."

⁷ Balak's messengers, officials of both Moab and Midian, set out and took money with them to pay Balaam to curse Israel. They went to Balaam and urgently explained to him what Balak wanted.

⁸ "Stay here overnight," Balaam said. "In the morning I will tell you whatever the LORD directs me to say." So the officials from Moab stayed there with Balaam.

⁹ That night God came to Balaam and asked him, "Who are these men with you?"

¹⁰ So Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent me this message:

¹¹ 'A vast horde of people has come from Egypt and has spread out over the whole land. Come at once to curse them. Perhaps then I will be able to conquer them and drive them from the land.'

¹² "Do not go with them," God told Balaam. "You are not to curse these people, for I have blessed them!"

¹³ The next morning Balaam got up and told Balak's officials, "Go on home! The LORD will not let me go with you."

¹⁴ So the Moabite officials returned to King Balak and reported, "Balaam refused to come with us."

¹⁵ Then Balak tried again. This time he sent a larger number of even more distinguished officials than those he had sent the first time.

¹⁶ They went to Balaam and gave him this message: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Please don't let anything stop you from coming.

¹⁷ I will pay you well and do anything you ask of me. Just come and curse these people for me!"

¹⁸ But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak were to give me a palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the LORD my God.

¹⁹ But stay here one more night to see if the LORD has anything else to say to me."

²⁰ That night God came to Balaam and told him, "Since these men have come for you, get up and go with them. But be sure to do only what I tell you to do."

²¹ So the next morning Balaam saddled his donkey and started off with the Moabite officials.

²² But God was furious that Balaam was going, so he sent the angel of the LORD to stand in the road to block his way. As Balaam and two servants were riding along,

²³ Balaam's donkey suddenly saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand. The donkey bolted off the road into a field, but Balaam beat it and turned it back onto the road.

²⁴ Then the angel of the LORD stood at a place where the road narrowed between two vineyard walls.

²⁵ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing there, it tried to squeeze by and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall. So Balaam beat the donkey again.

²⁶ Then the angel of the LORD moved farther down the road and stood in a

place so narrow that the donkey could not get by at all.

²⁷ This time when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down under Balaam. In a fit of rage Balaam beat it again with his staff.

²⁸ Then the LORD caused the donkey to speak. "What have I done to you that deserves your beating me these three times?" it asked Balaam.

²⁹ "Because you have made me look like a fool!" Balaam shouted. "If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!"

³⁰ "But I am the same donkey you always ride on," the donkey answered. "Have I ever done anything like this before?" "No," he admitted.

³¹ Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the roadway with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam fell face down on the ground before him.

³² "Why did you beat your donkey those three times?" the angel of the LORD demanded. "I have come to block your way because you are stubbornly resisting me.

³³ Three times the donkey saw me and shied away; otherwise, I would certainly have killed you by now and spared the donkey."

³⁴ Then Balaam confessed to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to block my way. I will go back home if you are against my going."

³⁵ But the angel of the LORD told him, "Go with these men, but you may say only what I tell you to say." So Balaam went on with Balak's officials.

³⁶ When King Balak heard that Balaam was on the way, he went out to meet him at a Moabite town on the Arnon River at the border of his land.

³⁷ "Did I not send you an urgent invitation? Why didn't you come right away?" Balak asked Balaam. "Didn't you believe me when I said I would reward you richly?"

³⁸ Balaam replied, "I have come, but I have no power to say just anything. I will speak only the messages that God gives me."

³⁹ Then Balaam accompanied Balak to Kiriath-huzoth,

⁴⁰ where the king sacrificed cattle and sheep. He sent portions of the meat to Balaam and the officials who were with him.

⁴¹ The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth-baal. From there he could see the people of Israel spread out below him.

23 ¹ Balaam said to King Balak, "Build me seven altars here, and

prepare seven young bulls and seven rams for a sacrifice."

² Balak followed his instructions, and the two of them sacrificed a young bull and a ram on each altar.

³ Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offerings, and I will go to see if the LORD will respond to me. Then I will tell you whatever he reveals to me." So Balaam went alone to the top of a hill,

⁴ and God met him there. Balaam said to him, "I have prepared seven altars and have sacrificed a young bull and a ram on each altar."

⁵ Then the LORD gave Balaam a message for King Balak and said, "Go back to Balak and tell him what I told you."

⁶ When Balaam returned, the king was standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of Moab.

⁷ This was the prophecy Balaam delivered: "Balak summoned me to come from Aram; the king of Moab brought me from the eastern hills. 'Come,' he said, 'curse Jacob for me! Come and announce Israel's doom.'

⁸ But how can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I condemn those whom the LORD has not condemned?

⁹ I see them from the cliff tops; I watch them from the hills. I see a people who live by themselves, set apart from other nations.

¹⁰ Who can count Jacob's descendants, as numerous as dust? Who can count even a fourth of Israel's people? Let me die like the righteous; let my life end like theirs."

¹¹ Then King Balak demanded of Balaam, "What have you done to me?"

I brought you to curse my enemies. Instead, you have blessed them!"

¹² But Balaam replied, "Can I say anything except what the LORD tells me?"

¹³ Then King Balak told him, "Come with me to another place. There you will see only a portion of the nation of Israel. Curse at least that many!"

¹⁴ So Balak took Balaam to the plateau of Zophim on Pisgah Peak. He built seven altars there and offered a young bull and a ram on each altar.

¹⁵ Then Balaam said to the king, "Stand here by your burnt offering while I go to meet the LORD."

¹⁶ So the LORD met Balaam and gave him a message. Then he said, "Go back to Balak and give him this message."

¹⁷ So Balaam returned to the place where the king and the officials of Moab were standing beside Balak's burnt

offerings. "What did the LORD say?" Balak asked eagerly.

¹⁸ This was the prophecy Balaam delivered: "Rise up, Balak, and listen! Hear me, son of Zippor.

¹⁹ God is not a man, that he should lie. He is not a human, that he should change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?

²⁰ I received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot reverse it!

²¹ No misfortune is in sight for Jacob; no trouble is in store for Israel. For the LORD their God is with them; he has been proclaimed their king.

²² God has brought them out of Egypt; he is like a strong ox for them.

²³ No curse can touch Jacob; no sorcery has any power against Israel. For now it will be said of Jacob, 'What wonders God has done for Israel!'

²⁴ These people rise up like a lioness; like a majestic lion they stand. They refuse to rest until they have feasted on prey, drinking the blood of the slaughtered!"

²⁵ Then Balak said to Balaam, "If you aren't going to curse them, at least don't bless them!"

²⁶ But Balaam replied, "Didn't I tell you that I must do whatever the LORD tells me?"

²⁷ Then King Balak said to Balaam, "Come, I will take you to yet another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them from there."

²⁸ So Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor, overlooking the wasteland.

²⁹ Balaam again told Balak, "Build me seven altars and prepare me seven young bulls and seven rams for a sacrifice."

³⁰ So Balak did as Balaam ordered and offered a young bull and a ram on each altar.

24 ¹ By now Balaam realized that the LORD intended to bless Israel, so he did not resort to divination as he often did. Instead, he turned and looked out toward the wilderness,

² where he saw the people of Israel camped, tribe by tribe. Then the Spirit of God came upon him,

³ and this is the prophecy he delivered: "This is the prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of the man whose eyes see clearly,

⁴ who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls down with eyes wide open:

⁵ How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob; how lovely are your homes, O Israel!

⁶ They spread before me like groves of palms, like fruitful gardens by the

riverside. They are like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters.

⁷ Water will gush out in buckets; their offspring are supplied with all they need. Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted.

⁸ God brought them up from Egypt, drawing them along like a wild ox. He devours all the nations that oppose him, breaking their bones in pieces, shooting them with arrows.

⁹ Like a lion, Israel crouches and lies down; like a lioness, who dares to arouse her? Blessed is everyone who blesses you, O Israel, and cursed is everyone who curses you."

¹⁰ King Balak flew into a rage against Balaam. He angrily clapped his hands and shouted, "I called you to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times.

¹¹ Now get out of here! Go back home! I had planned to reward you richly, but the LORD has kept you from your reward."

¹² Balaam told Balak, "Don't you remember what I told your messengers? I said,

¹³ 'Even if Balak were to give me a palace filled with silver and gold, I am powerless to do anything against the will of the LORD.' I told you that I could say only what the LORD says!

¹⁴ Now I am returning to my own people. But first let me tell you what the Israelites will do to your people in the future."

¹⁵ This is the prophecy Balaam delivered: "This is the message of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of the man whose eyes see clearly,

¹⁶ who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who

sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls down with eyes wide open:

¹⁷ I see him, but not in the present time. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel. It will crush the foreheads of Moab's people, cracking the skulls of the people of Sheth.

¹⁸ Edom will be taken over, and Seir, its enemy, will be conquered, while Israel continues on in triumph.

¹⁹ A ruler will rise in Jacob who will destroy the survivors of Ir."

²⁰ Then Balaam looked over at the people of Amalek and delivered this prophecy: "Amalek was the greatest of nations, but its destiny is destruction!"

²¹ Then he looked over at the Kenites and prophesied: "You are strongly situated; your nest is set in the rocks.

²² But the Kenites will be destroyed when Assyria takes you captive."

²³ Balaam concluded his prophecies by saying: "Alas, who can survive when God does this?"

²⁴ Ships will come from the coasts of Cyprus; they will oppress both Assyria and Eber, but they, too, will be utterly destroyed."

²⁵ Then Balaam and Balak returned to their homes.

25 ¹ While the Israelites were camped at Acacia, some of the men defiled themselves by sleeping with the local Moabite women.

² These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, and soon the Israelites were feasting with them and worshiping the gods of Moab.

³ Before long Israel was joining in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the LORD's anger to blaze against his people.

⁴ The LORD issued the following command to Moses: "Seize all the ringleaders and execute them before the LORD in broad daylight, so his fierce anger will turn away from the people of Israel."

⁵ So Moses ordered Israel's judges to execute everyone who had joined in worshiping Baal of Peor.

⁶ Just then one of the Israelite men brought a Midianite woman into the camp, right before the eyes of Moses and all the people, as they were weeping at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

⁷ When Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the priest saw this, he jumped up and left the assembly. Then he took a spear

⁸ and rushed after the man into his tent. Phinehas thrust the spear all the way through the man's body and into

the woman's stomach. So the plague against the Israelites was stopped,
⁹ but not before 24,000 people had died.

¹⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹¹ "Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the priest has turned my anger away from the Israelites by displaying passionate zeal among them on my behalf. So I have stopped destroying all Israel as I had intended to do in my anger.

¹² So tell him that I am making my special covenant of peace with him.

¹³ In this covenant, he and his descendants will be priests for all time, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel."

¹⁴ The Israelite man killed with the Midianite woman was named Zimri son

of Salu, the leader of a family from the tribe of Simeon.

¹⁵ The woman's name was Cozbi; she was the daughter of Zur, the leader of a Midianite clan.

¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁷ "Attack the Midianites and destroy them,

¹⁸ because they assaulted you with deceit by tricking you into worshiping Baal of Peor, and because of Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, who was killed on the day of the plague at Peor."

26 ¹ After the plague had ended, the LORD said to Moses and to Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest,

² "Take a census of all the men of Israel who are twenty years old or older, to find out how many of each family are of military age."

³ At that time the entire nation of Israel was camped on the plains of Moab

beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho. So Moses and Eleazar the priest issued these census instructions to the leaders of Israel:

⁴ "Count all the men of Israel twenty years old and older, just as the LORD commanded Moses." This is the census record of all the descendants of Israel who came out of Egypt.

⁵ These were the clans descended from Reuben, Jacob's oldest son: The Hanochite clan, named after its ancestor Hanoch. The Palluite clan, named after its ancestor Pallu.

⁶ The Hezronite clan, named after its ancestor Hezron. The Carmite clan, named after its ancestor Carmi.

⁷ The men from all the clans of Reuben numbered 43,730.

⁸ Pallu was the ancestor of Eliab,

⁹ and Eliab was the father of Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. This Dathan and

Abiram are the same community leaders who conspired with Korah against Moses and Aaron, defying the LORD.

¹⁰ But the earth opened up and swallowed them with Korah, and 250 of their followers were destroyed that day by fire from the LORD. This served as a warning to the entire nation of Israel.

¹¹ However, the sons of Korah did not die that day.

¹² These were the clans descended from the sons of Simeon: The Nemuelite clan, named after its ancestor Nemuel. The Jaminite clan, named after its ancestor Jamin. The Jakinite clan, named after its ancestor Jakin.

¹³ The Zerahite clan, named after its ancestor Zerah. The Shaulite clan, named after its ancestor Shaul.

¹⁴ The men from all the clans of Simeon numbered 22,200.

¹⁵ These were the clans descended from the sons of Gad: The Zephonite clan, named after its ancestor Zephon. The Haggite clan, named after its ancestor Haggi. The Shunite clan, named after its ancestor Shuni.

¹⁶ The Oznite clan, named after its ancestor Ozni. The Erite clan, named after its ancestor Eri.

¹⁷ The Arodite clan, named after its ancestor Arodi. The Arelite clan, named after its ancestor Areli.

¹⁸ The men from all the clans of Gad numbered 40,500.

¹⁹ Judah had two sons, Er and Onan, who had died in the land of Canaan.

²⁰ But the following clans descended from Judah's surviving sons: The Shelanite clan, named after its ancestor Shelah. The Perezite clan, named after its ancestor Perez. The Zerahite clan, named after its ancestor Zerah.

²¹ These were the subclans descended from the Perezites: The Hezronites, named after their ancestor Hezron. The Hamulites, named after their ancestor Hamul.

²² The men from all the clans of Judah numbered 76,500.

²³ These were the clans descended from the sons of Issachar: The Tolaite clan, named after its ancestor Tola. The Puite clan, named after its ancestor Puah.

²⁴ The Jashubite clan, named after its ancestor Jashub. The Shimronite clan, named after its ancestor Shimron.

²⁵ The men from all the clans of Issachar numbered 64,300.

²⁶ These were the clans descended from the sons of Zebulun: The Seredite clan, named after its ancestor Sered. The Elonite clan, named after its ancestor

Elon. The Jahleelite clan, named after its ancestor Jahleel.

²⁷ The men from all the clans of Zebulun numbered 60,500.

²⁸ Two clans were descended from Joseph through Manasseh and Ephraim.

²⁹ These were the clans descended from Manasseh: The Makirite clan, named after its ancestor Makir. The Gileadite clan, named after its ancestor Gilead, Makir's son.

³⁰ These were the subclans descended from the Gileadites: The Iezerites, named after their ancestor Iezer. The Helekites, named after their ancestor Helek.

³¹ The Asrielites, named after their ancestor Asriel. The Shechemites, named after their ancestor Shechem.

³² The Shemidaite, named after their ancestor Shemida. The Hopherites, named after their ancestor Hopher.

³³ Hepher's son, Zelophehad, had no sons, but his daughters' names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

³⁴ The men from all the clans of Manasseh numbered 52,700.

³⁵ These were the clans descended from the sons of Ephraim: The Shuthelahite clan, named after its ancestor Shuthelah. The Bekerite clan, named after its ancestor Beker. The Tahanite clan, named after its ancestor Tahan.

³⁶ This was the subclan descended from the Shuthelahites: The Eranites, named after their ancestor Eran.

³⁷ The men from all the clans of Ephraim numbered 32,500. These clans of Manasseh and Ephraim were all descendants of Joseph.

³⁸ These were the clans descended from the sons of Benjamin: The Belaite clan, named after its ancestor Bela. The

Ashbelite clan, named after its ancestor Ashbel. The Ahiramite clan, named after its ancestor Ahiram.

³⁹ The Shuphamite clan, named after its ancestor Shupham. The Huphamite clan, named after its ancestor Hupham.

⁴⁰ These were the subclans descended from the Belaites: The Ardites, named after their ancestor Ard. The Naamites, named after their ancestor Naaman.

⁴¹ The men from all the clans of Benjamin numbered 45,600.

⁴² These were the clans descended from the sons of Dan: The Shuhamite clan, named after its ancestor Shuham.

⁴³ All the clans of Dan were Shuhamite clans, and the men from these clans numbered 64,400.

⁴⁴ These were the clans descended from the sons of Asher: The Imnite clan, named after its ancestor Imnah. The Ishvite clan, named after its ancestor

Ishvi. The Beriite clan, named after its ancestor Beriah.

⁴⁵ These were the subclans descended from the Beriites: The Heberites, named after their ancestor Heber. The Malkielites, named after their ancestor Malkiel.

⁴⁶ Asher also had a daughter named Serah.

⁴⁷ The men from all the clans of Asher numbered 53,400.

⁴⁸ These were the clans descended from the sons of Naphtali: The Jahzeelite clan, named after its ancestor Jahzeel. The Gunitite clan, named after its ancestor Guni.

⁴⁹ The Jezerite clan, named after its ancestor Jezer. The Shillemite clan, named after its ancestor Shillem.

⁵⁰ The men from all the clans of Naphtali numbered 45,400.

⁵¹ So the total number of Israelite men counted in the census numbered 601,730.

⁵² Then the LORD said to Moses,

⁵³ "Divide the land among the tribes in proportion to their populations, as indicated by the census.

⁵⁴ Give the larger tribes more land and the smaller tribes less land, each group's inheritance reflecting the size of its population.

⁵⁵ Make sure you assign the land by lot, and define the inheritance of each ancestral tribe by means of the census listings.

⁵⁶ Each inheritance must be assigned by lot among the larger and smaller tribal groups."

⁵⁷ This is the census record for the Levites who were counted according to their clans: The Gershonite clan, named after its ancestor Gershon. The

Kohathite clan, named after its ancestor Kohath. The Merarite clan, named after its ancestor Merari.

⁵⁸ The Libnites, the Hebronites, the Mahlites, the Mushites, and the Korahites were all subclans of the Levites. Now Kohath was the ancestor of Amram,

⁵⁹ and Amram's wife was named Jochebed. She also was a descendant of Levi, born among the Levites in the land of Egypt. Amram and Jochebed became the parents of Aaron, Moses, and their sister, Miriam.

⁶⁰ To Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁶¹ But Nadab and Abihu died when they burned before the LORD a different kind of fire than he had commanded.

⁶² The men from the Levite clans who were one month old or older numbered 23,000. But the Levites were

not included in the total census figure of the people of Israel because they were not given an inheritance of land when it was divided among the Israelites.

⁶³ So these are the census figures of the people of Israel as prepared by Moses and Eleazar the priest on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

⁶⁴ Not one person that was counted in this census had been among those counted in the previous census taken by Moses and Aaron in the wilderness of Sinai.

⁶⁵ For the LORD had said of them, "They will all die in the wilderness." The only exceptions were Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

27 ¹ One day a petition was presented by the daughters of Zelophehad—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. Their father,

Zelophehad, was the son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Makir, son of Manasseh, son of Joseph.

² These women went and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the tribal leaders, and the entire community at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

³ "Our father died in the wilderness without leaving any sons," they said. "But he was not among Korah's followers, who rebelled against the LORD. He died because of his own sin.

⁴ Why should the name of our father disappear just because he had no sons? Give us property along with the rest of our relatives."

⁵ So Moses brought their case before the LORD.

⁶ And the LORD replied to Moses,

⁷ "The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You must give them an inheritance of land along with their father's relatives.

Assign them the property that would have been given to their father.

⁸ Moreover announce this to the people of Israel: 'If a man dies and has no sons, then give his inheritance to his daughters.

⁹ And if he has no daughters, turn his inheritance over to his brothers.

¹⁰ If he has no brothers, give his inheritance to his father's brothers.

¹¹ But if his father has no brothers, pass on his inheritance to the nearest relative in his clan. The Israelites must observe this as a general legal requirement, just as the LORD commanded Moses.'"

¹² One day the LORD said to Moses, "Climb to the top of the mountains east of the river, and look out over the land I have given the people of Israel.

¹³ After you have seen it, you will die as Aaron your brother did,

¹⁴ for you both rebelled against my instructions in the wilderness of Zin. When the people of Israel rebelled, you failed to demonstrate my holiness to them at the waters." (These are the waters of Meribah at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)

¹⁵ Then Moses said to the LORD,

¹⁶ "O LORD, the God of the spirits of all living things, please appoint a new leader for the community.

¹⁷ Give them someone who will lead them into battle, so the people of the LORD will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

¹⁸ The LORD replied, "Take Joshua son of Nun, who has the Spirit in him, and lay your hands on him.

¹⁹ Present him to Eleazar the priest before the whole community, and publicly commission him with the responsibility of leading the people.

²⁰ Transfer your authority to him so the whole community of Israel will obey him.

²¹ When direction from the LORD is needed, Joshua will stand before Eleazar the priest, who will determine the LORD's will by means of sacred lots. This is how Joshua and the rest of the community of Israel will discover what they should do."

²² So Moses did as the LORD commanded and presented Joshua to Eleazar the priest and the whole community.

²³ Moses laid his hands on him and commissioned him to his responsibilities, just as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

28 ¹ The LORD said to Moses,
² "Give these instructions to the people of Israel: The offerings you present to me by fire on the altar are my

food, and they are very pleasing to me. See to it that they are brought at the appointed times and offered according to my instructions.

³ "Say to them: When you present your daily whole burnt offerings to the LORD, you must offer two one-year-old male lambs with no physical defects.

⁴ One lamb will be sacrificed in the morning and the other in the evening.

⁵ With each lamb you must offer a grain offering of two quarts of choice flour mixed with one quart of olive oil.

⁶ This is the regular burnt offering ordained at Mount Sinai, an offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

⁷ Along with it you must present the proper drink offering, consisting of one quart of fermented drink with each lamb, poured out in the Holy Place as an offering to the LORD.

⁸ Offer the second lamb in the evening with the same grain offering and drink offering. It, too, is an offering made by fire, very pleasing to the LORD.

⁹ "On the Sabbath day, sacrifice two one-year-old male lambs with no physical defects. They must be accompanied by a grain offering of three quarts of choice flour mixed with olive oil, and a drink offering.

¹⁰ This is the whole burnt offering to be presented each Sabbath day, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering and its accompanying drink offering.

¹¹ "On the first day of each month, present an extra burnt offering to the LORD of two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

¹² These will be accompanied by grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive

oil—five quarts with each bull, three quarts with the ram,

¹³ and two quarts with each lamb. This burnt offering must be presented by fire, and it will be very pleasing to the LORD.

¹⁴ You must also give a drink offering with each sacrifice: two quarts of wine with each bull, two and a half pints for the ram, and one quart for each lamb. Present this monthly burnt offering on the first day of each month throughout the year.

¹⁵ "Also, on the first day of each month you must offer one male goat for a sin offering to the LORD. This is in addition to the regular daily burnt offering and its accompanying drink offering.

¹⁶ "On the appointed day in early spring, you must celebrate the LORD's Passover.

¹⁷ On the following day a joyous, seven-day festival will begin, but no bread made with yeast may be eaten.

¹⁸ On the first day of the festival you must call a sacred assembly of the people. None of your regular work may be done on that day.

¹⁹ You must present as a burnt offering to the LORD two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

²⁰ These will be accompanied by grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil—five quarts with each bull, three quarts with the ram,

²¹ and two quarts with each of the seven lambs.

²² You must also offer a male goat as a sin offering, to make atonement for yourselves.

²³ You will present these offerings in addition to your regular morning sacrifices.

²⁴ On each of the seven days of the festival, this is how you will prepare the food offerings to be presented by fire, very pleasing to the LORD. These will be offered in addition to the regular whole burnt offerings and drink offerings.

²⁵ On the seventh day of the festival you must call another holy assembly of the people. None of your regular work may be done on that day.

²⁶ "On the first day of the Festival of Harvest, when you present the first of your new grain to the LORD, you must call a holy assembly of the people. None of your regular work may be done on that day.

²⁷ A special whole burnt offering will be offered that day, very pleasing to the LORD. It will consist of two young bulls,

one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs.

²⁸ These will be accompanied by grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil—five quarts with each bull, three quarts with the ram,

²⁹ and two quarts with each of the seven lambs.

³⁰ Also, offer one male goat to make atonement for yourselves.

³¹ These special burnt offerings, along with their drink offerings, are in addition to the regular daily burnt offering and its accompanying grain offering. Be sure that all the animals you sacrifice have no physical defects.

29 ¹ "The Festival of Trumpets will be celebrated on the appointed day in early autumn each year. You must call a solemn assembly of all the people on that day, and no regular work may be done.

² On that day you must present a burnt offering, very pleasing to the LORD. It will consist of one young bull, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

³ These must be accompanied by grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil—five quarts with the bull, three quarts with the ram,

⁴ and two quarts with each of the seven lambs.

⁵ In addition, you must sacrifice a male goat as a sin offering, to make atonement for yourselves.

⁶ These special sacrifices are in addition to your regular monthly and daily burnt offerings, and they must be given with their prescribed grain offerings and drink offerings. These offerings are given to the LORD by fire and are very pleasing to him.

⁷ "Ten days later, you must call another holy assembly of all the people. On that day, the Day of Atonement, the people must go without food, and no regular work may be done.

⁸ You must present a burnt offering, very pleasing to the LORD. It will consist of one young bull, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

⁹ These offerings must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offerings of choice flour mixed with olive oil—five quarts of choice flour with the bull, three quarts of choice flour with the ram,

¹⁰ and two quarts of choice flour with each of the seven lambs.

¹¹ You must also sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering. This is in addition to the sin offering of atonement and the regular daily burnt offering with its grain

offering, and their accompanying drink offerings.

¹² "Five days later, you must call yet another holy assembly of all the people, and on that day no regular work may be done. It is the beginning of the Festival of Shelters, a seven-day festival to the LORD.

¹³ That day you must present a special whole burnt offering by fire, very pleasing to the LORD. It will consist of thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

¹⁴ Each of these offerings must be accompanied by a grain offering of choice flour mixed with olive oil—five quarts for each of the thirteen bulls, three quarts for each of the two rams,

¹⁵ and two quarts for each of the fourteen lambs.

¹⁶ You must also sacrifice a male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

¹⁷ "On the second day of this seven-day festival, sacrifice twelve young bulls, two rams, and fourteen one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

¹⁸ Each of these offerings of bulls, rams, and lambs must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

¹⁹ You must also sacrifice a male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

²⁰ "On the third day of the festival, sacrifice eleven young bulls, two rams, and fourteen one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

²¹ Each of these offerings of bulls, rams, and lambs must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

²² You must also sacrifice a male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

²³ "On the fourth day of the festival, sacrifice ten young bulls, two rams, and fourteen one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

²⁴ Each of these offerings of bulls, rams, and lambs must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

²⁵ You must also sacrifice a male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

²⁶ "On the fifth day of the festival, sacrifice nine young bulls, two rams, and fourteen one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

²⁷ Each of these offerings of bulls, rams, and lambs must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

²⁸ You must also sacrifice a male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

²⁹ "On the sixth day of the festival, sacrifice eight young bulls, two rams, and fourteen one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

³⁰ Each of these offerings of bulls, rams, and lambs must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

³¹ You must also sacrifice a male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

³² "On the seventh day of the festival, sacrifice seven young bulls, two rams, and fourteen one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

³³ Each of these offerings of bulls, rams, and lambs must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

³⁴ You must also sacrifice one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

³⁵ "On the eighth day of the festival, call all the people to another holy assembly. You must do no regular work on that day.

³⁶ You must present a burnt offering, very pleasing to the LORD. It will consist of one young bull, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs, all with no physical defects.

³⁷ Each of these offerings must be accompanied by the prescribed grain offering and drink offering.

³⁸ You must also sacrifice one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular daily burnt offering with its accompanying grain offering and drink offering.

³⁹ "You must present these offerings to the LORD at your annual festivals. These are in addition to the sacrifices and offerings you present in connection with vows, or as freewill offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, or peace offerings."

⁴⁰ So Moses gave all of these instructions to the people of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded him.

30 ¹ Now Moses summoned the leaders of the tribes of Israel and told them, "This is what the LORD has commanded:

² A man who makes a vow to the LORD or makes a pledge under oath must never break it. He must do exactly what he said he would do.

³ "If a young woman makes a vow to the LORD or a pledge under oath while she is still living at her father's home,

⁴ and her father hears of the vow or pledge but says nothing, then all her vows and pledges will stand.

⁵ But if her father refuses to let her fulfill the vow or pledge on the day he hears of it, then all her vows and pledges will become invalid. The LORD

will forgive her because her father would not let her fulfill them.

⁶ "Now suppose a young woman takes a vow or makes an impulsive pledge and later marries.

⁷ If her husband learns of her vow or pledge and raises no objections on the day he hears of it, her vows and pledges will stand.

⁸ But if her husband refuses to accept her vow or impulsive pledge on the day he hears of it, he nullifies her commitments, and the LORD will forgive her.

⁹ If, however, a woman is a widow or is divorced, she must fulfill all her vows and pledges no matter what.

¹⁰ "Suppose a woman is married and living in her husband's home when she makes a vow or pledge.

¹¹ If her husband hears of it and does nothing to stop her, her vow or pledge will stand.

¹² But if her husband refuses to accept it on the day he hears of it, her vow or pledge will be nullified, and the LORD will forgive her.

¹³ So her husband may either confirm or nullify any vows or pledges she makes to deny herself.

¹⁴ But if he says nothing on the day he hears of it, then he is agreeing to it.

¹⁵ If he waits more than a day and then tries to nullify a vow or pledge, he will suffer the consequences of her guilt."

¹⁶ These are the regulations the LORD gave Moses concerning relationships between a man and his wife, and between a father and a young daughter who still lives at home.

31 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses,
² "Take vengeance on the Midianites for leading the Israelites into idolatry. After that, you will die and join your ancestors."

³ So Moses said to the people, "Choose some men to fight the LORD's war of vengeance against Midian.

⁴ From each tribe of Israel, send one thousand men into battle."

⁵ So they chose one thousand men from each tribe of Israel, a total of twelve thousand men armed for battle.

⁶ Then Moses sent them out, a thousand men from each tribe, and Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest led them into battle. They carried along the holy objects of the sanctuary and the trumpets for sounding the charge.

⁷ They attacked Midian just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed all the men.

⁸ All five of the Midianite kings—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba—died in the battle. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.

⁹ Then the Israelite army captured the Midianite women and children and seized their cattle and flocks and all their wealth as plunder.

¹⁰ They burned all the towns and villages where the Midianites had lived.

¹¹ After they had gathered the plunder and captives, both people and animals,

¹² they brought them all to Moses and Eleazar the priest, and to the whole community of Israel, which was camped on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

¹³ Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the people went to meet them outside the camp.

¹⁴ But Moses was furious with all the military commanders who had returned from the battle.

¹⁵ "Why have you let all the women live?" he demanded.

¹⁶ "These are the very ones who followed Balaam's advice and caused the people of Israel to rebel against the LORD at Mount Peor. They are the ones who caused the plague to strike the LORD's people.

¹⁷ Now kill all the boys and all the women who have slept with a man.

¹⁸ Only the young girls who are virgins may live; you may keep them for yourselves.

¹⁹ And all of you who have killed anyone or touched a dead body must stay outside the camp for seven days. You must purify yourselves and your captives on the third and seventh days.

²⁰ Also, purify all your clothing and everything made of leather, goat hair, or wood."

²¹ Then Eleazar the priest said to the men who were in the battle, "The LORD has given Moses this requirement of the law:

²² Anything made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, or lead—

²³ that is, metals that do not burn— must be passed through fire in order to be made ceremonially pure. These metal objects must then be further purified with the water of purification. But everything that burns must be purified by the water alone.

²⁴ On the seventh day you must wash your clothes and be purified. Then you may return to the camp."

²⁵ And the LORD said to Moses,

²⁶ "You and Eleazar the priest and the family leaders of each tribe are to make

a list of all the plunder taken in the battle, including the people and animals.

²⁷ Then divide the plunder into two parts, and give half to the men who fought the battle and half to the rest of the people.

²⁸ But first give the LORD his share of the captives, cattle, donkeys, sheep, and goats that belong to the army. Set apart one out of every five hundred as the LORD's share.

²⁹ Give this share of their half to Eleazar the priest as an offering to the LORD.

³⁰ Also take one of every fifty of the captives, cattle, donkeys, sheep, and goats in the half that belongs to the people of Israel. Give this share to the Levites in charge of maintaining the LORD's Tabernacle."

³¹ So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.

³² The plunder remaining from the spoils that the fighting men had taken totaled 675,000 sheep,

³³ 72,000 cattle,

³⁴ 61,000 donkeys,

³⁵ and 32,000 young girls.

³⁶ So the half of the plunder given to the fighting men totaled 337,500 sheep,

³⁷ of which 675 were the LORD's share;

³⁸ 36,000 cattle, of which 72 were the LORD's share;

³⁹ 30,500 donkeys, of which 61 were the LORD's share;

⁴⁰ 16,000 young girls, of whom 32 were the LORD's share.

⁴¹ Moses gave all the LORD's share to Eleazar the priest, just as the LORD had directed him.

⁴² The half of the plunder belonging to the people of Israel, which Moses had separated from the half belonging to the fighting men,

⁴³ amounted to 337,500 sheep,

⁴⁴ 36,000 cattle,

⁴⁵ 30,500 donkeys,

⁴⁶ and 16,000 young girls.

⁴⁷ From the half-share given to the people, Moses took one of every fifty prisoners and animals and gave them to the Levites who maintained the LORD's Tabernacle. All this was done just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁴⁸ Then all the military commanders came to Moses

⁴⁹ and said, "Sir, we have accounted for all the men who went out to battle under our command; not one of us is missing!

⁵⁰ So we are presenting the items of gold we captured as an offering to the LORD from our share of the plunder—armbands, bracelets, rings, earrings, and necklaces. This will make

atonement for our lives before the LORD."

⁵¹ So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from all the military commanders, all kinds of jewelry and crafted objects.

⁵² In all, the gold that the commanders presented as a gift to the LORD weighed about 420 pounds.

⁵³ All the fighting men had taken some of the plunder for themselves.

⁵⁴ So Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted the gifts from the military commanders and brought the gold to the Tabernacle as a reminder to the LORD that the people of Israel belong to him.

32 ¹ Now the tribes of Reuben and Gad owned vast numbers of livestock. So when they saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were ideally suited for their flocks and herds,

² they came to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the other leaders of the people. They said,

³ "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon—

⁴ the LORD has conquered this whole area for the people of Israel. It is ideally suited for all our flocks and herds.

⁵ If we have found favor with you, please let us have this land as our property instead of giving us land across the Jordan River."

⁶ "Do you mean you want to stay back here while your brothers go across and do all the fighting?" Moses asked the Reubenites and Gadites.

⁷ "Are you trying to discourage the rest of the people of Israel from going across to the land the LORD has given them?"

⁸ This is what your ancestors did when I sent them from Kadesh–barnea to explore the land.

⁹ After they went up to the valley of Eshcol and scouted the land, they discouraged the people of Israel from entering the land the LORD was giving them.

¹⁰ Then the LORD was furious with them, and he vowed,

¹¹ ‘Of all those I rescued from Egypt, no one who is twenty years old or older will ever see the land I solemnly promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for they have not obeyed me completely.

¹² The only exceptions are Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they have wholeheartedly followed the LORD.’

¹³ "The LORD was furious with Israel and made them wander in the wilderness for

forty years until the whole generation that sinned against him had died.

¹⁴ But here you are, a brood of sinners, doing exactly the same thing! You are making the LORD even angrier with Israel.

¹⁵ If you turn away from him like this and he abandons them again in the wilderness, you will be responsible for destroying this entire nation!"

¹⁶ But they responded to Moses, "We simply want to build sheepfolds for our flocks and fortified cities for our wives and children.

¹⁷ Then we will arm ourselves and lead our fellow Israelites into battle until we have brought them safely to their inheritance. Meanwhile, our families will stay in the fortified cities we build here, so they will be safe from any attacks by the local people.

¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until all the people of Israel have received their inheritance of land.

¹⁹ But we do not want any of the land on the other side of the Jordan. We would rather live here on the east side where we have received our inheritance."

²⁰ Then Moses said, "If you keep your word and arm yourselves for the LORD's battles,

²¹ and if your troops cross the Jordan until the LORD has driven out his enemies,

²² then you may return when the land is finally subdued before the LORD. You will have discharged your duty to the LORD and to the rest of the people of Israel. And the land on the east side of the Jordan will be your inheritance from the LORD.

²³ But if you fail to keep your word, then you will have sinned against the

LORD, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.

²⁴ Go ahead and build towns for your families and sheepfolds for your flocks, but do everything you have said."

²⁵ Then the people of Gad and Reuben replied, "We are your servants and will follow your instructions exactly.

²⁶ Our children, wives, flocks, and cattle will stay here in the towns of Gilead.

²⁷ But, sir, all who are able to bear arms will cross over to fight for the LORD, just as you have said."

²⁸ So Moses gave orders to Eleazar, Joshua, and the tribal leaders of Israel.

²⁹ He said, "If all the men of Gad and Reuben who are able to fight the LORD's battles cross the Jordan with you, then when the land is conquered, you must give them the land of Gilead as their property.

³⁰ But if they refuse to cross over and march ahead of you, then they must accept land with the rest of you in the land of Canaan."

³¹ The tribes of Gad and Reuben said again, "Sir, we will do as the LORD has commanded!

³² We will cross the Jordan into Canaan fully armed to fight for the LORD, but our inheritance of land will be here on this side of the Jordan."

³³ So Moses assigned to the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the territory of King Sihon of the Amorites and the land of King Og of Bashan—the whole land with its towns and surrounding lands.

³⁴ The people of Gad built the towns of Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer,

³⁵ Atroth—shopan, Jazer, Jogbehah,

³⁶ Beth–nimrah, and Beth–haran. These were all fortified cities with sheepfolds for their flocks.

³⁷ The people of Reuben built the towns of Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim,

³⁸ Nebo, Baal–meon, and Sibmah. They changed the names of some of the towns they conquered and rebuilt.

³⁹ Then the descendants of Makir of the tribe of Manasseh went to Gilead and conquered it, and they drove out the Amorites, who were living there.

⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to the Makirites, descendants of Manasseh, and they lived there.

⁴¹ The people of Jair, another clan of the tribe of Manasseh, captured many of the towns in Gilead and changed the name of that region to the Towns of Jair.

⁴² Meanwhile, a man named Nobah captured the town of Kenath and its

surrounding villages, and he renamed that area Nobah after himself.

33 ¹ This is the itinerary the Israelites followed as they marched out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

² At the LORD's direction, Moses kept a written record of their progress. These are the stages of their march, identified by the different places they stopped along the way.

³ They set out from the city of Rameses on the morning after the first Passover celebration in early spring. The people of Israel left defiantly, in full view of all the Egyptians.

⁴ Meanwhile, the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn sons, whom the LORD had killed the night before. The LORD had defeated the gods of Egypt that night with great acts of judgment!

⁵ After leaving Rameses, the Israelites set up camp at Succoth.

⁶ Then they left Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness.

⁷ They left Etham and turned back toward Pi-hahiroth, opposite Baal-zephon, and camped near Migdol.

⁸ They left Pi-hahiroth and crossed the Red Sea into the wilderness beyond. Then they traveled for three days into the Etham wilderness and camped at Marah.

⁹ They left Marah and camped at Elim, where there are twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees.

¹⁰ They left Elim and camped beside the Red Sea.

¹¹ They left the Red Sea and camped in the Sin Desert.

¹² They left the Sin Desert and camped at Dophkah.

¹³ They left Dophkah and camped at Alush.

¹⁴ They left Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

¹⁵ They left Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai.

¹⁶ They left the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah.

¹⁷ They left Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.

¹⁸ They left Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.

¹⁹ They left Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez.

²⁰ They left Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah.

²¹ They left Libnah and camped at Rissah.

²² They left Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

²³ They left Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

²⁴ They left Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

²⁵ They left Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

²⁶ They left Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

²⁷ They left Tahath and camped at Terah.

²⁸ They left Terah and camped at Mithcah.

²⁹ They left Mithcah and camped at Hashmonah.

³⁰ They left Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.

³¹ They left Moseroth and camped at Bene–jaakan.

³² They left Bene–jaakan and camped at Hor–haggidgad.

³³ They left Hor–haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah.

³⁴ They left Jotbathah and camped at Abironah.

³⁵ They left Abironah and camped at Ezion-geber.

³⁶ They left Ezion-geber and camped at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

³⁷ They left Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, at the border of Edom.

³⁸ While they were at the foot of Mount Hor, Aaron the priest was directed by the LORD to go up the mountain, and there he died. This happened on a day in midsummer, during the fortieth year after Israel's departure from Egypt.

³⁹ Aaron was 123 years old when he died there on Mount Hor.

⁴⁰ It was then that the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev in the land of Canaan, heard that the people of Israel were approaching his land.

⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Israelites left Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.

⁴² Then they left Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

⁴³ They left Punon and camped at Oboth.

⁴⁴ They left Oboth and camped at Iye–abarim on the border of Moab.

⁴⁵ They left Iye–abarim and camped at Dibon–gad.

⁴⁶ They left Dibon–gad and camped at Almon–diblathaim.

⁴⁷ They left Almon–diblathaim and camped in the mountains east of the river, near Mount Nebo.

⁴⁸ They left the mountains east of the river and camped on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

⁴⁹ Along the Jordan River they camped from Beth–jeshimoth as far as Abel–shittim on the plains of Moab.

⁵⁰ While they were camped near the Jordan River on the plains of Moab

opposite Jericho, the LORD said to Moses,

⁵¹ "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: 'When you cross the Jordan River into the land of Canaan,

⁵² you must drive out all the people living there. You must destroy all their carved and molten images and demolish all their pagan shrines.

⁵³ Take possession of the land and settle in it, because I have given it to you to occupy.

⁵⁴ You must distribute the land among the clans by sacred lot and in proportion to their size. A larger inheritance of land will be allotted to each of the larger clans, and a smaller inheritance will be allotted to each of the smaller clans. The decision of the sacred lot is final. In this way, the land will be divided among your ancestral tribes.

⁵⁵ But if you fail to drive out the people who live in the land, those who remain will be like splinters in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will harass you in the land where you live.

⁵⁶ And I will do to you what I had planned to do to them.'"

34 ¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, ² "Give these instructions to the Israelites: When you come into the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your special possession, these will be the boundaries.

³ The southern portion of your country will extend from the wilderness of Zin, along the edge of Edom. The southern boundary will begin on the east at the Dead Sea.

⁴ It will then run south past Scorpion Pass in the direction of Zin. Its southernmost point will be Kadesh—

barnea, from which it will go to Hazar-addar, and on to Azmon.

⁵ From Azmon the boundary will turn toward the brook of Egypt and end at the Mediterranean Sea.

⁶ "Your western boundary will be the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea.

⁷ "Your northern boundary will begin at the Mediterranean Sea and run eastward to Mount Hor,

⁸ then to Lebo-hamath, and on through Zedad

⁹ and Ziphron to Hazar-enan. This will be your northern boundary.

¹⁰ "The eastern boundary will start at Hazar-enan and run south to Shepham,

¹¹ then down to Riblah on the east side of Ain. From there the boundary will run down along the eastern edge of the Sea of Galilee,

¹² and then along the Jordan River to the Dead Sea. These are the boundaries of your land."

¹³ Then Moses told the Israelites, "This is the territory you are to divide among yourselves by sacred lot. The LORD commands that the land be divided up among the nine and a half remaining tribes.

¹⁴ The families of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have already received their inheritance of land

¹⁵ on the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho."

¹⁶ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁷ "These are the men who are to divide the land among the people: Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun.

¹⁸ Also enlist one leader from each tribe to help them with the task.

¹⁹ These are the tribes and the names of the leaders: Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;

²⁰ Simeon, Shemuel son of Ammihud;

²¹ Benjamin, Elidad son of Kislou;

²² Dan, Bukki son of Jogli;

²³ Manasseh son of Joseph, Hanniel son of Ephod;

²⁴ Ephraim son of Joseph, Kemuel son of Shiphtan;

²⁵ Zebulun, Elizaphan son of Parnach;

²⁶ Issachar, Paltiel son of Azzan;

²⁷ Asher, Ahihud son of Shelomi;

²⁸ Naphtali, Pedahel son of Ammihud.

²⁹ These are the men the LORD has appointed to oversee the dividing of the land of Canaan among the Israelites."

35 ¹ While Israel was camped beside the Jordan on the plains of Moab, across from Jericho, the LORD said to Moses,

² "Instruct the people of Israel to give to the Levites from their property certain towns to live in, along with the surrounding pasturelands.

³ These towns will be their homes, and the surrounding lands will provide pasture for their cattle, flocks, and other livestock.

⁴ The pastureland assigned to the Levites around these towns will extend 1,500 feet from the town walls in every direction.

⁵ Measure off 3,000 feet outside the town walls in every direction—east, south, west, north—with the town at the center. This area will serve as the larger pastureland for the towns.

⁶ "You must give the Levites six cities of refuge, where a person who has accidentally killed someone can flee for safety. In addition, give them forty-two other towns.

⁷ In all, forty–eight towns with the surrounding pastureland will be given to the Levites.

⁸ These towns will come from the property of the people of Israel. The larger tribes will give more towns to the Levites, while the smaller tribes will give fewer. Each tribe will give in proportion to its inheritance."

⁹ And the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁰ "Say this to the people of Israel: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

¹¹ designate cities of refuge for people to flee to if they have killed someone accidentally.

¹² These cities will be places of protection from a dead person's relatives who want to avenge the death. The slayer must not be killed before being tried by the community.

¹³ Designate six cities of refuge for yourselves,

¹⁴ three on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west in the land of Canaan.

¹⁵ These cities are for the protection of Israelites, resident foreigners, and traveling merchants. Anyone who accidentally kills someone may flee there for safety.

¹⁶ "But if someone strikes and kills another person with a piece of iron, it must be presumed to be murder, and the murderer must be executed.

¹⁷ Or if someone strikes and kills another person with a large stone, it is murder, and the murderer must be executed.

¹⁸ The same is true if someone strikes and kills another person with a wooden weapon. It must be presumed to be

murder, and the murderer must be executed.

¹⁹ The victim's nearest relative is responsible for putting the murderer to death. When they meet, the avenger must execute the murderer.

²⁰ So if in premeditated hostility someone pushes another person or throws a dangerous object and the person dies, it is murder.

²¹ Or if someone angrily hits another person with a fist and the person dies, it is murder. In such cases, the victim's nearest relative must execute the murderer when they meet.

²² "But suppose someone pushes another person without premeditated hostility, or throws something that unintentionally hits another person,

²³ or accidentally drops a stone on someone, though they were not enemies, and the person dies.

²⁴ If this should happen, the assembly must follow these regulations in making a judgment between the slayer and the avenger, the victim's nearest relative.

²⁵ They must protect the slayer from the avenger, and they must send the slayer back to live in a city of refuge until the death of the high priest.

²⁶ "But if the slayer leaves the city of refuge,

²⁷ and the victim's nearest relative finds him outside the city limits and kills him, it will not be considered murder.

²⁸ The slayer should have stayed inside the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest, the slayer may return to his own property.

²⁹ These are permanent laws for you to observe from generation to generation, wherever you may live.

³⁰ "All murderers must be executed, but only if there is more than one witness. No one may be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

³¹ Also, you must never accept a ransom payment for the life of someone judged guilty of murder and subject to execution; murderers must always be put to death.

³² And never accept a ransom payment from someone who has fled to a city of refuge, allowing the slayer to return to his property before the death of the high priest.

³³ This will ensure that the land where you live will not be polluted, for murder pollutes the land. And no atonement can be made for murder except by the execution of the murderer.

³⁴ You must not defile the land where you are going to live, for I live there

myself. I am the LORD, who lives among the people of Israel.'"

36 ¹ Then the heads of the clan of Gilead—descendants of Makir, son of Manasseh, son of Joseph—came to Moses and the family leaders of Israel with a petition.

² They said, "Sir, the LORD instructed you to divide the land by sacred lot among the people of Israel. You were told by the LORD to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters.

³ But if any of them marries a man from another tribe, their inheritance of land will go with them to the tribe into which they marry. In this way, the total area of our tribal land will be reduced.

⁴ Then when the Year of Jubilee comes, their inheritance of land will be added to that of the new tribe, causing it to be lost forever to our ancestral tribe."

⁵ So Moses gave the Israelites this command from the LORD: "The men of the tribe of Joseph are right.

⁶ This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad: Let them marry anyone they like, as long as it is within their own ancestral tribe.

⁷ None of the inherited land may pass from tribe to tribe, for the inheritance of every tribe must remain fixed as it was first allotted.

⁸ The daughters throughout the tribes of Israel who are in line to inherit property must marry within their tribe, so that all the Israelites will keep their ancestral property.

⁹ No inheritance may pass from one tribe to another; each tribe of Israel must hold on to its allotted inheritance of land."

¹⁰ The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD commanded Moses.

¹¹ Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah all married cousins on their father's side.

¹² They married into the clans of Manasseh son of Joseph. Thus, their inheritance of land remained within their ancestral tribe.

¹³ These are the commands and regulations that the LORD gave to the people of Israel through Moses while they were camped on the plains of Moab beside the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

Deuteronomy

1 ¹ This book records the words that Moses spoke to all the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River. They were camped in the Jordan Valley near Suph, between Paran on one side and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab on the other.

² Normally it takes only eleven days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, going by way of Mount Seir.

³ But forty years after the Israelites left Mount Sinai, on a day in midwinter, Moses gave these speeches to the Israelites, telling them everything the LORD had commanded him to say.

⁴ This was after he had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who had ruled in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who had ruled in Ashtaroth and Edrei.

⁵ So Moses addressed the people of Israel while they were in the land of Moab east of the Jordan River. He began to explain the law as follows:

⁶ "When we were at Mount Sinai, the LORD our God said to us, 'You have stayed at this mountain long enough.

⁷ It is time to break camp and move on. Go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the neighboring regions—the Jordan Valley, the hill country, the western foothills, the Negev, and the coastal plain. Go to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, and all the way to the great Euphrates River.

⁸ I am giving all this land to you! Go in and occupy it, for it is the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all their descendants.'

⁹ "At that time I told you, 'You are too great a burden for me to carry all by myself.

¹⁰ The LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars!

¹¹ And may the LORD, the God of your ancestors, multiply you a thousand times more and bless you as he promised!

¹² But how can I settle all your quarrels and problems by myself?

¹³ Choose some men from each tribe who have wisdom, understanding, and a good reputation, and I will appoint them as your leaders.'

¹⁴ "You agreed that my plan was a good one.

¹⁵ So I took the wise and respected men you had selected from your tribes and appointed them to serve as judges and officials over you. Some were

responsible for a thousand people, some for a hundred, some for fifty, and some for ten.

¹⁶ I instructed the judges, 'You must be perfectly fair at all times, not only to fellow Israelites, but also to the foreigners living among you.

¹⁷ When you make decisions, never favor those who are rich; be fair to lowly and great alike. Don't be afraid of how they will react, for you are judging in the place of God. Bring me any cases that are too difficult for you, and I will handle them.'

¹⁸ And at that time I gave you instructions about everything you were to do.

¹⁹ "Then, just as the LORD our God directed us, we left Mount Sinai and traveled through the great and terrifying wilderness, which you yourselves saw, and headed toward the hill country

of the Amorites. When we arrived at Kadesh–barnea,

²⁰ I said to you, ‘You have now reached the land that the LORD our God is giving us.

²¹ Look! He has placed it in front of you. Go and occupy it as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. Don’t be afraid! Don’t be discouraged!’

²² “But you responded, ‘First, let’s send out scouts to explore the land for us. They will advise us on the best route to take and decide which towns we should capture.’

²³ This seemed like a good idea to me, so I chose twelve scouts, one from each of your tribes.

²⁴ They crossed into the hills and came to the valley of Eshcol and explored it.

²⁵ They picked some of its fruit and brought it back to us. And they reported

that the land the LORD our God had given us was indeed a good land.

²⁶ "But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God and refused to go in.

²⁷ You murmured and complained in your tents and said, 'The LORD must hate us, bringing us here from Egypt to be slaughtered by these Amorites.

²⁸ How can we go on? Our scouts have demoralized us with their report. They say that the people of the land are taller and more powerful than we are, and that the walls of their towns rise high into the sky! They have even seen giants there—the descendants of Anak!

²⁹ "But I said to you, 'Don't be afraid!

³⁰ The LORD your God is going before you. He will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt.

³¹ And you saw how the LORD your God cared for you again and again here in the

wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now he has brought you to this place.'

³² But even after all he did, you refused to trust the LORD your God,

³³ who goes before you looking for the best places to camp, guiding you by a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud by day.

³⁴ "When the LORD heard your complaining, he became very angry. So he solemnly swore,

³⁵ 'Not one of you from this entire wicked generation will live to see the good land I swore to give your ancestors,

³⁶ except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see this land because he has followed the LORD completely. I will give to him and his descendants some of the land he walked over during his scouting mission.'

³⁷ "And the LORD was also angry with me because of you. He said to me, 'You will never enter the Promised Land!

³⁸ Instead, your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will lead the people into the land. Encourage him as he prepares to enter it.

³⁹ I will give the land to your innocent children. You were afraid they would be captured, but they will be the ones who occupy it.

⁴⁰ As for you, turn around now and go on back through the wilderness toward the Red Sea.'

⁴¹ "Then you confessed, 'We have sinned against the LORD! We will go into the land and fight for it, as the LORD our God has told us.' So your men strapped on their weapons, thinking it would be easy to conquer the hill country.

⁴² "But the LORD said to me, 'Tell them not to attack, for I will not go with them.

If they do, they will be crushed by their enemies.’

⁴³ This is what I told you, but you would not listen. Instead, you again rebelled against the LORD’s command and arrogantly went into the hill country to fight.

⁴⁴ But the Amorites who lived there came out against you like a swarm of bees. They chased and battered you all the way from Seir to Hormah.

⁴⁵ Then you returned and wept before the LORD, but he refused to listen.

⁴⁶ So you stayed there at Kadesh for a long time.

2¹ "Then we turned around and set out across the wilderness toward the Red Sea, just as the LORD had instructed me, and we wandered around Mount Seir for a long time.

² Then at last the LORD said to me,

³ 'You have been wandering around in this hill country long enough; turn northward.

⁴ Give these orders to the people: "You will be passing through the country belonging to your relatives the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. The Edomites will feel threatened, so be careful.

⁵ Don't bother them, for I have given them all the hill country around Mount Seir as their property, and I will not give you any of their land.

⁶ Pay them for whatever food or water you use.

⁷ The LORD your God has blessed everything you have done and has watched your every step through this great wilderness. During these forty years, the LORD your God has been with you and provided for your every need so that you lacked nothing."

⁸ So we went past our relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and avoided the road through the Arabah Valley that comes up from Elath and Ezion–geber. "Then as we traveled northward along the desert route through Moab,

⁹ the LORD warned us, 'Do not bother the Moabites, the descendants of Lot, or start a war with them. I have given them Ar as their property, and I will not give you any of their land.'

¹⁰ (A numerous and powerful race of giants called the Emites had once lived in the area of Ar. They were as tall as the Anakites, another race of giants.

¹¹ Both the Emites and the Anakites are often referred to as the Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emites.

¹² In earlier times the Horites had lived at Mount Seir, but they were driven out and displaced by the descendants

of Esau. In a similar way the peoples in Canaan were driven from the land that the LORD had assigned to Israel.)

¹³ Moses continued, "Then the LORD told us to cross Zered Brook, and we did.

¹⁴ So thirty–eight years passed from the time we first arrived at Kadesh–barnea until we finally crossed Zered Brook! For the LORD had vowed that this could not happen until all the men old enough to fight in battle had died in the wilderness.

¹⁵ The LORD had lifted his hand against them until all of them had finally died.

¹⁶ "When all the men of fighting age had died,

¹⁷ the LORD said to me,

¹⁸ 'Today you will cross the border of Moab at Ar

¹⁹ and enter the land of Ammon. But do not bother the Ammonites, the descendants of Lot, or start a war with them. I have given the land of Ammon

to them as their property, and I will not give you any of their land.'"

²⁰ (That area, too, was once considered the land of the Rephaites, though the Ammonites referred to them as Zamzummites.

²¹ They were a numerous and powerful race, as tall as the Anakites. But the LORD destroyed them so the Ammonites could occupy their land.

²² He had similarly helped the descendants of Esau at Mount Seir, for he destroyed the Horites so they could settle there in their place. The descendants of Esau live there to this day.

²³ A similar thing happened when the Caphtorites from Crete invaded and destroyed the Avvites, who had lived in villages in the area of Gaza.)

²⁴ Moses continued, "Then the LORD said, 'Now cross the Arnon Gorge! Look,

I will help you defeat Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and I will give you his land. Attack him and begin to occupy the land.

²⁵ Beginning today I will make all people throughout the earth terrified of you. When they hear reports about you, they will tremble with dread and fear.'

²⁶ "Then from the wilderness of Kedemoth I sent ambassadors to King Sihon of Heshbon with this proposal of peace:

²⁷ 'Let us pass through your land. We will stay on the main road and won't turn off into the fields on either side.

²⁸ We will pay for every bite of food we eat and all the water we drink. All we want is permission to pass through your land.

²⁹ The descendants of Esau at Mount Seir allowed us to go through their country, and so did the Moabites, who

live in Ar. Let us pass through until we cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God has given us.'

³⁰ But King Sihon refused to allow you to pass through, because the LORD your God made Sihon stubborn and defiant so he could help you defeat them, as he has now done.

³¹ "Then the LORD said to me, 'Look, I have begun to hand King Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to conquer and occupy his land.'

³² Then King Sihon declared war on us and mobilized his forces at Jahaz.

³³ But the LORD our God handed him over to us, and we crushed him, his sons, and all his people.

³⁴ We conquered all his towns and completely destroyed everyone—men, women, and children. Not a single person was spared.

³⁵ We took all the livestock as plunder for ourselves, along with anything of value from the towns we ransacked.

³⁶ "The LORD our God helped us conquer Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Gorge, the town in the gorge, and the whole area as far as Gilead. No town had walls too strong for us.

³⁷ However, we stayed away from the Ammonites along the Jabbok River and the towns in the hill country—all the places the LORD our God had commanded us to leave alone.

3¹ "Next we headed for the land of Bashan, where King Og and his army attacked us at Edrei.

² But the LORD told me, 'Do not be afraid of him, for I have given you victory over Og and his army, giving you his entire land. Treat him just as you treated King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon.'

³ So the LORD our God handed King Og and all his people over to us, and we killed them all.

⁴ We conquered all sixty of his towns, the entire Argob region in his kingdom of Bashan.

⁵ These were all fortified cities with high walls and barred gates. We also took many unwalled villages at the same time.

⁶ We completely destroyed the kingdom of Bashan, just as we had destroyed King Sihon of Heshbon. We destroyed* all the people in every town we conquered—men, women, and children alike.

⁷ But we kept all the livestock for ourselves and took plunder from all the towns.

⁸ "We now possessed all the land of the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan

River—from the Arnon Gorge to Mount Hermon.

⁹ (Mount Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians; the Amorites call it Senir.)

¹⁰ We had now conquered all the cities on the plateau, and all Gilead and Bashan as far as the towns of Salecah and Edrei, which were part of Og's kingdom in Bashan.

¹¹ (Incidentally, King Og of Bashan was the last of the giant Rephaites. His iron bed was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It can still be seen in the Ammonite city of Rabbah.)

¹² "When we took possession of this land, I gave the territory beyond Aroer along the Arnon Gorge, plus half of the hill country of Gilead with its towns, to the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

¹³ Then I gave the rest of Gilead and all of Bashan—Og's former kingdom—to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (The Argob

region of Bashan used to be known as the land of the Rephaites.

¹⁴ Jair, a leader from the tribe of Manasseh, acquired the whole Argob region in Bashan all the way to the borders of the Geshurites and Maacathites. Jair renamed this region after himself, calling it the Towns of Jair, as it is still known today.)

¹⁵ I gave Gilead to the clan of Makir.

¹⁶ And to the tribes of Reuben and Gad I gave the area extending from Gilead to the middle of the Arnon Gorge, all the way to the Jabbok River on the Ammonite frontier.

¹⁷ They also received the Jordan Valley, including the Jordan River and its eastern banks, all the way from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea, with the slopes of Pisgah on the east.

¹⁸ "At that time I gave this command to the tribes that will live east of the

Jordan: 'Although the LORD your God has given you this land as your property, all your fighting men must cross the Jordan, armed and ready to protect your Israelite relatives.

¹⁹ Your wives, children, and numerous livestock, however, may stay behind in the towns I have given you.

²⁰ When the LORD has given security to the rest of the Israelites, as he has to you, and when they occupy the land the LORD your God is giving them across the Jordan River, then you may return here to the land I have given you.'

²¹ "At that time I said to Joshua, 'You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. He will do the same to all the kingdoms on the west side of the Jordan.

²² Do not be afraid of the nations there, for the LORD your God will fight for you.'

²³ "At that time I pleaded with the LORD and said,

²⁴ 'O Sovereign LORD, I am your servant. You have only begun to show me your greatness and power. Is there any god in heaven or on earth who can perform such great deeds as yours?

²⁵ Please let me cross the Jordan to see the wonderful land on the other side, the beautiful hill country and the Lebanon mountains.'

²⁶ "But the LORD was angry with me because of you, and he would not listen to me. 'That's enough!' he ordered. 'Speak of it no more.

²⁷ You can go to Pisgah Peak and view the land in every direction, but you may not cross the Jordan River.

²⁸ But commission Joshua and encourage him, for he will lead the people across the Jordan. He will give them the land you now see before you.'

²⁹ So we stayed in the valley near Beth–peor.

4 ¹ "And now, Israel, listen carefully to these laws and regulations that I am about to teach you. Obey them so that you may live, so you may enter and occupy the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you.

² Do not add to or subtract from these commands I am giving you from the LORD your God. Just obey them.

³ You saw what the LORD did to you at Baal–peor, where the LORD your God destroyed everyone who had worshiped the god Baal of Peor.

⁴ But all of you who were faithful to the LORD your God are still alive today.

⁵ "You must obey these laws and regulations when you arrive in the land you are about to enter and occupy. The LORD my God gave them to me and commanded me to pass them on to you.

⁶ If you obey them carefully, you will display your wisdom and intelligence to the surrounding nations. When they hear about these laws, they will exclaim, 'What other nation is as wise and prudent as this!'

⁷ For what great nation has a god as near to them as the LORD our God is near to us whenever we call on him?

⁸ And what great nation has laws and regulations as fair as this body of laws that I am giving you today?

⁹ "But watch out! Be very careful never to forget what you have seen the LORD do for you. Do not let these things escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren.

¹⁰ Tell them especially about the day when you stood before the LORD your God at Mount Sinai, where he told me, 'Summon the people before me, and I

will instruct them. That way, they will learn to fear me as long as they live, and they will be able to teach my laws to their children.'

¹¹ You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain was burning with fire. Flames shot into the sky, shrouded in black clouds and deep darkness.

¹² And the LORD spoke to you from the fire. You heard his words but didn't see his form; there was only a voice.

¹³ He proclaimed his covenant, which he commanded you to keep—the Ten Commandments—and wrote them on two stone tablets.

¹⁴ It was at that time that the LORD commanded me to issue the laws and regulations you must obey in the land you are about to enter and occupy.

¹⁵ "But be careful! You did not see the LORD's form on the day he spoke to you from the fire at Mount Sinai.

¹⁶ So do not corrupt yourselves by making a physical image in any form—whether of a man or a woman,
¹⁷ an animal or a bird,
¹⁸ a creeping creature or a fish.

¹⁹ And when you look up into the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars—all the forces of heaven—don't be seduced by them and worship them. The LORD your God designated these heavenly bodies for all the peoples of the earth.

²⁰ Remember that the LORD rescued you from the burning furnace of Egypt to become his own people and special possession; that is what you are today.

²¹ "But the LORD was very angry with me because of you. He vowed that I would never cross the Jordan River into

the good land the LORD your God is giving you as your special possession.

²² Though you will cross the Jordan to occupy the land, I will die here on this side of the river.

²³ So be careful not to break the covenant the LORD your God has made with you. You will break it if you make idols of any shape or form, for the LORD your God has absolutely forbidden this.

²⁴ The LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

²⁵ "In the future, when you have children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time, do not corrupt yourselves by making idols of any kind. This is evil in the sight of the LORD your God and will arouse his anger.

²⁶ "Today I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you. If you disobey me, you will quickly disappear from the land you are crossing the Jordan to

occupy. You will live there only a short time; then you will be utterly destroyed.

²⁷ For the LORD will scatter you among the nations, where only a few of you will survive.

²⁸ There, in a foreign land, you will worship idols made from wood and stone, gods that neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

²⁹ From there you will search again for the LORD your God. And if you search for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him.

³⁰ "When those bitter days have come upon you far in the future, you will finally return to the LORD your God and listen to what he tells you.

³¹ For the LORD your God is merciful—he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors.

³² "Search all of history, from the time God created people on the earth until now. Then search from one end of the heavens to the other. See if anything as great as this has ever happened before.

³³ Has any nation ever heard the voice of God speaking from fire—as you did—and survived?

³⁴ Has any other god taken one nation for himself by rescuing it from another by means of trials, miraculous signs, wonders, war, awesome power, and terrifying acts? Yet that is what the LORD your God did for you in Egypt, right before your very eyes.

³⁵ "He showed you these things so you would realize that the LORD is God and that there is no other god.

³⁶ He let you hear his voice from heaven so he could instruct you. He let you see his great fire here on earth so he could speak to you from it.

³⁷ Because he loved your ancestors, he chose to bless their descendants and personally brought you out of Egypt with a great display of power.

³⁸ He drove out nations far greater than you, so he could bring you in and give you their land as a special possession, as it is today.

³⁹ So remember this and keep it firmly in mind: The LORD is God both in heaven and on earth, and there is no other god!

⁴⁰ If you obey all the laws and commands that I will give you today, all will be well with you and your children. Then you will enjoy a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

⁴¹ Then Moses set apart three cities of refuge east of the Jordan River,

⁴² where anyone who had accidentally killed someone without having any previous hostility could flee for safety.

⁴³ These were the cities: Bezer on the wilderness plateau for the tribe of Reuben; Ramoth in Gilead for the tribe of Gad; Golan in Bashan for the tribe of Manasseh.

⁴⁴ This is the law that Moses handed down to the Israelites.

⁴⁵ These are the stipulations, laws, and regulations that Moses gave to the people of Israel when they left Egypt,

⁴⁶ and as they camped in the valley near Beth-peor east of the Jordan River. (This land was formerly occupied by the Amorites under King Sihon of Heshbon. He and his people had been destroyed by Moses and the Israelites as they came up from Egypt.)

⁴⁷ Israel conquered his land and that of King Og of Bashan—the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan.

⁴⁸ So Israel conquered all the area from Aroer at the edge of the Arnon Gorge

to Mount Sirion, also called Mount Hermon.

⁴⁹ And they took the eastern bank of the Jordan Valley as far south as the Dead Sea, below the slopes of Pisgah.)

5 ¹ Moses called all the people of Israel together and said, "Listen carefully to all the laws and regulations I am giving you today. Learn them and be sure to obey them!

² "While we were at Mount Sinai, the LORD our God made a covenant with us.

³ The LORD did not make this covenant long ago with our ancestors, but with all of us who are alive today.

⁴ The LORD spoke to you face to face from the heart of the fire on the mountain.

⁵ I stood as an intermediary between you and the LORD, for you were afraid of the fire and did not climb the mountain.

He spoke to me, and I passed his words on to you. This is what he said:

⁶ "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.

⁷ "Do not worship any other gods besides me.

⁸ "Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish.

⁹ You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not share your affection with any other god! I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.

¹⁰ But I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations.

¹¹ "Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let

you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

¹² "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you.

¹³ Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work,

¹⁴ but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your oxen and donkeys and other livestock, and any foreigners living among you. All your male and female servants must rest as you do.

¹⁵ Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out with amazing power and mighty deeds. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

16 "'Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God commanded you. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you.

17 "'Do not murder.

18 "'Do not commit adultery.

19 "'Do not steal.

20 "'Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

21 "'Do not covet your neighbor's wife. Do not covet your neighbor's house or land, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else your neighbor owns.'

22 "The LORD spoke these words with a loud voice to all of you from the heart of the fire, surrounded by clouds and deep darkness. This was all he said at that time, and he wrote his words on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

23 But when you heard the voice from the darkness, while the mountain was

blazing with fire, all your tribal leaders came to me.

²⁴ They said, 'The LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice from the heart of the fire. Today we have seen God speaking to humans, and yet we live!

²⁵ But now, why should we die? If the LORD our God speaks to us again, we will certainly die and be consumed by this awesome fire.

²⁶ Can any living thing hear the voice of the living God from the heart of the fire and yet survive?

²⁷ You go and listen to what the LORD our God says. Then come and tell us everything he tells you, and we will listen and obey.'

²⁸ "The LORD heard your request and said to me, 'I have heard what the people have said to you, and they are right.

²⁹ Oh, that they would always have hearts like this, that they might fear me and obey all my commands! If they did, they and their descendants would prosper forever.

³⁰ Go and tell them to return to their tents.

³¹ But you stay here with me so I can give you all my commands, laws, and regulations. You will teach them to the people so they can obey them in the land I am giving to them as their inheritance.'"

³² So Moses told the people, "You must obey all the commands of the LORD your God, following his instructions in every detail.

³³ Stay on the path that the LORD your God has commanded you to follow. Then you will live long and prosperous lives in the land you are about to enter and occupy.

6 ¹ "These are all the commands, laws, and regulations that the LORD your God told me to teach you so you may obey them in the land you are about to enter and occupy,

² and so you and your children and grandchildren might fear the LORD your God as long as you live. If you obey all his laws and commands, you will enjoy a long life.

³ Listen closely, Israel, to everything I say. Be careful to obey. Then all will go well with you, and you will have many children in the land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

⁴ "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

⁵ And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

⁶ And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today.

⁷ Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again.

⁸ Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead.

⁹ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

¹⁰ "The LORD your God will soon bring you into the land he swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land filled with large, prosperous cities that you did not build.

¹¹ The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and

olive trees you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land,

¹² be careful not to forget the LORD, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt.

¹³ You must fear the LORD your God and serve him. When you take an oath, you must use only his name.

¹⁴ "You must not worship any of the gods of neighboring nations,

¹⁵ for the LORD your God, who lives among you, is a jealous God. His anger will flare up against you and wipe you from the face of the earth.

¹⁶ Do not test the LORD your God as you did when you complained at Massah.

¹⁷ You must diligently obey the commands of the LORD your God—all the stipulations and laws he has given you.

¹⁸ Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight, so all will go well with you.

Then you will enter and occupy the good land that the LORD solemnly promised to give your ancestors.

¹⁹ You will drive out all the enemies living in your land, just as the LORD said you would.

²⁰ "In the future your children will ask you, 'What is the meaning of these stipulations, laws, and regulations that the LORD our God has given us?'

²¹ Then you must tell them, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with amazing power.

²² Before our eyes the LORD did miraculous signs and wonders, dealing terrifying blows against Egypt and Pharaoh and all his people.

²³ He brought us out of Egypt so he could give us this land he had solemnly promised to give our ancestors.

²⁴ And the LORD our God commanded us to obey all these laws and to fear him for our own prosperity and well-being, as is now the case.

²⁵ For we are righteous when we obey all the commands the LORD our God has given us.'

7 ¹ "When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are about to enter and occupy, he will clear away many nations ahead of you: the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. These seven nations are all more powerful than you.

² When the LORD your God hands these nations over to you and you conquer them, you must completely destroy them. Make no treaties with them and show them no mercy.

³ Do not intermarry with them, and don't let your daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters.

⁴ They will lead your young people away from me to worship other gods. Then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and he will destroy you.

⁵ Instead, you must break down their pagan altars and shatter their sacred pillars. Cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols.

⁶ For you are a holy people, who belong to the LORD your God. Of all the people on earth, the LORD your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure.

⁷ "The LORD did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations!

⁸ It was simply because the LORD loves you, and because he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors.

That is why the LORD rescued you with such amazing power from your slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt.

⁹ Understand, therefore, that the LORD your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and constantly loves those who love him and obey his commands.

¹⁰ But he does not hesitate to punish and destroy those who hate him.

¹¹ Therefore, obey all these commands, laws, and regulations I am giving you today.

¹² "If you listen to these regulations and obey them faithfully, the LORD your God will keep his covenant of unfailing love with you, as he solemnly promised your ancestors.

¹³ He will love you and bless you and make you into a great nation. He will give you many children and give fertility

to your land and your animals. When you arrive in the land he swore to give your ancestors, you will have large crops of grain, grapes, and olives, and great herds of cattle, sheep, and goats.

¹⁴ You will be blessed above all the nations of the earth. None of your men or women will be childless, and all your livestock will bear young.

¹⁵ And the LORD will protect you from all sickness. He will not let you suffer from the terrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will bring them all on your enemies!

¹⁶ "You must destroy all the nations the LORD your God hands over to you. Show them no mercy and do not worship their gods. If you do, they will trap you.

¹⁷ Perhaps you will think to yourselves, 'How can we ever conquer these nations that are so much more powerful than we are?'

¹⁸ But don't be afraid of them! Just remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all the land of Egypt.

¹⁹ Remember the great terrors the LORD your God sent against them. You saw it all with your own eyes! And remember the miraculous signs and wonders, and the amazing power he used when he brought you out of Egypt. The LORD your God will use this same power against the people you fear.

²⁰ And then the LORD your God will send hornets to drive out the few survivors still hiding from you!

²¹ "No, do not be afraid of those nations, for the LORD your God is among you, and he is a great and awesome God.

²² The LORD your God will drive those nations out ahead of you little by little. You will not clear them away all at once, for if you did, the wild animals would multiply too quickly for you.

²³ But the LORD your God will hand them over to you. He will throw them into complete confusion until they are destroyed.

²⁴ He will put their kings in your power, and you will erase their names from the face of the earth. No one will be able to stand against you, and you will destroy them all.

²⁵ "You must burn their idols in fire, and do not desire the silver or gold with which they are made. Do not take it or it will become a snare to you, for it is detestable to the LORD your God.

²⁶ Do not bring any detestable objects into your home, for then you will be set apart for destruction just like them. You must utterly detest such things, for they are set apart for destruction.

8 ¹ "Be careful to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then you will live and multiply, and you

will enter and occupy the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors.

² Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would really obey his commands.

³ Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people need more than bread for their life; real life comes by feeding on every word of the LORD.

⁴ For all these forty years your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't blister or swell.

⁵ So you should realize that just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you to help you.

⁶ "So obey the commands of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and fearing him.

⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with springs that gush forth in the valleys and hills.

⁸ It is a land of wheat and barley, of grapevines, fig trees, pomegranates, olives, and honey.

⁹ It is a land where food is plentiful and nothing is lacking. It is a land where iron is as common as stone, and copper is abundant in the hills.

¹⁰ When you have eaten your fill, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

¹¹ "But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the LORD your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and laws.

¹² For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in,

¹³ and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else,

¹⁴ that is the time to be careful. Do not become proud at that time and forget the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt.

¹⁵ Do not forget that he led you through the great and terrifying wilderness with poisonous snakes and scorpions, where it was so hot and dry. He gave you water from the rock!

¹⁶ He fed you with manna in the wilderness, a food unknown to your ancestors. He did this to humble you and test you for your own good.

¹⁷ He did it so you would never think that it was your own strength and energy that made you wealthy.

¹⁸ Always remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you power to become rich, and he does it to fulfill the covenant he made with your ancestors.

¹⁹ "But I assure you of this: If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods, worshiping and bowing down to them, you will certainly be destroyed.

²⁰ Just as the LORD has destroyed other nations in your path, you also will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.

9¹ "Hear, O Israel! Today you are about to cross the Jordan River to occupy the land belonging to nations much greater and more powerful than you. They live in cities with walls that reach to the sky!

² They are strong and tall—descendants of the famous Anakite giants. You've heard the saying, 'Who can stand up to the Anakites?'

³ But the LORD your God will cross over ahead of you like a devouring fire to destroy them. He will subdue them so that you will quickly conquer them and drive them out, just as the LORD has promised.

⁴ "After the LORD your God has done this for you, don't say to yourselves, 'The LORD has given us this land because we are so righteous!' No, it is because of the wickedness of the other nations that he is doing it.

⁵ It is not at all because you are such righteous, upright people that you are about to occupy their land. The LORD your God will drive these nations out ahead of you only because of their wickedness, and to fulfill the oath he

had sworn to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

⁶ I will say it again: The LORD your God is not giving you this good land because you are righteous, for you are not—you are a stubborn people.

⁷ "Remember how angry you made the LORD your God out in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until now, you have constantly rebelled against him.

⁸ Remember how angry you made the LORD at Mount Sinai, where he was ready to destroy you.

⁹ That was when I was on the mountain receiving the tablets of stone inscribed with the covenant that the LORD had made with you. I was there for forty days and forty nights, and all that time I ate nothing and drank no water.

¹⁰ The LORD gave me the covenant, the tablets on which God himself had

written all the words he had spoken to you from the fire on the mountain.

¹¹ "At the end of the forty days and nights, the LORD handed me the two stone tablets with the covenant inscribed on them.

¹² Then the LORD said to me, 'Go down immediately because the people you led out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have already turned from the way I commanded them to live and have cast an idol for themselves from gold.'

¹³ "The LORD said to me, 'I have been watching this people, and they are extremely stubborn.

¹⁴ Leave me alone so I may destroy them and erase their name from under heaven. Then I will make a mighty nation of your descendants, a nation larger and more powerful than they are.'

¹⁵ "So I came down from the fiery mountain, holding in my hands the two stone tablets of the covenant.

¹⁶ There below me I could see the gold calf you had made in your terrible sin against the LORD your God. How quickly you had turned from the path the LORD had commanded you to follow!

¹⁷ So I raised the stone tablets and dashed them to the ground. I smashed them before your very eyes.

¹⁸ Then for forty days and nights I lay prostrate before the LORD, neither eating bread nor drinking water. I did this because you had sinned by doing what the LORD hated, thus making him very angry.

¹⁹ How I feared for you, for the LORD was ready to destroy you. But again he listened to me.

²⁰ The LORD was so angry with Aaron that he wanted to destroy him. But I

prayed for Aaron, and the LORD spared him.

²¹ I took your sin—the calf you had made—and I melted it in the fire and ground it into fine dust. I threw the dust into the stream that cascades down the mountain.

²² "You also made the LORD angry at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah.

²³ And at Kadesh-barnea the LORD sent you out with this command: 'Go up and take the land I have given you.' But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God and refused to trust him or obey him.

²⁴ Yes, you have been rebelling against the LORD as long as I have known you.

²⁵ "That is why I fell down and lay before the LORD for forty days and nights when he was ready to destroy you.

²⁶ I prayed to the LORD and said, 'O Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your own people. They are your special possession, redeemed from Egypt by your mighty power and glorious strength.

²⁷ Overlook the stubbornness and sin of these people, but remember instead your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

²⁸ If you destroy these people, the Egyptians will say, "The LORD destroyed them because he wasn't able to bring them to the land he had sworn to give them." Or they might say, "He destroyed them because he hated them; he brought them into the wilderness to slaughter them."

²⁹ But they are your people and your special possession, whom you brought from Egypt by your mighty power and glorious strength.'

10¹ "At that time the LORD said to me, 'Prepare two stone tablets like the first ones, and make a sacred chest of wood to keep them in. Return to me on the mountain,

² and I will write on the tablets the same words that were on the ones you smashed. Then place the tablets in the sacred chest—the Ark of the Covenant.'

³ "So I made a chest of acacia wood and cut two stone tablets like the first two, and I took the tablets up the mountain.

⁴ The LORD again wrote the terms of the covenant—the Ten Commandments—on them and gave them to me. They were the same words the LORD had spoken to you from the heart of the fire on the mountain as you were assembled below.

⁵ Then I came down and placed the tablets in the Ark of the Covenant, which I had made, just as the LORD

commanded me. And the tablets are still there in the Ark.

⁶ "The people of Israel set out from the wells of the people of Jaakan and traveled to Moserah, where Aaron died and was buried. His son Eleazar became the high priest in his place.

⁷ Then they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from there to Jotbathah, a land with brooks of water.

⁸ At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of the LORD's covenant, to minister before the LORD, and to pronounce blessings in his name. These are still their duties.

⁹ That is why the Levites have no share or inheritance reserved for them among the other Israelite tribes. The LORD himself is their inheritance, as the LORD your God told them.

¹⁰ "As I said before, I stayed on the mountain in the LORD's presence for

forty days and nights, as I had done the first time. And once again the LORD yielded to my pleas and didn't destroy you.

¹¹ But the LORD said to me, 'Get up and lead the people into the land I swore to give their ancestors, so they may take possession of it.'

¹² "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? He requires you to fear him, to live according to his will, to love and worship him with all your heart and soul,

¹³ and to obey the LORD's commands and laws that I am giving you today for your own good.

¹⁴ The highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the LORD your God.

¹⁵ Yet the LORD chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose

you, their descendants, above every other nation, as is evident today.

¹⁶ Therefore, cleanse your sinful hearts and stop being stubborn.

¹⁷ "The LORD your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and takes no bribes.

¹⁸ He gives justice to orphans and widows. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing.

¹⁹ You, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

²⁰ You must fear the LORD your God and worship him and cling to him. Your oaths must be in his name alone.

²¹ He is your God, the one who is worthy of your praise, the one who has done mighty miracles that you yourselves have seen.

²² When your ancestors went down into Egypt, there were only seventy of them. But now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky!

11 ¹ "You must love the LORD your God and obey all his requirements, laws, regulations, and commands.

² Listen! I am not talking now to your children, who have never experienced the discipline of the LORD your God or seen his greatness and awesome power.

³ They weren't there to see the miraculous signs and wonders he performed in Egypt against Pharaoh and all his land.

⁴ They didn't see what the LORD did to the armies of Egypt and to their horses and chariots—how he drowned them in the Red Sea as they were chasing you, and how he has kept them devastated to this very day!

⁵ They didn't see how the LORD cared for you in the wilderness until you arrived here.

⁶ They weren't there to see what he did to Dathan and Abiram (the sons of Eliab, a descendant of Reuben) when the earth opened up and swallowed them, along with their households and tents and every living thing that belonged to them.

⁷ But you have seen all the LORD's mighty deeds with your own eyes!

⁸ "Therefore, be careful to obey every command I am giving you today, so you may have strength to go in and occupy the land you are about to enter.

⁹ If you obey, you will enjoy a long life in the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors and to you, their descendants—a land flowing with milk and honey!

¹⁰ For the land you are about to enter and occupy is not like the land of Egypt

from which you came, where you planted your seed and dug out irrigation ditches with your foot as in a vegetable garden.

¹¹ It is a land of hills and valleys with plenty of rain—

¹² a land that the LORD your God cares for. He watches over it day after day throughout the year!

¹³ "If you carefully obey all the commands I am giving you today, and if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul, and if you worship him,

¹⁴ then he will send the rains in their proper seasons so you can harvest crops of grain, grapes for wine, and olives for oil.

¹⁵ He will give you lush pastureland for your cattle to graze in, and you yourselves will have plenty to eat.

¹⁶ "But do not let your heart turn away from the LORD to worship other gods.

¹⁷ If you do, the LORD's anger will burn against you. He will shut up the sky and hold back the rain, and your harvests will fail. Then you will quickly die in that good land the LORD is now giving you.

¹⁸ So commit yourselves completely to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead.

¹⁹ Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again.

²⁰ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,

²¹ so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, you and your children may flourish in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors.

²² "Be careful to obey all the commands I give you; show love to the LORD your

God by walking in his ways and clinging to him.

²³ Then the LORD will drive out all the nations in your land, though they are much greater and stronger than you.

²⁴ Wherever you set your feet, the land will be yours. Your frontiers will stretch from the wilderness in the south to Lebanon in the north, and from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

²⁵ No one will be able to stand against you, for the LORD your God will send fear and dread ahead of you, as he promised you, wherever you go in the whole land.

²⁶ "Today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse!

²⁷ You will be blessed if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today.

²⁸ You will receive a curse if you reject the commands of the LORD your God

and turn from his way by worshiping foreign gods.

²⁹ "When the LORD your God brings you into the land to possess it, you must pronounce a blessing from Mount Gerizim and a curse from Mount Ebal.

³⁰ (These two mountains are west of the Jordan River in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Jordan Valley, near the town of Gilgal. They are located toward the west, not far from the oaks of Moreh.)

³¹ For you are about to cross the Jordan to occupy the land the LORD your God is giving you. When you are living in that land,

³² you must be careful to obey all the laws and regulations I am giving you today.

12 ¹ "These are the laws and regulations you must obey as

long as you live in the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you.

² "When you drive out the nations that live there, you must destroy all the places where they worship their gods—high on the mountains, up on the hills, and under every green tree.

³ Break down their altars and smash their sacred pillars. Burn their Asherah poles and cut down their carved idols. Erase the names of their gods from those places!

⁴ "Do not worship the LORD your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods.

⁵ Rather, you must seek the LORD your God at the place he himself will choose from among all the tribes for his name to be honored.

⁶ There you will bring to the LORD your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your special gifts, your offerings

to fulfill a vow, your freewill offerings, and your offerings of the firstborn animals of your flocks and herds.

⁷ There you and your families will feast in the presence of the LORD your God, and you will rejoice in all you have accomplished because the LORD your God has blessed you.

⁸ "Today you are doing whatever you please, but that is not how it will be

⁹ when you arrive in the place of rest the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁰ You will soon cross the Jordan River and live in the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession. When he gives you rest and security from all your enemies,

¹¹ you must bring everything I command you—your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your special gifts, and your offerings to fulfill a

vow—to the place the LORD your God will choose for his name to be honored.

¹² You must celebrate there with your sons and daughters and all your servants in the presence of the LORD your God. And remember the Levites who live in your towns, for they will have no inheritance of land as their own.

¹³ Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings just anywhere.

¹⁴ You may do so only at the place the LORD will choose within one of your tribal territories. There you must offer your burnt offerings and do everything I command you.

¹⁵ "But you may butcher animals for meat in any town, wherever you want, just as you do now with gazelle and deer. You may eat as many animals as the LORD your God gives you. All of you, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat.

¹⁶ The only restriction is that you are not to eat the blood. You must pour it out on the ground like water.

¹⁷ "But your offerings must not be eaten at home—neither the tithe of your grain and new wine and olive oil, nor the firstborn of your flocks and herds, nor an offering to fulfill a vow, nor your freewill offerings, nor your special gifts.

¹⁸ You must eat these in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose. Eat them there with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns, celebrating in the presence of the LORD your God in all you do.

¹⁹ Be very careful never to forget the Levites as long as you live in your land.

²⁰ "When the LORD your God enlarges your territory as he has promised, you may eat meat whenever you want.

²¹ It might happen that the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored is a long way from your home. If so, you may butcher any of the cattle or sheep the LORD has given you, and you may eat the meat at your home as I have commanded you.

²² Anyone, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you do now with gazelle and deer.

²³ The only restriction is never to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat.

²⁴ Instead, pour out the blood on the ground like water.

²⁵ Do not eat the blood; then all will go well with you and your children, because you will be doing what pleases the LORD.

²⁶ Take your sacred gifts and your offerings given to fulfill a vow to the place the LORD chooses to dwell.

²⁷ You must offer the meat and blood of your burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD your God. The blood of your other sacrifices must be poured out beside the altar of the LORD your God, but you may eat the meat.

²⁸ Be careful to obey all my commands so that all will go well with you and your children, because you will be doing what pleases the LORD your God.

²⁹ "When the LORD your God destroys the nations and you drive them out and occupy their land,

³⁰ do not be trapped into following their example in worshiping their gods. Do not say, 'How do these nations worship their gods? I want to follow their example.'

³¹ You must not do this to the LORD your God. These nations have committed many detestable acts that the LORD hates, all in the name of their gods.

They have even burned their sons and daughters as sacrifices to their gods.

³² Carefully obey all the commands I give you. Do not add to them or subtract from them.

13 ¹ "Suppose there are prophets among you, or those who have dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles,

² and the predicted signs or miracles take place. If the prophets then say, 'Come, let us worship the gods of foreign nations,'

³ do not listen to them. The LORD your God is testing you to see if you love him with all your heart and soul.

⁴ Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him.

⁵ The false prophets or dreamers who try to lead you astray must be put to death, for they encourage rebellion

against the LORD your God, who brought you out of slavery in the land of Egypt. Since they try to keep you from following the LORD your God, you must execute them to remove the evil from among you.

⁶ "Suppose your brother, son, daughter, beloved wife, or closest friend comes to you secretly and says, 'Let us go worship other gods'—gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known.

⁷ They might suggest that you worship the gods of peoples who live nearby or who come from the ends of the earth.

⁸ If they do this, do not give in or listen, and have no pity. Do not spare or protect them.

⁹ You must put them to death! You must be the one to initiate the execution; then all the people must join in.

¹⁰ Stone the guilty ones to death because they have tried to draw you

away from the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of slavery.

¹¹ Then all Israel will hear about it and be afraid, and such wickedness will never again be done among you.

¹² "Suppose you hear in one of the towns the LORD your God is giving you

¹³ that some worthless rabble among you have led their fellow citizens astray by encouraging them to worship foreign gods.

¹⁴ In such cases, you must examine the facts carefully. If you find it is true and can prove that such a detestable act has occurred among you,

¹⁵ you must attack that town and completely destroy all its inhabitants, as well as all the livestock.

¹⁶ Then you must pile all the plunder in the middle of the street and burn it. Put the entire town to the torch as a burnt

offering to the LORD your God. That town must remain a ruin forever; it may never be rebuilt.

¹⁷ Keep none of the plunder that has been set apart for destruction. Then the LORD will turn from his fierce anger and be merciful to you. He will have compassion on you and make you a great nation, just as he solemnly promised your ancestors.

¹⁸ "The LORD your God will be merciful only if you obey him and keep all the commands I am giving you today, doing what is pleasing to him.

14 ¹ "Since you are the people of the LORD your God, never cut yourselves or shave the hair above your foreheads for the sake of the dead.

² You have been set apart as holy to the LORD your God, and he has chosen you to be his own special treasure from all the nations of the earth.

³ "You must not eat animals that are ceremonially unclean.

⁴ These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat,

⁵ the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain sheep.

⁶ "Any animal that has split hooves and chews the cud may be eaten,

⁷ but if the animal doesn't have both, it may not be eaten. So you may not eat the camel, the hare, or the rock badger. They chew the cud but do not have split hooves.

⁸ And the pig may not be eaten, for though it has split hooves, it does not chew the cud. All these animals are ceremonially unclean for you. You may not eat or even touch the dead bodies of such animals.

⁹ "As for marine animals, you may eat whatever has both fins and scales.

¹⁰ You may not, however, eat marine animals that do not have both fins and scales. They are ceremonially unclean for you.

¹¹ "You may eat any bird that is ceremonially clean.

¹² These are the birds you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey,

¹³ the buzzard, kites of all kinds,

¹⁴ ravens of all kinds,

¹⁵ the ostrich, the nighthawk, the seagull, hawks of all kinds,

¹⁶ the little owl, the great owl, the white owl,

¹⁷ the pelican, the carrion vulture, the cormorant,

¹⁸ the stork, herons of all kinds, the hoopoe, and the bat.

¹⁹ "All flying insects are ceremonially unclean for you and may not be eaten.

²⁰ But you may eat any winged creature that is ceremonially clean.

²¹ "Do not eat anything that has died a natural death. You may give it to a foreigner living among you, or you may sell it to a foreigner. But do not eat it yourselves, for you are set apart as holy to the LORD your God. "Do not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

²² "You must set aside a tithe of your crops—one-tenth of all the crops you harvest each year.

²³ Bring this tithe to the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored, and eat it there in his presence. This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to fear the LORD your God.

²⁴ Now the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored might be a long way from your home.

²⁵ If so, you may sell the tithe portion of your crops and herds and take the money to the place the LORD your God chooses.

²⁶ When you arrive, use the money to buy anything you want—an ox, a sheep, some wine, or beer. Then feast there in the presence of the LORD your God and celebrate with your household.

²⁷ And do not forget the Levites in your community, for they have no inheritance as you do.

²⁸ "At the end of every third year bring the tithe of all your crops and store it in the nearest town.

²⁹ Give it to the Levites, who have no inheritance among you, as well as to the foreigners living among you, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, so they can eat and be satisfied. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all your work.

15 ¹ "At the end of every seventh year you must cancel your debts.

² This is how it must be done. Creditors must cancel the loans they have made to their fellow Israelites. They must not demand payment from their neighbors or relatives, for the LORD's time of release has arrived.

³ This release from debt, however, applies only to your fellow Israelites—
—not to the foreigners living among you.

⁴ There should be no poor among you, for the LORD your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession.

⁵ You will receive this blessing if you carefully obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today.

⁶ The LORD your God will bless you as he has promised. You will lend money

to many nations but will never need to borrow! You will rule many nations, but they will not rule over you!

⁷ "But if there are any poor people in your towns when you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them.

⁸ Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need.

⁹ Do not be mean-spirited and refuse someone a loan because the year of release is close at hand. If you refuse to make the loan and the needy person cries out to the LORD, you will be considered guilty of sin.

¹⁰ Give freely without begrudging it, and the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

¹¹ There will always be some among you who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share your

resources freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need.

¹² "If an Israelite man or woman voluntarily becomes your servant and serves you for six years, in the seventh year you must set that servant free.

¹³ "When you release a male servant, do not send him away empty-handed.

¹⁴ Give him a generous farewell gift from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress. Share with him some of the bounty with which the LORD your God has blessed you.

¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you! That is why I am giving you this command.

¹⁶ But suppose your servant says, 'I will not leave you,' because he loves you and your family, and he is well off with you.

¹⁷ In that case, take an awl and push it through his earlobe into the door. After

that, he will be your servant for life.

"You must do the same for your female servants.

¹⁸ "Do not consider it a hardship when you release your servants. Remember that for six years they have given you the services worth double the wages of hired workers, and the LORD your God will bless you in all you do.

¹⁹ "You must set aside for the LORD your God all the firstborn males from your flocks and herds. Do not use the firstborn of your herds to work your fields, and do not shear the firstborn of your flocks.

²⁰ Instead, you and your family must eat these animals in the presence of the LORD your God each year at the place he chooses.

²¹ But if this firstborn animal has any defect, such as being lame or blind, or if

anything else is wrong with it, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.

²² Instead, use it for food for your family at home. Anyone may eat it, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, just as anyone may eat a gazelle or deer.

²³ But do not eat the blood. You must pour it out on the ground like water.

16 ¹ "In honor of the LORD your God, always celebrate the Passover at the proper time in early spring, for that was when the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

² Your Passover sacrifice may be from either the flock or the herd, and it must be sacrificed to the LORD your God at the place he chooses for his name to be honored.

³ Eat it with bread made without yeast. For seven days eat only bread made without yeast, as you did when you escaped from Egypt in such a hurry. Eat

this bread—the bread of suffering—so that you will remember the day you departed from Egypt as long as you live.

⁴ Let no yeast be found in any house throughout your land for seven days. And do not let any of the meat of the Passover lamb remain until the next morning.

⁵ "The Passover must not be eaten in the towns that the LORD your God is giving you.

⁶ It must be offered at the place the LORD your God will choose for his name to be honored. Sacrifice it there as the sun goes down on the anniversary of your exodus from Egypt.

⁷ Roast the lamb and eat it in the place the LORD your God chooses. Then go back to your tents the next morning.

⁸ For the next six days you may not eat bread made with yeast. On the seventh day the people must assemble before

the LORD your God, and no work may be done on that day.

⁹ "Count off seven weeks from the beginning of your grain harvest.

¹⁰ Then you must celebrate the Festival of Harvest to honor the LORD your God. Bring him a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings you have received from him.

¹¹ It is a time to celebrate before the LORD your God at the place he chooses for his name to be honored. Celebrate with your whole family, all your servants, the Levites from your towns, and the foreigners, orphans, and widows who live among you.

¹² Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, so be careful to obey all these laws.

¹³ "Another celebration, the Festival of Shelters, must be observed for seven days at the end of the harvest season,

after the grain has been threshed and the grapes have been pressed.

¹⁴ This festival will be a happy time of rejoicing with your family, your servants, and with the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows from your towns.

¹⁵ For seven days celebrate this festival to honor the LORD your God at the place he chooses, for it is the LORD your God who gives you bountiful harvests and blesses all your work. This festival will be a time of great joy for all.

¹⁶ "Each year every man in Israel must celebrate these three festivals: the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters. They must appear before the LORD your God at the place he chooses on each of these occasions, and they must bring a gift to the LORD.

¹⁷ All must give as they are able, according to the blessings given to them by the LORD your God.

¹⁸ "Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in all the towns the LORD your God is giving you. They will judge the people fairly throughout the land.

¹⁹ You must never twist justice or show partiality. Never accept a bribe, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and corrupt the decisions of the godly.

²⁰ Let true justice prevail, so you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

²¹ "You must never set up an Asherah pole beside the altar of the LORD your God.

²² And never set up sacred pillars for worship, for the LORD your God hates them.

17¹ "Never sacrifice a sick or defective ox or sheep to the LORD your God, for he detests such gifts.

² "Suppose a man or woman among you, in one of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, has done evil in the sight of the LORD your God and has violated the covenant

³ by serving other gods or by worshiping the sun, the moon, or any of the forces of heaven, which I have strictly forbidden.

⁴ When you hear about it, investigate the matter thoroughly. If it is true that this detestable thing has been done in Israel,

⁵ then that man or woman must be taken to the gates of the town and stoned to death.

⁶ But never put a person to death on the testimony of only one witness. There must always be at least two or three witnesses.

⁷ The witnesses must throw the first stones, and then all the people will join in. In this way, you will purge all evil from among you.

⁸ "Suppose a case arises in a local court that is too hard for you to decide—for instance, whether someone is guilty of murder or only of manslaughter, or a difficult lawsuit, or a case involving different kinds of assault. Take such cases to the place the LORD your God will choose,

⁹ where the Levitical priests and the judge on duty will hear the case and decide what to do.

¹⁰ The decision they make at the place the LORD chooses will always stand. You must do exactly what they say.

¹¹ After they have interpreted the law and reached a verdict, the sentence they impose must be fully executed; do not modify it in any way.

¹² Anyone arrogant enough to reject the verdict of the judge or of the priest who represents the LORD your God must be put to death. Such evil must be purged from Israel.

¹³ Then everyone will hear about it and be afraid to act so arrogantly.

¹⁴ "You will soon arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you, and you will conquer it and settle there. Then you may begin to think, 'We ought to have a king like the other nations around us.'

¹⁵ If this happens, be sure that you select as king the man the LORD your God chooses. You must appoint a fellow Israelite, not a foreigner.

¹⁶ The king must not build up a large stable of horses for himself, and he must never send his people to Egypt to buy horses there, for the LORD has told you, 'You must never return to Egypt.'

¹⁷ The king must not take many wives for himself, because they will lead him away from the LORD. And he must not accumulate vast amounts of wealth in silver and gold for himself.

¹⁸ "When he sits on the throne as king, he must copy these laws on a scroll for himself in the presence of the Levitical priests.

¹⁹ He must always keep this copy of the law with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the LORD his God by obeying all the terms of this law.

²⁰ This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from these commands in the smallest way. This will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel.

18 ¹ "Remember that the Levitical priests and the rest of the tribe of Levi will not be given an inheritance of land like the other tribes in Israel. Instead, the priests and Levites will eat from the offerings given to the LORD by fire, for that is their inheritance.

² They will have no inheritance of their own among the Israelites. The LORD himself is their inheritance, just as he promised them.

³ "These are the parts the priests may claim as their share from the oxen and sheep that the people bring as offerings: the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach.

⁴ You must also give to the priests the first share of the grain, the new wine, the olive oil, and the wool at shearing time.

⁵ For the LORD your God chose the tribe of Levi out of all your tribes to minister in the LORD's name forever.

⁶ "Any Levite who so desires may come from any town in Israel, from wherever he is living, to the place the LORD chooses.

⁷ He may minister there in the name of the LORD his God, just like his fellow Levites who are serving the LORD there.

⁸ He may eat his share of the sacrifices and offerings, even if he has a private source of income.

⁹ "When you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you, be very careful not to imitate the detestable customs of the nations living there.

¹⁰ For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling or sorcery, or allow

them to interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft,

¹¹ or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead.

¹² Anyone who does these things is an object of horror and disgust to the LORD. It is because the other nations have done these things that the LORD your God will drive them out ahead of you.

¹³ You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

¹⁴ The people you are about to displace consult with sorcerers and fortune-tellers, but the LORD your God forbids you to do such things.

¹⁵ "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites, and you must listen to that prophet.

¹⁶ For this is what you yourselves requested of the LORD your God when

you were assembled at Mount Sinai. You begged that you might never again have to listen to the voice of the LORD your God or see this blazing fire for fear you would die.

¹⁷ "Then the LORD said to me, 'Fine, I will do as they have requested.

¹⁸ I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will tell that prophet what to say, and he will tell the people everything I command him.

¹⁹ I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf.

²⁰ But any prophet who claims to give a message from another god or who falsely claims to speak for me must die.'

²¹ You may wonder, 'How will we know whether the prophecy is from the LORD or not?'

²² If the prophet predicts something in the LORD's name and it does not

happen, the LORD did not give the message. That prophet has spoken on his own and need not be feared.

19¹ "The LORD your God will soon destroy the nations whose land he is giving you, and you will displace them and settle in their towns and homes.

² Then you must set apart three cities of refuge in the land the LORD your God is giving you to occupy.

³ Divide the land the LORD your God is giving you into three districts, with one of these cities in each district. Keep the roads to these cities in good repair so that anyone who has killed someone can flee there for safety.

⁴ "If someone accidentally kills a neighbor without harboring any previous hatred, the slayer may flee to any of these cities and be safe.

⁵ For example, suppose someone goes into the forest with a neighbor to cut wood. And suppose one of them swings an ax and the ax head flies off the handle, killing the other person. In such cases, the slayer could flee to one of the cities of refuge and be safe.

⁶ If the distance to the nearest city of refuge was too far, an enraged avenger might be able to chase down and kill the person who caused the death. The slayer would die, even though there was no death sentence and the first death had been an accident.

⁷ That is why I am commanding you to set aside three cities of refuge.

⁸ "If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he solemnly promised your ancestors, and gives you all the land he promised them,

⁹ you must designate three additional cities of refuge. (He will give you this

land if you obey all the commands I have given you—if you always love the LORD your God and walk in his ways.)

¹⁰ That way you will prevent the death of innocent people in the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession, and you will not be held responsible for murder.

¹¹ "But suppose someone hates a neighbor and deliberately ambushes and murders that neighbor and then escapes to one of the cities of refuge.

¹² In that case, the leaders of the murderer's hometown must have the murderer brought back from the city of refuge and handed over to the dead person's avenger to be killed.

¹³ Do not feel sorry for that murderer! Purge the guilt of murder from Israel so all may go well with you.

¹⁴ "When you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special

possession, never steal someone's land by moving the boundary markers your ancestors set up to mark their property.

¹⁵ "Never convict anyone of a crime on the testimony of just one witness. The facts of the case must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

¹⁶ If a malicious witness comes forward and accuses someone of a crime,

¹⁷ then both the accuser and accused must appear before the priests and judges who are on duty before the LORD.

¹⁸ They must be closely questioned, and if the accuser is found to be lying,

¹⁹ the accuser will receive the punishment intended for the accused. In this way, you will cleanse such evil from among you.

²⁰ Those who hear about it will be afraid to do such an evil thing again.

²¹ You must never show pity! Your rule should be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

20 ¹ "When you go out to fight your enemies and you face horses and chariots and an army greater than your own, do not be afraid. The LORD your God, who brought you safely out of Egypt, is with you!

² Before you go into battle, the priest will come forward to speak with the troops.

³ He will say, 'Listen to me, all you men of Israel! Do not be afraid as you go out to fight today! Do not lose heart or panic.

⁴ For the LORD your God is going with you! He will fight for you against your enemies, and he will give you victory!'

⁵ "Then the officers of the army will address the troops and say, 'Has anyone just built a new house but not yet

dedicated it? If so, go home! You might be killed in the battle, and someone else would dedicate your house!

⁶ Has anyone just planted a vineyard but not yet eaten any of its fruit? If so, go home! You might die in battle, and someone else would eat from it!

⁷ Has anyone just become engaged? Well, go home and get married! You might die in the battle, and someone else would marry your fianc,e.'

⁸ Then the officers will also say, 'Is anyone terrified? If you are, go home before you frighten anyone else.'

⁹ When the officers have finished saying this to their troops, they will announce the names of the unit commanders.

¹⁰ "As you approach a town to attack it, first offer its people terms for peace.

¹¹ If they accept your terms and open the gates to you, then all the people inside will serve you in forced labor.

¹² But if they refuse to make peace and prepare to fight, you must attack the town.

¹³ When the LORD your God hands it over to you, kill every man in the town.

¹⁴ But you may keep for yourselves all the women, children, livestock, and other plunder. You may enjoy the spoils of your enemies that the LORD your God has given you.

¹⁵ But these instructions apply only to distant towns, not to the towns of nations nearby.

¹⁶ "As for the towns of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession, destroy every living thing in them.

¹⁷ You must completely destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the LORD your God has commanded you.

¹⁸ This will keep the people of the land from teaching you their detestable customs in the worship of their gods, which would cause you to sin deeply against the LORD your God.

¹⁹ "When you are besieging a town and the war drags on, do not destroy the trees. Eat the fruit, but do not cut down the trees. They are not enemies that need to be attacked!

²⁰ But you may cut down trees that you know are not valuable for food. Use them to make the equipment you need to besiege the town until it falls.

21 ¹ "Suppose someone is found murdered in a field in the land the LORD your God is giving you, and you don't know who committed the murder.

² In such cases, your leaders and judges must determine which town is nearest the body.

³ Then the leaders of that town must select a young cow that has never been trained or yoked to a plow.

⁴ They must lead it to a valley that is neither plowed nor planted with a stream running through it. There they must break the cow's neck.

⁵ The Levitical priests must go there also, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister before him and to pronounce blessings in the LORD's name. And they are to decide all lawsuits and punishments.

⁶ "The leaders of the town nearest the body must wash their hands over the young cow whose neck was broken.

⁷ Then they must say, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did we see it happen.

⁸ O LORD, forgive your people Israel whom you have redeemed. Do not charge your people Israel with the guilt

of murdering an innocent person.' Then they will be absolved of the guilt of this person's blood.

⁹ By following these instructions and doing what is right in the LORD's sight, you will cleanse the guilt of murder from your community.

¹⁰ "Suppose you go to war against your enemies and the LORD your God hands them over to you and you take captives.

¹¹ And suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you are attracted to her and want to marry her.

¹² If this happens, you may take her to your home, where she must shave her head, cut her fingernails,

¹³ and change all her clothes. Then she must remain in your home for a full month, mourning for her father and mother. After that you may marry her.

¹⁴ But if you marry her and then decide you do not like her, you must let her go

free. You may not sell her or treat her as a slave, for you have humiliated her.

¹⁵ "Suppose a man has two wives, but he loves one and not the other, and both have given him sons. And suppose the firstborn son is the son of the wife he does not love.

¹⁶ When the man divides the inheritance, he may not give the larger inheritance to his younger son, the son of the wife he loves.

¹⁷ He must give the customary double portion to his oldest son, who represents the strength of his father's manhood and who owns the rights of the firstborn son, even though he is the son of the wife his father does not love.

¹⁸ "Suppose a man has a stubborn, rebellious son who will not obey his father or mother, even though they discipline him.

¹⁹ In such cases, the father and mother must take the son before the leaders of the town.

²⁰ They must declare: ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious and refuses to obey. He is a worthless drunkard.’

²¹ Then all the men of the town must stone him to death. In this way, you will cleanse this evil from among you, and all Israel will hear about it and be afraid.

²² "If someone has committed a crime worthy of death and is executed and then hanged on a tree,

²³ the body must never remain on the tree overnight. You must bury the body that same day, for anyone hanging on a tree is cursed of God. Do not defile the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession.

22 ¹ "If you see your neighbor's ox or sheep wandering away, don't

pretend not to see it. Take it back to its owner.

² If it does not belong to someone nearby or you don't know who the owner is, keep it until the owner comes looking for it; then return it.

³ Do the same if you find your neighbor's donkey, clothing, or anything else your neighbor loses. Don't pretend you did not see it.

⁴ "If you see your neighbor's ox or donkey lying on the road, do not look the other way. Go and help your neighbor get it to its feet!

⁵ "A woman must not wear men's clothing, and a man must not wear women's clothing. The LORD your God detests people who do this.

⁶ "If you find a bird's nest on the ground or in a tree and there are young ones or eggs in it with the mother sitting in the

nest, do not take the mother with the young.

⁷ You may take the young, but let the mother go, so you may prosper and enjoy a long life.

⁸ "Every new house you build must have a barrier around the edge of its flat rooftop. That way you will not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your household if someone falls from the roof.

⁹ "Do not plant any other crop between the rows of your vineyard. If you do, you are forbidden to use either the grapes from the vineyard or the produce of the other crop.

¹⁰ "Do not plow with an ox and a donkey harnessed together.

¹¹ "Do not wear clothing made of wool and linen woven together.

¹² "You must put tassels on the four corners of your cloaks.

¹³ "Suppose a man marries a woman and, after sleeping with her, changes his mind about her

¹⁴ and falsely accuses her of having slept with another man. He might say, 'I discovered she was not a virgin when I married her.'

¹⁵ If the man does this, the woman's father and mother must bring the proof of her virginity to the leaders of the town.

¹⁶ Her father must tell them, 'I gave my daughter to this man to be his wife, and now he has turned against her.

¹⁷ He has accused her of shameful things, claiming that she was not a virgin when he married her. But here is the proof of my daughter's virginity.' Then they must spread the cloth before the judges.

¹⁸ The judges must then punish the man.

¹⁹ They will fine him one hundred pieces of silver, for he falsely accused a virgin of Israel. The payment will be made to the woman's father. The woman will then remain the man's wife, and he may never divorce her.

²⁰ "But suppose the man's accusations are true, and her virginity could not be proved.

²¹ In such cases, the judges must take the girl to the door of her father's home, and the men of the town will stone her to death. She has committed a disgraceful crime in Israel by being promiscuous while living in her parents' home. Such evil must be cleansed from among you.

²² "If a man is discovered committing adultery, both he and the other man's wife must be killed. In this way, the evil will be cleansed from Israel.

²³ "Suppose a man meets a young woman, a virgin who is engaged to be married, and he has sexual intercourse with her. If this happens within a town,

²⁴ you must take both of them to the gates of the town and stone them to death. The woman is guilty because she did not scream for help. The man must die because he violated another man's wife. In this way, you will cleanse the land of evil.

²⁵ "But if the man meets the engaged woman out in the country, and he rapes her, then only the man should die.

²⁶ Do nothing to the young woman; she has committed no crime worthy of death. This case is similar to that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor.

²⁷ Since the man raped her out in the country, it must be assumed that she

screamed, but there was no one to rescue her.

²⁸ "If a man is caught in the act of raping a young woman who is not engaged,

²⁹ he must pay fifty pieces of silver to her father. Then he must marry the young woman because he violated her, and he will never be allowed to divorce her.

³⁰ "A man must not have intercourse with his father's wife, for this would violate his father.

23 ¹ "If a man's testicles are crushed or his penis is cut off, he may not be included in the assembly of the LORD.

² "Those of illegitimate birth and their descendants for ten generations may not be included in the assembly of the LORD.

³ "No Ammonites or Moabites, or any of their descendants for ten generations,

may be included in the assembly of the LORD.

⁴ These nations did not welcome you with food and water when you came out of Egypt. Instead, they tried to hire Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram–naharaim to curse you.

⁵ (But the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam. He turned the intended curse into a blessing because the LORD your God loves you.)

⁶ You must never, as long as you live, try to help the Ammonites or the Moabites in any way.

⁷ "Do not detest the Edomites or the Egyptians, because the Edomites are your relatives, and you lived as foreigners among the Egyptians.

⁸ The third generation of Egyptians who came with you from Egypt may enter the assembly of the LORD.

⁹ "When you go to war against your enemies, stay away from everything impure.

¹⁰ "Any man who becomes ceremonially defiled because of a nocturnal emission must leave the camp and stay away all day.

¹¹ Toward evening he must bathe himself, and at sunset he may return to the camp.

¹² "Mark off an area outside the camp for a latrine.

¹³ Each of you must have a spade as part of your equipment. Whenever you relieve yourself, you must dig a hole with the spade and cover the excrement.

¹⁴ The camp must be holy, for the LORD your God moves around in your camp to protect you and to defeat your enemies. He must not see any shameful thing among you, or he might turn away from you.

¹⁵ "If slaves should escape from their masters and take refuge with you, do not force them to return.

¹⁶ Let them live among you in whatever town they choose, and do not oppress them.

¹⁷ "No Israelite man or woman may ever become a temple prostitute.

¹⁸ Do not bring to the house of the LORD your God any offering from the earnings of a prostitute, whether a man or a woman, for both are detestable to the LORD your God.

¹⁹ "Do not charge interest on the loans you make to a fellow Israelite, whether it is money, food, or anything else that may be loaned with interest.

²⁰ You may charge interest to foreigners, but not to Israelites, so the LORD your God may bless you in everything you do in the land you are about to enter and occupy.

²¹ "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, be prompt in doing whatever you promised him. For the LORD your God demands that you promptly fulfill all your vows. If you don't, you will be guilty of sin.

²² However, it is not a sin to refrain from making a vow.

²³ But once you have voluntarily made a vow, be careful to do as you have said, for you have made a vow to the LORD your God.

²⁴ "You may eat your fill of grapes from your neighbor's vineyard, but do not take any away in a basket.

²⁵ And you may pluck a few heads of your neighbor's grain by hand, but you may not harvest it with a sickle.

24 ¹ "Suppose a man marries a woman but later discovers something about her that is shameful.

So he writes her a letter of divorce, gives it to her, and sends her away.

² If she then leaves and marries another man

³ and the second husband also divorces her or dies,

⁴ the former husband may not marry her again, for she has been defiled. That would be detestable to the LORD. You must not bring guilt upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession.

⁵ "A newly married man must not be drafted into the army or given any other special responsibilities. He must be free to be at home for one year, bringing happiness to the wife he has married.

⁶ "It is wrong to take a pair of millstones, or even just the upper millstone, as a pledge, for the owner uses it to make a living.

⁷ "If anyone kidnaps a fellow Israelite and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must cleanse the evil from among you.

⁸ "Watch all contagious skin diseases carefully and follow the instructions of the Levitical priests; obey the commands I have given them.

⁹ Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam as you were coming from Egypt.

¹⁰ "If you lend anything to your neighbor, do not enter your neighbor's house to claim the security.

¹¹ Stand outside and the owner will bring it out to you.

¹² If your neighbor is poor and has only a cloak to give as security, do not keep the cloak overnight.

¹³ Return the cloak to its owner by sunset so your neighbor can sleep in it

and bless you. And the LORD your God will count it as a righteous act.

¹⁴ "Never take advantage of poor laborers, whether fellow Israelites or foreigners living in your towns.

¹⁵ Pay them their wages each day before sunset because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they might cry out to the LORD against you, and it would be counted against you as sin.

¹⁶ "Parents must not be put to death for the sins of their children, nor the children for the sins of their parents. Those worthy of death must be executed for their own crimes.

¹⁷ "True justice must be given to foreigners living among you and to orphans, and you must never accept a widow's garment in pledge of her debt.

¹⁸ Always remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your

God redeemed you. That is why I have given you this command.

¹⁹ "When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don't go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all you do.

²⁰ When you beat the olives from your olive trees, don't go over the boughs twice. Leave some of the olives for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.

²¹ This also applies to the grapes in your vineyard. Do not glean the vines after they are picked, but leave any remaining grapes for the foreigners, orphans, and widows.

²² Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt. That is why I am giving you this command.

25 ¹ "Suppose two people take a dispute to court, and the judges

declare that one is right and the other is wrong.

² If the person in the wrong is sentenced to be flogged, the judge will command him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of lashes appropriate to the crime.

³ No more than forty lashes may ever be given; more than forty lashes would publicly humiliate your neighbor.

⁴ "Do not keep an ox from eating as it treads out the grain.

⁵ "If two brothers are living together on the same property and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Instead, her husband's brother must marry her and fulfill the duties of a brother-in-law.

⁶ The first son she bears to him will be counted as the son of the dead brother, so that his name will not be forgotten in Israel.

⁷ But if the dead man's brother refuses to marry the widow, she must go to the town gate and say to the leaders there, 'My husband's brother refuses to preserve his brother's name in Israel—he refuses to marry me.'

⁸ The leaders of the town will then summon him and try to reason with him. If he still insists that he doesn't want to marry her,

⁹ the widow must walk over to him in the presence of the leaders, pull his sandal from his foot, and spit in his face. She will then say, 'This is what happens to a man who refuses to raise up a son for his brother.'

¹⁰ Ever afterward his family will be referred to as 'the family of the man whose sandal was pulled off'!

¹¹ "If two Israelite men are fighting and the wife of one tries to rescue her

husband by grabbing the testicles of the other man,

¹² her hand must be cut off without pity.

¹³ "You must use accurate scales when you weigh out merchandise,

¹⁴ and you must use full and honest measures.

¹⁵ Yes, use honest weights and measures, so that you will enjoy a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁶ Those who cheat with dishonest weights and measures are detestable to the LORD your God.

¹⁷ "Never forget what the Amalekites did to you as you came from Egypt.

¹⁸ They attacked you when you were exhausted and weary, and they struck down those who were lagging behind. They had no fear of God.

¹⁹ Therefore, when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies in the land he is giving you as a special possession, you are to destroy the Amalekites and erase their memory from under heaven. Never forget this!

26 ¹ "When you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession and you have conquered it and settled there,

² put some of the first produce from each harvest into a basket and bring it to the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored.

³ Go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, 'With this gift I acknowledge that the LORD your God has brought me into the land he swore to give our ancestors.'

⁴ The priest will then take the basket from your hand and set it before the altar of the LORD your God.

⁵ You must then say in the presence of the LORD your God, ‘My ancestor Jacob was a wandering Aramean who went to live in Egypt. His family was few in number, but in Egypt they became a mighty and numerous nation.

⁶ When the Egyptians mistreated and humiliated us by making us their slaves,

⁷ we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors. He heard us and saw our hardship, toil, and oppression.

⁸ So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with amazing power, overwhelming terror, and miraculous signs and wonders.

⁹ He brought us to this place and gave us this land flowing with milk and honey!

¹⁰ And now, O LORD, I have brought you a token of the first crops you have given me from the ground.’ Then place the produce before the LORD your God and worship him.

¹¹ Afterward go and celebrate because of all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household. Remember to include the Levites and the foreigners living among you in the celebration.

¹² "Every third year you must offer a special tithe of your crops. You must give these tithes to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows so that they will have enough to eat in your towns.

¹³ Then you must declare in the presence of the LORD your God, 'I have taken the sacred gift from my house and have given it to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows, just as you commanded me. I have not violated or forgotten any of your commands.

¹⁴ I have not eaten any of it while in mourning; I have not touched it while I was ceremonially unclean; and I have not offered any of it to the dead. I have

obeyed the LORD my God and have done everything you commanded me.

¹⁵ Look down from your holy dwelling place in heaven and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us—a land flowing with milk and honey—just as you solemnly promised our ancestors.’

¹⁶ "Today the LORD your God has commanded you to obey all these laws and regulations. You must commit yourself to them without reservation.

¹⁷ You have declared today that the LORD is your God. You have promised to obey his laws, commands, and regulations by walking in his ways and doing everything he tells you.

¹⁸ The LORD has declared today that you are his people, his own special treasure, just as he promised, and that you must obey all his commands.

¹⁹ And if you do, he will make you greater than any other nation. Then you

will receive praise, honor, and renown. You will be a nation that is holy to the LORD your God, just as he promised."

27 ¹ Then Moses and the leaders of Israel charged the people as follows: "Keep all these commands that I am giving you today.

² When you cross the Jordan River and enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster.

³ Then write all the terms of this law on them. I repeat, you will soon cross the river to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

⁴ When you cross the Jordan, set up these stones at Mount Ebal and coat them with plaster, as I am commanding you today.

⁵ Then build an altar there to the LORD your God, using natural stones.

⁶ Do not shape the stones with an iron tool. On the altar you must offer burnt offerings to the LORD your God.

⁷ Sacrifice peace offerings on it also, and feast there with great joy before the LORD your God.

⁸ On the stones coated with plaster, you must clearly write all the terms of this law."

⁹ Then Moses and the Levitical priests addressed all Israel as follows: "O Israel, be quiet and listen! Today you have become the people of the LORD your God.

¹⁰ So obey the LORD your God by keeping all these commands and laws that I am giving you today."

¹¹ That same day Moses gave this charge to the people:

¹² "When you cross the Jordan River, the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin must stand on Mount Gerizim to proclaim a blessing over the people.

¹³ And the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali must stand on Mount Ebal to proclaim a curse.

¹⁴ Then the Levites must shout to all the people of Israel:

¹⁵ 'Cursed is anyone who carves or casts idols and secretly sets them up. These idols, the work of craftsmen, are detestable to the LORD.' And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

¹⁶ 'Cursed is anyone who despises father or mother.' And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

¹⁷ 'Cursed is anyone who steals property from a neighbor by moving a boundary marker.' And all the people will reply, 'Amen.'

¹⁸ ‘Cursed is anyone who leads a blind person astray on the road.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

¹⁹ ‘Cursed is anyone who is unjust to foreigners, orphans, and widows.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

²⁰ ‘Cursed is anyone who has sexual intercourse with his father’s wife, for he has violated his father.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

²¹ ‘Cursed is anyone who has sexual intercourse with an animal.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

²² ‘Cursed is anyone who has sexual intercourse with his sister, whether she is the daughter of his father or his mother.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

²³ ‘Cursed is anyone who has sexual intercourse with his mother-in-law.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

²⁴ ‘Cursed is anyone who kills another person in secret.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

²⁵ ‘Cursed is anyone who accepts payment to kill an innocent person.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

²⁶ ‘Cursed is anyone who does not affirm the terms of this law by obeying them.’ And all the people will reply, ‘Amen.’

28 ¹ "If you fully obey the LORD your God by keeping all the commands I am giving you today, the LORD your God will exalt you above all the nations of the world.

² You will experience all these blessings if you obey the LORD your God:

³ You will be blessed in your towns and in the country.

⁴ You will be blessed with many children and productive fields. You will be blessed with fertile herds and flocks.

⁵ You will be blessed with baskets overflowing with fruit, and with kneading bowls filled with bread.

⁶ You will be blessed wherever you go, both in coming and in going.

⁷ "The LORD will conquer your enemies when they attack you. They will attack you from one direction, but they will scatter from you in seven!

⁸ "The LORD will bless everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

⁹ "If you obey the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways, the LORD will establish you as his holy people as he solemnly promised to do.

¹⁰ Then all the nations of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the LORD, and they will stand in awe of you.

¹¹ "The LORD will give you an abundance of good things in the land

he swore to give your ancestors—many children, numerous livestock, and abundant crops.

¹² The LORD will send rain at the proper time from his rich treasury in the heavens to bless all the work you do. You will lend to many nations, but you will never need to borrow from them.

¹³ If you listen to these commands of the LORD your God and carefully obey them, the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always have the upper hand.

¹⁴ You must not turn away from any of the commands I am giving you today to follow after other gods and worship them.

¹⁵ "But if you refuse to listen to the LORD your God and do not obey all the commands and laws I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overwhelm you:

¹⁶ You will be cursed in your towns and in the country.

¹⁷ You will be cursed with baskets empty of fruit, and with kneading bowls empty of bread.

¹⁸ You will be cursed with few children and barren fields. You will be cursed with infertile herds and flocks.

¹⁹ You will be cursed wherever you go, both in coming and in going.

²⁰ "The LORD himself will send against you curses, confusion, and disillusionment in everything you do, until at last you are completely destroyed for doing evil and forsaking me.

²¹ The LORD will send diseases among you until none of you are left in the land you are about to enter and occupy.

²² The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, fever, and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, and with

blight and mildew. These devastations will pursue you until you die.

²³ The skies above will be as unyielding as bronze, and the earth beneath will be as hard as iron.

²⁴ The LORD will turn your rain into sand and dust, and it will pour down from the sky until you are destroyed.

²⁵ "The LORD will cause you to be defeated by your enemies. You will attack your enemies from one direction, but you will scatter from them in seven! You will be an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

²⁶ Your dead bodies will be food for the birds and wild animals, and no one will be there to chase them away.

²⁷ "The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, scurvy, and the itch, from which you cannot be cured.

²⁸ The LORD will strike you with madness, blindness, and panic.

²⁹ You will grope around in broad daylight, just like a blind person groping in the darkness, and you will not succeed at anything you do. You will be oppressed and robbed continually, and no one will come to save you.

³⁰ "You will be engaged to a woman, but another man will ravish her. You will build a house, but someone else will live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will never enjoy its fruit.

³¹ Your ox will be butchered before your eyes, but you won't get a single bite of the meat. Your donkey will be driven away, never to be returned. Your sheep will be given to your enemies, and no one will be there to help you.

³² You will watch as your sons and daughters are taken away as slaves. Your

heart will break as you long for them, but nothing you do will help.

³³ A foreign nation you have never heard about will eat the crops you worked so hard to grow. You will suffer under constant oppression and harsh treatment.

³⁴ You will go mad because of all the tragedy around you.

³⁵ The LORD will cover you from head to foot with incurable boils.

³⁶ "The LORD will exile you and the king you crowned to a nation unknown to you and your ancestors. Then in exile you will worship gods of wood and stone!

³⁷ You will become an object of horror, a proverb and a mockery among all the nations to which the LORD sends you.

³⁸ "You will plant much but harvest little, for locusts will eat your crops.

³⁹ You will plant vineyards and care for them, but you will not drink the wine or

eat the grapes, for worms will destroy the vines.

⁴⁰ You will grow olive trees throughout your land, but you will never use the olive oil, for the trees will drop the fruit before it is ripe.

⁴¹ You will have sons and daughters, but you will not keep them, for they will be led away into captivity.

⁴² Swarms of insects will destroy your trees and crops.

⁴³ The foreigners living among you will become stronger and stronger, while you become weaker and weaker.

⁴⁴ They will lend money to you, not you to them. They will be the head, and you will be the tail!

⁴⁵ "If you refuse to listen to the LORD your God and to obey the commands and laws he has given you, all these curses will pursue and overtake you until you are destroyed.

⁴⁶ These horrors will serve as a sign and warning among you and your descendants forever.

⁴⁷ Because you have not served the LORD your God with joy and enthusiasm for the abundant benefits you have received,

⁴⁸ you will serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you. You will be left hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking in everything. They will oppress you harshly until you are destroyed.

⁴⁹ "The LORD will bring a distant nation against you from the end of the earth, and it will swoop down on you like an eagle. It is a nation whose language you do not understand,

⁵⁰ a fierce and heartless nation that shows no respect for the old and no pity for the young.

⁵¹ Its armies will devour your livestock and crops, and you will starve to death.

They will leave you no grain, new wine, olive oil, calves, or lambs, bringing about your destruction.

⁵² They will lay siege to your cities until all the fortified walls in your land—the walls you trusted to protect you—are knocked down. They will attack all the towns in the land the LORD your God has given you.

⁵³ The siege will be so severe that you will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you.

⁵⁴ The most tenderhearted man among you will have no compassion for his own brother, his beloved wife, and his surviving children.

⁵⁵ He will refuse to give them a share of the flesh he is devouring—the flesh of one of his own children—because he has nothing else to eat during the siege

that your enemy will inflict on all your towns.

⁵⁶ The most tender and delicate woman among you—so delicate she would not so much as touch her feet to the ground—will be cruel to the husband she loves and to her own son or daughter.

⁵⁷ She will hide from them the afterbirth and the new baby she has borne, so that she herself can secretly eat them. She will have nothing else to eat during the siege and terrible distress that your enemy will inflict on all your towns.

⁵⁸ "If you refuse to obey all the terms of this law that are written in this book, and if you do not fear the glorious and awesome name of the LORD your God,

⁵⁹ then the LORD will overwhelm both you and your children with indescribable plagues. These plagues will be intense

and without relief, making you miserable and unbearably sick.

⁶⁰ He will bring against you all the diseases of Egypt that you feared so much, and they will claim you.

⁶¹ The LORD will bring against you every sickness and plague there is, even those not mentioned in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed.

⁶² Though you are as numerous as the stars in the sky, few of you will be left because you would not listen to the LORD your God.

⁶³ "Just as the LORD has found great pleasure in helping you to prosper and multiply, the LORD will find pleasure in destroying you, until you disappear from the land you are about to enter and occupy.

⁶⁴ For the LORD will scatter you among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship

foreign gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods made of wood and stone!

⁶⁵ There among those nations you will find no place of security and rest. And the LORD will cause your heart to tremble, your eyesight to fail, and your soul to despair.

⁶⁶ Your lives will hang in doubt. You will live night and day in fear, with no reason to believe that you will see the morning light.

⁶⁷ In the morning you will say, 'If only it were night!' And in the evening you will say, 'If only it were morning!' You will say this because of your terror at the awesome horrors you see around you.

⁶⁸ Then the LORD will send you back to Egypt in ships, a journey I promised you would never again make. There you will offer to sell yourselves to your enemies

as slaves, but no one will want to buy you."

29 ¹ These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites while they were in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Mount Sinai.

² Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them, "You have seen with your own eyes everything the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and his whole country—

³ all the great tests of strength, the miraculous signs, and the amazing wonders.

⁴ But to this day the LORD has not given you minds that understand, nor eyes that see, nor ears that hear!

⁵ For forty years I led you through the wilderness, yet your clothes and sandals did not wear out.

⁶ You had no bread or wine or other strong drink, but he gave you food so you would know that he is the LORD your God.

⁷ When we came here, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out to fight against us, but we defeated them.

⁸ We took their land and gave it to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and to the half-tribe of Manasseh as their inheritance.

⁹ "Therefore, obey the terms of this covenant so that you will prosper in everything you do.

¹⁰ All of you—your tribal leaders, your judges, your officers, all the men of Israel—are standing today before the LORD your God.

¹¹ With you are your little ones, your wives, and the foreigners living among

you who chop your wood and carry your water.

¹² You are standing here today to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God. The LORD is making this covenant with you today, and he has sealed it with an oath.

¹³ He wants to confirm you today as his people and to confirm that he is your God, just as he promised you, and as he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

¹⁴ But you are not the only ones with whom the LORD is making this covenant with its obligations.

¹⁵ The LORD your God is making this covenant with you who stand in his presence today and also with all future generations of Israel.

¹⁶ "Surely you remember how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we traveled

through the lands of enemy nations as we left.

¹⁷ You have seen their detestable idols made of wood, stone, silver, and gold.

¹⁸ The LORD made this covenant with you so that no man, woman, family, or tribe among you would turn away from the LORD our God to worship these gods of other nations, and so that no root among you would bear bitter and poisonous fruit.

¹⁹ Let none of those who hear the warnings of this curse consider themselves immune, thinking, 'I am safe, even though I am walking in my own stubborn way.' This would lead to utter ruin!

²⁰ The LORD will not pardon such people. His anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them, and

the LORD will erase their names from under heaven.

²¹ The LORD will separate them from all the tribes of Israel, to pour out on them all the covenant curses recorded in this Book of the Law.

²² "Then the generations to come, both your own descendants and the foreigners who come from distant lands, will see the devastation of the land and the diseases the LORD will send against it.

²³ They will find its soil turned into sulfur and salt, with nothing planted and nothing growing, not even a blade of grass. It will be just like Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD destroyed in his anger.

²⁴ The surrounding nations will ask, 'Why has the LORD done this to his land? Why was he so angry?'

²⁵ "And they will be told, 'This happened because the people of the land broke the covenant they made with the LORD, the God of their ancestors, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

²⁶ They turned to serve and worship other gods that were foreign to them, gods that the LORD had not designated for them.

²⁷ That is why the LORD's anger burned against this land, bringing down on it all the curses recorded in this book.

²⁸ In great anger and fury the LORD uprooted his people from their land and exiled them to another land, where they still live today!

²⁹ "There are secret things that belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our descendants forever, so that we may obey these words of the law.

30¹ "Suppose all these things happen to you—the blessings and the curses I have listed—and you meditate on them as you are living among the nations to which the LORD your God has exiled you.

² If at that time you return to the LORD your God, and you and your children begin wholeheartedly to obey all the commands I have given you today,

³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes. He will have mercy on you and gather you back from all the nations where he has scattered you.

⁴ Though you are at the ends of the earth, the LORD your God will go and find you and bring you back again.

⁵ He will return you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will possess that land again. He will make you even more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors!

⁶ "The LORD your God will cleanse your heart and the hearts of all your descendants so that you will love him with all your heart and soul, and so you may live!

⁷ The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and persecutors.

⁸ Then you will again obey the LORD and keep all the commands I am giving you today.

⁹ The LORD your God will make you successful in everything you do. He will give you many children and numerous livestock, and your fields will produce abundant harvests, for the LORD will delight in being good to you as he was to your ancestors.

¹⁰ The LORD your God will delight in you if you obey his voice and keep the commands and laws written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

¹¹ "This command I am giving you today is not too difficult for you to understand or perform.

¹² It is not up in heaven, so distant that you must ask, 'Who will go to heaven and bring it down so we can hear and obey it?'

¹³ It is not beyond the sea, so far away that you must ask, 'Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we can hear and obey it?'

¹⁴ The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart so that you can obey it.

¹⁵ "Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between prosperity and disaster, between life and death.

¹⁶ I have commanded you today to love the LORD your God and to keep his commands, laws, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and become a great nation, and

the LORD your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods,

¹⁸ then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.

¹⁹ "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live!

²⁰ Choose to love the LORD your God and to obey him and commit yourself to him, for he is your life. Then you will live long in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

31 ¹ When Moses had finished saying these things to all the people of Israel,

² he said, "I am now 120 years old and am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has told me that I will not cross the Jordan River.

³ But the LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy the nations living there, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua is your new leader, and he will go with you, just as the LORD promised.

⁴ The LORD will destroy the nations living in the land, just as he destroyed Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites.

⁵ The LORD will hand over to you the people who live there, and you will deal with them as I have commanded you.

⁶ Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid of them! The LORD your God will

go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you."

⁷ Then Moses called for Joshua, and as all Israel watched he said to him, "Be strong and courageous! For you will lead these people into the land that the LORD swore to give their ancestors. You are the one who will deliver it to them as their inheritance.

⁸ Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD is the one who goes before you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor forsake you."

⁹ So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, who carried the Ark of the LORD's covenant, and to the leaders of Israel.

¹⁰ Then Moses gave them this command: "At the end of every seventh year, the Year of Release, during the Festival of Shelters,

¹¹ you must read this law to all the people of Israel when they assemble before the LORD your God at the place he chooses.

¹² Call them all together—men, women, children, and the foreigners living in your towns—so they may listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully obey all the terms of this law.

¹³ Do this so that your children who have not known these laws will hear them and will learn to fear the LORD your God. Do this as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy."

¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "The time has come for you to die. Call Joshua and take him with you to the Tabernacle, and I will commission him there." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tabernacle.

¹⁵ And the LORD appeared to them in a pillar of cloud at the entrance to the sacred tent.

¹⁶ The LORD said to Moses, "You are about to die and join your ancestors. After you are gone, these people will begin worshiping foreign gods, the gods of the land where they are going. They will abandon me and break the covenant I have made with them.

¹⁷ Then my anger will blaze forth against them. I will abandon them, hiding my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Terrible trouble will come down on them, so that they will say, 'These disasters have come because God is no longer among us!'

¹⁸ At that time I will hide my face from them on account of all the sins they have committed by worshiping other gods.

¹⁹ "Now write down the words of this song, and teach it to the people of Israel.

Teach them to sing it, so it may serve as a witness against them.

²⁰ For I will bring them into the land I swore to give their ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey. There they will become prosperous; they will eat all the food they want and become well nourished. Then they will begin to worship other gods; they will despise me and break my covenant.

²¹ Then great disasters will come down on them, and this song will stand as evidence against them, for it will never be forgotten by their descendants. I know what these people are like, even before they have entered the land I swore to give them."

²² So that very day Moses wrote down the words of the song and taught it to the Israelites.

²³ Then the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun with these words: "Be strong

and courageous! You must bring the people of Israel into the land I swore to give them. I will be with you."

²⁴ When Moses had finished writing down this entire body of law in a book,

²⁵ he gave these instructions to the Levites who carried the Ark of the LORD's covenant:

²⁶ "Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God, so it may serve as a witness against the people of Israel.

²⁷ For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Even now, while I am still with you, you have rebelled against the LORD. How much more rebellious will you be after my death!

²⁸ Now summon all the leaders and officials of your tribes so that I can speak to them and call heaven and earth to witness against them.

²⁹ I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt and will turn from the path I have commanded you to follow. In the days to come, disaster will come down on you, for you will make the LORD very angry by doing what is evil in his sight."

³⁰ So Moses recited this entire song to the assembly of Israel:

32 ¹ "Listen, O heavens, and I will speak! Hear, O earth, the words that I say!

² My teaching will fall on you like rain; my speech will settle like dew. My words will fall like rain on tender grass, like gentle showers on young plants.

³ I will proclaim the name of the LORD; how glorious is our God!

⁴ He is the Rock; his work is perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!

⁵ "But they have acted corruptly toward him; when they act like that, are they really his children? They are a deceitful and twisted generation.

⁶ Is this the way you repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Isn't he your Father who created you? Has he not made you and established you?

⁷ Remember the days of long ago; think about the generations past. Ask your father and he will inform you. Inquire of your elders, and they will tell you.

⁸ When the Most High assigned lands to the nations, when he divided up the human race, he established the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of angelic beings.

⁹ For the people of Israel belong to the LORD; Jacob is his special possession.

¹⁰ "He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over

them; he guarded them as his most precious possession.

¹¹ Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them in and carried them aloft on his pinions.

¹² The LORD alone guided them; they lived without any foreign gods.

¹³ He made them ride over the highlands; he let them feast on the crops of the fields. He nourished them with honey from the cliffs, with olive oil from the hard rock.

¹⁴ He fed them curds from the herd and milk from the flock, together with the fat of lambs and goats. He gave them choice rams and goats from Bashan, together with the choicest wheat. You drank the finest wine, made from the juice of grapes.

¹⁵ But Israel soon became fat and unruly; the people grew heavy, plump,

and stuffed! Then they abandoned the God who had made them; they made light of the Rock of their salvation.

¹⁶ They stirred up his jealousy by worshiping foreign gods; they provoked his fury with detestable acts.

¹⁷ They offered sacrifices to demons, non-gods, to gods they had not known before, to gods only recently arrived, to gods their ancestors had never feared.

¹⁸ You neglected the Rock who had fathered you; you forgot the God who had given you birth.

¹⁹ "The LORD saw this and was filled with loathing. He was provoked to anger by his own sons and daughters.

²⁰ He said, 'I will abandon them; I will see to their end! For they are a twisted generation, children without integrity.

²¹ They have roused my jealousy by worshiping non-gods; they have provoked my fury with useless idols. Now

I will rouse their jealousy by blessing other nations; I will provoke their fury by blessing the foolish Gentiles.

²² For my anger blazes forth like fire and burns to the depths of the grave. It devours the earth and all its crops and ignites the foundations of the mountains.

²³ I will heap disasters upon them and shoot them down with my arrows.

²⁴ I will send against them wasting famine, burning fever, and deadly disease. They will be troubled by the fangs of wild beasts, by poisonous snakes that glide in the dust.

²⁵ Outside, the sword will bring death, and inside, terror will strike both young men and young women, both infants and the aged.

²⁶ I decided to scatter them, so even the memory of them would disappear.

²⁷ But I feared the taunt of the enemy, that their adversaries might misunderstand and say, "Our power has triumphed! It was not the LORD who did this!"

²⁸ "Israel is a nation that lacks sense; the people are foolish, without understanding.

²⁹ Oh, that they were wise and could understand this! Oh, that they might know their fate!

³⁰ How could one person chase a thousand of them, and two people put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the LORD had given them up?

³¹ But the rock of our enemies is not like our Rock, as even they recognize.

³² Their vine grows from the vine of Sodom, from the vineyards of Gomorrah. Their grapes are poison, and their clusters are bitter.

³³ Their wine is the venom of snakes,
the deadly poison of vipers.

³⁴ "I am storing up these things, sealing
them away within my treasury.

³⁵ I will take vengeance; I will repay
those who deserve it. In due time their
feet will slip. Their day of disaster will
arrive, and their destiny will overtake
them.'

³⁶ "Indeed, the LORD will judge his
people, and he will change his mind
about his servants, when he sees their
strength is gone and no one is left, slave
or free.

³⁷ Then he will ask, 'Where are their
gods, the rocks they fled to for refuge?

³⁸ Where now are those gods, who ate
the fat of their sacrifices and drank the
wine of their offerings? Let those gods
arise and help you! Let them provide
you with shelter!

³⁹ Look now; I myself am he! There is no god other than me! I am the one who kills and gives life; I am the one who wounds and heals; no one delivers from my power!

⁴⁰ Now I raise my hand to heaven and declare, "As surely as I live,

⁴¹ when I sharpen my flashing sword and begin to carry out justice, I will bring vengeance on my enemies and repay those who hate me.

⁴² I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword will devour flesh—the blood of the slaughtered and the captives, and the heads of the enemy leaders."

⁴³ "Rejoice with him, O heavens, and let all the angels of God worship him, for he will avenge the blood of his servants. He will take vengeance on his enemies and cleanse his land and his people."

⁴⁴ So Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and recited all the words of this song to the people.

⁴⁵ When Moses had finished reciting these words to Israel,

⁴⁶ he added: "Take to heart all the words I have given you today. Pass them on as a command to your children so they will obey every word of this law.

⁴⁷ These instructions are not mere words—they are your life! By obeying them you will enjoy a long life in the land you are crossing the Jordan River to occupy."

⁴⁸ That same day the LORD said to Moses,

⁴⁹ "Go to Moab, to the mountains east of the river, and climb Mount Nebo, which is across from Jericho. Look out across the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the people of Israel as their own possession.

⁵⁰ Then you must die there on the mountain and join your ancestors, just as Aaron, your brother, died on Mount Hor and joined his ancestors.

⁵¹ For both of you broke faith with me among the Israelites at the waters of Meribah at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. You failed to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel there.

⁵² So you will see the land from a distance, but you may not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."

33 ¹ This is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, gave to the people of Israel before his death:

² "The LORD came from Mount Sinai and dawned upon us from Mount Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran and came from Meribah–kadesh with flaming fire at his right hand.

³ Indeed, you love the people; all your holy ones are in your hands. They

follow in your steps and accept your instruction.

⁴ Moses charged us with the law, the special possession of the assembly of Israel.

⁵ The LORD became king in Israel —when the leaders of the people assembled, when the tribes of Israel gathered."

⁶ Moses said this about the tribe of Reuben: "Let the tribe of Reuben live and not die out, even though their tribe is small."

⁷ Moses said this about the tribe of Judah: "O LORD, hear the cry of Judah and bring them again to their people. Give them strength to defend their cause; help them against their enemies!"

⁸ Moses said this about the tribe of Levi: "O LORD, you have given the sacred lots to your faithful servants the Levites. You put them to the test at Massah and

contended with them at the waters of Meribah.

⁹ The Levites obeyed your word and guarded your covenant. They were more loyal to you than to their parents, relatives, and children.

¹⁰ Now let them teach your regulations to Jacob; let them give your instructions to Israel. They will present incense before you and offer whole burnt offerings on the altar.

¹¹ Bless the Levites, O LORD, and accept all their work. Crush the loins of their enemies; strike down their foes so they never rise again."

¹² Moses said this about the tribe of Benjamin: "The people of Benjamin are loved by the LORD and live in safety beside him. He surrounds them continuously and preserves them from every harm."

¹³ Moses said this about the tribes of Joseph: "May their land be blessed by the LORD with the choice gift of rain from the heavens, and water from beneath the earth;

¹⁴ with the riches that grow in the sun, and the bounty produced each month;

¹⁵ with the finest crops of the ancient mountains, and the abundance from the everlasting hills;

¹⁶ with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness, and the favor of the one who appeared in the burning bush. May these blessings rest on Joseph's head, crowning the brow of the prince among his brothers.

¹⁷ Joseph has the strength and majesty of a young bull; his power is like the horns of a wild ox. He will gore distant nations, driving them to the ends of the earth. This is my blessing for

the multitudes of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh."

¹⁸ Moses said this about the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar: "May the people of Zebulun prosper in their expeditions abroad. May the people of Issachar prosper at home in their tents.

¹⁹ They summon the people to the mountain to offer proper sacrifices there. They benefit from the riches of the sea and the hidden treasures of the sand."

²⁰ Moses said this about the tribe of Gad: "Blessed is the one who enlarges Gad's territory! Gad is poised there like a lion to tear off an arm or a head.

²¹ The people of Gad took the best land for themselves; a leader's share was assigned to them. When the leaders of the people were assembled, they carried out the LORD's justice and obeyed his regulations for Israel."

²² Moses said this about the tribe of Dan: "Dan is a lion's cub, leaping out from Bashan."

²³ Moses said this about the tribe of Naphtali: "O Naphtali, you are rich in favor and full of the LORD's blessings; may you possess the west and the south."

²⁴ Moses said this about the tribe of Asher: "May Asher be blessed above other sons; may he be esteemed by his brothers; may he bathe his feet in olive oil."

²⁵ May the bolts of your gates be of iron and bronze; may your strength match the length of your days!"

²⁶ "There is no one like the God of Israel. He rides across the heavens to help you, across the skies in majestic splendor."

²⁷ The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. He

thrusts out the enemy before you; it is he who cries, 'Destroy them!'

²⁸ So Israel will live in safety, prosperous Jacob in security, in a land of grain and wine, while the heavens drop down dew.

²⁹ How blessed you are, O Israel! Who else is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your protecting shield and your triumphant sword! Your enemies will bow low before you, and you will trample on their backs!"

34 ¹ Then Moses went to Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab and climbed Pisgah Peak, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him the whole land, from Gilead as far as Dan;

² all the land of Naphtali; the land of Ephraim and Manasseh; all the land of Judah, extending to the Mediterranean Sea;

³ the Negev; the Jordan Valley with Jericho—the city of palms—as far as Zoar.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I told them I would give it to their descendants. I have now allowed you to see it, but you will not enter the land."

⁵ So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, just as the LORD had said.

⁶ He was buried in a valley near Beth-peor in Moab, but to this day no one knows the exact place.

⁷ Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever.

⁸ The people of Israel mourned thirty days for Moses on the plains of Moab, until the customary period of mourning was over.

⁹ Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did everything just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ There has never been another prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.

¹¹ The LORD sent Moses to perform all the miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and his entire land.

¹² And it was through Moses that the LORD demonstrated his mighty power and terrifying acts in the sight of all Israel.

Joshua

1 ¹ After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said,

² "Now that my servant Moses is dead, you must lead my people across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them.

³ I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Everywhere you go, you will be on land I have given you—

⁴ from the Negev Desert in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and all the land of the Hittites.'

⁵ No one will be able to stand their ground against you as long as you live.

For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.

⁶ "Be strong and courageous, for you will lead my people to possess all the land I swore to give their ancestors.

⁷ Be strong and very courageous. Obey all the laws Moses gave you. Do not turn away from them, and you will be successful in everything you do.

⁸ Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed.

⁹ I command you—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

¹⁰ Joshua then commanded the leaders of Israel,

¹¹ "Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan

River and take possession of the land the LORD your God has given you."

¹² Then Joshua called together the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He told them,

¹³ "Remember what Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded you: 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and has given you this land.'

¹⁴ Your wives, children, and cattle may remain here on the east side of the Jordan River, but your warriors, fully armed, must lead the other tribes across the Jordan to help them conquer their territory. Stay with them

¹⁵ until the LORD gives rest to them as he has given rest to you, and until they, too, possess the land the LORD your God is giving them. Only then may you settle here on the east side of the Jordan River in the land that Moses, the servant of the LORD, gave you."

¹⁶ They answered Joshua, "We will do whatever you command us, and we will go wherever you send us.

¹⁷ We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. And may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses.

¹⁸ Anyone who rebels against your word and does not obey your every command will be put to death. So be strong and courageous!"

2¹ Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia. He instructed them, "Spy out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho." So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.

² But someone told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land."

³ So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: "Bring out the men who have come into your house. They are spies sent here to discover the best way to attack us."

⁴ Rahab, who had hidden the two men, replied, "The men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from."

⁵ They left the city at dusk, as the city gates were about to close, and I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them."

⁶ (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath piles of flax.)

⁷ So the king's men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossing places of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the city gate was shut.

⁸ Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them.

⁹ "I know the LORD has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone is living in terror.

¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed.

¹¹ No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.

¹² Now swear to me by the LORD that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that

¹³ when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families."

¹⁴ "We offer our own lives as a guarantee for your safety," the men agreed. "If you don't betray us, we will keep our promise when the LORD gives us the land."

¹⁵ Then, since Rahab's house was built into the city wall, she let them down by a rope through the window.

¹⁶ "Escape to the hill country," she told them. "Hide there for three days until the men who are searching for you have returned; then go on your way."

¹⁷ Before they left, the men told her, "We can guarantee your safety

¹⁸ only if you leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window. And all your family members—your father, mother,

brothers, and all your relatives—must be here inside the house.

¹⁹ If they go out into the street, they will be killed, and we cannot be held to our oath. But we swear that no one inside this house will be killed—not a hand will be laid on any of them.

²⁰ If you betray us, however, we are not bound by this oath in any way."

²¹ "I accept your terms," she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

²² The spies went up into the hill country and stayed there three days. The men who were chasing them had searched everywhere along the road, but they finally returned to the city without success.

²³ Then the two spies came down from the hill country, crossed the Jordan River,

and reported to Joshua all that had happened to them.

²⁴ "The LORD will certainly give us the whole land," they said, "for all the people in the land are terrified of us."

3 ¹ Early the next morning Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River, where they camped before crossing.

² Three days later, the Israelite leaders went through the camp

³ giving these instructions to the people: "When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God, follow them.

⁴ Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you. Stay about a half mile behind them, keeping a clear distance between you and the Ark. Make sure you don't come any closer."

⁵ Then Joshua told the people, "Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do great wonders among you."

⁶ In the morning Joshua said to the priests, "Lift up the Ark of the Covenant and lead the people across the river." And so they started out.

⁷ The LORD told Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you great in the eyes of all the Israelites. Now they will know that I am with you, just as I was with Moses.

⁸ Give these instructions to the priests who are carrying the Ark of the Covenant: 'When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river and stop.'

⁹ So Joshua told the Israelites, "Come and listen to what the LORD your God says.

¹⁰ Today you will know that the living God is among you. He will surely drive out the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites,

Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites.

¹¹ Think of it! The Ark of the Covenant, which belongs to the Lord of the whole earth, will lead you across the Jordan River!

¹² Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe.

¹³ The priests will be carrying the Ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth. When their feet touch the water, the flow of water will be cut off upstream, and the river will pile up there in one heap."

¹⁴ When the people set out to cross the Jordan, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them.

¹⁵ Now it was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests

who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge,

¹⁶ the water began piling up at a town upstream called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the city of Jericho.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the LORD's covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by them. They waited there until everyone had crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

4 ¹ When all the people were safely across the river, the LORD said to Joshua,

² "Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe.

³ Tell the men to take twelve stones from where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan and pile

them up at the place where you camp tonight."

⁴ So Joshua called together the twelve men

⁵ and told them, "Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the LORD your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes.

⁶ We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future, your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean to you?'

⁷ Then you can tell them, 'They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the LORD's covenant went across.' These stones will stand as a permanent memorial among the people of Israel."

⁸ So the men did as Joshua told them. They took twelve stones from the

middle of the Jordan River, one for each tribe, just as the LORD had commanded Joshua. They carried them to the place where they camped for the night and constructed the memorial there.

⁹ Joshua also built another memorial of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. The memorial remains there to this day.

¹⁰ The priests who were carrying the Ark stood in the middle of the river until all of the LORD's instructions, which Moses had given to Joshua, were carried out. Meanwhile, the people hurried across the riverbed.

¹¹ And when everyone was on the other side, the priests crossed over with the Ark of the LORD.

¹² The armed warriors from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of

Manasseh led the Israelites across the Jordan, just as Moses had directed.

¹³ These warriors—about forty thousand strong—were ready for battle, and they crossed over to the plains of Jericho in the LORD's presence.

¹⁴ That day the LORD made Joshua great in the eyes of all the Israelites, and for the rest of his life they revered him as much as they had revered Moses.

¹⁵ The LORD had said to Joshua,

¹⁶ "Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come up out of the riverbed."

¹⁷ So Joshua gave the command.

¹⁸ And as soon as the priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's covenant came up out of the riverbed, the Jordan River flooded its banks as before.

¹⁹ The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month—the month

that marked their exodus from Egypt. They camped at Gilgal, east of Jericho.

²⁰ It was there at Gilgal that Joshua piled up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River.

²¹ Then Joshua said to the Israelites, "In the future, your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?'

²² Then you can tell them, 'This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.'

²³ For the LORD your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over.

²⁴ He did this so that all the nations of the earth might know the power of the LORD, and that you might fear the LORD your God forever."

5 ¹ When all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite

kings who lived along the Mediterranean coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan River so the people of Israel could cross, they lost heart and were paralyzed with fear.

² At that time the LORD told Joshua, "Use knives of flint to make the Israelites a circumcised people again."

³ So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the entire male population of Israel at Gibeath–haaraloth.

⁴ Joshua had to circumcise them because all the men who were old enough to bear arms when they left Egypt had died in the wilderness.

⁵ Those who left Egypt had all been circumcised, but none of those born after the Exodus, during the years in the wilderness, had been circumcised.

⁶ The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years until all the men who were old enough to bear arms

when they left Egypt had died. For they had disobeyed the LORD, and the LORD vowed he would not let them enter the land he had sworn to give us—a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁷ So Joshua circumcised their sons who had not been circumcised on the way to the Promised Land—those who had grown up to take their fathers' places.

⁸ After all the males had been circumcised, they rested in the camp until they were healed.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the shame of your slavery in Egypt." So that place has been called Gilgal to this day.

¹⁰ While the Israelites were camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month—the month that marked their exodus from Egypt.

¹¹ The very next day they began to eat unleavened bread and roasted grain harvested from the land.

¹² No manna appeared that day, and it was never seen again. So from that time on the Israelites ate from the crops of Canaan.

¹³ As Joshua approached the city of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man facing him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you friend or foe?"

¹⁴ "Neither one," he replied. "I am commander of the LORD's army." At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. "I am at your command," Joshua said. "What do you want your servant to do?"

¹⁵ The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for this is holy ground." And Joshua did as he was told.

6¹ Now the gates of Jericho were tightly shut because the people were afraid of the Israelites. No one was allowed to go in or out.

² But the LORD said to Joshua, "I have given you Jericho, its king, and all its mighty warriors.

³ Your entire army is to march around the city once a day for six days.

⁴ Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the horns.

⁵ When you hear the priests give one long blast on the horns, have all the people give a mighty shout. Then the walls of the city will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the city."

⁶ So Joshua called together the priests and said, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and assign seven priests to

walk in front of it, each carrying a ram's horn."

⁷ Then he gave orders to the people: "March around the city, and the armed men will lead the way in front of the Ark of the LORD."

⁸ After Joshua spoke to the people, the seven priests with the rams' horns started marching in the presence of the LORD, blowing the horns as they marched. And the priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's covenant followed behind them.

⁹ Armed guards marched both in front of the priests and behind the Ark, with the priests continually blowing the horns.

¹⁰ "Do not shout; do not even talk," Joshua commanded. "Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!"

¹¹ So the Ark of the LORD was carried around the city once that day, and then everyone returned to spend the night in the camp.

¹² Joshua got up early the next morning, and the priests again carried the Ark of the LORD.

¹³ The seven priests with the rams' horns marched in front of the Ark of the LORD, blowing their horns. Armed guards marched both in front of the priests with the horns and behind the Ark of the LORD. All this time the priests were sounding their horns.

¹⁴ On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They followed this pattern for six days.

¹⁵ On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the city as they had done before. But this time they went around the city seven times.

¹⁶ The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!

¹⁷ The city and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the LORD. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.

¹⁸ Do not take any of the things set apart for destruction, or you yourselves will be completely destroyed, and you will bring trouble on all Israel.

¹⁹ Everything made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron is sacred to the LORD and must be brought into his treasury."

²⁰ When the people heard the sound of the horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged

straight into the city from every side and captured it.

²¹ They completely destroyed everything in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep, donkeys—everything.

²² Then Joshua said to the two spies, "Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute's house and bring her out, along with all her family."

²³ The young men went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

²⁴ Then the Israelites burned the city and everything in it. Only the things made from silver, gold, bronze, or iron were kept for the treasury of the LORD's house.

²⁵ So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute and her relatives who were

with her in the house, because she had hidden the spies Joshua sent to Jericho. And she lives among the Israelites to this day.

²⁶ At that time Joshua invoked this curse: "May the curse of the LORD fall on anyone who tries to rebuild the city of Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn son, he will lay its foundation. At the cost of his youngest son, he will set up its gates."

²⁷ So the LORD was with Joshua, and his name became famous throughout the land.

7¹ But Israel was unfaithful concerning the things set apart for the LORD. A man named Achan had stolen some of these things, so the LORD was very angry with the Israelites. Achan was the son of Carmi, of the family of Zimri, of the clan of Zerah, and of the tribe of Judah.

² Joshua sent some of his men from Jericho to spy out the city of Ai, east of Bethel, near Beth-aven.

³ When they returned, they told Joshua, "It's a small town, and it won't take more than two or three thousand of us to destroy it. There's no need for all of us to go there."

⁴ So approximately three thousand warriors were sent, but they were soundly defeated. The men of Ai

⁵ chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the quarries, and they killed about thirty-six who were retreating down the slope. The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away.

⁶ Joshua and the leaders of Israel tore their clothing in dismay, threw dust on their heads, and bowed down facing the Ark of the LORD until evening.

⁷ Then Joshua cried out, "Sovereign LORD, why did you bring us across the Jordan River if you are going to let the Amorites kill us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side!

⁸ Lord, what am I to say, now that Israel has fled from its enemies?

⁹ For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe us off the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?"

¹⁰ But the LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why are you lying on your face like this?"

¹¹ Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen the things that I commanded to be set apart for me. And they have not only stolen them; they have also lied about it and hidden the things among their belongings.

¹² That is why the Israelites are running from their enemies in defeat. For now Israel has been set apart for destruction. I will not remain with you any longer unless you destroy the things among you that were set apart for destruction.

¹³ "Get up! Command the people to purify themselves in preparation for tomorrow. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Hidden among you, O Israel, are things set apart for the LORD. You will never defeat your enemies until you remove these things.

¹⁴ In the morning you must present yourselves by tribes, and the LORD will point out the tribe to which the guilty man belongs. That tribe must come forward with its clans, and the LORD will point out the guilty clan. That clan will then come forward, and the LORD will point out the guilty family. Finally, each

member of the guilty family must come one by one.

¹⁵ The one who has stolen what was set apart for destruction will himself be burned with fire, along with everything he has, for he has broken the covenant of the LORD and has done a horrible thing in Israel."

¹⁶ Early the next morning Joshua brought the tribes of Israel before the LORD, and the tribe of Judah was singled out.

¹⁷ Then the clans of Judah came forward, and the clan of Zerah was singled out. Then the families of Zerah came before the LORD, and the family of Zimri was singled out.

¹⁸ Every member of Zimri's family was brought forward person by person, and Achan was singled out.

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of

Israel, by telling the truth. Make your confession and tell me what you have done. Don't hide it from me."

²⁰ Achan replied, "I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel.

²¹ For I saw a beautiful robe imported from Babylon, two hundred silver coins, and a bar of gold weighing more than a pound. I wanted them so much that I took them. They are hidden in the ground beneath my tent, with the silver buried deeper than the rest."

²² So Joshua sent some men to make a search. They ran to the tent and found the stolen goods hidden there, just as Achan had said, with the silver buried beneath the rest.

²³ They took the things from the tent and brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites. Then they laid them on the ground in the presence of the LORD.

²⁴ Then Joshua and all the Israelites took Achan, the silver, the robe, the bar of gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, tent, and everything he had, and they brought them to the valley of Achor.

²⁵ Then Joshua said to Achan, "Why have you brought trouble on us? The LORD will now bring trouble on you." And all the Israelites stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies.

²⁶ They piled a great heap of stones over Achan, which remains to this day. That is why the place has been called the Valley of Trouble ever since. So the LORD was no longer angry.

8¹ Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Take the entire army and attack Ai, for I have given to you the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.

² You will destroy them as you destroyed Jericho and its king. But this time you may keep the captured goods and the cattle for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city."

³ So Joshua and the army of Israel set out to attack Ai. Joshua chose thirty thousand fighting men and sent them out at night

⁴ with these orders: "Hide in ambush close behind the city and be ready for action.

⁵ When our main army attacks, the men of Ai will come out to fight as they did before, and we will run away from them.

⁶ We will let them chase us until they have all left the city. For they will say, 'The Israelites are running away from us as they did before.'

⁷ Then you will jump up from your ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will give it to you.

⁸ Set the city on fire, as the LORD has commanded. You have your orders."

⁹ So they left that night and lay in ambush between Bethel and the west side of Ai. But Joshua remained among the people in the camp that night.

¹⁰ Early the next morning Joshua roused his men and started toward Ai, accompanied by the leaders of Israel.

¹¹ They camped on the north side of Ai, with a valley between them and the city.

¹² That night Joshua sent five thousand men to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.

¹³ So they stationed the main army north of the city and the ambush west of the city. Joshua himself spent that night in the valley.

¹⁴ When the king of Ai saw the Israelites across the valley, he and all his army hurriedly went out early the next morning and attacked the Israelites at a

place overlooking the Jordan Valley. But he didn't realize there was an ambush behind the city.

¹⁵ Joshua and the Israelite army fled toward the wilderness as though they were badly beaten,

¹⁶ and all the men in the city were called out to chase after them. In this way, they were lured away from the city.

¹⁷ There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not chase after the Israelites, and the city was left wide open.

¹⁸ Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Point your spear toward Ai, for I will give you the city." Joshua did as he was commanded.

¹⁹ As soon as Joshua gave the signal, the men in ambush jumped up and poured into the city. They quickly captured it and set it on fire.

²⁰ When the men of Ai looked behind them, smoke from the city was filling the sky, and they had nowhere to go. For the Israelites who had fled in the direction of the wilderness now turned on their pursuers.

²¹ When Joshua and the other Israelites saw that the ambush had succeeded and that smoke was rising from the city, they turned and attacked the men of Ai.

²² Then the Israelites who were inside the city came out and started killing the enemy from the rear. So the men of Ai were caught in a trap, and all of them died. Not a single person survived or escaped.

²³ Only the king of Ai was taken alive and brought to Joshua.

²⁴ When the Israelite army finished killing all the men outside the city, they went back and finished off everyone inside.

²⁵ So the entire population of Ai was wiped out that day—twelve thousand in all.

²⁶ For Joshua kept holding out his spear until everyone who had lived in Ai was completely destroyed.

²⁷ Only the cattle and the treasures of the city were not destroyed, for the Israelites kept these for themselves, as the LORD had commanded Joshua.

²⁸ So Ai became a permanent mound of ruins, desolate to this very day.

²⁹ Joshua hung the king of Ai on a tree and left him there until evening. At sunset the Israelites took down the body and threw it in front of the city gate. They piled a great heap of stones over him that can still be seen today.

³⁰ Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal.

³¹ He followed the instructions that Moses the LORD's servant had written in

the Book of the Law: "Make me an altar from stones that are uncut and have not been shaped with iron tools." Then on the altar they presented burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD.

³² And as the Israelites watched, Joshua copied the law of Moses onto the stones of the altar.

³³ Then all the Israelites—foreigners and citizens alike—along with the leaders, officers, and judges, were divided into two groups. One group stood at the foot of Mount Gerizim, the other at the foot of Mount Ebal. Each group faced the other, and between them stood the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the LORD's covenant. This was all done according to the instructions Moses, the servant of the LORD, had given for blessing the people of Israel.

³⁴ Joshua then read to them all the blessings and curses Moses had written in the Book of the Law.

³⁵ Every command Moses had ever given was read to the entire assembly, including the women and children and the foreigners who lived among the Israelites.

9¹ Now all the kings west of the Jordan heard about what had happened. (These were the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who lived in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as the Lebanon mountains.)

² These kings quickly combined their armies to fight against Joshua and the Israelites.

³ But when the people of Gibeon heard what had happened to Jericho and Ai,

⁴ they resorted to deception to save themselves. They sent ambassadors to Joshua, loading their donkeys with weathered saddlebags and old patched wineskins.

⁵ They put on ragged clothes and worn-out, patched sandals. And they took along dry, moldy bread for provisions.

⁶ When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us."

⁷ The Israelites replied to these Hivites, "How do we know you don't live nearby? For if you do, we cannot make a treaty with you."

⁸ They replied, "We will be your servants." "But who are you?" Joshua demanded. "Where do you come from?"

⁹ They answered, "We are from a very distant country. We have heard of the

might of the LORD your God and of all he did in Egypt.

¹⁰ We have also heard what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan (who lived in Ashtaroth).

¹¹ So our leaders and our people instructed us, 'Prepare for a long journey. Go meet with the people of Israel and declare our people to be their servants, and ask for peace.'

¹² "This bread was hot from the ovens when we left. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy.

¹³ These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and cracked. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our long, hard trip."

¹⁴ So the Israelite leaders examined their bread, but they did not consult the LORD.

¹⁵ Then Joshua went ahead and signed a peace treaty with them, and the leaders of Israel ratified their agreement with a binding oath.

¹⁶ Three days later, the facts came out—these people of Gibeon lived nearby!

¹⁷ The Israelites set out at once to investigate and reached their towns in three days. The names of these towns were Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath—yearim.

¹⁸ But the Israelites did not attack the towns, for their leaders had made a vow to the LORD, the God of Israel. The people of Israel grumbled against their leaders because of the treaty.

¹⁹ But the leaders replied, "We have sworn an oath in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel. We cannot touch them.

²⁰ We must let them live, for God would be angry with us if we broke our oath.

²¹ Let them live. But we will make them chop the wood and carry the water for the entire community." So the Israelites kept their promise to the Gibeonites.

²² But Joshua called together the Gibeonite leaders and said, "Why did you lie to us? Why did you say that you live in a distant land when you live right here among us?"

²³ May you be cursed! From now on you will chop wood and carry water for the house of my God."

²⁴ They replied, "We did it because we were told that the LORD your God instructed his servant Moses to conquer this entire land and destroy all the people living in it. So we feared for our lives because of you. That is why we have done it.

²⁵ Now we are at your mercy—do whatever you think is right."

²⁶ Joshua did not allow the people of Israel to kill them.

²⁷ But that day he made the Gibeonites the woodchoppers and water carriers for the people of Israel and for the altar of the LORD—wherever the LORD would choose to build it. That arrangement continues to this day.

10 ¹ Now Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua had captured and completely destroyed Ai and killed its king, just as he had destroyed the city of Jericho and killed its king. He also learned that the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel and were now their allies.

² He and his people became very afraid when they heard all this because Gibeon was a large city—as large as the

royal cities and larger than Ai. And the Gibeonite men were mighty warriors.

³ So King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent messengers to several other kings: Hoham of Hebron, Piram of Jarmuth, Japhia of Lachish, and Debir of Eglon.

⁴ "Come and help me destroy Gibeon," he urged them, "for they have made peace with Joshua and the people of Israel."

⁵ So these five Amorite kings combined their armies for a united attack. They moved all their troops into place and attacked Gibeon.

⁶ The men of Gibeon quickly sent messengers to Joshua at Gilgal, "Don't abandon your servants now!" they pleaded. "Come quickly and save us! For all the Amorite kings who live in the hill country have come out against us with their armies."

⁷ So Joshua and the entire Israelite army left Gilgal and set out to rescue Gibeon.

⁸ "Do not be afraid of them," the LORD said to Joshua, "for I will give you victory over them. Not a single one of them will be able to stand up to you."

⁹ Joshua traveled all night from Gilgal and took the Amorite armies by surprise.

¹⁰ The LORD threw them into a panic, and the Israelites slaughtered them in great numbers at Gibeon. Then the Israelites chased the enemy along the road to Beth-horon and attacked them at Azekah and Makkedah, killing them along the way.

¹¹ As the Amorites retreated down the road from Beth-horon, the LORD destroyed them with a terrible hailstorm that continued until they reached Azekah. The hail killed more of the

enemy than the Israelites killed with the sword.

¹² On the day the LORD gave the Israelites victory over the Amorites, Joshua prayed to the LORD in front of all the people of Israel. He said, "Let the sun stand still over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Aijalon."

¹³ So the sun and moon stood still until the Israelites had defeated their enemies. Is this event not recorded in The Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and it did not set as on a normal day.

¹⁴ The LORD fought for Israel that day. Never before or since has there been a day like that one, when the LORD answered such a request from a human being.

¹⁵ Then Joshua and the Israelite army returned to their camp at Gilgal.

¹⁶ During the battle, the five kings escaped and hid in a cave at Makkedah.

¹⁷ When Joshua heard that they had been found,

¹⁸ he issued this command: "Cover the opening of the cave with large rocks and place guards at the entrance to keep the kings inside.

¹⁹ The rest of you continue chasing the enemy and cut them down from the rear. Don't let them get back to their cities, for the LORD your God has given you victory over them."

²⁰ So Joshua and the Israelite army continued the slaughter and wiped out the five armies except for a tiny remnant that managed to reach their fortified cities.

²¹ Then the Israelites returned safely to their camp at Makkedah. After that, no one dared to speak a word against Israel.

²² Then Joshua said, "Remove the rocks covering the opening of the cave and bring the five kings to me."

²³ So they brought the five kings out of the cave—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon.

²⁴ Joshua told the captains of his army, "Come and put your feet on the kings' necks." And they did as they were told.

²⁵ "Don't ever be afraid or discouraged," Joshua told his men. "Be strong and courageous, for the LORD is going to do this to all of your enemies."

²⁶ Then Joshua killed each of the five kings and hung them on five trees until evening.

²⁷ As the sun was going down, Joshua gave instructions for the bodies of the kings to be taken down from the trees and thrown into the cave where they had been hiding. Then they covered the

opening of the cave with a large pile of stones, which remains to this very day.

²⁸ That same day Joshua completely destroyed the city of Makkedah, killing everyone in it, including the king. Not one person in the city was left alive. He killed the king of Makkedah as he had killed the king of Jericho.

²⁹ Then Joshua and the Israelites went to Libnah and attacked it.

³⁰ There, too, the LORD gave them the city and its king. They slaughtered everyone in the city and left no survivors. Then Joshua killed the king of Libnah just as he had killed the king of Jericho.

³¹ From Libnah, Joshua and the Israelites went to Lachish and attacked it.

³² And the LORD gave it to them on the second day. Here, too, the entire population was slaughtered, just as at Libnah.

³³ During the attack on Lachish, King Horam of Gezer had arrived with his army to help defend the city. But Joshua's men killed him and destroyed his entire army.

³⁴ Then Joshua and the Israelite army went to Eglon and attacked it.

³⁵ They captured it in one day, and as at Lachish, they completely destroyed everyone in the city.

³⁶ After leaving Eglon, they attacked Hebron,

³⁷ capturing it and all of its surrounding towns. And just as they had done at Eglon, they completely destroyed the entire population. Not one person was left alive.

³⁸ Then they turned back and attacked Debir.

³⁹ They captured the city, its king, and all of its surrounding villages. And they killed everyone in it, leaving no survivors.

They completely destroyed Debir just as they had destroyed Libnah and Hebron.

⁴⁰ So Joshua conquered the whole region—the kings and people of the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills, and the mountain slopes. He completely destroyed everyone in the land, leaving no survivors, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded.

⁴¹ Joshua slaughtered them from Kadesh–barnea to Gaza and from Goshen to Gibeon.

⁴² In a single campaign Joshua conquered all these kings and their land, for the LORD, the God of Israel, was fighting for his people.

⁴³ Then Joshua and the Israelite army returned to their camp at Gilgal.

11 ¹ When King Jabin of Hazor heard what had happened, he sent urgent messages to the following

kings: King Jobab of Madon; the king of Shimron; the king of Acshaph;

² all the kings of the northern hill country; the kings in the Jordan Valley south of Galilee; the kings in the western foothills; the kings of Naphoth–dor on the west;

³ the kings of Canaan, both east and west; the kings of the Amorites; the kings of the Hittites; the kings of the Perizzites; the kings in the Jebusite hill country; and the Hivites in the towns on the slopes of Mount Hermon, in the land of Mizpah.

⁴ All these kings responded by mobilizing their warriors and uniting to fight against Israel. Their combined armies, along with a vast array of horses and chariots, covered the landscape like the sand on the seashore.

⁵ They established their camp around the water near Merom to fight against Israel.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them. By this time tomorrow they will all be dead. Cripple their horses and burn their chariots."

⁷ So Joshua and his warriors traveled to the water near Merom and attacked suddenly.

⁸ And the LORD gave them victory over their enemies. The Israelites chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward into the valley of Mizpah, until not one enemy warrior was left alive.

⁹ Then Joshua crippled the horses and burned all the chariots, as the LORD had instructed.

¹⁰ Joshua then turned back and captured Hazor and killed its king. (Hazor

had at one time been the capital of the federation of all these kingdoms.)

¹¹ The Israelites completely destroyed every living thing in the city. Not a single person was spared. And then Joshua burned the city.

¹² Joshua slaughtered all the other kings and their people, completely destroying them, just as Moses, the servant of the LORD, had commanded.

¹³ However, Joshua did not burn any of the cities built on mounds except Hazor.

¹⁴ And the Israelites took all the captured goods and cattle of the ravaged cities for themselves, but they killed all the people.

¹⁵ As the LORD had commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua. And Joshua did as he was told, carefully obeying all of the LORD's instructions to Moses.

¹⁶ So Joshua conquered the entire region—the hill country, the Negev, the land of Goshen, the western foothills, the Jordan Valley, and the mountains and lowlands of Israel.

¹⁷ The Israelite territory now extended all the way from Mount Halak, which leads up to Seir, to Baal-gad at the foot of Mount Hermon in the valley of Lebanon. Joshua killed all the kings of those territories,

¹⁸ waging war for a long time to accomplish this.

¹⁹ No one in this region made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites of Gibeon. All the others were defeated.

²⁰ For the LORD hardened their hearts and caused them to fight the Israelites instead of asking for peace. So they were completely and mercilessly destroyed, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²¹ During this period, Joshua destroyed all the descendants of Anak, who lived in the hill country of Hebron, Debir, Anab, and the entire hill country of Judah and Israel. He killed them all and completely destroyed their towns.

²² Not one was left in all the land of Israel, though some still remained in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

²³ So Joshua took control of the entire land, just as the LORD had instructed Moses. He gave it to the people of Israel as their special possession, dividing the land among the tribes. So the land finally had rest from war.

12 ¹ These are the kings east of the Jordan River who had been killed and whose land was taken. Their territory extended from the Arnon Gorge to Mount Hermon and included all the land east of the Jordan Valley.

² King Sihon of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, was defeated. His kingdom included Aroer, on the edge of the Arnon Gorge, and extended from the middle of the Arnon Gorge to the Jabbok River, which serves as a boundary for the Ammonites. This territory included half of the present area of Gilead, which lies north of the Jabbok River.

³ Sihon also controlled the Jordan Valley as far north as the western shores of the Sea of Galilee and as far south as the Dead Sea, from Beth-jeshimoth to the slopes of Pisgah.

⁴ King Og of Bashan, the last of the Rephaites, lived at Ashtaroth and Edrei.

⁵ He ruled a territory stretching from Mount Hermon to Salecah in the north and to all of Bashan in the east, and westward to the boundaries of the kingdoms of Geshur and Maacah. His kingdom included the northern half of

Gilead, the other portion of which was in the territory of King Sihon of Heshbon.

⁶ Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the Israelites had destroyed the people of King Sihon and King Og. And Moses gave their land to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

⁷ The following is a list of the kings Joshua and the Israelite armies defeated on the west side of the Jordan, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak, which leads up to Seir. (Joshua allotted this land to the tribes of Israel as their inheritance,

⁸ including the hill country, the western foothills, the Jordan Valley, the mountain slopes, the Judean wilderness, and the Negev. The people who lived in this region were the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.) These are the kings Israel defeated:

⁹ The king of Jericho; The king of Ai, near Bethel;

¹⁰ The king of Jerusalem; The king of Hebron;

¹¹ The king of Jarmuth; The king of Lachish;

¹² The king of Eglon; The king of Gezer;

¹³ The king of Debir; The king of Geder;

¹⁴ The king of Hormah; The king of Arad;

¹⁵ The king of Libnah; The king of Adullam;

¹⁶ The king of Makkedah; The king of Bethel;

¹⁷ The king of Tappuah; The king of Hopher;

¹⁸ The king of Aphek; The king of Lasharon;

¹⁹ The king of Madon; The king of Hazor;

²⁰ The king of Shimron–meron; The king of Acshaph;

²¹ The king of Taanach; The king of Megiddo;

²² The king of Kedesh; The king of Jokneam in Carmel;

²³ The king of Dor in the city of Naphoth–dor; The king of Goyim in Gilgal;

²⁴ The king of Tirzah. In all, thirty–one kings and their cities were destroyed.

13 ¹ When Joshua was an old man, the LORD said to him, "You are growing old, and much land remains to be conquered.

² The people still need to occupy the land of the Philistines and the Geshurites—

³ territory that belongs to the Canaanites. This land extends from the stream of Shihor, which is on the boundary of Egypt, northward to the boundary of Ekron,

⁴ and includes the five Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. The land of the Avvites in the south also remains to be conquered. In the north, this area has not yet been conquered: all the land of the Canaanites, including Mearah (which belongs to the Sidonians), stretching northward to Aphek on the border of the Amorites;

⁵ the land of the Gebalites and all of the Lebanon mountain area to the east, from Baal-gad beneath Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath;

⁶ and all the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim, including all the land of the Sidonians. "I will drive these people out of the land for the Israelites. So be sure to give this land to Israel as a special possession, just as I have commanded you.

⁷ Include all this territory as Israel's inheritance when you divide the land among the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh."

⁸ Half the tribe of Manasseh and the tribes of Reuben and Gad had already received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan, for Moses, the servant of the LORD, had previously assigned this land to them.

⁹ Their territory extended from Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Gorge (including the town in the middle of the gorge) to the plain beyond Medeba, as far as Dibon.

¹⁰ It also included all the towns of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and extended as far as the borders of Ammon.

¹¹ It included Gilead, the territory of the kingdoms of Geshur and Maacah, all

of Mount Hermon, all of Bashan as far as Salecah,

¹² and all the territory of King Og of Bashan, who had reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei. King Og was the last of the Rephaites, for Moses had attacked them and driven them out.

¹³ But the Israelites failed to drive out the people of Geshur and Maacah, so they continue to live among the Israelites to this day.

¹⁴ Moses did not assign any land to the tribe of Levi. Instead, as the LORD had promised them, their inheritance came from the offerings burned on the altar to the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁵ Moses had assigned the following area to the families of the tribe of Reuben.

¹⁶ Their territory extended from Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Gorge

(including the town in the middle of the gorge) to the plain beyond Medeba.

¹⁷ It included Heshbon and the other towns on the plain—Dibon, Bamoth-baal, Beth-baal-meon,

¹⁸ Jahaz, Kedemoth, Mephaath,

¹⁹ Kiriathaim, Sibmah, Zereth-shahar on the hill above the valley,

²⁰ Beth-peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth.

²¹ The land of Reuben also included all the towns of the plain and the entire kingdom of Sihon. Sihon was the Amorite king who had reigned in Heshbon and was killed by Moses along with the chiefs of Midian—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba—princes living in the region who were allied with Sihon.

²² The Israelites also killed Balaam the magician, the son of Beor.

²³ The Jordan River marked the western boundary for the tribe of Reuben. The

towns and villages in this area were given as an inheritance to the families of the tribe of Reuben.

²⁴ Moses had assigned the following area to the families of the tribe of Gad.

²⁵ Their territory included Jazer, all the towns of Gilead, and half of the land of Ammon, as far as the town of Aroer just west of Rabbah.

²⁶ It extended from Heshbon to Ramath–mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to Lo–debar.

²⁷ In the valley were Beth–haram, Beth–nimrah, Succoth, Zaphon, and the rest of the kingdom of King Sihon of Heshbon. The Jordan River was the western border, extending as far north as the Sea of Galilee.

²⁸ The towns and villages in this area were given as an inheritance to the families of the tribe of Gad.

²⁹ Moses had assigned the following area to the families of the half-tribe of Manasseh.

³⁰ Their territory extended from Mahanaim, including all of Bashan, all the former kingdom of King Og, and the sixty towns of Jair in Bashan.

³¹ It also included half of Gilead and King Og's royal cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei. All this was given to the descendants of Makir, who was Manasseh's son.

³² These are the allotments Moses had made while he was on the plains of Moab, across the Jordan River, east of Jericho.

³³ But Moses gave no land to the tribe of Levi, for the LORD, the God of Israel, had promised to be their inheritance.

14 ¹ The remaining tribes of Israel inherited land in Canaan as allotted by Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the tribal leaders.

² These nine and a half tribes received their inheritance by means of sacred lots, in accordance with the LORD's command through Moses.

³ Moses had already given an inheritance of land to the two and a half tribes on the east side of the Jordan River.

⁴ The tribe of Joseph had become two separate tribes—Manasseh and Ephraim. And the Levites were given no land at all, only towns to live in and the surrounding pasturelands for their flocks and herds.

⁵ So the distribution of the land was in strict accordance with the LORD's instructions to Moses.

⁶ A delegation from the tribe of Judah, led by Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, came to Joshua at Gilgal. Caleb said to Joshua, "Remember what the LORD said to Moses, the man of God,

about you and me when we were at Kadesh–barnea.

⁷ I was forty years old when Moses, the servant of the LORD, sent me from Kadesh–barnea to explore the land of Canaan. I returned and gave from my heart a good report,

⁸ but my brothers who went with me frightened the people and discouraged them from entering the Promised Land. For my part, I followed the LORD my God completely.

⁹ So that day Moses promised me, ‘The land of Canaan on which you were just walking will be your special possession and that of your descendants forever, because you wholeheartedly followed the LORD my God.’

¹⁰ "Now, as you can see, the LORD has kept me alive and well as he promised for all these forty–five years since Moses made this promise—even while Israel

wandered in the wilderness. Today I am eighty–five years old.

¹¹ I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on that journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then.

¹² So I'm asking you to give me the hill country that the LORD promised me. You will remember that as scouts we found the Anakites living there in great, walled cities. But if the LORD is with me, I will drive them out of the land, just as the LORD said."

¹³ So Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave Hebron to him as an inheritance.

¹⁴ Hebron still belongs to the descendants of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite because he wholeheartedly followed the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁵ (Previously Hebron had been called Kiriath–arba. It had been named after

Arba, a great hero of the Anakites.) And the land had rest from war.

15 ¹The land assigned to the families of the tribe of Judah reached southward to the border of Edom, with the wilderness of Zin being its southernmost point.

²The southern boundary began at the south bay of the Dead Sea,

³ran south of Scorpion Pass into the wilderness of Zin and went south of Kadesh–barnea to Hezron. Then it went up to Addar, where it turned toward Karka.

⁴From there it passed to Azmon, until it finally reached the brook of Egypt, which it followed to the Mediterranean Sea. This was their southern boundary.

⁵The eastern boundary extended along the Dead Sea to the mouth of the Jordan River. The northern boundary began at

the bay where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea,

⁶ crossed to Beth–hoglah, then proceeded north of Beth–arabah to the stone of Bohan. (Bohan was Reuben’s son.)

⁷ From that point it went through the valley of Achor to Debir, turning north toward Gilgal, which is across from the slopes of Adummim on the south side of the valley. From there the border extended to the springs at En–shemesh and on to En–rogel.

⁸ The boundary then passed through the valley of the son of Hinnom, along the southern slopes of the Jebusites, where the city of Jerusalem is located. Then it went west to the top of the mountain above the valley of Hinnom, and on up to the northern end of the valley of Rephaim.

⁹ From there the border extended from the top of the mountain to the spring at the waters of Nephtoah, and from there to the towns on Mount Ephron. Then it turned toward Baalah (that is, Kiriath–jearim).

¹⁰ The border circled west of Baalah to Mount Seir, passed along to the town of Kesalon on the northern slope of Mount Jearim, and went down to Beth–shemesh and on to Timnah.

¹¹ The boundary line then proceeded to the slope of the hill north of Ekron, where it turned toward Shikkeron and Mount Baalah. It passed Jabneel and ended at the Mediterranean Sea.

¹² The western boundary was the shoreline of the Mediterranean Sea. These are the boundaries for the families of the tribe of Judah.

¹³ The LORD instructed Joshua to assign some of Judah’s territory to Caleb son

of Jephunneh. So Caleb was given the city of Arba (that is, Hebron), which had been named after Anak's ancestor.

¹⁴ Caleb drove out the three Anakites—Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai—descendants of Anak.

¹⁵ Then he fought against the people living in the town of Debir (formerly called Kiriath-sepher).

¹⁶ Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Acsah in marriage to the one who attacks and captures Kiriath-sepher."

¹⁷ Othniel, the son of Caleb's brother Kenaz, was the one who conquered it, so Acsah became Othniel's wife.

¹⁸ When Acsah married Othniel, she urged him to ask her father for an additional field. As she got down off her donkey, Caleb asked her, "What is it? What can I do for you?"

¹⁹ She said, "Give me a further blessing. You have been kind enough to give me

land in the Negev; please give me springs as well." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

²⁰ This was the inheritance given to the families of the tribe of Judah.

²¹ The towns of Judah situated along the borders of Edom in the extreme south are Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur,

²² Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah,

²³ Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan,

²⁴ Ziph, Telem, Bealoth,

²⁵ Hazor–hadattah, Kerioth–hezron (that is, Hazor),

²⁶ Amam, Shema, Moladah,

²⁷ Hazar–gaddah, Heshmon, Beth–pelet,

²⁸ Hazar–shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah,

²⁹ Baalah, Iim, Ezem,

³⁰ Eltolad, Kesil, Hormah,

³¹ Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah,

³² Lebaath, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. In all, there were twenty–nine of these towns with their surrounding villages.

³³ The following towns situated in the western foothills were also given to Judah: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,
³⁴ Zanoah, En–gannim, Tappuah, Enam,
³⁵ Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah,
³⁶ Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim. In all, there were fourteen towns with their surrounding villages.

³⁷ Also included were Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal–gad,
³⁸ Dilean, Mizpeh, Joktheel,
³⁹ Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,
⁴⁰ Cabbon, Lahmam, Kitlish,
⁴¹ Gederoth, Beth–dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah—sixteen towns with their surrounding villages.

⁴² Besides these, there were Libnah, Ether, Ashan,
⁴³ Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib,

⁴⁴ Keilah, Aczib, and Mareshah—nine towns with their surrounding villages.

⁴⁵ The territory of the tribe of Judah also included all the towns and villages of Ekron.

⁴⁶ From Ekron the boundary extended west and included the towns near Ashdod with their surrounding villages.

⁴⁷ It also included Ashdod with its towns and villages and Gaza with its towns and villages, as far as the brook of Egypt and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

⁴⁸ Judah also received the following towns in the hill country: Shamir, Jattir, Socoh,

⁴⁹ Dannah, Kiriath–sannah (that is, Debir),

⁵⁰ Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim,

⁵¹ Goshen, Holon, and Giloh—eleven towns with their surrounding villages.

⁵² Also included were the towns of Arab, Dumah, Eshan,

⁵³ Janim, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah,

⁵⁴ Humtah, Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior—nine towns with their surrounding villages.

⁵⁵ Besides these, there were Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah,

⁵⁶ Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah,

⁵⁷ Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah—ten towns with their surrounding villages.

⁵⁸ In addition, there were Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor,

⁵⁹ Maarath, Beth-anoth, and Eltekon—six towns with their surrounding villages.

⁶⁰ There were also Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim) and Rabbah—two towns with their surrounding villages.

⁶¹ In the wilderness there were the towns of Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah,

⁶² Nibshan, the City of Salt, and Engedi—six towns with their surrounding villages.

⁶³ But the tribe of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, who lived in the city of Jerusalem, so the Jebusites live there among the people of Judah to this day.

16 ¹ The allotment to the descendants of Joseph extended from the Jordan River near Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, through the wilderness and into the hill country of Bethel.

² From Bethel (that is, Luz) it ran over to Ataroth in the territory of the Arkites.

³ Then it descended westward to the territory of the Japhletites as far as Lower Beth–horon, then to Gezer and on over to the Mediterranean Sea.

⁴ The families of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance.

⁵ The following territory was given to the families of the tribe of Ephraim as their inheritance. The eastern boundary of their inheritance began at Ataroth–addar. From there it ran to Upper Beth–horon,

⁶ then on to the Mediterranean Sea. The northern boundary began at the Mediterranean, ran east past Micmethath, then curved eastward past Taanath–shiloh to the east of Janoah.

⁷ From Janoah it turned southward to Ataroth and Naarah, touched Jericho, and ended at the Jordan River.

⁸ From Tappuah the border extended westward, following the Kanah Ravine to the Mediterranean Sea. This is the inheritance given to the families of the tribe of Ephraim.

⁹ Ephraim was also given some towns with surrounding villages in the territory of the half–tribe of Manasseh.

¹⁰ They did not drive the Canaanites out of Gezer, however, so the people of Gezer live as slaves among the people of Ephraim to this day.

17 ¹ The next allotment of land was given to the half-tribe of Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph's older son. Gilead and Bashan on the east side of the Jordan had already been given to the family of Makir because he was a great warrior. (Makir was Manasseh's oldest son and was the father of Gilead.)

² Land on the west side of the Jordan was allotted to the remaining families within the tribe of Manasseh: Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hopher, and Shemida.

³ However, Zelophehad son of Hopher, who was a descendant of Manasseh, Makir, and Gilead, had no sons. Instead, he had five daughters. Their names

were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

⁴ These women came to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the Israelite leaders and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with the men of our tribe." So Joshua gave them an inheritance along with their uncles, as the LORD had commanded.

⁵ As a result, Manasseh's inheritance came to ten parcels of land, in addition to the land of Gilead and Bashan across the Jordan River,

⁶ because the female descendants of Manasseh received an inheritance along with the male descendants. (The land of Gilead was given to the rest of the male descendants of Manasseh.)

⁷ The boundary of the tribe of Manasseh extended from the border of Asher to Micmethath, which is east

of Shechem. Then the boundary went south from Micmethath to the people living near the spring of Tappuah.

⁸ (The land surrounding Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but the town of Tappuah, on the border of Manasseh's territory, belonged to the tribe of Ephraim.)

⁹ From the spring of Tappuah, the border of Manasseh followed the northern side of the Kanah Ravine to the Mediterranean Sea. (Several towns in Manasseh's territory belonged to the tribe of Ephraim.)

¹⁰ The land south of the ravine belonged to Ephraim, and the land north of the ravine belonged to Manasseh, with the Mediterranean Sea forming Manasseh's western border. North of Manasseh was the territory of Asher, and to the east was the territory of Issachar.

¹¹ The following towns within the territory of Issachar and Asher were given to Manasseh: Beth-shan, Ibleam, Dor (that is, Naphoth-dor), Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo, with their respective villages.

¹² But the descendants of Manasseh were unable to occupy these towns. They could not drive out the Canaanites who continued to live there.

¹³ Later on, however, when the Israelites became strong enough, they forced the Canaanites to work as slaves. But they did not drive them out of the land.

¹⁴ The descendants of Joseph came to Joshua and asked, "Why have you given us only one portion of land when the LORD has given us so many people?"

¹⁵ Joshua replied, "If the hill country of Ephraim is not large enough for you,

clear out land for yourselves in the forest where the Perizzites and Rephaites live."

¹⁶ They said, "The hill country is not enough for us, and the Canaanites in the lowlands around Beth–shan and the valley of Jezreel have iron chariots—they are too strong for us."

¹⁷ Then Joshua said to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph, "Since you are so large and strong, you will be given more than one portion."

¹⁸ The forests of the hill country will be yours as well. Clear as much of the land as you wish and live there. And I am sure you can drive out the Canaanites from the valleys, too, even though they are strong and have iron chariots."

18 ¹ Now that the land was under Israelite control, the entire Israelite assembly gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tabernacle.

² But there remained seven tribes who had not yet been allotted their inheritance.

³ Then Joshua asked them, "How long are you going to wait before taking possession of the remaining land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given to you?"

⁴ Select three men from each tribe, and I will send them out to survey the unconquered territory. They will return to me with a written report of their proposed divisions of the inheritance.

⁵ The scouts will map the land into seven sections, excluding Judah's territory in the south and Joseph's territory in the north.

⁶ Then I will cast sacred lots in the presence of the LORD our God to decide which section will be assigned to each tribe.

⁷ However, the Levites will not receive any land. Their role as priests of the LORD is their inheritance. And the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh won't receive any more land, for they have already received their inheritance, which Moses, the servant of the LORD, gave them on the east side of the Jordan River."

⁸ As the men who were mapping out the land started on their way, Joshua commanded them, "Go and survey the land. Then return to me with your written report, and I will assign the land to the tribes by casting sacred lots in the presence of the LORD here at Shiloh."

⁹ The men did as they were told and mapped the entire territory into seven sections, listing the towns in each section. Then they returned to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh.

¹⁰ There at Shiloh, Joshua cast sacred lots in the presence of the LORD to determine which tribe should have each section.

¹¹ The first allotment of land went to the families of the tribe of Benjamin. It lay between the territory previously assigned to the tribes of Judah and Joseph.

¹² The northern boundary began at the Jordan River, went north of the slope of Jericho, then west through the hill country and the wilderness of Beth-aven.

¹³ From there the boundary went south to Luz (that is, Bethel) and proceeded down to Ataroth-addar to the top of the hill south of Lower Beth-horon.

¹⁴ The boundary then ran south along the western edge of the hill facing Beth-horon, ending at the village of Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), one

of the towns belonging to the tribe of Judah. This was the western boundary.

¹⁵ The southern boundary began at the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim. From there it ran westward to the spring at the waters of Nephtoah,

¹⁶ and down to the base of the mountain beside the valley of the son of Hinnom, at the northern end of the valley of Rephaim. From there it went down the valley of Hinnom, crossing south of the slope where the Jebusites lived, and continued down to En-rogel.

¹⁷ From En-rogel the boundary proceeded northeast to En-shemesh and on to Geliloth (which is across from the slopes of Adummim). Then it went down to the stone of Bohan. (Bohan was Reuben's son.)

¹⁸ From there it passed along the north side of the slope overlooking the Jordan

Valley. The border then went down into the valley,

¹⁹ ran past the north slope of Beth-hoglah, and ended at the north bay of the Dead Sea, which is the southern end of the Jordan River.

²⁰ The eastern boundary was the Jordan River. This was the inheritance for the families of the tribe of Benjamin.

²¹ These were the towns given to the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz,

²² Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel,

²³ Avvim, Parah, Ophrah,

²⁴ Kephar-ammoni, Ophni, and Geba—twelve towns with their villages.

²⁵ Also Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth,

²⁶ Mizpeh, Kephirah, Mozah,

²⁷ Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah,

²⁸ Zela, Haeleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah, and Kiriath-jearim—fourteen towns with their villages.

This was the inheritance given to the families of the tribe of Benjamin.

19¹ The second allotment of land went to the families of the tribe of Simeon. Their inheritance was surrounded by Judah's territory.

² Simeon's inheritance included Beersheba, Sheba, Moladah,
³ Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem,
⁴ Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah,
⁵ Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah,
⁶ Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhem—
thirteen towns with their villages.

⁷ It also included Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan—four towns with their villages,

⁸ including all the villages as far south as Baalath-beer (also known as Ramah of the Negev). This was the inheritance of the families of the tribe of Simeon.

⁹ Their inheritance came from part of what had been given to Judah because

Judah's territory was too large for them. So the tribe of Simeon received an inheritance within the territory of Judah.

¹⁰ The third allotment of land went to the families of the tribe of Zebulun. The boundary of Zebulun's inheritance started at Sarid.

¹¹ From there it went west, going past Maralah, touching Dabbesheth, and proceeding to the brook east of Jokneam.

¹² In the other direction, the boundary line went east from Sarid to the border of Kisloth-tabor, and from there to Daberath and up to Japhia.

¹³ Then it continued east to Gath-hepher, Eth-kazin, and Rimmon and turned toward Neah.

¹⁴ The northern boundary of Zebulun passed Hannathon and ended at the valley of Iphtah-el.

¹⁵ The towns in these areas included Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem—twelve towns with their surrounding villages.

¹⁶ This was the inheritance of the families of the tribe of Zebulun.

¹⁷ The fourth allotment of land went to the families of the tribe of Issachar.

¹⁸ Its boundaries included the following towns: Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem,

¹⁹ Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath,

²⁰ Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez,

²¹ Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez.

²² The boundary also touched Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh, ending at the Jordan River—sixteen towns with their surrounding villages.

²³ This was the inheritance of the families of the tribe of Issachar.

²⁴ The fifth allotment of land went to the families of the tribe of Asher.

²⁵ Its boundaries included these towns: Helkath, Hali, Beten, Acshaph,

²⁶ Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal. The boundary on the west went from Carmel to Shihor–libnath,

²⁷ turned east toward Beth–dagon, and ran as far as Zebulun in the valley of Iphtah–el, running north to Beth–emek and Neiel. It then continued north to Cabul,

²⁸ Abdon, Rehob, Hammon, Kanah, and as far as Greater Sidon.

²⁹ Then the boundary turned toward Ramah and the fortified city of Tyre and came to the Mediterranean Sea at Hosah. The territory also included Mehebel, Aczib,

³⁰ Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob–
–twenty–two towns with their surrounding villages.

³¹ This was the inheritance of the families of the tribe of Asher.

³² The sixth allotment of land went to the families of the tribe of Naphtali.

³³ Its boundary ran from Heleph, from the oak at Zaananim, and extended across to Adami–nekeb, Jabneel, and as far as Lakkum, ending at the Jordan River.

³⁴ The western boundary ran past Aznoth–tabor, then to Hukkok, and touched the boundary of Zebulun in the south, the boundary of Asher on the west, and the Jordan River on the east.

³⁵ The fortified cities included in this territory were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth,

³⁶ Adamah, Ramah, Hazor,

³⁷ Kedesh, Edrei, En–hazor,

³⁸ Yiron, Migdal–el, Horem, Beth–anath, and Beth–shemesh—nineteen cities with their surrounding villages.

³⁹ This was the inheritance of the families of the tribe of Naphtali.

⁴⁰ The seventh and last allotment of land went to the families of the tribe of Dan.

⁴¹ The towns within Dan's inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh,

⁴² Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah,

⁴³ Elon, Timnah, Ekron,

⁴⁴ Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath,

⁴⁵ Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon,

⁴⁶ and Me-jarkon, also Rakkon along with the territory across from Joppa.

⁴⁷ But the tribe of Dan had trouble taking possession of their land, so they fought against the town of Laish. They captured it, slaughtered its people, and settled there. They renamed the city Dan after their ancestor.

⁴⁸ This was the inheritance of the families of the tribe of Dan—these towns with their villages.

⁴⁹ After all the land was divided among the tribes, the Israelites gave a special piece of land to Joshua as his inheritance.

⁵⁰ For the LORD had said he could have any town he wanted. He chose Timnath–serah in the hill country of Ephraim. He rebuilt the town and lived there.

⁵¹ These are the territories that Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the tribal leaders gave as an inheritance to the tribes of Israel by casting sacred lots in the presence of the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle at Shiloh. So the division of the land was completed.

20 ¹ The LORD said to Joshua,
² "Now tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed Moses.

³ Anyone who kills another person unintentionally can run to one of these cities and be protected from the

relatives of the one who was killed, for the relatives may seek to avenge the killing.

⁴ "Upon reaching one of these cities, the one who caused the accidental death will appear before the leaders at the city gate and explain what happened. They must allow the accused to enter the city and live there among them.

⁵ If the relatives of the victim come to avenge the killing, the leaders must not release the accused to them, for the death was accidental.

⁶ But the person who caused the death must stay in that city and be tried by the community and found innocent. Then the one declared innocent because the death was accidental must continue to live in that city until the death of the high priest who was in office at the time of the accident. After that, the one found innocent is free to return home."

⁷ The following cities were designated as cities of refuge: Kedesh of Galilee, in the hill country of Naphtali; Shechem, in the hill country of Ephraim; and Kiriath–arba (that is, Hebron), in the hill country of Judah.

⁸ On the east side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho, the following cities were designated as cities of refuge: Bezer, in the wilderness plain of the tribe of Reuben; Ramoth in Gilead, in the territory of the tribe of Gad; and Golan in Bashan, in the land of the tribe of Manasseh.

⁹ These cities were set apart for Israelites as well as the foreigners living among them. Anyone who accidentally killed another person could take refuge in one of these cities. In this way, they could escape being killed in revenge prior to standing trial before the community.

21 ¹ Then the leaders of the tribe of Levi came to consult with Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders of the other tribes of Israel.

² They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, "The LORD instructed Moses to give us towns to live in and pasturelands for our cattle."

³ So by the command of the LORD the Levites were given as their inheritance the following towns with their pasturelands.

⁴ The descendants of Aaron, who were members of the Kohathite clan within the tribe of Levi, were given thirteen towns that were originally assigned to the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

⁵ The other families of the Kohathite clan were allotted ten towns from the territories of Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

⁶ The clan of Gershon received thirteen towns from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.

⁷ The clan of Merari received twelve cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

⁸ So the Israelites obeyed the LORD's command to Moses and assigned these towns and pasturelands to the Levites by casting sacred lots.

⁹ The Israelites gave the following towns from the tribes of Judah and Simeon

¹⁰ to the descendants of Aaron, who were members of the Kohathite clan within the tribe of Levi, since the sacred lot fell to them first:

¹¹ Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), in the hill country of Judah, along with its surrounding pasturelands. (Arba was an ancestor of Anak.)

¹² But the fields beyond the city and the surrounding villages were given to Caleb son of Jephunneh.

¹³ The following towns with their pasturelands were given to the descendants of Aaron the priest: Hebron (a city of refuge for those who accidentally killed someone), Libnah,

¹⁴ Jattir, Eshtemoa,

¹⁵ Holon, Debir,

¹⁶ Ain, Juttah, and Beth—shemesh—
nine towns from these two tribes.

¹⁷ From the tribe of Benjamin the priests were given the following towns with their surrounding pasturelands:

Gibeon, Geba,

¹⁸ Anathoth, and Almon—four towns.

¹⁹ So thirteen towns were given to the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

²⁰ The rest of the Kohathite clan from the tribe of Levi was allotted these

towns and pasturelands from the tribe of Ephraim:

²¹ Shechem (a city of refuge for those who accidentally killed someone), Gezer,

²² Kibzaim, and Beth-horon—four towns.

²³ The following towns and pasturelands were allotted to the priests from the tribe of Dan: Eltekeh, Gibbethon,

²⁴ Aijalon, and Gath-rimmon—four towns.

²⁵ The half-tribe of Manasseh allotted the following towns with their pasturelands to the priests: Taanach and Gath-rimmon—two towns.

²⁶ So ten towns with their pasturelands were given to the rest of the Kohathite clan.

²⁷ The descendants of Gershon, another clan within the tribe of Levi, received two towns with their pasturelands from the

half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan (a city of refuge) and Be-eshterah.

²⁸ From the tribe of Issachar they received Kishion, Daberath,

²⁹ Jarmuth, and En-gannim—four towns with their pasturelands.

³⁰ From the tribe of Asher they received Mishal, Abdon,

³¹ Helkath, and Rehob—four towns and their pasturelands.

³² From the tribe of Naphtali they received Kedesh in Galilee (a city of refuge), Hammoth-dor, and Kartan—three towns with their pasturelands.

³³ So thirteen towns and their pasturelands were allotted to the clan of Gershon.

³⁴ The rest of the Levites—the Merari clan—were given the following towns from the tribe of Zebulun: Jokneam, Kartah,

³⁵ Dimnah, and Nahalal—four towns with their pasturelands.

³⁶ From the tribe of Reuben they received Bezer, Jahaz,

³⁷ Kedemoth, and Mephaath—four towns with their pasturelands.

³⁸ From the tribe of Gad they received Ramoth in Gilead (a city of refuge), Mahanaim,

³⁹ Heshbon, and Jazer—four towns with their pasturelands.

⁴⁰ So twelve towns were allotted to the clan of Merari.

⁴¹ The total number of towns and pasturelands within Israelite territory given to the Levites came to forty-eight.

⁴² Every one of these towns had pasturelands surrounding it.

⁴³ So the LORD gave to Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they conquered it and settled there.

⁴⁴ And the LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had solemnly promised their ancestors. None of their enemies could stand against them, for the LORD helped them conquer all their enemies.

⁴⁵ All of the good promises that the LORD had given Israel came true.

22 ¹ Then Joshua called together the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

² He told them, "You have done as Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded you, and you have obeyed every order I have given you.

³ You have not deserted the other tribes, even though the campaign has lasted for such a long time. You have been careful to obey the commands of the LORD your God up to the present day.

⁴ And now the LORD your God has given the other tribes rest, as he promised them. So go home now to the land Moses, the servant of the LORD, gave you on the east side of the Jordan River.

⁵ But be very careful to obey all the commands and the law that Moses gave to you. Love the LORD your God, walk in all his ways, obey his commands, be faithful to him, and serve him with all your heart and all your soul."

⁶ So Joshua blessed them and sent them home.

⁷ Now Moses had given the land of Bashan to the half-tribe of Manasseh east of the Jordan. The other half of the tribe was given land west of the Jordan. As Joshua sent them away, he blessed them

⁸ and said, "Share with your relatives back home the great wealth you have taken from your enemies. Share with

them your large herds of cattle, your silver and gold, your bronze and iron, and your clothing."

⁹ So the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the rest of Israel at Shiloh in the land of Canaan. They started the journey back to their own land of Gilead, the territory that belonged to them according to the LORD's command through Moses.

¹⁰ But while they were still in Canaan, before they crossed the Jordan River, Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built a very large altar near the Jordan River at a place called Geliloth.

¹¹ When the rest of Israel heard they had built the altar at Geliloth west of the Jordan River, in the land of Canaan,

¹² the whole assembly gathered at Shiloh and prepared to go to war against their brother tribes.

¹³ First, however, they sent a delegation led by Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest. They crossed the river to talk with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

¹⁴ In this delegation were ten high officials of Israel, one from each of the ten tribes, and each a leader within the family divisions of Israel.

¹⁵ When they arrived in the land of Gilead, they said to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh,

¹⁶ "The whole community of the LORD demands to know why you are betraying the God of Israel. How could you turn away from the LORD and build an altar in rebellion against him?

¹⁷ Was our sin at Peor not enough? We are not yet fully cleansed of it, even after the plague that struck the entire assembly of the LORD.

¹⁸ And yet today you are turning away from following the LORD. If you rebel against the LORD today, he will be angry with all of us tomorrow.

¹⁹ If you need the altar because your land is defiled, then join us on our side of the river, where the LORD lives among us in his Tabernacle, and we will share our land with you. But do not rebel against the LORD or draw us into your rebellion by building another altar for yourselves. There is only one true altar of the LORD our God.

²⁰ Didn't God punish all the people of Israel when Achan, a member of the clan of Zerah, sinned by stealing the things set apart for the LORD? He was not the only one who died because of that sin."

²¹ Then the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered these high officials:

²² "The LORD alone is God! The LORD alone is God! We have not built the altar in rebellion against the LORD. If we have done so, do not spare our lives this day. But the LORD knows, and let all Israel know, too,

²³ that we have not built an altar for ourselves to turn away from the LORD. Nor will we use it for our burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings. If we have built it for this purpose, may the LORD himself punish us.

²⁴ "We have built this altar because we fear that in the future your descendants will say to ours, 'What right do you have to worship the LORD, the God of Israel?

²⁵ The LORD has placed the Jordan River as a barrier between our people and your people. You have no claim to the LORD.' And your descendants may make our descendants stop worshiping the LORD.

²⁶ So we decided to build the altar, not for burnt sacrifices,

²⁷ but as a memorial. It will remind our descendants and your descendants that we, too, have the right to worship the LORD at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings. Then your descendants will not be able to say to ours, 'You have no claim to the LORD.'

²⁸ If they say this, our descendants can reply, 'Look at this copy of the LORD's altar that our ancestors made. It is not for burnt offerings or sacrifices; it is a reminder of the relationship both of us have with the LORD.'

²⁹ Far be it from us to rebel against the LORD or turn away from him by building our own altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings, or sacrifices. Only the altar of the LORD our God that stands in front

of the Tabernacle may be used for that purpose."

³⁰ When Phinehas the priest and the high officials heard this from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, they were satisfied.

³¹ Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, replied to them, "Today we know the LORD is among us because you have not sinned against the LORD as we thought. Instead, you have rescued Israel from being destroyed by the LORD."

³² Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the ten high officials left the tribes of Reuben and Gad in Gilead and returned to the land of Canaan to tell the Israelites what had happened.

³³ And all the Israelites were satisfied and praised God and spoke no more of war against Reuben and Gad.

³⁴ The people of Reuben and Gad named the altar "Witness," for they said,

"It is a witness between us and them that the LORD is our God, too."

23 ¹ The years passed, and the LORD had given the people of Israel rest from all their enemies. Joshua, who was now very old,

² called together all the elders, leaders, judges, and officers of Israel. He said to them, "I am an old man now.

³ You have seen everything the LORD your God has done for you during my lifetime. The LORD your God has fought for you against your enemies.

⁴ I have allotted to you as an inheritance all the land of the nations yet unconquered, as well as the land of those we have already conquered—from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

⁵ This land will be yours, for the LORD your God will drive out all the people living there now. You will live there

instead of them, just as the LORD your God promised you.

⁶ "So be strong! Be very careful to follow all the instructions written in the Book of the Law of Moses. Do not deviate from them in any way.

⁷ Make sure you do not associate with the other people still remaining in the land. Do not even mention the names of their gods, much less swear by them or worship them.

⁸ But be faithful to the LORD your God as you have done until now.

⁹ "For the LORD has driven out great and powerful nations for you, and no one has yet been able to defeat you.

¹⁰ Each one of you will put to flight a thousand of the enemy, for the LORD your God fights for you, just as he has promised.

¹¹ So be very careful to love the LORD your God.

¹² "But if you turn away from him and intermarry with the survivors of these nations remaining among you,

¹³ then know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive them out from your land. Instead, they will be a snare and a trap to you, a pain in your side and a thorn in your eyes, and you will be wiped out from this good land the LORD your God has given you.

¹⁴ "Soon I will die, going the way of all the earth. Deep in your hearts you know that every promise of the LORD your God has come true. Not a single one has failed!

¹⁵ But as surely as the LORD your God has given you the good things he promised, he will also bring disaster on you if you disobey him. He will completely wipe you out from this good land he has given you.

¹⁶ If you break the covenant of the LORD your God by worshiping and serving other gods, his anger will burn against you, and you will quickly be wiped out from the good land he has given you."

24 ¹ Then Joshua summoned all the people of Israel to Shechem, along with their elders, leaders, judges, and officers. So they came and presented themselves to God.

² Joshua said to the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River, and they worshiped other gods.

³ But I took your ancestor Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him into the land of Canaan. I gave him many descendants through his son Isaac.

⁴ To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the hill country of Seir, while Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

⁵ "Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I brought terrible plagues on Egypt; and afterward I brought you out as a free people.

⁶ But when your ancestors arrived at the Red Sea, the Egyptians chased after you with chariots and horses.

⁷ When you cried out to the LORD, I put darkness between you and the Egyptians. I brought the sea crashing down on the Egyptians, drowning them. With your very own eyes you saw what I did. Then you lived in the wilderness for many years.

⁸ "Finally, I brought you into the land of the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave you victory over them, and you took possession of their land.

⁹ Then Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, started a war against Israel. He asked Balaam son of Beor to curse you,
¹⁰ but I would not listen to him. Instead, I made Balaam bless you, and so I rescued you from Balak.

¹¹ "When you crossed the Jordan River and came to Jericho, the men of Jericho fought against you. There were also many others who fought you, including the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I gave you victory over them.

¹² And I sent hornets ahead of you to drive out the two kings of the Amorites. It was not your swords or bows that brought you victory.

¹³ I gave you land you had not worked for, and I gave you cities you did not build—the cities in which you are now living. I gave you vineyards and olive

groves for food, though you did not plant them.

¹⁴ "So honor the LORD and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD alone.

¹⁵ But if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD."

¹⁶ The people replied, "We would never forsake the LORD and worship other gods.

¹⁷ For the LORD our God is the one who rescued us and our ancestors from slavery in the land of Egypt. He performed mighty miracles before our very eyes. As we traveled through the

wilderness among our enemies, he preserved us.

¹⁸ It was the LORD who drove out the Amorites and the other nations living here in the land. So we, too, will serve the LORD, for he alone is our God."

¹⁹ Then Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy and jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and sins.

²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve other gods, he will turn against you and destroy you, even though he has been so good to you."

²¹ But the people answered Joshua, saying, "No, we are determined to serve the LORD!"

²² "You are accountable for this decision," Joshua said. "You have chosen to serve the LORD." "Yes," they replied, "we are accountable."

²³ "All right then," Joshua said, "destroy the idols among you, and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

²⁴ The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God. We will obey him alone."

²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day at Shechem, committing them to a permanent and binding contract between themselves and the LORD.

²⁶ Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. As a reminder of their agreement, he took a huge stone and rolled it beneath the oak tree beside the Tabernacle of the LORD.

²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, "This stone has heard everything the LORD said to us. It will be a witness to testify against you if you go back on your word to God."

²⁸ Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance.

²⁹ Soon after this, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110.

³⁰ They buried him in the land he had inherited, at Timnath–serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

³¹ Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the leaders who outlived him—those who had personally experienced all that the LORD had done for Israel.

³² The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought along with them when they left Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the parcel of ground Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor for one hundred pieces of silver. This land was located in the territory allotted to

the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph.

³³ Eleazar son of Aaron also died. He was buried in the hill country of Ephraim, in the town of Gibeah, which had been given to his son Phinehas.

Judges

1 ¹ After Joshua died, the Israelites asked the LORD, "Which tribe should attack the Canaanites first?"

² The LORD answered, "Judah, for I have given them victory over the land."

³ The leaders of Judah said to their relatives from the tribe of Simeon, "Join with us to fight against the Canaanites living in the territory allotted to us. Then we will help you conquer your territory." So the men of Simeon went with Judah.

⁴ When the men of Judah attacked, the LORD gave them victory over the Canaanites and Perizzites, and they killed ten thousand enemy warriors at the town of Bezek.

⁵ While at Bezek they encountered King Adoni-bezek and fought against him,

and the Canaanites and Perizzites were defeated.

⁶ Adoni-bezek escaped, but the Israelites soon captured him and cut off his thumbs and big toes.

⁷ Adoni-bezek said, "I once had seventy kings with thumbs and big toes cut off, eating scraps from under my table. Now God has paid me back for what I did to them." They took him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

⁸ The men of Judah attacked Jerusalem and captured it, killing all its people and setting the city on fire.

⁹ Then they turned south to fight the Canaanites living in the hill country, the Negev, and the western foothills.

¹⁰ Judah marched against the Canaanites in Hebron (formerly called Kiriath-arba), defeating the forces of Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi.

¹¹ From there they marched against the people living in the town of Debir (formerly called Kiriath-sepher).

¹² Then Caleb said, "I will give my daughter Acsah in marriage to the one who attacks and captures Kiriath-sepher."

¹³ Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother Kenaz, was the one who conquered it, so Acsah became Othniel's wife.

¹⁴ When Acsah married Othniel, she urged him to ask her father for an additional field. As she got down off her donkey, Caleb asked her, "What is it? What can I do for you?"

¹⁵ She said, "Give me a further blessing. You have been kind enough to give me land in the Negev; please give me springs as well." So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs.

¹⁶ When the tribe of Judah left Jericho, the Kenites, who were descendants of Moses' father-in-law, traveled with them into the wilderness of Judah. They settled among the people there, near the town of Arad in the Negev.

¹⁷ Then Judah joined with Simeon to fight against the Canaanites living in Zephath, and they completely destroyed the town. So the town was named Hormah.

¹⁸ In addition, Judah captured the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron, along with their surrounding territories.

¹⁹ The LORD was with the people of Judah, and they took possession of the hill country. But they failed to drive out the people living in the plains because the people there had iron chariots.

²⁰ The city of Hebron was given to Caleb as Moses had promised. And Caleb drove out the people living there, who

were descendants of the three sons of Anak.

²¹ The tribe of Benjamin, however, failed to drive out the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem. So to this day the Jebusites live in Jerusalem among the people of Benjamin.

²² The descendants of Joseph attacked the town of Bethel, and the LORD was with them.

²³ They sent spies to Bethel (formerly known as Luz),

²⁴ who confronted a man coming out of the city. They said to him, "Show us a way into the city, and we will have mercy on you."

²⁵ So he showed them a way in, and they killed everyone in the city except for this man and his family.

²⁶ Later the man moved to the land of the Hittites, where he built a city. He

named the city Luz, and it is known by that name to this day.

²⁷ The tribe of Manasseh failed to drive out the people living in Beth-shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, and their surrounding villages, because the Canaanites were determined to stay in that region.

²⁸ When the Israelites grew stronger, they forced the Canaanites to work as slaves, but they never did drive them out of the land.

²⁹ The tribe of Ephraim also failed to drive out the Canaanites living in Gezer, and so the Canaanites continued to live there among them.

³⁰ The tribe of Zebulun also failed to drive out the Canaanites living in Kitron and Nahalol, who continued to live among them. But they forced them to work as slaves.

³¹ The tribe of Asher also failed to drive out the residents of Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphik, and Rehob.

³² In fact, because they did not drive them out, the Canaanites dominated the land where the people of Asher lived.

³³ The tribe of Naphtali also failed to drive out the residents of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath. Instead, the Canaanites dominated the land where they lived. Nevertheless, the people of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath were sometimes forced to work as slaves for the people of Naphtali.

³⁴ As for the tribe of Dan, the Amorites forced them into the hill country and would not let them come down into the plains.

³⁵ The Amorites were determined to stay in Mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim, but when the descendants of

Joseph became stronger, they forced the Amorites to work as slaves.

³⁶ The boundary of the Amorites ran from Scorpion Pass to Sela and continued upward from there.

2 ¹ The angel of the LORD went up from Gilgal to Bokim with a message for the Israelites. He told them, "I brought you out of Egypt into this land that I swore to give your ancestors, and I said I would never break my covenant with you.

² For your part, you were not to make any covenants with the people living in this land; instead, you were to destroy their altars. Why, then, have you disobeyed my command?

³ Since you have done this, I will no longer drive out the people living in your land. They will be thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a constant temptation to you."

⁴ When the angel of the LORD finished speaking, the Israelites wept loudly.

⁵ So they called the place "Weeping," and they offered sacrifices to the LORD.

⁶ After Joshua sent the people away, each of the tribes left to take possession of the land allotted to them.

⁷ And the Israelites served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the leaders who outlived him—those who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel.

⁸ Then Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110.

⁹ They buried him in the land he had inherited, at Timnath–serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

¹⁰ After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the LORD or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.

¹¹ Then the Israelites did what was evil in the LORD's sight and worshiped the images of Baal.

¹² They abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They chased after other gods, worshiping the gods of the people around them. And they angered the LORD.

¹³ They abandoned the LORD to serve Baal and the images of Ashtoreth.

¹⁴ This made the LORD burn with anger against Israel, so he handed them over to marauders who stole their possessions. He sold them to their enemies all around, and they were no longer able to resist them.

¹⁵ Every time Israel went out to battle, the LORD fought against them, bringing them defeat, just as he promised. And the people were very distressed.

¹⁶ Then the LORD raised up judges to rescue the Israelites from their enemies.

¹⁷ Yet Israel did not listen to the judges but prostituted themselves to other gods, bowing down to them. How quickly they turned away from the path of their ancestors, who had walked in obedience to the LORD's commands.

¹⁸ Whenever the LORD placed a judge over Israel, he was with that judge and rescued the people from their enemies throughout the judge's lifetime. For the LORD took pity on his people, who were burdened by oppression and suffering.

¹⁹ But when the judge died, the people returned to their corrupt ways, behaving worse than those who had lived before them. They followed other gods, worshiping and bowing down to them. And they refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

²⁰ So the LORD burned with anger against Israel. He said, "Because these people have violated the covenant I made with their ancestors and have ignored my commands,

²¹ I will no longer drive out the nations that Joshua left unconquered when he died.

²² I did this to test Israel—to see whether or not they would obey the LORD as their ancestors did."

²³ That is why the LORD did not quickly drive the nations out or allow Joshua to conquer them all.

3 ¹ The LORD left certain nations in the land to test those Israelites who had not participated in the wars of Canaan.

² He did this to teach warfare to generations of Israelites who had no experience in battle.

³ These were the nations: the Philistines (those living under the five Philistine

rulers), all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the hill country of Lebanon from Mount Baal–hermon to Lebo–hamath.

⁴ These people were left to test the Israelites—to see whether they would obey the commands the LORD had given to their ancestors through Moses.

⁵ So Israel lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites,

⁶ and they intermarried with them. Israelite sons married their daughters, and Israelite daughters were given in marriage to their sons. And the Israelites worshiped their gods.

⁷ The Israelites did what was evil in the LORD’s sight. They forgot about the LORD their God, and they worshiped the images of Baal and the Asherah poles.

⁸ Then the LORD burned with anger against Israel, and he handed them

over to King Cushan–rishathaim of Aram–naharaim. And the Israelites were subject to Cushan–rishathaim for eight years.

⁹ But when Israel cried out to the LORD for help, the LORD raised up a man to rescue them. His name was Othniel, the son of Caleb’s younger brother, Kenaz.

¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he became Israel’s judge. He went to war against King Cushan–rishathaim of Aram, and the LORD gave Othniel victory over him.

¹¹ So there was peace in the land for forty years. Then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

¹² Once again the Israelites did what was evil in the LORD’s sight, so the LORD gave King Eglon of Moab control over Israel.

¹³ Together with the Ammonites and Amalekites, Eglon attacked Israel and took possession of Jericho.

¹⁴ And the Israelites were subject to Eglon of Moab for eighteen years.

¹⁵ But when Israel cried out to the LORD for help, the LORD raised up a man to rescue them. His name was Ehud son of Gera, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was left-handed. The Israelites sent Ehud to deliver their tax money to King Eglon of Moab.

¹⁶ So Ehud made himself a double-edged dagger that was eighteen inches long, and he strapped it to his right thigh, keeping it hidden under his clothing.

¹⁷ He brought the tax money to Eglon, who was very fat.

¹⁸ After delivering the payment, Ehud sent home those who had carried the tax money.

¹⁹ But when Ehud reached the stone carvings near Gilgal, he turned back. He came to Eglon and said, "I have a secret message for you." So the king commanded his servants to be silent and sent them all out of the room.

²⁰ Ehud walked over to Eglon as he was sitting alone in a cool upstairs room and said, "I have a message for you from God!" As King Eglon rose from his seat,

²¹ Ehud reached with his left hand, pulled out the dagger strapped to his right thigh, and plunged it into the king's belly.

²² The dagger went so deep that the handle disappeared beneath the king's fat. So Ehud left the dagger in, and the king's bowels emptied.

²³ Then Ehud closed and locked the doors and climbed down the latrine and escaped through the sewage access.

²⁴ After Ehud was gone, the king's servants returned and found the doors to the upstairs room locked. They thought he might be using the latrine,

²⁵ so they waited. But when the king didn't come out after a long delay, they became concerned and got a key. And when they opened the door, they found their master dead on the floor.

²⁶ While the servants were waiting, Ehud escaped, passing the idols on his way to Seirah.

²⁷ When he arrived in the hill country of Ephraim, Ehud sounded a call to arms. Then he led a band of Israelites down from the hills.

²⁸ "Follow me," he said, "for the LORD has given you victory over Moab your enemy." So they followed him. And the Israelites took control of the shallows of the Jordan River across from Moab, preventing anyone from crossing.

²⁹ They attacked the Moabites and killed about ten thousand of their strongest and bravest warriors. Not one of them escaped.

³⁰ So Moab was conquered by Israel that day, and the land was at peace for eighty years.

³¹ After Ehud, Shamgar son of Anath rescued Israel. He killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad.

4 ¹ After Ehud's death, the Israelites again did what was evil in the LORD's sight.

² So the LORD handed them over to King Jabin of Hazor, a Canaanite king. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-haggoyim.

³ Sisera, who had nine hundred iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

⁴ Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophet who had become a judge in Israel.

⁵ She would hold court under the Palm of Deborah, which stood between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to settle their disputes.

⁶ One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. She said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: Assemble ten thousand warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor.

⁷ I will lure Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him."

⁸ Barak told her, "I will go, but only if you go with me!"

⁹ "Very well," she replied, "I will go with you. But since you have made this choice, you will receive no honor. For the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.

¹⁰ At Kedesh, Barak called together the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand warriors marched up with him. Deborah also marched with them.

¹¹ Now Heber the Kenite, a descendant of Moses' brother-in-law Hobab, had moved away from the other members of his tribe and pitched his tent by the Oak of Zaananim, near Kedesh.

¹² When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor,

¹³ he called for all nine hundred of his iron chariots and all of his warriors, and they marched from

Harosheth–haggoyim to the Kishon River.

¹⁴ Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get ready! Today the LORD will give you victory over Sisera, for the LORD is marching ahead of you." So Barak led his ten thousand warriors down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle.

¹⁵ When Barak attacked, the LORD threw Sisera and all his charioteers and warriors into a panic. Then Sisera leaped down from his chariot and escaped on foot.

¹⁶ Barak chased the enemy and their chariots all the way to Harosheth–haggoyim, killing all of Sisera's warriors. Not a single one was left alive.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, Sisera ran to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because Heber's family was on friendly terms with King Jabin of Hazor.

¹⁸ Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come into my tent, sir. Come in. Don't be afraid." So he went into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

¹⁹ "Please give me some water," he said. "I'm thirsty." So she gave him some milk to drink and covered him again.

²⁰ "Stand at the door of the tent," he told her. "If anybody comes and asks you if there is anyone here, say no."

²¹ But when Sisera fell asleep from exhaustion, Jael quietly crept up to him with a hammer and tent peg. Then she drove the tent peg through his temple and into the ground, and so he died.

²² When Barak came looking for Sisera, Jael went out to meet him. She said, "Come, and I will show you the man you are looking for." So he followed her into the tent and found Sisera lying there

dead, with the tent peg through his temple.

²³ So on that day Israel saw God subdue Jabin, the Canaanite king.

²⁴ And from that time on Israel became stronger and stronger against King Jabin, until they finally destroyed him.

5 ¹ On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

² "When Israel's leaders take charge, and the people gladly follow—bless the LORD!

³ "Listen, you kings! Pay attention, you mighty rulers! For I will sing to the LORD. I will lift up my song to the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁴ "LORD, when you set out from Seir and marched across the fields of Edom, the earth trembled and the cloudy skies poured down rain.

⁵ The mountains quaked at the coming of the LORD. Even Mount Sinai shook in

the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁶ "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, and in the days of Jael, people avoided the main roads, and travelers stayed on crooked side paths.

⁷ There were few people left in the villages of Israel—until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.

⁸ When Israel chose new gods, war erupted at the city gates. Yet not a shield or spear could be seen among forty thousand warriors in Israel!

⁹ My heart goes out to Israel's leaders, and to those who gladly followed. Bless the LORD!

¹⁰ "You who ride on fine donkeys and sit on fancy saddle blankets, listen! And you who must walk along the road, listen!

¹¹ Listen to the village musicians gathered at the watering holes. They recount the righteous victories of the

LORD, and the victories of his villagers in Israel. Then the people of the LORD marched down to the city gates.

¹² "Wake up, Deborah, wake up! Wake up, wake up, and sing a song! Arise, Barak! Lead your captives away, son of Abinoam!

¹³ "Down from Tabor marched the remnant against the mighty. The people of the LORD marched down against mighty warriors.

¹⁴ They came down from Ephraim—
—a land that once belonged to the Amalekites, and Benjamin also followed you. From Makir the commanders marched down; from Zebulun came those who carry the rod of authority.

¹⁵ The princes of Issachar were with Deborah and Barak. They followed Barak, rushing into the valley. But in the tribe of Reuben there was great indecision.

¹⁶ Why did you sit at home among the sheepfolds—to hear the shepherds whistle for their flocks? In the tribe of Reuben there was great indecision.

¹⁷ Gilead remained east of the Jordan. And Dan, why did he stay home? Asher sat unmoved at the seashore, remaining in his harbors.

¹⁸ But Zebulun risked his life, as did Naphtali, on the battlefield.

¹⁹ "The kings of Canaan fought at Taanach near Megiddo's springs, but they carried off no treasures of battle.

²⁰ The stars fought from heaven. The stars in their orbits fought against Sisera.

²¹ The Kishon River swept them away—that ancient river, the Kishon. March on, my soul, with courage!

²² Then the horses' hooves hammered the ground, the galloping, galloping of Sisera's mighty steeds.

²³ 'Let the people of Meroz be cursed,' said the angel of the LORD. 'Let them be utterly cursed because they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty warriors.'

²⁴ "Most blessed is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. May she be blessed above all women who live in tents.

²⁵ Sisera asked for water, and Jael gave him milk. In a bowl fit for kings, she brought him yogurt.

²⁶ Then with her left hand she reached for a tent peg, and with her right hand she reached for the workman's hammer. She hit Sisera, crushing his head. She pounded the tent peg through his head, piercing his temples.

²⁷ He sank, he fell, he lay dead at her feet.

²⁸ "From the window Sisera's mother looked out. Through the window she watched for his return, saying, 'Why is

his chariot so long in coming? Why don't we hear the sound of chariot wheels?'

²⁹ A reply comes from her wise women, and she repeats these words to herself:

³⁰ 'They are dividing the captured goods they found—a woman or two for every man. There are gorgeous robes for Sisera, and colorful, beautifully embroidered robes for me.'

³¹ "LORD, may all your enemies die as Sisera did! But may those who love you rise like the sun at full strength!" Then there was peace in the land for forty years.

6 ¹ Again the Israelites did what was evil in the LORD's sight. So the LORD handed them over to the Midianites for seven years.

² The Midianites were so cruel that the Israelites fled to the mountains, where they made hiding places for themselves in caves and dens.

³ Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, marauders from Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east would attack Israel,

⁴ camping in the land and destroying crops as far away as Gaza. They left the Israelites with nothing to eat, taking all the sheep, oxen, and donkeys.

⁵ These enemy hordes, coming with their cattle and tents as thick as locusts, arrived on droves of camels too numerous to count. And they stayed until the land was stripped bare.

⁶ So Israel was reduced to starvation by the Midianites. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

⁷ When they cried out to the LORD because of Midian,

⁸ the LORD sent a prophet to the Israelites. He said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of slavery in Egypt

⁹ and rescued you from the Egyptians and from all who oppressed you. I drove out your enemies and gave you their land.

¹⁰ I told you, 'I am the LORD your God. You must not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you now live.' But you have not listened to me."

¹¹ Then the angel of the LORD came and sat beneath the oak tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash had been threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites.

¹² The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the LORD is with you!"

¹³ "Sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say,

‘The LORD brought us up out of Egypt’?
But now the LORD has abandoned us
and handed us over to the Midianites."

¹⁴ Then the LORD turned to him and
said, "Go with the strength you have and
rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am
sending you!"

¹⁵ "But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can
I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in
the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am
the least in my entire family!"

¹⁶ The LORD said to him, "I will be with
you. And you will destroy the Midianites
as if you were fighting against one man."

¹⁷ Gideon replied, "If you are truly going
to help me, show me a sign to prove that
it is really the LORD speaking to me.

¹⁸ Don't go away until I come back and
bring my offering to you." The LORD
answered, "I will stay here until you
return."

¹⁹ Gideon hurried home. He cooked a young goat, and with half a bushel of flour he baked some bread without yeast. Then, carrying the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, he brought them out and presented them to the angel, who was under the oak tree.

²⁰ The angel of God said to him, "Place the meat and the unleavened bread on this rock, and pour the broth over it." And Gideon did as he was told.

²¹ Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and bread with the staff in his hand, and fire flamed up from the rock and consumed all he had brought. And the angel of the LORD disappeared.

²² When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he cried out, "Sovereign LORD, I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!"

²³ "It is all right," the LORD replied. "Do not be afraid. You will not die."

²⁴ And Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and named it "The LORD Is Peace." The altar remains in Ophrah in the land of the clan of Abiezer to this day.

²⁵ That night the LORD said to Gideon, "Take the second best bull from your father's herd, the one that is seven years old. Pull down your father's altar to Baal, and cut down the Asherah pole standing beside it.

²⁶ Then build an altar to the LORD your God here on this hill, laying the stones carefully. Sacrifice the bull as a burnt offering on the altar, using as fuel the wood of the Asherah pole you cut down."

²⁷ So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD had commanded. But he did it at night because he was afraid of the other members of his father's household and the people of

the town. He knew what would happen if they found out who had done it.

²⁸ Early the next morning, as the people of the town began to stir, someone discovered that the altar of Baal had been knocked down and that the Asherah pole beside it was gone. In their place a new altar had been built, and it had the remains of a sacrifice on it.

²⁹ The people said to each other, "Who did this?" And after asking around and making a careful search, they learned that it was Gideon, the son of Joash.

³⁰ "Bring out your son," they shouted to Joash. "He must die for destroying the altar of Baal and for cutting down the Asherah pole."

³¹ But Joash shouted to the mob, "Why are you defending Baal? Will you argue his case? Whoever pleads his case will be put to death by morning! If Baal truly is a

god, let him defend himself and destroy the one who knocked down his altar!"

³² From then on Gideon was called Jerubbaal, which means "Let Baal defend himself," because he knocked down Baal's altar.

³³ Soon afterward the armies of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east formed an alliance against Israel and crossed the Jordan, camping in the valley of Jezreel.

³⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon. He blew a ram's horn as a call to arms, and the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him.

³⁵ He also sent messengers throughout Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, summoning their warriors, and all of them responded.

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised,

³⁷ prove it to me in this way. I will put some wool on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised."

³⁸ And it happened just that way. When Gideon got up the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water.

³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, "Please don't be angry with me, but let me make one more request. This time let the fleece remain dry while the ground around it is wet with dew."

⁴⁰ So that night God did as Gideon asked. The fleece was dry in the morning, but the ground was covered with dew.

7¹ So Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and his army got up early and went as far as the spring of Harod. The armies of

Midian were camped north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh.

² The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength.

³ Therefore, tell the people, 'Whoever is timid or afraid may leave and go home.'" Twenty-two thousand of them went home, leaving only ten thousand who were willing to fight.

⁴ But the LORD told Gideon, "There are still too many! Bring them down to the spring, and I will sort out who will go with you and who will not."

⁵ When Gideon took his warriors down to the water, the LORD told him, "Divide the men into two groups. In one group put all those who cup water in their hands and lap it up with their tongues like dogs. In the other group put all those

who kneel down and drink with their mouths in the stream."

⁶ Only three hundred of the men drank from their hands. All the others got down on their knees and drank with their mouths in the stream.

⁷ The LORD told Gideon, "With these three hundred men I will rescue you and give you victory over the Midianites. Send all the others home."

⁸ So Gideon collected the provisions and rams' horns of the other warriors and sent them home. But he kept the three hundred men with him. Now the Midianite camp was in the valley just below Gideon.

⁹ During the night, the LORD said, "Get up! Go down into the Midianite camp, for I have given you victory over them!

¹⁰ But if you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah.

¹¹ Listen to what the Midianites are saying, and you will be greatly encouraged. Then you will be eager to attack." So Gideon took Purah and went down to the outposts of the enemy camp.

¹² The armies of Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east had settled in the valley like a swarm of locusts. Their camels were like grains of sand on the seashore—too many to count!

¹³ Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his friend about a dream. The man said, "I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!"

¹⁴ His friend said, "Your dream can mean only one thing—God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over all the armies united with Midian!"

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he thanked God. Then he returned to the Israelite camp and shouted, "Get up! For the LORD has given you victory over the Midianites!"

¹⁶ He divided the three hundred men into three groups and gave each man a ram's horn and a clay jar with a torch in it.

¹⁷ Then he said to them, "Keep your eyes on me. When I come to the edge of the camp, do just as I do.

¹⁸ As soon as my group blows the rams' horns, those of you on the other sides of the camp blow your horns and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!'"

¹⁹ It was just after midnight, after the changing of the guard, when Gideon and the one hundred men with him reached the outer edge of the Midianite camp. Suddenly, they blew the horns and broke their clay jars.

²⁰ Then all three groups blew their horns and broke their jars. They held the blazing torches in their left hands and the horns in their right hands and shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!"

²¹ Each man stood at his position around the camp and watched as all the Midianites rushed around in a panic, shouting as they ran.

²² When the three hundred Israelites blew their horns, the LORD caused the warriors in the camp to fight against each other with their swords. Those who were not killed fled to places as far away as Beth-shittah near Zererah and to the border of Abel-meholah near Tabbath.

²³ Then Gideon sent for the warriors of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh, who joined in the chase after the fleeing army of Midian.

²⁴ Gideon also sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down to attack the Midianites. Cut them off at the shallows of the Jordan River at Beth–barah." And the men of Ephraim did as they were told.

²⁵ They captured Oreb and Zeeb, the two Midianite generals, killing Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. And they continued to chase the Midianites. Afterward the Israelites brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.

8 ¹ Then the people of Ephraim asked Gideon, "Why have you treated us this way? Why didn't you send for us when you first went out to fight the Midianites?" And they argued heatedly with Gideon.

² But Gideon replied, "What have I done compared to you? Aren't the last grapes

of Ephraim's harvest better than the entire crop of my little clan of Abiezer?

³ God gave you victory over Oreb and Zeeb, the generals of the Midianite army. What have I done compared to that?" When the men of Ephraim heard Gideon's answer, they were no longer angry.

⁴ Gideon then crossed the Jordan River with his three hundred men, and though they were exhausted, they continued to chase the enemy.

⁵ When they reached Succoth, Gideon asked the leaders of the town, "Will you please give my warriors some food? They are very tired. I am chasing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

⁶ But the leaders of Succoth replied, "You haven't caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet. Catch them first, and then we will feed your warriors."

⁷ So Gideon said, "After the LORD gives me victory over Zebah and Zalmunna, I will return and tear your flesh with the thorns and briers of the wilderness."

⁸ From there Gideon went up to Peniel and asked for food, but he got the same answer.

⁹ So he said to the people of Peniel, "After I return in victory, I will tear down this tower."

¹⁰ By this time Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with a remnant of 15,000 warriors—all that remained of the allied armies of the east—for 120,000 had already been killed.

¹¹ Gideon circled around by the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah, taking the Midianite army by surprise.

¹² Zebah and Zalmunna, the two Midianite kings, fled, but Gideon chased them down and captured all their warriors.

¹³ After this, Gideon returned by way of Heres Pass.

¹⁴ There he captured a young man from Succoth and demanded that he write down the names of all the seventy–seven rulers and leaders in the town.

¹⁵ Gideon then returned to Succoth and said to the leaders, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna. When we were here before, you taunted me, saying, 'You haven't caught Zebah and Zalmunna yet. Catch them first, and then we will feed your exhausted warriors.'"

¹⁶ Then Gideon took the leaders of the town and taught them a lesson, punishing them with thorns and briars from the wilderness.

¹⁷ He also knocked down the tower of Peniel and killed all the men in the town.

¹⁸ Then Gideon asked Zebah and Zalmunna, "The men you killed at

Tabor—what were they like?" "Like you," they replied. "They all had the look of a king's son."

¹⁹ "They were my brothers!" Gideon exclaimed. "As surely as the LORD lives, I wouldn't kill you if you hadn't killed them."

²⁰ Turning to Jether, his oldest son, he said, "Kill them!" But Jether did not draw his sword, for he was only a boy and was afraid.

²¹ Then Zebah and Zalmunna said to Gideon, "Don't ask a boy to do a man's job! Do it yourself!" So Gideon killed them both and took the royal ornaments from the necks of their camels.

²² Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Be our ruler! You and your son and your grandson will be our rulers, for you have rescued us from Midian."

²³ But Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son. The LORD will rule over you!

²⁴ However, I have one request. Each of you can give me an earring out of the treasures you collected from your fallen enemies." (The enemies, being Ishmaelites, all wore gold earrings.)

²⁵ "Gladly!" they replied. They spread out a cloak, and each one threw in a gold earring he had gathered.

²⁶ The weight of the gold earrings was forty–three pounds, not including the crescents and pendants, the royal clothing of the kings, or the chains around the necks of their camels.

²⁷ Gideon made a sacred ephod from the gold and put it in Ophrah, his hometown. But soon all the Israelites prostituted themselves by worshiping it, and it became a trap for Gideon and his family.

²⁸ That is the story of how Israel subdued Midian, which never recovered. Throughout the rest of Gideon's lifetime—about forty years—the land was at peace.

²⁹ Then Gideon son of Joash returned home.

³⁰ He had seventy sons, for he had many wives.

³¹ He also had a concubine in Shechem, who bore him a son named Abimelech.

³² Gideon died when he was very old, and he was buried in the grave of his father, Joash, at Ophrah in the land of the clan of Abiezer.

³³ As soon as Gideon was dead, the Israelites prostituted themselves by worshiping the images of Baal, making Baal-berith their god.

³⁴ They forgot the LORD their God, who had rescued them from all their enemies surrounding them.

³⁵ Nor did they show any loyalty to the family of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon), despite all the good he had done for Israel.

9 ¹ One day Gideon's son Abimelech went to Shechem to visit his mother's brothers. He said to them and to the rest of his mother's family,

² "Ask the people of Shechem whether they want to be ruled by all seventy of Gideon's sons or by one man. And remember, I am your own flesh and blood!"

³ So Abimelech's uncles spoke to all the people of Shechem on his behalf. And after listening to their proposal, they decided in favor of Abimelech because he was their relative.

⁴ They gave him seventy silver coins from the temple of Baal-berith, which he used to hire some soldiers who agreed to follow him.

⁵ He took the soldiers to his father's home at Ophrah, and there, on one stone, they killed all seventy of his half brothers. But the youngest brother, Jotham, escaped and hid.

⁶ Then the people of Shechem and Beth-millo called a meeting under the oak beside the pillar at Shechem and made Abimelech their king.

⁷ When Jotham heard about this, he climbed to the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted, "Listen to me, people of Shechem! Listen to me if you want God to listen to you!

⁸ Once upon a time the trees decided to elect a king. First they said to the olive tree, 'Be our king!'

⁹ But it refused, saying, 'Should I quit producing the olive oil that blesses both God and people, just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

¹⁰ "Then they said to the fig tree, 'You be our king!'

¹¹ But the fig tree also refused, saying, 'Should I quit producing my sweet fruit just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

¹² "Then they said to the grapevine, 'You be our king!'

¹³ But the grapevine replied, 'Should I quit producing the wine that cheers both God and people, just to wave back and forth over the trees?'

¹⁴ "Then all the trees finally turned to the thornbush and said, 'Come, you be our king!'

¹⁵ And the thornbush replied, 'If you truly want to make me your king, come and take shelter in my shade. If not, let fire come out from me and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

¹⁶ "Now make sure you have acted honorably and in good faith by making

Abimelech your king, and that you have done right by Gideon and all of his descendants. Have you treated my father with the honor he deserves?

¹⁷ For he fought for you and risked his life when he rescued you from the Midianites.

¹⁸ But now you have revolted against my father and his descendants, killing his seventy sons on one stone. And you have chosen his slave woman's son, Abimelech, to be your king just because he is your relative.

¹⁹ If you have acted honorably and in good faith toward Gideon and his descendants, then may you find joy in Abimelech, and may he find joy in you.

²⁰ But if you have not acted in good faith, then may fire come out from Abimelech and devour the people of Shechem and Beth-millo; and may fire

come out from the people of Shechem and Beth–millo and devour Abimelech!"

²¹ Then Jotham escaped and lived in Beer because he was afraid of his brother Abimelech.

²² After Abimelech had ruled over Israel for three years,

²³ God stirred up trouble between Abimelech and the people of Shechem, and they revolted.

²⁴ In the events that followed, God punished Abimelech and the men of Shechem for murdering Gideon's seventy sons.

²⁵ The people of Shechem set an ambush for Abimelech on the hilltops and robbed everyone who passed that way. But someone warned Abimelech about their plot.

²⁶ At that time Gaal son of Ebed moved to Shechem with his brothers and

gained the confidence of the people of Shechem.

²⁷ During the annual harvest festival at Shechem, held in the temple of the local god, the wine flowed freely, and everyone began cursing Abimelech.

²⁸ "Who is Abimelech?" Gaal shouted. "He's not a true descendant of Shechem! Why should we be Abimelech's servants? He's merely the son of Gideon, and Zebul is his administrator. Serve the men of Hamor, who are Shechem's true descendants. Why should we serve Abimelech?"

²⁹ If I were in charge, I would get rid of Abimelech. I would say to him, 'Get some more soldiers, and come out and fight!'"

³⁰ But when Zebul, the leader of the city, heard what Gaal was saying, he was furious.

³¹ He sent messengers to Abimelech in Arumah, telling him, "Gaal son of Ebed and his brothers have come to live in Shechem, and now they are inciting the city to rebel against you.

³² Come by night with an army and hide out in the fields.

³³ In the morning, as soon as it is daylight, storm the city. When Gaal and those who are with him come out against you, you can do with them as you wish."

³⁴ So Abimelech and his men went by night and split into four groups, stationing themselves around Shechem.

³⁵ Gaal was standing at the city gates when Abimelech and his army came out of hiding.

³⁶ When Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, "Look, there are people coming down from the hilltops!" Zebul replied,

"It's just the shadows of the hills that look like men."

³⁷ But again Gaal said, "No, people are coming down from the hills. And another group is coming down the road past the Diviners' Oak."

³⁸ Then Zebul turned on him triumphantly. "Now where is that big mouth of yours?" he demanded. "Wasn't it you that said, 'Who is Abimelech, and why should we be his servants?' The men you mocked are right outside the city! Go out and fight them!"

³⁹ Gaal then led the men of Shechem into battle against Abimelech,

⁴⁰ but he was defeated and ran away. Many of Shechem's warriors were killed, and the ground was covered with dead bodies all the way to the city gate.

⁴¹ Abimelech stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his brothers out of Shechem.

⁴² The next day the people of Shechem went out into the fields to battle. When Abimelech heard about it,

⁴³ he divided his men into three groups and set an ambush in the fields. When Abimelech saw the people coming out of the city, he and his men jumped up from their hiding places and attacked them.

⁴⁴ Abimelech and his group stormed the city gate to keep the men of Shechem from getting back in, while Abimelech's other two groups cut them down in the fields.

⁴⁵ The battle went on all day before Abimelech finally captured the city. He killed the people, leveled the city, and scattered salt all over the ground.

⁴⁶ When the people who lived in the tower of Shechem heard what had happened, they took refuge within the walls of the temple of Baal-berith.

⁴⁷ Someone reported to Abimelech that the people were gathered together in the temple,

⁴⁸ so he led his forces to Mount Zalmon. He took an ax and chopped some branches from a tree, and he put them on his shoulder. "Quick, do as I have done!" he told his men.

⁴⁹ So each of them cut down some branches, following Abimelech's example. They piled the branches against the walls of the temple and set them on fire. So all the people who had lived in the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech attacked the city of Thebez and captured it.

⁵¹ But there was a strong tower inside the city, and the entire population fled to it. They barricaded themselves in and climbed up to the roof of the tower.

⁵² Abimelech followed them to attack the tower. But as he prepared to set fire to the entrance,

⁵³ a woman on the roof threw down a millstone that landed on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.

⁵⁴ He said to his young armor bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me! Don't let it be said that a woman killed Abimelech!" So the young man stabbed him with his sword, and he died.

⁵⁵ When Abimelech's men saw that he was dead, they disbanded and returned to their homes.

⁵⁶ Thus, God punished Abimelech for the evil he had done against his father by murdering his seventy brothers.

⁵⁷ God also punished the men of Shechem for all their evil. So the curse of Jotham son of Gideon came true.

10 ¹ After Abimelech's death, Tola, the son of Puah and descendant

of Dodo, came to rescue Israel. He was from the tribe of Issachar but lived in the town of Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim.

² He was Israel's judge for twenty-three years. When he died, he was buried in Shamir.

³ After Tola died, a man from Gilead named Jair judged Israel for twenty-two years.

⁴ His thirty sons rode around on thirty donkeys, and they owned thirty towns in the land of Gilead, which are still called the Towns of Jair.

⁵ When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon.

⁶ Again the Israelites did evil in the LORD's sight. They worshiped images of Baal and Ashtoreth, and the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia. Not only this, but they

abandoned the LORD and no longer served him at all.

⁷ So the LORD burned with anger against Israel, and he handed them over to the Philistines and the Ammonites,

⁸ who began to oppress them that year. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites east of the Jordan River in the land of the Amorites (that is, in Gilead).

⁹ The Ammonites also crossed to the west side of the Jordan and attacked Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. The Israelites were in great distress.

¹⁰ Finally, they cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned against you because we have abandoned you as our God and have served the images of Baal."

¹¹ The LORD replied, "Did I not rescue you from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines,

¹² the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites? When they oppressed you, you cried out to me, and I rescued you.

¹³ Yet you have abandoned me and served other gods. So I will not rescue you anymore.

¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen! Let them rescue you in your hour of distress!"

¹⁵ But the Israelites pleaded with the LORD and said, "We have sinned. Punish us as you see fit, only rescue us today from our enemies."

¹⁶ Then the Israelites put aside their foreign gods and served the LORD. And he was grieved by their misery.

¹⁷ At that time the armies of Ammon had gathered for war and were camped in Gilead, preparing to attack Israel's army at Mizpah.

¹⁸ The leaders of Gilead said to each other, "Whoever attacks the Ammonites first will become ruler over all the people of Gilead."

11 ¹ Now Jephthah of Gilead was a great warrior. He was the son of Gilead, but his mother was a prostitute.

² Gilead's wife also had several sons, and when these half brothers grew up, they chased Jephthah off the land. "You will not get any of our father's inheritance," they said, "for you are the son of a prostitute."

³ So Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Soon he had a large band of rebels following him.

⁴ At about this time, the Ammonites began their war against Israel.

⁵ When the Ammonites attacked, the leaders of Gilead sent for Jephthah in the land of Tob. They said,

⁶ "Come and be our commander! Help us fight the Ammonites!"

⁷ But Jephthah said to them, "Aren't you the ones who hated me and drove me from my father's house? Why do you come to me now when you're in trouble?"

⁸ "Because we need you," they replied. "If you will lead us in battle against the Ammonites, we will make you ruler over all the people of Gilead."

⁹ Jephthah said, "If I come with you and if the LORD gives me victory over the Ammonites, will you really make me ruler over all the people?"

¹⁰ "The LORD is our witness," the leaders replied. "We promise to do whatever you say."

¹¹ So Jephthah went with the leaders of Gilead, and he became their ruler and commander of the army. At Mizpah, in the presence of the LORD, Jephthah

repeated what he had said to the leaders.

¹² Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of Ammon, demanding to know why Israel was being attacked.

¹³ The king of Ammon answered Jephthah's messengers, "When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they stole my land from the Arnon River to the Jabbok River and all the way to the Jordan. Now then, give back the land peaceably."

¹⁴ Jephthah sent this message back to the Ammonite king:

¹⁵ "This is what Jephthah says: Israel did not steal any land from Moab or Ammon.

¹⁶ When the people of Israel arrived at Kadesh on their journey from Egypt after crossing the Red Sea,

¹⁷ they sent messengers to the king of Edom asking for permission to pass

through his land. But their request was denied. Then they asked the king of Moab for similar permission, but he wouldn't let them pass through either. So the people of Israel stayed in Kadesh.

¹⁸ "Finally, they went around Edom and Moab through the wilderness. They traveled along Moab's eastern border and camped on the other side of the Arnon River. But they never once crossed the Arnon River into Moab.

¹⁹ "Then Israel sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled from Heshbon, asking for permission to cross through his land to get to their destination.

²⁰ But King Sihon didn't trust Israel to pass through his land. Instead, he mobilized his army at Jahaz and attacked them.

²¹ But the LORD, the God of Israel, gave his people victory over King Sihon. So

Israel took control of all the land of the Amorites, who lived in that region,
²² from the Arnon River to the Jabbok River, and from the wilderness to the Jordan.

²³ "So you see, it was the LORD, the God of Israel, who took away the land from the Amorites and gave it to Israel. Why, then, should we give it to you?

²⁴ You keep whatever your god Chemosh gives you, and we will keep whatever the LORD our God gives us.

²⁵ Are you any better than Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he try to make a case against Israel for disputed land? Did he go to war? No, of course not.

²⁶ But now after three hundred years you make an issue of this! Israel has been living here all this time, spread across the land from Heshbon to Aroer and in all the towns along the Arnon

River. Why have you made no effort to recover it before now?

²⁷ I have not sinned against you. Rather, you have wronged me by attacking me. Let the LORD, who is judge, decide today which of us is right—Israel or Ammon."

²⁸ But the king of Ammon paid no attention to Jephthah's message.

²⁹ At that time the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he went throughout the land of Gilead and Manasseh, including Mizpah in Gilead, and led an army against the Ammonites.

³⁰ And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD. He said, "If you give me victory over the Ammonites,

³¹ I will give to the LORD the first thing coming out of my house to greet me when I return in triumph. I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

³² So Jephthah led his army against the Ammonites, and the LORD gave him victory.

³³ He thoroughly defeated the Ammonites from Aroer to an area near Minnith—twenty towns—and as far away as Abel-keramim. Thus Israel subdued the Ammonites.

³⁴ When Jephthah returned home to Mizpah, his daughter—his only child—ran out to meet him, playing on a tambourine and dancing for joy.

³⁵ When he saw her, he tore his clothes in anguish. "My daughter!" he cried out. "My heart is breaking! What a tragedy that you came out to greet me. For I have made a vow to the LORD and cannot take it back."

³⁶ And she said, "Father, you have made a promise to the LORD. You must do to me what you have promised, for the

LORD has given you a great victory over your enemies, the Ammonites.

³⁷ But first let me go up and roam in the hills and weep with my friends for two months, because I will die a virgin."

³⁸ "You may go," Jephthah said. And he let her go away for two months. She and her friends went into the hills and wept because she would never have children.

³⁹ When she returned home, her father kept his vow, and she died a virgin. So it has become a custom in Israel

⁴⁰ for young Israelite women to go away for four days each year to lament the fate of Jephthah's daughter.

12 ¹ Then the tribe of Ephraim mobilized its army and crossed over to Zaphon. They sent this message to Jephthah: "Why didn't you call for us to help you fight against Ammon? We are going to burn down your house with you in it!"

² "I summoned you at the beginning of the dispute, but you refused to come!" Jephthah said. "You failed to help us in our struggle against Ammon.

³ So I risked my life and went to battle without you, and the LORD gave me victory over the Ammonites. So why have you come to fight me?"

⁴ The leaders of Ephraim responded, "The men of Gilead are nothing more than rejects from Ephraim and Manasseh." So Jephthah called out his army and attacked the men of Ephraim and defeated them.

⁵ Jephthah captured the shallows of the Jordan, and whenever a fugitive from Ephraim tried to go back across, the men of Gilead would challenge him. "Are you a member of the tribe of Ephraim?" they would ask. If the man said, "No, I'm not,"

⁶ they would tell him to say "Shibboleth." If he was from Ephraim, he

would say "Sibboleth," because people from Ephraim cannot pronounce the word correctly. Then they would take him and kill him at the shallows of the Jordan River. So forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time.

⁷ Jephthah was Israel's judge for six years. When he died, he was buried in one of the towns of Gilead.

⁸ After Jephthah, Ibzan became Israel's judge. He lived in Bethlehem,

⁹ and he had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He married his daughters to men outside his clan and brought in thirty young women from outside his clan to marry his sons. Ibzan judged Israel for seven years.

¹⁰ When he died, he was buried at Bethlehem.

¹¹ After him, Elon from Zebulun became Israel's judge. He judged Israel for ten years.

¹² When he died, he was buried at Aijalon in Zebulun.

¹³ After Elon died, Abdon son of Hillel, from Pirathon, became Israel's judge.

¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. He was Israel's judge for eight years.

¹⁵ Then he died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

13 ¹ Again the Israelites did what was evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD handed them over to the Philistines, who kept them in subjection for forty years.

² In those days, a man named Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was unable to become pregnant, and they had no children.

³ The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though

you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son.

⁴ You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink or eat any forbidden food.

⁵ You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will rescue Israel from the Philistines."

⁶ The woman ran and told her husband, "A man of God appeared to me! He was like one of God's angels, terrifying to look at. I didn't ask where he was from, and he didn't tell me his name.

⁷ But he told me, 'You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink or eat any forbidden food. For your son will be dedicated to

God as a Nazirite from the moment of his birth until the day of his death.'"

⁸ Then Manoah prayed to the LORD. He said, "Lord, please let the man of God come back to us again and give us more instructions about this son who is to be born."

⁹ God answered his prayer, and the angel of God appeared once again to his wife as she was sitting in the field. But her husband, Manoah, was not with her.

¹⁰ So she quickly ran and told her husband, "The man who appeared to me the other day is here again!"

¹¹ Manoah ran back with his wife and asked, "Are you the man who talked to my wife the other day?" "Yes," he replied, "I am."

¹² So Manoah asked him, "When your words come true, what kind of rules should govern the boy's life and work?"

¹³ The angel of the LORD replied, "Be sure your wife follows the instructions I gave her.

¹⁴ She must not eat grapes or raisins, drink wine or any other alcoholic drink, or eat any forbidden food."

¹⁵ Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, "Please stay here until we can prepare a young goat for you to eat."

¹⁶ "I will stay," the angel of the LORD replied, "but I will not eat anything. However, you may prepare a burnt offering as a sacrifice to the LORD." (Manoah didn't realize it was the angel of the LORD.)

¹⁷ Then Manoah asked the angel of the LORD, "What is your name? For when all this comes true, we want to honor you."

¹⁸ "Why do you ask my name?" the angel of the LORD replied. "You wouldn't understand if I told you."

¹⁹ Then Manoah took a young goat and a grain offering and offered it on a rock as a sacrifice to the LORD. And as Manoah and his wife watched, the LORD did an amazing thing.

²⁰ As the flames from the altar shot up toward the sky, the angel of the LORD ascended in the fire. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell with their faces to the ground.

²¹ The angel did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Manoah finally realized it was the angel of the LORD,

²² and he said to his wife, "We will die, for we have seen God!"

²³ But his wife said, "If the LORD were going to kill us, he wouldn't have accepted our burnt offering and grain offering. He wouldn't have appeared to us and told us this wonderful thing and done these miracles."

²⁴ When her son was born, they named him Samson. And the LORD blessed him as he grew up.

²⁵ And in Mahaneh–dan, which is located between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, the Spirit of the LORD began to take hold of him.

14 ¹ One day when Samson was in Timnah, he noticed a certain Philistine woman.

² When he returned home, he told his father and mother, "I want to marry a young Philistine woman I saw in Timnah."

³ His father and mother objected strenuously, "Isn't there one woman in our tribe or among all the Israelites you could marry? Why must you go to the pagan Philistines to find a wife?" But Samson told his father, "Get her for me. She is the one I want."

⁴ His father and mother didn't realize the LORD was at work in this, creating an opportunity to disrupt the Philistines, who ruled over Israel at that time.

⁵ As Samson and his parents were going down to Timnah, a young lion attacked Samson near the vineyards of Timnah.

⁶ At that moment the Spirit of the LORD powerfully took control of him, and he ripped the lion's jaws apart with his bare hands. He did it as easily as if it were a young goat. But he didn't tell his father or mother about it.

⁷ When Samson arrived in Timnah, he talked with the woman and was very pleased with her.

⁸ Later, when he returned to Timnah for the wedding, he turned off the path to look at the carcass of the lion. And he found that a swarm of bees had made some honey in the carcass.

⁹ He scooped some of the honey into his hands and ate it along the way. He also gave some to his father and mother, and they ate it. But he didn't tell them he had taken the honey from the carcass of the lion.

¹⁰ As his father was making final arrangements for the marriage, Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom of the day.

¹¹ Thirty young men from the town were invited to be his companions.

¹² Samson said to them, "Let me tell you a riddle. If you solve my riddle during these seven days of the celebration, I will give you thirty plain linen robes and thirty fancy robes.

¹³ But if you can't solve it, then you must give me thirty linen robes and thirty fancy robes." "All right," they agreed, "let's hear your riddle."

¹⁴ So he said: "From the one who eats came something to eat; out of the strong came something sweet." Three days later they were still trying to figure it out.

¹⁵ On the fourth day they said to Samson's wife, "Get the answer to the riddle from your husband, or we will burn down your father's house with you in it. Did you invite us to this party just to make us poor?"

¹⁶ So Samson's wife came to him in tears and said, "You don't love me; you hate me! You have given my people a riddle, but you haven't told me the answer." "I haven't even given the answer to my father or mother," he replied. "Why should I tell you?"

¹⁷ So she cried whenever she was with him and kept it up for the rest of the celebration. At last, on the seventh day, he told her the answer because of her

persistent nagging. Then she gave the answer to the young men.

¹⁸ So before sunset of the seventh day, the men of the town came to Samson with their answer: "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" Samson replied, "If you hadn't plowed with my heifer, you wouldn't have found the answer to my riddle!"

¹⁹ Then the Spirit of the LORD powerfully took control of him. He went down to the town of Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their belongings, and gave their clothing to the men who had answered his riddle. But Samson was furious about what had happened, and he went back home to live with his father and mother.

²⁰ So his wife was given in marriage to the man who had been Samson's best man at the wedding.

15 ¹ Later on, during the wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat as a present to his wife. He intended to sleep with her, but her father wouldn't let him in.

² "I really thought you hated her," her father explained, "so I gave her in marriage to your best man. But look, her sister is more beautiful than she is. Marry her instead."

³ Samson said, "This time I cannot be blamed for everything I am going to do to you Philistines."

⁴ Then he went out and caught three hundred foxes. He tied their tails together in pairs, and he fastened a torch to each pair of tails.

⁵ Then he lit the torches and let the foxes run through the fields of the Philistines. He burned all their grain to the ground, including the grain still in piles and all that had been bundled. He

also destroyed their grapevines and olive trees.

⁶ "Who did this?" the Philistines demanded. "Samson," was the reply, "because his father-in-law from Timnah gave Samson's wife to be married to his best man." So the Philistines went and got the woman and her father and burned them to death.

⁷ "Because you did this," Samson vowed, "I will take my revenge on you, and I won't stop until I'm satisfied!"

⁸ So he attacked the Philistines with great fury and killed many of them. Then he went to live in a cave in the rock of Etam.

⁹ The Philistines retaliated by setting up camp in Judah and raiding the town of Lehi.

¹⁰ The men of Judah asked the Philistines, "Why have you attacked us?" The Philistines replied, "We've come to

capture Samson. We have come to pay him back for what he did to us."

¹¹ So three thousand men of Judah went down to get Samson at the cave in the rock of Etam. They said to Samson, "Don't you realize the Philistines rule over us? What are you doing to us?" But Samson replied, "I only paid them back for what they did to me."

¹² But the men of Judah told him, "We have come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines." "All right," Samson said. "But promise that you won't kill me yourselves."

¹³ "We will tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines," they replied. "We won't kill you." So they tied him up with two new ropes and led him away from the rock.

¹⁴ As Samson arrived at Lehi, the Philistines came shouting in triumph. But the Spirit of the LORD powerfully

took control of Samson, and he snapped the ropes on his arms as if they were burnt strands of flax, and they fell from his wrists.

¹⁵ Then he picked up a donkey's jawbone that was lying on the ground and killed a thousand Philistines with it.

¹⁶ And Samson said, "With the jawbone of a donkey, I've made heaps on heaps! With the jawbone of a donkey, I've killed a thousand men!"

¹⁷ When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was named Jawbone Hill.

¹⁸ Now Samson was very thirsty, and he cried out to the LORD, "You have accomplished this great victory by the strength of your servant. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of these pagan people?"

¹⁹ So God caused water to gush out of a hollow in the ground at Lehi, and

Samson was revived as he drank. Then he named that place "The Spring of the One Who Cried Out," and it is still in Lehi to this day.

²⁰ Samson was Israel's judge for twenty years, while the Philistines ruled the land.

16 ¹ One day Samson went to the Philistine city of Gaza and spent the night with a prostitute.

² Word soon spread that Samson was there, so the men of Gaza gathered together and waited all night at the city gates. They kept quiet during the night, saying to themselves, "When the light of morning comes, we will kill him."

³ But Samson stayed in bed only until midnight. Then he got up, took hold of the city gates with its two posts, and lifted them, bar and all, right out of the ground. He put them on his shoulders

and carried them all the way to the top of the hill across from Hebron.

⁴ Later Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek.

⁵ The leaders of the Philistines went to her and said, "Find out from Samson what makes him so strong and how he can be overpowered and tied up securely. Then each of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."

⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me what makes you so strong and what it would take to tie you up securely."

⁷ Samson replied, "If I am tied up with seven new bowstrings that have not yet been dried, I will be as weak as anyone else."

⁸ So the Philistine leaders brought Delilah seven new bowstrings, and she tied Samson up with them.

⁹ She had hidden some men in one of the rooms of her house, and she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the bowstrings as if they were string that had been burned in a fire. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

¹⁰ Afterward Delilah said to him, "You made fun of me and told me a lie! Now please tell me how you can be tied up securely."

¹¹ Samson replied, "If I am tied up with brand-new ropes that have never been used, I will be as weak as anyone else."

¹² So Delilah took new ropes and tied him up with them. The men were hiding in the room as before, and again Delilah cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson snapped the ropes from his arms as if they were thread.

¹³ Then Delilah said, "You have been making fun of me and telling me lies! Won't you please tell me how you can be tied up securely?" Samson replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair into the fabric on your loom and tighten it with the loom shuttle, I will be as weak as anyone else." So while he slept, Delilah wove the seven braids of his hair into the fabric

¹⁴ and tightened it with the loom shuttle. Again she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!" But Samson woke up, pulled back the loom shuttle, and yanked his hair away from the loom and the fabric.

¹⁵ Then Delilah pouted, "How can you say you love me when you don't confide in me? You've made fun of me three times now, and you still haven't told me what makes you so strong!"

¹⁶ So day after day she nagged him until he couldn't stand it any longer.

¹⁷ Finally, Samson told her his secret. "My hair has never been cut," he confessed, "for I was dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as anyone else."

¹⁸ Delilah realized he had finally told her the truth, so she sent for the Philistine leaders. "Come back one more time," she said, "for he has told me everything." So the Philistine leaders returned and brought the money with them.

¹⁹ Delilah lulled Samson to sleep with his head in her lap, and she called in a man to shave off his hair, making his capture certain. And his strength left him.

²⁰ Then she cried out, "Samson! The Philistines have come to capture you!"

When he woke up, he thought, "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the LORD had left him.

²¹ So the Philistines captured him and gouged out his eyes. They took him to Gaza, where he was bound with bronze chains and made to grind grain in the prison.

²² But before long his hair began to grow back.

²³ The Philistine leaders held a great festival, offering sacrifices and praising their god, Dagon. They said, "Our god has given us victory over our enemy Samson!"

²⁴ When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy to us! The one who killed so many of us is now in our power!"

²⁵ Half drunk by now, the people demanded, "Bring out Samson so he can

perform for us!" So he was brought from the prison and made to stand at the center of the temple, between the two pillars supporting the roof.

²⁶ Samson said to the servant who was leading him by the hand, "Place my hands against the two pillars. I want to rest against them."

²⁷ The temple was completely filled with people. All the Philistine leaders were there, and there were about three thousand on the roof who were watching Samson and making fun of him.

²⁸ Then Samson prayed to the LORD, "Sovereign LORD, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me one more time so that I may pay back the Philistines for the loss of my eyes."

²⁹ Then Samson put his hands on the center pillars of the temple and pushed against them with all his might.

³⁰ "Let me die with the Philistines," he prayed. And the temple crashed down on the Philistine leaders and all the people. So he killed more people when he died than he had during his entire lifetime.

³¹ Later his brothers and other relatives went down to get his body. They took him back home and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, where his father, Manoah, was buried. Samson had been Israel's judge for twenty years.

17 ¹ A man named Micah lived in the hill country of Ephraim.

² One day he said to his mother, "I heard you curse the thief who stole eleven hundred pieces of silver from you. Well, here they are. I was the one who took them." "The LORD bless you for admitting it," his mother replied.

³ He returned the money to her, and she said, "I now dedicate these silver

coins to the LORD. In honor of my son, I will have an image carved and an idol cast."

⁴ So his mother took two hundred of the silver coins to a silversmith, who made them into an image and an idol. And these were placed in Micah's house.

⁵ Micah set up a shrine, and he made a sacred ephod and some household idols. Then he installed one of his sons as the priest.

⁶ In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

⁷ One day a young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah

⁸ arrived in that area of Ephraim, looking for a good place to live. He happened to stop at Micah's house as he was traveling through.

⁹ "Where are you from?" Micah asked him. And he replied, "I am a Levite from

Bethlehem in Judah, and I am looking for a place to live."

¹⁰ "Stay here with me," Micah said, "and you can be a father and priest to me. I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, plus a change of clothes and your food."

¹¹ The Levite agreed to this and became like one of Micah's sons.

¹² So Micah ordained the Levite as his personal priest, and he lived in Micah's house.

¹³ "I know the LORD will bless me now," Micah said, "because I have a Levite serving as my priest."

18 ¹ Now in those days Israel had no king. And the tribe of Dan was trying to find a place to settle, for they had not yet driven out the people who lived in the land assigned to them.

² So the men of Dan chose five warriors from among their clans, who lived in the

towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, to scout out a land for them to settle in. When these warriors arrived in the hill country of Ephraim, they came to Micah's home and spent the night there.

³ Noticing the young Levite's accent, they took him aside and asked him, "Who brought you here, and what are you doing? Why are you here?"

⁴ He told them about his agreement with Micah and that he was Micah's personal priest.

⁵ Then they said, "Ask God whether or not our journey will be successful."

⁶ "Go in peace," the priest replied. "For the LORD will go ahead of you on your journey."

⁷ So the five men went on to the town of Laish, where they noticed the people living carefree lives, like the Sidonians; they were peaceful and secure. The people were also wealthy because their

land was very fertile. And they lived a great distance from Sidon and had no allies nearby.

⁸ When the men returned to Zorah and Eshtaol, their relatives asked them, "What did you find?"

⁹ The men replied, "Let's attack! We have seen the land, and it is very good. You should not hesitate to go and take possession of it.

¹⁰ When you get there, you will find the people living carefree lives. God has given us a spacious and fertile land, lacking in nothing!"

¹¹ So six hundred warriors from the tribe of Dan set out from Zorah and Eshtaol.

¹² They camped at a place west of Kiriath-jearim in Judah, which is called Mahaneh-dan to this day.

¹³ Then they went up into the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

¹⁴ The five men who had scouted out the land around Laish said to the others, "There is a shrine here with a sacred ephod, some household idols, a carved image, and a cast idol. It's obvious what we ought to do."

¹⁵ So the five men went over to Micah's house, where the young Levite lived, and greeted him kindly.

¹⁶ As the six hundred warriors from the tribe of Dan stood just outside the gate,

¹⁷ the five spies entered the shrine and took the carved image, the sacred ephod, the household idols, and the cast idol.

¹⁸ When the priest saw the men carrying all the sacred objects out of Micah's shrine, he said, "What are you doing?"

¹⁹ "Be quiet and come with us," they said. "Be a father and priest to all of us. Isn't it better to be a priest for an entire tribe of Israel than just for the household of one man?"

²⁰ The young priest was quite happy to go with them, so he took along the sacred ephod, the household idols, and the carved image.

²¹ They started on their way again, placing their children, livestock, and possessions in front of them.

²² When the people from the tribe of Dan were quite a distance from Micah's home, Micah and some of his neighbors came chasing after them.

²³ They were shouting as they caught up with them. The men of Dan turned around and said, "What do you want? Why have you called these men together and chased after us like this?"

²⁴ "What do you mean, What do I want?" Micah replied. "You've taken away all my gods and my priest, and I have nothing left!"

²⁵ The men of Dan said, "Watch what you say! Some of us are short-tempered, and they might get angry and kill you and your family."

²⁶ So the men of Dan went on their way. When Micah saw that there were too many of them for him to attack, he turned around and went home.

²⁷ Then, with Micah's idols and his priest, the men of Dan came to the town of Laish, whose people were peaceful and secure. They attacked and killed all the people and burned the town to the ground.

²⁸ There was no one to rescue the residents of the town, for they lived a great distance from Sidon and had no allies nearby. This happened in the valley

near Beth–rehab. Then the people of the tribe of Dan rebuilt the town and lived there.

²⁹ They renamed the town Dan after their ancestor, Israel’s son, but it had originally been called Laish.

³⁰ Then they set up the carved image, and they appointed Jonathan son of Gershom, a descendant of Moses, as their priest. This family continued as priests for the tribe of Dan until the Exile.

³¹ So Micah’s carved image was worshiped by the tribe of Dan as long as the Tabernacle of God remained at Shiloh.

19 ¹ Now in those days Israel had no king. There was a man from the tribe of Levi living in a remote area of the hill country of Ephraim. One day he brought home a woman from Bethlehem in Judah to be his concubine.

² But she was unfaithful to him and returned to her father's home in Bethlehem. After about four months, ³ her husband took a servant and an extra donkey to Bethlehem to persuade her to come back. When he arrived at her father's house, she took him inside, and her father welcomed him.

⁴ Her father urged him to stay awhile, so he stayed three days, eating, drinking, and sleeping there.

⁵ On the fourth day the man was up early, ready to leave, but the woman's father said, "Have something to eat before you go."

⁶ So the two of them sat down together and had something to eat and drink. Then the woman's father said, "Please stay the night and enjoy yourself."

⁷ The man got up to leave, but his father-in-law kept urging him to stay, so he finally gave in and stayed the night.

⁸ On the morning of the fifth day he was up early again, ready to leave, and again the woman's father said, "Have something to eat; then you can leave some time this afternoon." So they had another day of feasting.

⁹ That afternoon, as he and his concubine and servant were preparing to leave, his father-in-law said, "Look, it's getting late. Stay the night and enjoy yourself. Tomorrow you can get up early and be on your way."

¹⁰ But this time the man was determined to leave. So he took his two saddled donkeys and his concubine and headed in the direction of Jebus (that is, Jerusalem).

¹¹ It was late in the day when they reached Jebus, and the man's servant said to him, "It's getting too late to travel; let's stay in this Jebusite city tonight."

¹² "No," his master said, "we can't stay in this foreign city where there are no Israelites. We will go on to Gibeah.

¹³ We will find a place to spend the night in either Gibeah or Ramah."

¹⁴ So they went on. The sun was setting as they came to Gibeah, a town in the land of Benjamin,

¹⁵ so they stopped there to spend the night. They rested in the town square, but no one took them in for the night.

¹⁶ That evening an old man came home from his work in the fields. He was from the hill country of Ephraim, but he was living in Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin.

¹⁷ When he saw the travelers sitting in the town square, he asked them where they were from and where they were going.

¹⁸ "We have been in Bethlehem in Judah," the man replied. "We are on our

way home to a remote area in the hill country of Ephraim, and we're going to the Tabernacle of the LORD. But no one has taken us in for the night,

¹⁹ even though we have everything we need. We have straw and fodder for our donkeys and plenty of bread and wine for ourselves."

²⁰ "You are welcome to stay with me," the old man said. "I will give you anything you might need. But whatever you do, don't spend the night in the square."

²¹ So he took them home with him and fed their donkeys. After they washed their feet, they had supper together.

²² While they were enjoying themselves, some of the wicked men in the town surrounded the house. They began beating at the door and shouting to the old man, "Bring out the

man who is staying with you so we can have sex with him."

²³ The old man stepped outside to talk to them. "No, my brothers, don't do such an evil thing. For this man is my guest, and such a thing would be shameful.

²⁴ Here, take my virgin daughter and this man's concubine. I will bring them out to you, and you can do whatever you like to them. But don't do such a shameful thing to this man."

²⁵ But they wouldn't listen to him. Then the Levite took his concubine and pushed her out the door. The men of the town abused her all night, taking turns raping her until morning. Finally, at dawn, they let her go.

²⁶ At daybreak the woman returned to the house where her husband was staying. She collapsed at the door of the house and lay there until it was light.

²⁷ When her husband opened the door to leave, he found her there. She was lying face down, with her hands on the threshold.

²⁸ He said, "Get up! Let's go!" But there was no answer. So he put her body on his donkey and took her home.

²⁹ When he got home, he took a knife and cut his concubine's body into twelve pieces. Then he sent one piece to each tribe of Israel.

³⁰ Everyone who saw it said, "Such a horrible crime has not been committed since Israel left Egypt. Shouldn't we speak up and do something about this?"

20 ¹ Then all the Israelites, from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead, came together in one large assembly and stood in the presence of the LORD at Mizpah.

² The leaders of all the people and all the tribes of Israel—400,000 warriors

armed with swords—took their positions in the assembly of the people of God.

³ (Word soon reached the land of Benjamin that the other tribes had gone up to Mizpah.) The Israelites then asked how this terrible crime had happened.

⁴ The Levite, the husband of the woman who had been murdered, said, "My concubine and I came to Gibeah, a town in the land of Benjamin, to spend the night.

⁵ That night some of the leaders of Gibeah surrounded the house, planning to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she was dead.

⁶ So I cut her body into twelve pieces and sent the pieces throughout the land of Israel, for these men have committed this terrible and shameful crime.

⁷ Now then, the entire community of Israel must decide what should be done about this!"

⁸ And all the people stood up together and replied, "Not one of us will return home.

⁹ Instead, we will draw lots to decide who will attack Gibeah.

¹⁰ One tenth of the men from each tribe will be chosen to supply the warriors with food, and the rest of us will take revenge on Gibeah for this shameful thing they have done in Israel."

¹¹ So all the Israelites were united, and they gathered together to attack the town.

¹² The Israelites sent messengers to the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What a terrible thing has been done among you!

¹³ Give up these evil men from Gibeah so we can execute them and purge Israel of this evil." But the people of Benjamin would not listen.

¹⁴ Instead, they came from their towns and gathered at Gibeah to fight the Israelites.

¹⁵ Twenty–six thousand of their warriors armed with swords arrived in Gibeah to join the seven hundred warriors who lived there.

¹⁶ Seven hundred of Benjamin's warriors were left–handed, each of whom could sling a rock and hit a target within a hairsbreadth, without missing.

¹⁷ Israel had 400,000 warriors armed with swords, not counting Benjamin's warriors.

¹⁸ Before the battle the Israelites went to Bethel and asked God, "Which tribe should lead the attack against the people of Benjamin?" The LORD answered, "Judah is to go first."

¹⁹ So the Israelites left early the next morning and camped near Gibeah.

²⁰ Then they advanced toward Gibeah to attack the men of Benjamin.

²¹ But Benjamin's warriors, who were defending the town, came out and killed twenty-two thousand Israelites in the field that day.

²² But the Israelites took courage and assembled at the same place they had fought the previous day.

²³ (For they had gone up to Bethel and wept in the presence of the LORD until evening. Then they asked the LORD, "Should we fight against our relatives from Benjamin again?" And the LORD said, "Go out and fight against them.")

²⁴ So they went out to fight against the warriors of Benjamin,

²⁵ but the men of Benjamin killed another eighteen thousand Israelites, all of whom were experienced with a sword.

²⁶ Then all the Israelites went up to Bethel and wept in the presence of the LORD and fasted until evening. They also brought burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD.

²⁷ And the Israelites went up seeking direction from the LORD. (In those days the Ark of the Covenant of God was in Bethel,

²⁸ and Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron was the priest.) The Israelites asked the LORD, "Should we fight against our relatives from Benjamin again or should we stop?" The LORD said, "Go! Tomorrow I will give you victory over them."

²⁹ So the Israelites set an ambush all around Gibeah.

³⁰ They went out on the third day and assembled at the same place as before.

³¹ When the warriors of Benjamin came out to attack, they were drawn away

from the town. And as they had done before, they began to kill the Israelites. About thirty Israelites died in the open fields and along the roads leading to Bethel and Gibeah.

³² Then the warriors of Benjamin shouted, "We're defeating them as we did in the first battle!" But the Israelites had agreed in advance to run away so that the men of Benjamin would chase them along the roads and be drawn away from the town.

³³ When the main group of Israelite warriors reached Baal-tamar, they turned and prepared to attack. Then the Israelites hiding in ambush west of Gibeah jumped up from where they were

³⁴ and advanced against Benjamin from behind. The fighting was so heavy that Benjamin didn't realize the impending disaster.

³⁵ So the LORD helped Israel defeat Benjamin, and that day the Israelites killed 25,100 of Benjamin's warriors, all of whom were experienced with a sword.

³⁶ Then the men of Benjamin saw that they were beaten. The Israelites had retreated from Benjamin's warriors in order to give those hiding in ambush more room to maneuver.

³⁷ Then those who were in hiding rushed in from all sides and killed everyone in the town.

³⁸ They sent up a large cloud of smoke from the town,

³⁹ which was the signal for the Israelites to turn and attack Benjamin's warriors. By that time Benjamin's warriors had killed about thirty Israelites, and they shouted, "We're defeating them as we did in the first battle!"

⁴⁰ But when the warriors of Benjamin looked behind them and saw the smoke rising into the sky from every part of the town,

⁴¹ the Israelites turned and attacked. At this point Benjamin's warriors realized disaster was near and became terrified.

⁴² So they ran toward the wilderness, but the Israelites chased after them and killed them.

⁴³ The Israelites surrounded the men of Benjamin and were relentless in chasing them down, finally overtaking them east of Gibeah.

⁴⁴ Eighteen thousand of Benjamin's greatest warriors died in that day's battle.

⁴⁵ The survivors fled into the wilderness toward the rock of Rimmon, but Israel killed five thousand of them along the road. They continued the chase until

they had killed another two thousand near Gidom.

⁴⁶ So the tribe of Benjamin lost twenty–five thousand brave warriors that day,

⁴⁷ leaving only six hundred men who escaped to the rock of Rimmon, where they lived for four months.

⁴⁸ Then the Israelites returned and slaughtered every living thing in all the towns—the people, the cattle—everything. They also burned down every town they came to.

21 ¹ The Israelites had vowed at Mizpah never to give their daughters in marriage to a man from the tribe of Benjamin.

² And the people went to Bethel and sat in the presence of God until evening, raising their voices and weeping bitterly.

³ "O LORD, God of Israel," they cried out, "why has this happened? Now one of our tribes is missing!"

⁴ Early the next morning the people built an altar and presented their burnt offerings and peace offerings on it.

⁵ Then they said, "Was any tribe of Israel not represented when we held our council in the presence of the LORD at Mizpah?" At that time they had taken a solemn oath in the LORD's presence, vowing that anyone who refused to come must die.

⁶ The Israelites felt deep sadness for Benjamin and said, "Today we have lost one of the tribes from our family; it is nearly wiped out.

⁷ How can we find wives for the few who remain, since we have sworn by the LORD not to give them our daughters in marriage?"

⁸ So they asked, "Was anyone absent when we presented ourselves to the LORD at Mizpah?" And they discovered that no one from Jabesh-gilead had attended.

⁹ For after they counted all the people, no one from Jabesh-gilead was present.

¹⁰ So they sent twelve thousand warriors to Jabesh-gilead with orders to kill everyone there, including women and children.

¹¹ "This is what you are to do," they said. "Completely destroy all the males and every woman who is not a virgin."

¹² Among the residents of Jabesh-gilead they found four hundred young virgins who had never slept with a man, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh in the land of Canaan.

¹³ The Israelite assembly sent a peace delegation to the little remnant of

Benjamin who were living at the rock of Rimmon.

¹⁴ Then the men of Benjamin returned to their homes, and the four hundred women of Jabesh-gilead who were spared were given to them as wives. But there were not enough women for all of them.

¹⁵ The people felt sorry for Benjamin because the LORD had left this gap in the tribes of Israel.

¹⁶ So the Israelite leaders asked, "How can we find wives for the few who remain, since all the women of the tribe of Benjamin are dead?"

¹⁷ There must be heirs for the survivors so that an entire tribe of Israel will not be lost forever.

¹⁸ But we cannot give them our own daughters in marriage because we have sworn with a solemn oath that anyone

who does this will fall under God's curse."

¹⁹ Then they thought of the annual festival of the LORD held in Shiloh, between Lebonah and Bethel, along the east side of the road that goes from Bethel to Shechem.

²⁰ They told the men of Benjamin who still needed wives, "Go and hide in the vineyards.

²¹ When the women of Shiloh come out for their dances, rush out from the vineyards, and each of you can take one of them home to be your wife!

²² And when their fathers and brothers come to us in protest, we will tell them, 'Please be understanding. Let them have your daughters, for we didn't find enough wives for them when we destroyed Jabesh-gilead. And you are not guilty of breaking the vow since you

did not give your daughters in marriage to them.'"

²³ So the men of Benjamin did as they were told. They kidnapped the women who took part in the celebration and carried them off to the land of their own inheritance. Then they rebuilt their towns and lived in them.

²⁴ So the assembly of Israel departed by tribes and families, and they returned to their own homes.

²⁵ In those days Israel had no king, so the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.

Ruth

1 ¹ In the days when the judges ruled in Israel, a man from Bethlehem in Judah left the country because of a severe famine. He took his wife and two sons and went to live in the country of Moab.

² The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. Their two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. During their stay in Moab,

³ Elimelech died and Naomi was left with her two sons.

⁴ The two sons married Moabite women. One married a woman named Orpah, and the other a woman named Ruth. But about ten years later,

⁵ both Mahlon and Kilion died. This left Naomi alone, without her husband or sons.

⁶ Then Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had blessed his people in Judah by giving them good crops again. So Naomi and her daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab to return to her homeland.

⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she set out from the place where she had been living, and they took the road that would lead them back to Judah.

⁸ But on the way, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back to your mothers' homes instead of coming with me. And may the LORD reward you for your kindness to your husbands and to me.

⁹ May the LORD bless you with the security of another marriage." Then she kissed them good-bye, and they all broke down and wept.

¹⁰ "No," they said. "We want to go with you to your people."

¹¹ But Naomi replied, "Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands?"

¹² No, my daughters, return to your parents' homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what?

¹³ Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters! Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD himself has caused me to suffer."

¹⁴ And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth insisted on staying with Naomi.

¹⁵ "See," Naomi said to her, "your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same."

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. I will go wherever you go and live wherever you live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

¹⁷ I will die where you die and will be buried there. May the LORD punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!"

¹⁸ So when Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her, she stopped urging her.

¹⁹ So the two of them continued on their journey. When they came to Bethlehem, the entire town was stirred by their arrival. "Is it really Naomi?" the women asked.

²⁰ "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me.

²¹ I went away full, but the LORD has brought me home empty. Why should you call me Naomi when the LORD has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy?"

²² So Naomi returned from Moab, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, the young Moabite woman. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

2¹ Now there was a wealthy and influential man in Bethlehem named Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech.

² One day Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go out into the fields to gather leftover grain behind anyone who will let me

do it." And Naomi said, "All right, my daughter, go ahead."

³ So Ruth went out to gather grain behind the harvesters. And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech.

⁴ While she was there, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters. "The LORD be with you!" he said. "The LORD bless you!" the harvesters replied.

⁵ Then Boaz asked his foreman, "Who is that girl over there?"

⁶ And the foreman replied, "She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi.

⁷ She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes' rest over there in the shelter."

⁸ Boaz went over and said to Ruth, "Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don't go to any other fields. Stay right behind the women working in my field.

⁹ See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to bother you. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well."

¹⁰ Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. "Why are you being so kind to me?" she asked. "I am only a foreigner."

¹¹ "Yes, I know," Boaz replied. "But I also know about the love and kindness you have shown your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and your own land to live here among complete strangers.

¹² May the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully."

¹³ "I hope I continue to please you, sir," she replied. "You have comforted me by speaking so kindly to me, even though I am not as worthy as your workers."

¹⁴ At lunchtime Boaz called to her, "Come over here and help yourself to some of our food. You can dip your bread in the wine if you like." So she sat with his harvesters, and Boaz gave her food—more than she could eat.

¹⁵ When Ruth went back to work again, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping her.

¹⁶ And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her. Let her pick them up, and don't give her a hard time!"

¹⁷ So Ruth gathered barley there all day, and when she beat out the grain that evening, it came to about half a bushel.

¹⁸ She carried it back into town and showed it to her mother-in-law. Ruth also gave her the food that was left over from her lunch.

¹⁹ "So much!" Naomi exclaimed. "Where did you gather all this grain today? Where did you work? May the LORD bless the one who helped you!" So Ruth told her mother-in-law about the man in whose field she had worked. And she said, "The man I worked with today is named Boaz."

²⁰ "May the LORD bless him!" Naomi told her daughter-in-law. "He is showing his kindness to us as well as to your dead husband. That man is one of our closest relatives, one of our family redeemers."

²¹ Then Ruth said, "What's more, Boaz even told me to come back and stay with

his harvesters until the entire harvest is completed."

²² "This is wonderful!" Naomi exclaimed. "Do as he said. Stay with his workers right through the whole harvest. You will be safe there, unlike in other fields."

²³ So Ruth worked alongside the women in Boaz's fields and gathered grain with them until the end of the barley harvest. Then she worked with them through the wheat harvest, too. But all the while she lived with her mother-in-law.

3¹ One day Naomi said to Ruth, "My daughter, it's time that I found a permanent home for you, so that you will be provided for.

² Boaz is a close relative of ours, and he's been very kind by letting you gather grain with his workers. Tonight he will be winnowing barley at the threshing floor.

³ Now do as I tell you—take a bath and put on perfume and dress in your nicest clothes. Then go to the threshing floor, but don't let Boaz see you until he has finished his meal.

⁴ Be sure to notice where he lies down; then go and uncover his feet and lie down there. He will tell you what to do."

⁵ "I will do everything you say," Ruth replied.

⁶ So she went down to the threshing floor that night and followed the instructions of her mother-in-law.

⁷ After Boaz had finished his meal and was in good spirits, he lay down beside the heap of grain and went to sleep. Then Ruth came quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

⁸ Around midnight, Boaz suddenly woke up and turned over. He was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet!

⁹ "Who are you?" he demanded. "I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer."

¹⁰ "The LORD bless you, my daughter!" Boaz exclaimed. "You are showing more family loyalty now than ever by not running after a younger man, whether rich or poor."

¹¹ Now don't worry about a thing, my daughter. I will do what is necessary, for everyone in town knows you are an honorable woman.

¹² But there is one problem. While it is true that I am one of your family redeemers, there is another man who is more closely related to you than I am.

¹³ Stay here tonight, and in the morning I will talk to him. If he is willing to redeem you, then let him marry you. But if he is not willing, then as surely as

the LORD lives, I will marry you! Now lie down here until morning."

¹⁴ So Ruth lay at Boaz's feet until the morning, but she got up before it was light enough for people to recognize each other. For Boaz said, "No one must know that a woman was here at the threshing floor."

¹⁵ Boaz also said to her, "Bring your cloak and spread it out." He measured out six scoops of barley into the cloak and helped her put it on her back. Then Boaz returned to the town.

¹⁶ When Ruth went back to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "What happened, my daughter?" Ruth told Naomi everything Boaz had done for her,

¹⁷ and she added, "He gave me these six scoops of barley and said, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

¹⁸ Then Naomi said to her, "Just be patient, my daughter, until we hear what

happens. The man won't rest until he has followed through on this. He will settle it today."

4¹ So Boaz went to the town gate and took a seat there. When the family redeemer he had mentioned came by, Boaz called out to him, "Come over here, friend. I want to talk to you." So they sat down together.

² Then Boaz called ten leaders from the town and asked them to sit as witnesses.

³ And Boaz said to the family redeemer, "You know Naomi, who came back from Moab. She is selling the land that belonged to our relative Elimelech.

⁴ I felt that I should speak to you about it so that you can redeem it if you wish. If you want the land, then buy it here in the presence of these witnesses. But if you don't want it, let me know right away, because I am next in line to

redeem it after you." The man replied, "All right, I'll redeem it."

⁵ Then Boaz told him, "Of course, your purchase of the land from Naomi also requires that you marry Ruth, the Moabite widow. That way, she can have children who will carry on her husband's name and keep the land in the family."

⁶ "Then I can't redeem it," the family redeemer replied, "because this might endanger my own estate. You redeem the land; I cannot do it."

⁷ In those days it was the custom in Israel for anyone transferring a right of purchase to remove his sandal and hand it to the other party. This publicly validated the transaction.

⁸ So the other family redeemer drew off his sandal as he said to Boaz, "You buy the land."

⁹ Then Boaz said to the leaders and to the crowd standing around, "You are

witnesses that today I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion, and Mahlon.

¹⁰ And with the land I have acquired Ruth, the Moabite widow of Mahlon, to be my wife. This way she can have a son to carry on the family name of her dead husband and to inherit the family property here in his hometown. You are all witnesses today."

¹¹ Then the leaders and all the people standing there replied, "We are witnesses! May the LORD make the woman who is now coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, from whom all the nation of Israel descended! May you be great in Ephrathah and famous in Bethlehem.

¹² And may the LORD give you descendants by this young woman who will be like those of our ancestor Perez, the son of Tamar and Judah."

¹³ So Boaz married Ruth and took her home to live with him. When he slept with her, the LORD enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son.

¹⁴ And the women of the town said to Naomi, "Praise the LORD who has given you a family redeemer today! May he be famous in Israel.

¹⁵ May this child restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you so much and who has been better to you than seven sons!"

¹⁶ Naomi took care of the baby and cared for him as if he were her own.

¹⁷ The neighbor women said, "Now at last Naomi has a son again!" And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

¹⁸ This is their family line beginning with their ancestor Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron.

¹⁹ Hezron was the father of Ram. Ram was the father of Amminadab.

²⁰ Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

²¹ Salmon was the father of Boaz. Boaz was the father of Obed.

²² Obed was the father of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David.

1 Samuel

1 ¹ There was a man named Elkanah who lived in Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. He was the son of Jeroham and grandson of Elihu, from the family of Tohu and the clan of Zuph.

² Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, while Hannah did not.

³ Each year Elkanah and his family would travel to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at the Tabernacle. The priests of the LORD at that time were the two sons of Eli—Hophni and Phinehas.

⁴ On the day Elkanah presented his sacrifice, he would give portions of the sacrifice to Peninnah and each of her children.

⁵ But he gave Hannah a special portion because he loved her very much, even though the LORD had given her no children.

⁶ But Peninnah made fun of Hannah because the LORD had closed her womb.

⁷ Year after year it was the same— Peninnah would taunt Hannah as they went to the Tabernacle. Hannah would finally be reduced to tears and would not even eat.

⁸ "What's the matter, Hannah?" Elkanah would ask. "Why aren't you eating? Why be so sad just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?"

⁹ Once when they were at Shiloh, Hannah went over to the Tabernacle after supper to pray to the LORD. Eli the priest was sitting at his customary place beside the entrance.

¹⁰ Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD.

¹¹ And she made this vow: "O LORD Almighty, if you will look down upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the LORD, his hair will never be cut."

¹² As she was praying to the LORD, Eli watched her.

¹³ Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking.

¹⁴ "Must you come here drunk?" he demanded. "Throw away your wine!"

¹⁵ "Oh no, sir!" she replied, "I'm not drunk! But I am very sad, and I was pouring out my heart to the LORD.

¹⁶ Please don't think I am a wicked woman! For I have been praying out of great anguish and sorrow."

¹⁷ "In that case," Eli said, "cheer up! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him."

¹⁸ "Oh, thank you, sir!" she exclaimed. Then she went back and began to eat again, and she was no longer sad.

¹⁹ The entire family got up early the next morning and went to worship the LORD once more. Then they returned home to Ramah. When Elkanah slept with Hannah, the LORD remembered her request,

²⁰ and in due time she gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I asked the LORD for him."

²¹ The next year Elkanah, Peninnah, and their children went on their annual trip to offer a sacrifice to the LORD.

²² But Hannah did not go. She told her husband, "Wait until the baby is weaned. Then I will take him to the Tabernacle and leave him there with the LORD permanently."

²³ "Whatever you think is best," Elkanah agreed. "Stay here for now, and may the LORD help you keep your promise." So she stayed home and nursed the baby.

²⁴ When the child was weaned, Hannah took him to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. They brought along a three-year-old bull for the sacrifice and half a bushel of flour and some wine.

²⁵ After sacrificing the bull, they took the child to Eli.

²⁶ "Sir, do you remember me?" Hannah asked. "I am the woman who stood here several years ago praying to the LORD.

²⁷ I asked the LORD to give me this child, and he has given me my request.

²⁸ Now I am giving him to the LORD, and he will belong to the LORD his whole life." And they worshiped the LORD there.

2 ¹ Then Hannah prayed: "My heart rejoices in the LORD! Oh, how the LORD has blessed me! Now I have an answer for my enemies, as I delight in your deliverance.

² No one is holy like the LORD! There is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

³ "Stop acting so proud and haughty! Don't speak with such arrogance! The LORD is a God who knows your deeds; and he will judge you for what you have done.

⁴ Those who were mighty are mighty no more; and those who were weak are now strong.

⁵ Those who were well fed are now starving; and those who were starving

are now full. The barren woman now has seven children; but the woman with many children will have no more.

⁶ The LORD brings both death and life; he brings some down to the grave but raises others up.

⁷ The LORD makes one poor and another rich; he brings one down and lifts another up.

⁸ He lifts the poor from the dust—yes, from a pile of ashes! He treats them like princes, placing them in seats of honor. "For all the earth is the LORD's, and he has set the world in order.

⁹ He will protect his godly ones, but the wicked will perish in darkness. No one will succeed by strength alone.

¹⁰ Those who fight against the LORD will be broken. He thunders against them from heaven; the LORD judges throughout the earth. He gives mighty

strength to his king; he increases the might of his anointed one."

¹¹ Then Elkanah and Hannah returned home to Ramah without Samuel. And the boy became the LORD's helper, for he assisted Eli the priest.

¹² Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels who had no respect for the LORD

¹³ or for their duties as priests.

Whenever anyone offered a sacrifice, Eli's sons would send over a servant with a three-pronged fork. While the meat of the sacrificed animal was still boiling,

¹⁴ the servant would stick the fork into the pot and demand that whatever it brought up be given to Eli's sons. All the Israelites who came to worship at Shiloh were treated this way.

¹⁵ Sometimes the servant would come even before the animal's fat had been burned on the altar. He would demand

raw meat before it had been boiled so that it could be used for roasting.

¹⁶ The man offering the sacrifice might reply, "Take as much as you want, but the fat must first be burned." Then the servant would demand, "No, give it to me now, or I'll take it by force."

¹⁷ So the sin of these young men was very serious in the LORD's sight, for they treated the LORD's offerings with contempt.

¹⁸ Now Samuel, though only a boy, was the LORD's helper. He wore a linen tunic just like that of a priest.

¹⁹ Each year his mother made a small coat for him and brought it to him when she came with her husband for the sacrifice.

²⁰ Before they returned home, Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the LORD give you other children to take

the place of this one she gave to the LORD."

²¹ And the LORD gave Hannah three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

²² Now Eli was very old, but he was aware of what his sons were doing to the people of Israel. He knew, for instance, that his sons were seducing the young women who assisted at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

²³ Eli said to them, "I have been hearing reports from the people about the wicked things you are doing. Why do you keep sinning?"

²⁴ You must stop, my sons! The reports I hear among the LORD's people are not good.

²⁵ If someone sins against another person, God can mediate for the guilty party. But if someone sins against the

LORD, who can intercede?" But Eli's sons wouldn't listen to their father, for the LORD was already planning to put them to death.

²⁶ Meanwhile, as young Samuel grew taller, he also continued to gain favor with the LORD and with the people.

²⁷ One day a prophet came to Eli and gave him this message from the LORD: "Didn't I reveal myself to your ancestors when the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt?"

²⁸ I chose your ancestor Aaron from among all his relatives to be my priest, to offer sacrifices on my altar, to burn incense, and to wear the priestly garments as he served me. And I assigned the sacrificial offerings to you priests.

²⁹ So why do you scorn my sacrifices and offerings? Why do you honor your sons more than me—for you and they

have become fat from the best offerings of my people!

³⁰ "Therefore, the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The terrible things you are doing cannot continue! I had promised that your branch of the tribe of Levi would always be my priests. But I will honor only those who honor me, and I will despise those who despise me.

³¹ I will put an end to your family, so it will no longer serve as my priests. All the members of your family will die before their time. None will live to a ripe old age.

³² You will watch with envy as I pour out prosperity on the people of Israel. But no members of your family will ever live out their days.

³³ Those who are left alive will live in sadness and grief, and their children will die a violent death.

³⁴ And to prove that what I have said will come true, I will cause your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, to die on the same day!

³⁵ "Then I will raise up a faithful priest who will serve me and do what I tell him to do. I will bless his descendants, and his family will be priests to my anointed kings forever.

³⁶ Then all of your descendants will bow before his descendants, begging for money and food. 'Please,' they will say, 'give us jobs among the priests so we will have enough to eat.'"

3 ¹ Meanwhile, the boy Samuel was serving the LORD by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the LORD were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon.

² One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had just gone to bed.

³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God.

⁴ Suddenly, the LORD called out, "Samuel! Samuel!" "Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?"

⁵ He jumped up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. What do you need?" "I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go on back to bed." So he did.

⁶ Then the LORD called out again, "Samuel!" Again Samuel jumped up and ran to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "What do you need?" "I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go on back to bed."

⁷ Samuel did not yet know the LORD because he had never had a message from the LORD before.

⁸ So now the LORD called a third time, and once more Samuel jumped up and ran to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "What do

you need?" Then Eli realized it was the LORD who was calling the boy.

⁹ So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Yes, LORD, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed.

¹⁰ And the LORD came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Yes, your servant is listening."

¹¹ Then the LORD said to Samuel, "I am about to do a shocking thing in Israel.

¹² I am going to carry out all my threats against Eli and his family.

¹³ I have warned him continually that judgment is coming for his family, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn't disciplined them.

¹⁴ So I have vowed that the sins of Eli and his sons will never be forgiven by sacrifices or offerings."

¹⁵ Samuel stayed in bed until morning, then got up and opened the doors of the

Tabernacle as usual. He was afraid to tell Eli what the LORD had said to him.

¹⁶ But Eli called out to him, "Samuel, my son." "Here I am," Samuel replied.

¹⁷ "What did the LORD say to you? Tell me everything. And may God punish you if you hide anything from me!"

¹⁸ So Samuel told Eli everything; he didn't hold anything back. "It is the LORD's will," Eli replied. "Let him do what he thinks best."

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him, and everything Samuel said was wise and helpful.

²⁰ All the people of Israel from one end of the land to the other knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD.

²¹ The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh and gave messages to Samuel there at the Tabernacle.

4 ¹ And Samuel's words went out to all the people of Israel. At that time Israel was at war with the Philistines. The Israelite army was camped near Ebenezer, and the Philistines were at Aphek.

² The Philistines attacked and defeated the army of Israel, killing four thousand men.

³ After the battle was over, the army of Israel retreated to their camp, and their leaders asked, "Why did the LORD allow us to be defeated by the Philistines?" Then they said, "Let's bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. If we carry it into battle with us, it will save us from our enemies."

⁴ So they sent men to Shiloh to bring back the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, helped carry

the Ark of God to where the battle was being fought.

⁵ When the Israelites saw the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD coming into the camp, their shout of joy was so loud that it made the ground shake!

⁶ "What's going on?" the Philistines asked. "What's all the shouting about in the Hebrew camp?" When they were told it was because the Ark of the LORD had arrived,

⁷ they panicked. "The gods have come into their camp!" they cried. "This is a disaster! We have never had to face anything like this before!

⁸ Who can save us from these mighty gods of Israel? They are the same gods who destroyed the Egyptians with plagues when Israel was in the wilderness.

⁹ Fight as you never have before, Philistines! If you don't, we will become

the Hebrews' slaves just as they have been ours!"

¹⁰ So the Philistines fought desperately, and Israel was defeated again. The slaughter was great; thirty thousand Israelite men died that day. The survivors turned and fled to their tents.

¹¹ The Ark of God was captured, and Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were killed.

¹² A man from the tribe of Benjamin ran from the battlefield and arrived at Shiloh later that same day. He had torn his clothes and put dust on his head to show his grief.

¹³ Eli was waiting beside the road to hear the news of the battle, for his heart trembled for the safety of the Ark of God. When the messenger arrived and told what had happened, an outcry resounded throughout the town.

¹⁴ "What is all the noise about?" Eli asked. The messenger rushed over to Eli, ¹⁵ who was ninety-eight years old and blind.

¹⁶ He said to Eli, "I have just come from the battlefront—I was there this very day." "What happened?" Eli demanded.

¹⁷ "Israel has been defeated," the messenger replied. "Thousands of Israelite troops are dead on the battlefield. Your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed, too. And the Ark of God has been captured."

¹⁸ When the messenger mentioned what had happened to the Ark, Eli fell backward from his seat beside the gate. He broke his neck and died, for he was old and very fat. He had led Israel for forty years.

¹⁹ Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near her time of delivery. When she heard that

the Ark of God had been captured and that her husband and father-in-law were dead, her labor pains suddenly began.

²⁰ She died in childbirth, but before she passed away the midwives tried to encourage her. "Don't be afraid," they said. "You have a baby boy!" But she did not answer or respond in any way.

²¹ She named the child Ichabod—"Where is the glory?"—murmuring, "Israel's glory is gone." She named him this because the Ark of God had been captured and because her husband and her father-in-law were dead.

²² Then she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the Ark of God has been captured."

5 ¹ After the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they took it from the battleground at Ebenezer to the city of Ashdod.

² They carried the Ark of God into the temple of Dagon and placed it beside the idol of Dagon.

³ But when the citizens of Ashdod went to see it the next morning, Dagon had fallen with his face to the ground in front of the Ark of the LORD! So they set the idol up again.

⁴ But the next morning the same thing happened—the idol had fallen face down before the Ark of the LORD again. This time his head and hands had broken off and were lying in the doorway. Only the trunk of his body was left intact.

⁵ That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor anyone who enters the temple of Dagon will step on its threshold.

⁶ Then the LORD began to afflict the people of Ashdod and the nearby villages with a plague of tumors.

⁷ When the people realized what was happening, they cried out, "We can't keep the Ark of the God of Israel here any longer! He is against us! We will all be destroyed along with our god Dagon."

⁸ So they called together the rulers of the five Philistine cities and asked, "What should we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?" The rulers discussed it and replied, "Move it to the city of Gath." So they moved the Ark of the God of Israel to Gath.

⁹ But when the Ark arrived at Gath, the LORD began afflicting its people, young and old, with a plague of tumors, and there was a great panic.

¹⁰ So they sent the Ark of God to the city of Ekron, but when the people of Ekron saw it coming they cried out, "They are bringing the Ark of the God of Israel here to kill us, too!"

¹¹ So the people summoned the rulers again and begged them, "Please send the Ark of the God of Israel back to its own country, or it will kill us all." For the plague from God had already begun, and great fear was sweeping across the city.

¹² Those who didn't die were afflicted with tumors; and there was weeping everywhere.

6 ¹ The Ark of the LORD remained in Philistine territory seven months in all.

² Then the Philistines called in their priests and diviners and asked them, "What should we do about the Ark of the LORD? Tell us how to return it to its own land."

³ "Send the Ark of the God of Israel back, along with a gift," they were told. "Send a guilt offering so the plague will stop. Then, if the plague doesn't stop,

you will know that God didn't send the plague after all."

⁴ "What sort of guilt offering should we send?" they asked. And they were told, "Since the plague has struck both you and your five rulers, make five gold tumors and five gold rats, just like those that have ravaged your land.

⁵ Make these things to show honor to the God of Israel. Perhaps then he will stop afflicting you, your gods, and your land.

⁶ Don't be stubborn and rebellious as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were. They wouldn't let Israel go until God had ravaged them with dreadful plagues.

⁷ Now build a new cart, and find two cows that have just had calves. Make sure the cows have never been yoked to a cart. Hitch the cows to the cart, but shut their calves away from them in a pen.

⁸ Put the Ark of the LORD on the cart, and beside it place a chest containing the gold rats and gold tumors. Then let the cows go wherever they want.

⁹ If they cross the border of our land and go to Beth–shemesh, we will know it was the LORD who brought this great disaster upon us. If they don't, we will know that the plague was simply a coincidence and was not sent by the LORD at all."

¹⁰ So these instructions were carried out. Two cows with newborn calves were hitched to the cart, and their calves were shut up in a pen.

¹¹ Then the Ark of the LORD and the chest containing the gold rats and gold tumors were placed on the cart.

¹² And sure enough, the cows went straight along the road toward Beth–shemesh, lowing as they went. The

Philistine rulers followed them as far as the border of Beth–shemesh.

¹³ The people of Beth–shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley, and when they saw the Ark, they were overjoyed!

¹⁴ The cart came into the field of a man named Joshua and stopped beside a large rock. So the people broke up the wood of the cart for a fire and killed the cows and sacrificed them to the LORD as a burnt offering.

¹⁵ Several men of the tribe of Levi lifted the Ark of the LORD and the chest containing the gold rats and gold tumors from the cart and placed them on the large rock. Many burnt offerings and sacrifices were offered to the LORD that day by the people of Beth–shemesh.

¹⁶ The five Philistine rulers watched all this and then returned to Ekron that same day.

¹⁷ The five gold tumors that were sent by the Philistines as a guilt offering to the LORD were gifts from the rulers of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron.

¹⁸ The five gold rats represented the five Philistine cities and their surrounding villages, which were controlled by the five rulers. The large rock at Bethshemesh, where they set the Ark of the LORD, still stands in the field of Joshua as a reminder of what happened there.

¹⁹ But the LORD killed seventy men from Bethshemesh because they looked into the Ark of the LORD. And the people mourned greatly because of what the LORD had done.

²⁰ "Who is able to stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?" they cried out. "Where can we send the Ark from here?"

²¹ So they sent messengers to the people at Kiriath–jearim and told them, "The Philistines have returned the Ark of the LORD. Please come here and get it!"

7 ¹ So the men of Kiriath–jearim came to get the Ark of the LORD. They took it to the hillside home of Abinadab and ordained Eleazar, his son, to be in charge of it.

² The Ark remained in Kiriath–jearim for a long time—twenty years in all. During that time, all Israel mourned because it seemed that the LORD had abandoned them.

³ Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you are really serious about wanting to return to the LORD, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Determine to obey only the LORD; then he will rescue you from the Philistines."

⁴ So the Israelites destroyed their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the LORD.

⁵ Then Samuel told them, "Come to Mizpah, all of you. I will pray to the LORD for you."

⁶ So they gathered there and, in a great ceremony, drew water from a well and poured it out before the LORD. They also went without food all day and confessed that they had sinned against the LORD. So it was at Mizpah that Samuel became Israel's judge.

⁷ When the Philistine rulers heard that all Israel had gathered at Mizpah, they mobilized their army and advanced. The Israelites were badly frightened when they learned that the Philistines were approaching.

⁸ "Plead with the LORD our God to save us from the Philistines!" they begged Samuel.

⁹ So Samuel took a young lamb and offered it to the LORD as a whole burnt offering. He pleaded with the LORD to help Israel, and the LORD answered.

¹⁰ Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived for battle. But the LORD spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them.

¹¹ The men of Israel chased them from Mizpah to Beth-car, slaughtering them all along the way.

¹² Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer—"the stone of help"—for he said, "Up to this point the LORD has helped us!"

¹³ So the Philistines were subdued and didn't invade Israel again for a long time.

And throughout Samuel's lifetime, the LORD's powerful hand was raised against the Philistines.

¹⁴ The Israelite towns near Ekron and Gath that the Philistines had captured were restored to Israel, along with the rest of the territory that the Philistines had taken. And there was also peace between Israel and the Amorites in those days.

¹⁵ Samuel continued as Israel's judge for the rest of his life.

¹⁶ Each year he traveled around, setting up his court first at Bethel, then at Gilgal, and then at Mizpah. He judged the people of Israel at each of these places.

¹⁷ Then he would return to his home at Ramah, and he would hear cases there, too. And Samuel built an altar to the LORD at Ramah.

8 ¹ As Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons to be judges over Israel.

² Joel and Abijah, his oldest sons, held court in Beersheba.

³ But they were not like their father, for they were greedy for money. They accepted bribes and perverted justice.

⁴ Finally, the leaders of Israel met at Ramah to discuss the matter with Samuel.

⁵ "Look," they told him, "you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king like all the other nations have."

⁶ Samuel was very upset with their request and went to the LORD for advice.

⁷ "Do as they say," the LORD replied, "for it is me they are rejecting, not you. They don't want me to be their king any longer.

⁸ Ever since I brought them from Egypt they have continually forsaken me and followed other gods. And now they are giving you the same treatment.

⁹ Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about how a king will treat them."

¹⁰ So Samuel passed on the LORD's warning to the people.

¹¹ "This is how a king will treat you," Samuel said. "The king will draft your sons into his army and make them run before his chariots.

¹² Some will be commanders of his troops, while others will be slave laborers. Some will be forced to plow in his fields and harvest his crops, while others will make his weapons and chariot equipment.

¹³ The king will take your daughters from you and force them to cook and bake and make perfumes for him.

¹⁴ He will take away the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his own servants.

¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your harvest and distribute it among his officers and attendants.

¹⁶ He will want your male and female slaves and demand the finest of your cattle and donkeys for his own use.

¹⁷ He will demand a tenth of your flocks, and you will be his slaves.

¹⁸ When that day comes, you will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but the LORD will not help you."

¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to Samuel's warning. "Even so, we still want a king," they said.

²⁰ "We want to be like the nations around us. Our king will govern us and lead us into battle."

²¹ So Samuel told the LORD what the people had said,

²² and the LORD replied, "Do as they say, and give them a king." Then Samuel agreed and sent the people home.

9¹ Kish was a rich, influential man from the tribe of Benjamin. He was the son of Abiel and grandson of Zeror, from the family of Becorath and the clan of Aphiah.

² His son Saul was the most handsome man in Israel—head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the land.

³ One day Kish's donkeys strayed away, and he told Saul, "Take a servant with you, and go look for them."

⁴ So Saul took one of his servants and traveled all through the hill country of Ephraim, the land of Shalishah, the Shaalim area, and the entire land of Benjamin, but they couldn't find the donkeys anywhere.

⁵ Finally, they entered the region of Zuph, and Saul said to his servant, "Let's

go home. By now my father will be more worried about us than about the donkeys!"

⁶ But the servant said, "I've just thought of something! There is a man of God who lives here in this town. He is held in high honor by all the people because everything he says comes true. Let's go find him. Perhaps he can tell us which way to go."

⁷ "But we don't have anything to offer him," Saul replied. "Even our food is gone, and we don't have a thing to give him."

⁸ "Well," the servant said, "I have one small silver piece. We can at least offer it to him and see what happens!"

⁹ (In those days if people wanted a message from God, they would say, "Let's go and ask the seer," for prophets used to be called seers.)

¹⁰ "All right," Saul agreed, "let's try it!" So they started into the town where the man of God was.

¹¹ As they were climbing a hill toward the town, they met some young women coming out to draw water. So Saul and his servant asked, "Is the seer here today?"

¹² "Yes," they replied. "Stay right on this road. He is at the town gates. He has just arrived to take part in a public sacrifice up on the hill.

¹³ Hurry and catch him before he goes up the hill to eat. The guests won't start until he arrives to bless the food."

¹⁴ So they entered the town, and as they passed through the gates, Samuel was coming out toward them to climb the hill.

¹⁵ Now the LORD had told Samuel the previous day,

¹⁶ "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him to be the leader of my people, Israel. He will rescue them from the Philistines, for I have looked down on my people in mercy and have heard their cry."

¹⁷ When Samuel noticed Saul, the LORD said, "That's the man I told you about! He will rule my people."

¹⁸ Just then Saul approached Samuel at the gateway and asked, "Can you please tell me where the seer's house is?"

¹⁹ "I am the seer!" Samuel replied. "Go on up the hill ahead of me to the place of sacrifice, and we'll eat there together. In the morning I will tell you what you want to know and send you on your way."

²⁰ And don't worry about those donkeys that were lost three days ago, for they have been found. And I am here to tell

you that you and your family are the focus of all Israel's hopes."

²¹ Saul replied, "But I'm only from Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, and my family is the least important of all the families of that tribe! Why are you talking like this to me?"

²² Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the great hall and placed them at the head of the table, honoring them above the thirty special guests.

²³ Samuel then instructed the cook to bring Saul the finest cut of meat, the piece that had been set aside for the guest of honor.

²⁴ So the cook brought it in and placed it before Saul. "Go ahead and eat it," Samuel said. "I was saving it for you even before I invited these others!" So Saul ate with Samuel.

²⁵ After the feast, when they had returned to the town, Samuel took Saul

up to the roof of the house and prepared a bed for him there.

²⁶ At daybreak the next morning, Samuel called up to Saul, "Get up! It's time you were on your way." So Saul got ready, and he and Samuel left the house together.

²⁷ When they reached the edge of town, Samuel told Saul to send his servant on ahead. After the servant was gone, Samuel said, "Stay here, for I have received a special message for you from God."

10 ¹ Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it over Saul's head. He kissed Saul on the cheek and said, "I am doing this because the LORD has appointed you to be the leader of his people Israel.

² When you leave me today, you will see two men beside Rachel's tomb at Zelzah, on the border of Benjamin. They

will tell you that the donkeys have been found and that your father is worried about you and is asking, 'Have you seen my son?'

³ "When you get to the oak of Tabor, you will see three men coming toward you who are on their way to worship God at Bethel. One will be bringing three young goats, another will have three loaves of bread, and the third will be carrying a skin of wine.

⁴ They will greet you and offer you two of the loaves, which you are to accept.

⁵ "When you arrive at Gibeah of God, where the garrison of the Philistines is located, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the altar on the hill. They will be playing a harp, a tambourine, a flute, and a lyre, and they will be prophesying.

⁶ At that time the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you with power, and

you will prophesy with them. You will be changed into a different person.

⁷ After these signs take place, do whatever you think is best, for God will be with you.

⁸ Then go down to Gilgal ahead of me and wait for me there seven days. I will join you there to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. When I arrive, I will give you further instructions."

⁹ As Saul turned and started to leave, God changed his heart, and all Samuel's signs were fulfilled that day.

¹⁰ When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw the prophets coming toward them. Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and he, too, began to prophesy.

¹¹ When his friends heard about it, they exclaimed, "What? Is Saul a prophet? How did the son of Kish become a prophet?"

¹² But one of the neighbors responded, "It doesn't matter who his father is; anyone can become a prophet." So that is the origin of the saying "Is Saul a prophet?"

¹³ When Saul had finished prophesying, he climbed the hill to the altar.

¹⁴ "Where in the world have you been?" Saul's uncle asked him. "We went to look for the donkeys," Saul replied, "but we couldn't find them. So we went to the prophet Samuel to ask him where they were."

¹⁵ "Oh? And what did he say?" his uncle asked.

¹⁶ "He said the donkeys had been found," Saul replied. But Saul didn't tell his uncle that Samuel had anointed him to be king.

¹⁷ Later Samuel called all the people of Israel to meet before the LORD at Mizpah.

¹⁸ And he gave them this message from the LORD, the God of Israel: "I brought you from Egypt and rescued you from the Egyptians and from all of the nations that were oppressing you.

¹⁹ But though I have done so much for you, you have rejected me and said, 'We want a king instead!' Now, therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by tribes and clans."

²⁰ So Samuel called the tribal leaders together before the LORD, and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen.

²¹ Then he brought each family of the tribe of Benjamin before the LORD, and the family of the Matrites was chosen. And finally Saul son of Kish was chosen from among them. But when they looked for him, he had disappeared!

²² So they asked the LORD, "Where is he?" And the LORD replied, "He is hiding among the baggage."

²³ So they found him and brought him out, and he stood head and shoulders above anyone else.

²⁴ Then Samuel said to all the people, "This is the man the LORD has chosen as your king. No one in all Israel is his equal!" And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

²⁵ Then Samuel told the people what the rights and duties of a king were. He wrote them down on a scroll and placed it before the LORD. Then Samuel sent the people home again.

²⁶ When Saul returned to his home at Gibeah, a band of men whose hearts God had touched became his constant companions.

²⁷ But there were some wicked men who complained, "How can this man save us?" And they despised him and refused to bring him gifts. But Saul ignored them.

11 ¹ About a month later, King Nahash of Ammon led his army against the Israelite city of Jabesh-gilead. But the citizens of Jabesh asked for peace. "Make a treaty with us, and we will be your servants," they pleaded.

² "All right," Nahash said, "but only on one condition. I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you as a disgrace to all Israel!"

³ "Give us seven days to send messengers throughout Israel!" replied the leaders of Jabesh. "If none of our relatives will come to save us, we will agree to your terms."

⁴ When the messengers came to Gibeah, Saul's hometown, and told the people about their plight, everyone broke into tears.

⁵ Saul was plowing in the field, and when he returned to town, he asked, "What's the matter? Why is everyone

crying?" So they told him about the message from Jabesh.

⁶ Then the Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul, and he became very angry.

⁷ He took two oxen and cut them into pieces and sent the messengers to carry them throughout Israel with this message: "This is what will happen to the oxen of anyone who refuses to follow Saul and Samuel into battle!" And the LORD made the people afraid of Saul's anger, and all of them came out together as one.

⁸ When Saul mobilized them at Bezek, he found that there were 300,000 men of Israel, in addition to 30,000 from Judah.

⁹ So Saul sent the messengers back to Jabesh-gilead to say, "We will rescue you by noontime tomorrow!" What joy there was throughout the city when that message arrived!

¹⁰ The men of Jabesh then told their enemies, "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you can do to us as you wish."

¹¹ But before dawn the next morning, Saul arrived, having divided his army into three detachments. He launched a surprise attack against the Ammonites and slaughtered them the whole morning. The remnant of their army was so badly scattered that no two of them were left together.

¹² Then the people exclaimed to Samuel, "Now where are those men who said Saul shouldn't rule over us? Bring them here, and we will kill them!"

¹³ But Saul replied, "No one will be executed today, for today the LORD has rescued Israel!"

¹⁴ Then Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us all go to Gilgal to reaffirm Saul's kingship."

¹⁵ So they went to Gilgal, and in a solemn ceremony before the LORD they crowned him king. Then they offered peace offerings to the LORD, and Saul and all the Israelites were very happy.

12 ¹ Then Samuel addressed the people again: "I have done as you asked and given you a king.

² I have selected him ahead of my own sons, and I stand here, an old, gray-haired man. I have served as your leader since I was a boy.

³ Now tell me as I stand before the LORD and before his anointed one—whose ox or donkey have I stolen? Have I ever cheated any of you? Have I ever oppressed you? Have I ever taken a bribe? Tell me and I will make right whatever I have done wrong."

⁴ "No," they replied, "you have never cheated or oppressed us in any way,

and you have never taken even a single bribe."

⁵ "The LORD and his anointed one are my witnesses," Samuel declared, "that you can never accuse me of robbing you." "Yes, it is true," they replied.

⁶ "It was the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron," Samuel continued. "He brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt."

⁷ Now stand here quietly before the LORD as I remind you of all the great things the LORD has done for you and your ancestors.

⁸ "When the Israelites were in Egypt and cried out to the LORD, he sent Moses and Aaron to rescue them from Egypt and to bring them into this land."

⁹ But the people soon forgot about the LORD their God, so he let them be conquered by Sisera, the general of

Hazor's army, and by the Philistines and the king of Moab.

¹⁰ "Then they cried to the LORD again and confessed, 'We have sinned by turning away from the LORD and worshiping the images of Baal and Ashtoreth. But we will worship you and you alone if you will rescue us from our enemies.'

¹¹ Then the LORD sent Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, and Samuel to save you, and you lived in safety.

¹² "But when you were afraid of Nahash, the king of Ammon, you came to me and said that you wanted a king to reign over you, even though the LORD your God was already your king.

¹³ All right, here is the king you have chosen. Look him over. You asked for him, and the LORD has granted your request.

¹⁴ "Now if you will fear and worship the LORD and listen to his voice, and if you do not rebel against the LORD's commands, and if you and your king follow the LORD your God, then all will be well.

¹⁵ But if you rebel against the LORD's commands and refuse to listen to him, then his hand will be as heavy upon you as it was upon your ancestors.

¹⁶ "Now stand here and see the great thing the LORD is about to do.

¹⁷ You know that it does not rain at this time of the year during the wheat harvest. I will ask the LORD to send thunder and rain today. Then you will realize how wicked you have been in asking the LORD for a king!"

¹⁸ So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain. And all the people were terrified of the LORD and of Samuel.

¹⁹ "Pray to the LORD your God for us, or we will die!" they cried out to Samuel. "For now we have added to our sins by asking for a king."

²⁰ "Don't be afraid," Samuel reassured them. "You have certainly done wrong, but make sure now that you worship the LORD with all your heart and that you don't turn your back on him in any way."

²¹ Don't go back to worshipping worthless idols that cannot help or rescue you—they really are useless!

²² The LORD will not abandon his chosen people, for that would dishonor his great name. He made you a special nation for himself.

²³ "As for me, I will certainly not sin against the LORD by ending my prayers for you. And I will continue to teach you what is good and right."

²⁴ But be sure to fear the LORD and sincerely worship him. Think of all the wonderful things he has done for you.

²⁵ But if you continue to sin, you and your king will be destroyed."

13 ¹ Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty–two years.

² Saul selected three thousand special troops from the army of Israel and sent the rest of the men home. He took two thousand of the chosen men with him to Micmash and the hill country of Bethel. The other thousand went with Saul's son Jonathan to Gibeah in the land of Benjamin.

³ Soon after this, Jonathan attacked and defeated the garrison of Philistines at Geba. The news spread quickly among the Philistines that Israel was in revolt, so Saul sounded the call to arms throughout Israel.

⁴ He announced that the Philistine garrison at Geba had been destroyed, and he warned the people that the Philistines now hated the Israelites more than ever. So the entire Israelite army mobilized again and met Saul at Gilgal.

⁵ The Philistines mustered a mighty army of three thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and as many warriors as the grains of sand along the seashore! They camped at Micmash east of Beth-aven.

⁶ When the men of Israel saw the vast number of enemy troops, they lost their nerve entirely and tried to hide in caves, holes, rocks, tombs, and cisterns.

⁷ Some of them crossed the Jordan River and escaped into the land of Gad and Gilead. Meanwhile, Saul stayed at Gilgal, and his men were trembling with fear.

⁸ Saul waited there seven days for Samuel, as Samuel had instructed him earlier, but Samuel still didn't come. Saul realized that his troops were rapidly slipping away.

⁹ So he demanded, "Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings!" And Saul sacrificed the burnt offering himself.

¹⁰ Just as Saul was finishing with the burnt offering, Samuel arrived. Saul went out to meet and welcome him,

¹¹ but Samuel said, "What is this you have done?" Saul replied, "I saw my men scattering from me, and you didn't arrive when you said you would, and the Philistines are at Micmash ready for battle.

¹² So I said, 'The Philistines are ready to march against us, and I haven't even asked for the LORD's help!' So I felt obliged to offer the burnt offering myself before you came."

¹³ "How foolish!" Samuel exclaimed. "You have disobeyed the command of the LORD your God. Had you obeyed, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

¹⁴ But now your dynasty must end, for the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart. The LORD has already chosen him to be king over his people, for you have not obeyed the LORD's command."

¹⁵ Samuel then left Gilgal and went on his way, but the rest of the troops went with Saul to meet the army. They went up from Gilgal to Gibeah in the land of Benjamin. When Saul counted the men who were still with him, he found only six hundred left!

¹⁶ Saul and Jonathan and the troops with them were staying at Geba, near Gibeah, in the land of Benjamin. The Philistines set up their camp at Micmash.

¹⁷ Three raiding parties soon left the camp of the Philistines. One went north toward Ophrah in the land of Shual,

¹⁸ another went west to Beth-horon, and the third moved toward the border above the valley of Zeboim near the wilderness.

¹⁹ There were no blacksmiths in the land of Israel in those days. The Philistines wouldn't allow them for fear they would make swords and spears for the Hebrews.

²⁰ So whenever the Israelites needed to sharpen their plowshares, picks, axes, or sickles, they had to take them to a Philistine blacksmith.

²¹ (The schedule of charges was as follows: a quarter of an ounce of silver for sharpening a plowshare or a pick, and an eighth of an ounce for sharpening an ax, a sickle, or an ox goad.)

²² So none of the people of Israel had a sword or spear, except for Saul and Jonathan.

²³ The pass at Micmash had meanwhile been secured by a contingent of the Philistine army.

14 ¹ One day Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come on, let's go over to where the Philistines have their outpost." But Jonathan did not tell his father what he was doing.

² Meanwhile, Saul and his six hundred men were camped on the outskirts of Gibeah, around the pomegranate tree at Migron.

³ (Among Saul's men was Ahijah the priest, who was wearing the linen ephod. Ahijah was the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother. Ahitub was the son of Phinehas and the grandson of Eli, the priest of the LORD who had served at

Shiloh.) No one realized that Jonathan had left the Israelite camp.

⁴ To reach the Philistine outpost, Jonathan had to go down between two rocky cliffs that were called Bozez and Seneh.

⁵ The cliff on the north was in front of Micmash, and the one on the south was in front of Geba.

⁶ "Let's go across to see those pagans," Jonathan said to his armor bearer. "Perhaps the LORD will help us, for nothing can hinder the LORD. He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few!"

⁷ "Do what you think is best," the youth replied. "I'm with you completely, whatever you decide."

⁸ "All right then," Jonathan told him. "We will cross over and let them see us.

⁹ If they say to us, 'Stay where you are or we'll kill you,' then we will stop and not go up to them.

¹⁰ But if they say, 'Come on up and fight,' then we will go up. That will be the LORD's sign that he will help us defeat them."

¹¹ When the Philistines saw them coming, they shouted, "Look! The Hebrews are crawling out of their holes!"

¹² Then they shouted to Jonathan, "Come on up here, and we'll teach you a lesson!" "Come on, climb right behind me," Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "for the LORD will help us defeat them!"

¹³ So they climbed up using both hands and feet, and the Philistines fell back as Jonathan and his armor bearer killed them right and left.

¹⁴ They killed about twenty men in all, and their bodies were scattered over about half an acre.

¹⁵ Suddenly, panic broke out in the Philistine army, both in the camp and in the field, including even the outposts and raiding parties. And just then an earthquake struck, and everyone was terrified.

¹⁶ Saul's lookouts in Gibeah saw a strange sight—the vast army of Philistines began to melt away in every direction.

¹⁷ "Find out who isn't here," Saul ordered. And when they checked, they found that Jonathan and his armor bearer were gone.

¹⁸ Then Saul shouted to Ahijah, "Bring the ephod here!" For at that time Ahijah was wearing the ephod in front of the Israelites.

¹⁹ But while Saul was talking to the priest, the shouting and confusion in the Philistine camp grew louder and louder.

So Saul said to Ahijah, "Never mind; let's get going!"

²⁰ Then Saul and his six hundred men rushed out to the battle and found the Philistines killing each other. There was terrible confusion everywhere.

²¹ Even the Hebrews who had gone over to the Philistine army revolted and joined in with Saul, Jonathan, and the rest of the Israelites.

²² Likewise, the men who were hiding in the hills joined the chase when they saw the Philistines running away.

²³ So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle continued to rage even out beyond Beth-aven.

²⁴ Now the men of Israel were worn out that day, because Saul had made them take an oath, saying, "Let a curse fall on anyone who eats before evening—before I have full revenge on

my enemies." So no one ate a thing all day,

²⁵ even though they found honeycomb on the ground in the forest.

²⁶ They didn't even touch the honey because they all feared the oath they had taken.

²⁷ But Jonathan had not heard his father's command, and he dipped a stick into a piece of honeycomb and ate the honey. After he had eaten it, he felt much better.

²⁸ But one of the men saw him and said, "Your father made the army take a strict oath that anyone who eats food today will be cursed. That is why everyone is weary and faint."

²⁹ "My father has made trouble for us all!" Jonathan exclaimed. "A command like that only hurts us. See how much better I feel now that I have eaten this little bit of honey."

³⁰ If the men had been allowed to eat freely from the food they found among our enemies, think how many more we could have killed!"

³¹ But hungry as they were, they chased and killed the Philistines all day from Micmash to Aijalon, growing more and more faint.

³² That evening they flew upon the battle plunder and butchered the sheep, cattle, and calves, but they ate them without draining the blood.

³³ Someone reported to Saul, "Look, the men are sinning against the LORD by eating meat that still has blood in it." "That is very wrong," Saul said. "Find a large stone and roll it over here.

³⁴ Then go out among the troops and tell them, 'Bring the cattle and sheep here to kill them and drain the blood. Do not sin against the LORD by eating meat with the blood still in it.'" So that night

all the troops brought their animals and slaughtered them there.

³⁵ And Saul built an altar to the LORD, the first one he had ever built.

³⁶ Then Saul said, "Let's chase the Philistines all night and destroy every last one of them." His men replied, "We'll do whatever you think is best." But the priest said, "Let's ask God first."

³⁷ So Saul asked God, "Should we go after the Philistines? Will you help us defeat them?" But God made no reply that day.

³⁸ Then Saul said to the leaders, "Something's wrong! I want all my army commanders to come here. We must find out what sin was committed today.

³⁹ I vow by the name of the LORD who rescued Israel that the sinner will surely die, even if it is my own son Jonathan!" But no one would tell him what the trouble was.

⁴⁰ Then Saul said, "Jonathan and I will stand over here, and all of you stand over there." And the people agreed.

⁴¹ Then Saul prayed, "O LORD, God of Israel, please show us who is guilty and who is innocent. Are Jonathan and I guilty, or is the sin among the others?" And Jonathan and Saul were chosen as the guilty ones, and the people were declared innocent.

⁴² Then Saul said, "Now choose between me and Jonathan." And Jonathan was shown to be the guilty one.

⁴³ "Tell me what you have done," Saul demanded of Jonathan. "I tasted a little honey," Jonathan admitted. "It was only a little bit on the end of a stick. Does that deserve death?"

⁴⁴ "Yes, Jonathan," Saul said, "you must die! May God strike me dead if you are not executed for this."

⁴⁵ But the people broke in and said to Saul, "Should Jonathan, who saved Israel today, die? Far from it! As surely as the LORD lives, not one hair on his head will be touched, for he has been used of God to do a mighty miracle today." So the people rescued Jonathan, and he was not put to death.

⁴⁶ Then Saul called back the army from chasing the Philistines, and the Philistines returned home.

⁴⁷ Now when Saul had secured his grasp on Israel's throne, he fought against his enemies in every direction—against Moab, Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. And wherever he turned, he was victorious.

⁴⁸ He did great deeds and conquered the Amalekites, saving Israel from all those who had plundered them.

⁴⁹ Saul's sons included Jonathan, Ishbosheth, and Malkishua. He also had

two daughters: Merab, who was older, and Michal.

⁵⁰ Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. The commander of Saul's army was his cousin Abner, his uncle Ner's son.

⁵¹ Abner's father, Ner, and Saul's father, Kish, were brothers; both were sons of Abiel.

⁵² The Israelites fought constantly with the Philistines throughout Saul's lifetime. So whenever Saul saw a young man who was brave and strong, he drafted him into his army.

15 ¹ One day Samuel said to Saul, "I anointed you king of Israel because the LORD told me to. Now listen to this message from the LORD!

² This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I have decided to settle accounts with the nation of Amalek for opposing Israel when they came from Egypt.

³ Now go and completely destroy the entire Amalekite nation—men, women, children, babies, cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys.’”

⁴ So Saul mobilized his army at Telaim. There were 200,000 troops in addition to 10,000 men from Judah.

⁵ Then Saul went to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley.

⁶ Saul sent this message to the Kenites: "Move away from where the Amalekites live or else you will die with them. For you were kind to the people of Israel when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites packed up and left.

⁷ Then Saul slaughtered the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, east of Egypt.

⁸ He captured Agag, the Amalekite king, but completely destroyed everyone else.

⁹ Saul and his men spared Agag’s life and kept the best of the sheep and cattle,

the fat calves and lambs—everything, in fact, that appealed to them. They destroyed only what was worthless or of poor quality.

¹⁰ Then the LORD said to Samuel,

¹¹ "I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he has not been loyal to me and has again refused to obey me." Samuel was so deeply moved when he heard this that he cried out to the LORD all night.

¹² Early the next morning Samuel went to find Saul. Someone told him, "Saul went to Carmel to set up a monument to himself; then he went on to Gilgal."

¹³ When Samuel finally found him, Saul greeted him cheerfully. "May the LORD bless you," he said. "I have carried out the LORD's command!"

¹⁴ "Then what is all the bleating of sheep and lowing of cattle I hear?" Samuel demanded.

¹⁵ "It's true that the army spared the best of the sheep and cattle," Saul admitted. "But they are going to sacrifice them to the LORD your God. We have destroyed everything else."

¹⁶ Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! Listen to what the LORD told me last night!" "What was it?" Saul asked.

¹⁷ And Samuel told him, "Although you may think little of yourself, are you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD has anointed you king of Israel.

¹⁸ And the LORD sent you on a mission and told you, 'Go and completely destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, until they are all dead.'

¹⁹ Why haven't you obeyed the LORD? Why did you rush for the plunder and do exactly what the LORD said not to do?"

²⁰ "But I did obey the LORD," Saul insisted. "I carried out the mission he

gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else.

²¹ Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep and cattle and plunder to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

²² But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams.

²³ Rebellion is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you from being king."

²⁴ Then Saul finally admitted, "Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the LORD's command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded.

²⁵ Oh, please, forgive my sin now and go with me to worship the LORD."

²⁶ But Samuel replied, "I will not return with you! Since you have rejected the LORD's command, he has rejected you from being the king of Israel."

²⁷ As Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed at him to try to hold him back and tore his robe.

²⁸ And Samuel said to him, "See? The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to someone else—one who is better than you.

²⁹ And he who is the Glory of Israel will not lie, nor will he change his mind, for he is not human that he should change his mind!"

³⁰ Then Saul pleaded again, "I know I have sinned. But please, at least honor me before the leaders and before my

people by going with me to worship the LORD your God."

³¹ So Samuel finally agreed and went with him, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

³² Then Samuel said, "Bring King Agag to me." Agag arrived full of smiles, for he thought, "Surely the worst is over, and I have been spared!"

³³ But Samuel said, "As your sword has killed the sons of many mothers, now your mother will be childless." And Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

³⁴ Then Samuel went home to Ramah, and Saul returned to his house at Gibeah.

³⁵ Samuel never went to meet with Saul again, but he mourned constantly for him. And the LORD was sorry he had ever made Saul king of Israel.

16 ¹ Finally, the LORD said to Samuel, "You have mourned long enough

for Saul. I have rejected him as king of Israel. Now fill your horn with olive oil and go to Bethlehem. Find a man named Jesse who lives there, for I have selected one of his sons to be my new king."

² But Samuel asked, "How can I do that? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me." "Take a heifer with you," the LORD replied, "and say that you have come to make a sacrifice to the LORD.

³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you which of his sons to anoint for me."

⁴ So Samuel did as the LORD instructed him. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the leaders of the town became afraid. "What's wrong?" they asked. "Do you come in peace?"

⁵ "Yes," Samuel replied. "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." Then Samuel performed the purification rite

for Jesse and his sons and invited them, too.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Surely this is the LORD's anointed!"

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at a person's thoughts and intentions."

⁸ Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "This is not the one the LORD has chosen."

⁹ Next Jesse summoned Shammah, but Samuel said, "Neither is this the one the LORD has chosen."

¹⁰ In the same way all seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But

Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these."

¹¹ Then Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep." "Send for him at once," Samuel said. "We will not sit down to eat until he arrives."

¹² So Jesse sent for him. He was ruddy and handsome, with pleasant eyes. And the LORD said, "This is the one; anoint him."

¹³ So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the olive oil he had brought and poured it on David's head. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah.

¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the LORD had left Saul, and the LORD sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear.

¹⁵ Some of Saul's servants suggested a remedy. "It is clear that a spirit from God is tormenting you," they said.

¹⁶ "Let us find a good musician to play the harp for you whenever the tormenting spirit is bothering you. The harp music will quiet you, and you will soon be well again."

¹⁷ "All right," Saul said. "Find me someone who plays well and bring him here."

¹⁸ One of the servants said to Saul, "The son of Jesse is a talented harp player. Not only that; he is brave and strong and has good judgment. He is also a fine-looking young man, and the LORD is with him."

¹⁹ So Saul sent messengers to Jesse to say, "Send me your son David, the shepherd."

²⁰ Jesse responded by sending David to Saul, along with a young goat and

a donkey loaded down with food and wine.

²¹ So David went to Saul and served him. Saul liked David very much, and David became one of Saul's armor bearers.

²² Then Saul sent word to Jesse asking, "Please let David join my staff, for I am very pleased with him."

²³ And whenever the tormenting spirit from God troubled Saul, David would play the harp. Then Saul would feel better, and the tormenting spirit would go away.

17 ¹ The Philistines now mustered their army for battle and camped between Socoh in Judah and Azekah at Ephes-dammim.

² Saul countered by gathering his troops near the valley of Elah.

³ So the Philistines and Israelites faced each other on opposite hills, with the valley between them.

⁴ Then Goliath, a Philistine champion from Gath, came out of the Philistine ranks to face the forces of Israel. He was a giant of a man, measuring over nine feet tall!

⁵ He wore a bronze helmet and a coat of mail that weighed 125 pounds.

⁶ He also wore bronze leggings, and he slung a bronze javelin over his back.

⁷ The shaft of his spear was as heavy and thick as a weaver's beam, tipped with an iron spearhead that weighed fifteen pounds. An armor bearer walked ahead of him carrying a huge shield.

⁸ Goliath stood and shouted across to the Israelites, "Do you need a whole army to settle this? Choose someone to fight for you, and I will represent the

Philistines. We will settle this dispute in single combat!

⁹ If your man is able to kill me, then we will be your slaves. But if I kill him, you will be our slaves!

¹⁰ I defy the armies of Israel! Send me a man who will fight with me!"

¹¹ When Saul and the Israelites heard this, they were terrified and deeply shaken.

¹² Now David was the son of a man named Jesse, an Ephrathite from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. Jesse was an old man at that time, and he had eight sons in all.

¹³ Jesse's three oldest sons—Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah—had already joined Saul's army to fight the Philistines.

¹⁴ David was the youngest of Jesse's sons. Since David's three oldest brothers were in the army, they stayed with Saul's forces all the time.

¹⁵ But David went back and forth between working for Saul and helping his father with the sheep in Bethlehem.

¹⁶ For forty days, twice a day, morning and evening, the Philistine giant strutted in front of the Israelite army.

¹⁷ One day Jesse said to David, "Take this half-bushel of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread to your brothers.

¹⁸ And give these ten cuts of cheese to their captain. See how your brothers are getting along, and bring me back a letter from them."

¹⁹ David's brothers were with Saul and the Israelite army at the valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines.

²⁰ So David left the sheep with another shepherd and set out early the next morning with the gifts. He arrived at the outskirts of the camp just as the Israelite

army was leaving for the battlefield with shouts and battle cries.

²¹ Soon the Israelite and Philistine forces stood facing each other, army against army.

²² David left his things with the keeper of supplies and hurried out to the ranks to greet his brothers.

²³ As he was talking with them, he saw Goliath, the champion from Gath, come out from the Philistine ranks, shouting his challenge to the army of Israel.

²⁴ As soon as the Israelite army saw him, they began to run away in fright.

²⁵ "Have you seen the giant?" the men were asking. "He comes out each day to challenge Israel. And have you heard about the huge reward the king has offered to anyone who kills him? The king will give him one of his daughters for a wife, and his whole family will be exempted from paying taxes!"

²⁶ David talked to some others standing there to verify the report. "What will a man get for killing this Philistine and putting an end to his abuse of Israel?" he asked them. "Who is this pagan Philistine anyway, that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God?"

²⁷ And David received the same reply as before: "What you have been hearing is true. That is the reward for killing the giant."

²⁸ But when David's oldest brother, Eliab, heard David talking to the men, he was angry. "What are you doing around here anyway?" he demanded. "What about those few sheep you're supposed to be taking care of? I know about your pride and dishonesty. You just want to see the battle!"

²⁹ "What have I done now?" David replied. "I was only asking a question!"

³⁰ He walked over to some others and asked them the same thing and received the same answer.

³¹ Then David's question was reported to King Saul, and the king sent for him.

³² "Don't worry about a thing," David told Saul. "I'll go fight this Philistine!"

³³ "Don't be ridiculous!" Saul replied. "There is no way you can go against this Philistine. You are only a boy, and he has been in the army since he was a boy!"

³⁴ But David persisted. "I have been taking care of my father's sheep," he said. "When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock,

³⁵ I go after it with a club and take the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death.

³⁶ I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan

Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God!

³⁷ The LORD who saved me from the claws of the lion and the bear will save me from this Philistine!" Saul finally consented. "All right, go ahead," he said. "And may the LORD be with you!"

³⁸ Then Saul gave David his own armor—a bronze helmet and a coat of mail.

³⁹ David put it on, strapped the sword over it, and took a step or two to see what it was like, for he had never worn such things before. "I can't go in these," he protested. "I'm not used to them." So he took them off again.

⁴⁰ He picked up five smooth stones from a stream and put them in his shepherd's bag. Then, armed only with his shepherd's staff and sling, he started across to fight Goliath.

⁴¹ Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him,
⁴² sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy.

⁴³ "Am I a dog," he roared at David, "that you come at me with a stick?" And he cursed David by the names of his gods.

⁴⁴ "Come over here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!" Goliath yelled.

⁴⁵ David shouted in reply, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD Almighty—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

⁴⁶ Today the LORD will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel!

⁴⁷ And everyone will know that the LORD does not need weapons to rescue his people. It is his battle, not ours. The LORD will give you to us!"

⁴⁸ As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him.

⁴⁹ Reaching into his shepherd's bag and taking out a stone, he hurled it from his sling and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell face downward to the ground.

⁵⁰ So David triumphed over the Philistine giant with only a stone and sling. And since he had no sword,

⁵¹ he ran over and pulled Goliath's sword from its sheath. David used it to kill the giant and cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they turned and ran.

⁵² Then the Israelites gave a great shout of triumph and rushed after the

Philistines, chasing them as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron. The bodies of the dead and wounded Philistines were strewn all along the road from Shaaraim, as far as Gath and Ekron.

⁵³ Then the Israelite army returned and plundered the deserted Philistine camp.

⁵⁴ (David took Goliath's head to Jerusalem, but he stored the Philistine's armor in his own tent.)

⁵⁵ As Saul watched David go out to fight Goliath, he asked Abner, the general of his army, "Abner, whose son is he?" "I really don't know," Abner said.

⁵⁶ "Well, find out!" the king told him.

⁵⁷ After David had killed Goliath, Abner brought him to Saul with the Philistine's head still in his hand.

⁵⁸ "Tell me about your father, my boy," Saul said. And David replied, "His name is Jesse, and we live in Bethlehem."

18 ¹ After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond of love between them, and they became the best of friends.

² From that day on Saul kept David with him at the palace and wouldn't let him return home.

³ And Jonathan made a special vow to be David's friend,

⁴ and he sealed the pact by giving him his robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt.

⁵ Whatever Saul asked David to do, David did it successfully. So Saul made him a commander in his army, an appointment that was applauded by the fighting men and officers alike.

⁶ But something happened when the victorious Israelite army was returning home after David had killed Goliath. Women came out from all the towns along the way to celebrate and to cheer

for King Saul, and they sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals.

⁷ This was their song: "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands!"

⁸ This made Saul very angry. "What's this?" he said. "They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they'll be making him their king!"

⁹ So from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

¹⁰ The very next day, in fact, a tormenting spirit from God overwhelmed Saul, and he began to rave like a madman. David began to play the harp, as he did whenever this happened. But Saul, who had a spear in his hand,

¹¹ suddenly hurled it at David, intending to pin him to the wall. But David jumped

aside and escaped. This happened another time, too,

¹² for Saul was afraid of him, and he was jealous because the LORD had left him and was now with David.

¹³ Finally, Saul banned him from his presence and appointed him commander over only a thousand men, but David faithfully led his troops into battle.

¹⁴ David continued to succeed in everything he did, for the LORD was with him.

¹⁵ When Saul recognized this, he became even more afraid of him.

¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David because he was so successful at leading his troops into battle.

¹⁷ One day Saul said to David, "I am ready to give you my older daughter, Merab, as your wife. But first you must prove yourself to be a real warrior by

fighting the LORD's battles." For Saul thought to himself, "I'll send him out against the Philistines and let them kill him rather than doing it myself."

¹⁸ "Who am I, and what is my family in Israel that I should be the king's son-in-law?" David exclaimed. "My father's family is nothing!"

¹⁹ So when the time came for the wedding, Saul gave Merab in marriage to Adriel, a man from Meholah.

²⁰ In the meantime, Saul's daughter Michal had fallen in love with David, and Saul was delighted when he heard about it.

²¹ "Here's another chance to see him killed by the Philistines!" Saul said to himself. But to David he said, "I have a way for you to become my son-in-law after all!"

²² Then Saul told his men to say confidentially to David, "The king really

likes you, and so do we. Why don't you accept the king's offer and become his son-in-law?"

²³ When Saul's men said these things to David, he replied, "How can a poor man from a humble family afford the bride price for the daughter of a king?"

²⁴ When Saul's men reported this back to the king,

²⁵ he told them, "Tell David that all I want for the bride price is one hundred Philistine foreskins! Vengeance on my enemies is all I really want." But what Saul had in mind was that David would be killed in the fight.

²⁶ David was delighted to accept the offer. So before the time limit expired,

²⁷ he and his men went out and killed two hundred Philistines and presented all their foreskins to the king. So Saul gave Michal to David to be his wife.

²⁸ When the king realized how much the LORD was with David and how much Michal loved him,

²⁹ he became even more afraid of him, and he remained David's enemy for the rest of his life.

³⁰ Whenever the Philistine army attacked, David was more successful against them than all the rest of Saul's officers. So David's name became very famous throughout the land.

19 ¹ Saul now urged his servants and his son Jonathan to assassinate David. But Jonathan, because of his close friendship with David,

² told him what his father was planning. "Tomorrow morning," he warned him, "you must find a hiding place out in the fields.

³ I'll ask my father to go out there with me, and I'll talk to him about you. Then I'll tell you everything I can find out."

⁴ The next morning Jonathan spoke with his father about David, saying many good things about him. "Please don't sin against David," Jonathan pleaded. "He's never done anything to harm you. He has always helped you in any way he could.

⁵ Have you forgotten about the time he risked his life to kill the Philistine giant and how the LORD brought a great victory to Israel as a result? You were certainly happy about it then. Why should you murder an innocent man like David? There is no reason for it at all!"

⁶ So Saul listened to Jonathan and vowed, "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be killed."

⁷ Afterward Jonathan called David and told him what had happened. Then he took David to see Saul, and everything was as it had been before.

⁸ War broke out shortly after that, and David led his troops against the Philistines. He attacked them with such fury that they all ran away.

⁹ But one day as Saul was sitting at home, the tormenting spirit from the LORD suddenly came upon him again. As David played his harp for the king,

¹⁰ Saul hurled his spear at David in an attempt to kill him. But David dodged out of the way and escaped into the night, leaving the spear stuck in the wall.

¹¹ Then Saul sent troops to watch David's house. They were told to kill David when he came out the next morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, "If you don't get away tonight, you will be dead by morning."

¹² So she helped him climb out through a window, and he escaped.

¹³ Then she took an idol and put it in his bed, covered it with blankets, and put a cushion of goat's hair at its head.

¹⁴ When the troops came to arrest David, she told them he was sick and couldn't get out of bed.

¹⁵ "Then bring him to me in his bed," Saul ordered, "so I can kill him as he lies there!" And he sent them back to David's house.

¹⁶ But when they came to carry David out, they discovered that it was only an idol in the bed with a cushion of goat's hair at its head.

¹⁷ "Why have you tricked me and let my enemy escape?" Saul demanded of Michal. "I had to," Michal replied. "He threatened to kill me if I didn't help him."

¹⁸ So David got away and went to Ramah to see Samuel, and he told him all that Saul had done to him. Then

Samuel took David with him to live at Naioth.

¹⁹ When the report reached Saul that David was at Naioth in Ramah,

²⁰ he sent troops to capture him. But when they arrived and saw Samuel and the other prophets prophesying, the Spirit of God came upon Saul's men, and they also began to prophesy.

²¹ When Saul heard what had happened, he sent other troops, but they, too, prophesied! The same thing happened a third time!

²² Finally, Saul himself went to Ramah and arrived at the great well in Secu. "Where are Samuel and David?" he demanded. "They are at Naioth in Ramah," someone told him.

²³ But on the way to Naioth the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and he, too, began to prophesy!

²⁴ He tore off his clothes and lay on the ground all day and all night, prophesying in the presence of Samuel. The people who were watching exclaimed, "What? Is Saul a prophet, too?"

20 ¹ David now fled from Naioth in Ramah and found Jonathan. "What have I done?" he exclaimed. "What is my crime? How have I offended your father that he is so determined to kill me?"

² "That's not true!" Jonathan protested. "I'm sure he's not planning any such thing, for he always tells me everything he's going to do, even the little things. I know he wouldn't hide something like this from me. It just isn't so!"

³ Then David took an oath before Jonathan and said, "Your father knows perfectly well about our friendship, so he has said to himself, 'I won't tell Jonathan—why should I hurt him?' But I

swear to you that I am only a step away from death! I swear it by the LORD and by your own soul!"

⁴ "Tell me what I can do!" Jonathan exclaimed.

⁵ David replied, "Tomorrow we celebrate the new moon festival. I've always eaten with your father on this occasion, but tomorrow I'll hide in the field and stay there until the evening of the third day.

⁶ If your father asks where I am, tell him I asked permission to go home to Bethlehem for an annual family sacrifice.

⁷ If he says, 'Fine!' then you will know all is well. But if he is angry and loses his temper, then you will know he was planning to kill me.

⁸ Show me this kindness as my sworn friend—for we made a covenant together before the LORD—or kill me yourself if I have sinned against your

father. But please don't betray me to him!"

⁹ "Never!" Jonathan exclaimed. "You know that if I had the slightest notion my father was planning to kill you, I would tell you at once."

¹⁰ Then David asked, "How will I know whether or not your father is angry?"

¹¹ "Come out to the field with me," Jonathan replied. And they went out there together.

¹² Then Jonathan told David, "I promise by the LORD, the God of Israel, that by this time tomorrow, or the next day at the latest, I will talk to my father and let you know at once how he feels about you. If he speaks favorably about you, I will let you know.

¹³ But if he is angry and wants you killed, may the LORD kill me if I don't warn you so you can escape and live.

May the LORD be with you as he used to be with my father.

¹⁴ And may you treat me with the faithful love of the LORD as long as I live. But if I die,

¹⁵ treat my family with this faithful love, even when the LORD destroys all your enemies."

¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with David, saying, "May the LORD destroy all your enemies!"

¹⁷ And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself.

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said, "Tomorrow we celebrate the new moon festival. You will be missed when your place at the table is empty.

¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid before, and wait there by the stone pile.

²⁰ I will come out and shoot three arrows to the side of the stone pile as though I were shooting at a target.

²¹ Then I will send a boy to bring the arrows back. If you hear me tell him, 'They're on this side,' then you will know, as surely as the LORD lives, that all is well, and there is no trouble.

²² But if I tell him, 'Go farther—the arrows are still ahead of you,' then it will mean that you must leave immediately, for the LORD is sending you away.

²³ And may the LORD make us keep our promises to each other, for he has witnessed them."

²⁴ So David hid himself in the field, and when the new moon festival began, the king sat down to eat.

²⁵ He sat at his usual place against the wall, with Jonathan sitting opposite him and Abner beside him. But David's place was empty.

²⁶ Saul didn't say anything about it that day, for he said to himself, "Something must have made David ceremonially unclean. Yes, that must be why he's not here."

²⁷ But when David's place was empty again the next day, Saul asked Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse been here for dinner either yesterday or today?"

²⁸ Jonathan replied, "David earnestly asked me if he could go to Bethlehem.

²⁹ He wanted to take part in a family sacrifice. His brother demanded that he be there, so I told him he could go. That's why he isn't here."

³⁰ Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. "You stupid son of a whore!" he swore at him. "Do you think I don't know that you want David to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother?"

³¹ As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!"

³² "But what has he done?" Jonathan demanded. "Why should he be put to death?"

³³ Then Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan, intending to kill him. So at last Jonathan realized that his father was really determined to kill David.

³⁴ Jonathan left the table in fierce anger and refused to eat all that day, for he was crushed by his father's shameful behavior toward David.

³⁵ The next morning, as agreed, Jonathan went out into the field and took a young boy with him to gather his arrows.

³⁶ "Start running," he told the boy, "so you can find the arrows as I shoot them." So the boy ran, and Jonathan shot an arrow beyond him.

³⁷ When the boy had almost reached the arrow, Jonathan shouted, "The arrow is still ahead of you.

³⁸ Hurry, hurry, don't wait." So the boy quickly gathered up the arrows and ran back to his master.

³⁹ He, of course, didn't understand what Jonathan meant; only Jonathan and David knew.

⁴⁰ Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and told him to take them back to the city.

⁴¹ As soon as the boy was gone, David came out from where he had been hiding near the stone pile. Then David bowed to Jonathan with his face to the ground. Both of them were in tears as they embraced each other and said good-bye, especially David.

⁴² At last Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have made a pact in the LORD's name. We have entrusted each

other and each other's children into the LORD's hands forever." Then David left, and Jonathan returned to the city.

21 ¹ David went to the city of Nob to see Ahimelech the priest.

Ahimelech trembled when he saw him.

"Why are you alone?" he asked. "Why is no one with you?"

² "The king has sent me on a private matter," David said. "He told me not to tell anyone why I am here. I have told my men where to meet me later.

³ Now, what is there to eat? Give me five loaves of bread or anything else you have."

⁴ "We don't have any regular bread," the priest replied. "But there is the holy bread, which I guess you can have if your young men have not slept with any women recently."

⁵ "Don't worry," David replied. "I never allow my men to be with women when

they are on a campaign. And since they stay clean even on ordinary trips, how much more on this one!"

⁶ So, since there was no other food available, the priest gave him the holy bread—the Bread of the Presence that was placed before the LORD in the Tabernacle. It had just been replaced that day with fresh bread.

⁷ Now Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman, was there that day for ceremonial purification.

⁸ David asked Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or sword? The king's business was so urgent that I didn't even have time to grab a weapon!"

⁹ "I only have the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah," the priest replied. "It is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. Take that if you want it, for there is

nothing else here." "There is nothing like it!" David replied. "Give it to me!"

¹⁰ So David escaped from Saul and went to King Achish of Gath.

¹¹ But Achish's officers weren't happy about his being there. "Isn't this David, the king of the land?" they asked.

"Isn't he the one the people honor with dances, singing, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?"

¹² David heard these comments and was afraid of what King Achish might do to him.

¹³ So he pretended to be insane, scratching on doors and drooling down his beard.

¹⁴ Finally, King Achish said to his men, "Must you bring me a madman?"

¹⁵ We already have enough of them around here! Why should I let someone like this be my guest?"

22 ¹ So David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. Soon his brothers and other relatives joined him there.

² Then others began coming—men who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented—until David was the leader of about four hundred men.

³ Later David went to Mizpeh in Moab, where he asked the king, "Would you let my father and mother live here under royal protection until I know what God is going to do for me?"

⁴ The king agreed, and David's parents stayed in Moab while David was living in his stronghold.

⁵ One day the prophet Gad told David, "Leave the stronghold and return to the land of Judah." So David went to the forest of Hereth.

⁶ The news of his arrival in Judah soon reached Saul. At the time, the king was

sitting beneath a tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, holding his spear and surrounded by his officers.

⁷ "Listen here, you men of Benjamin!" Saul shouted when he heard the news. "Has David promised you fields and vineyards? Has he promised to make you commanders in his army?"

⁸ Is that why you have conspired against me? For not one of you has ever told me that my own son is on David's side. You're not even sorry for me. Think of it! My own son—encouraging David to try and kill me!"

⁹ Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing there with Saul's men, spoke up. "When I was at Nob," he said, "I saw David talking to Ahimelech the priest.

¹⁰ Ahimelech consulted the LORD to find out what David should do. Then he gave David food and the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

¹¹ King Saul immediately sent for Ahimelech and all his family, who served as priests at Nob.

¹² When they arrived, Saul shouted at him, "Listen to me, you son of Ahitub!" "What is it, my king?" Ahimelech asked.

¹³ "Why have you and David conspired against me?" Saul demanded. "Why did you give him food and a sword? Why have you inquired of God for him? Why did you encourage him to revolt against me and to come here and attack me?"

¹⁴ "But sir," Ahimelech replied, "is there anyone among all your servants who is as faithful as David, your son-in-law? Why, he is the captain of your bodyguard and a highly honored member of your household!

¹⁵ This was certainly not the first time I had consulted God for him! Please don't accuse me and my family in this matter,

for I knew nothing of any plot against you."

¹⁶ "You will surely die, Ahimelech, along with your entire family!" the king shouted.

¹⁷ And he ordered his bodyguards, "Kill these priests of the LORD, for they are allies and conspirators with David! They knew he was running away from me, but they didn't tell me!" But Saul's men refused to kill the LORD's priests.

¹⁸ Then the king said to Doeg, "You do it." So Doeg turned on them and killed them, eighty-five priests in all, all still wearing their priestly tunics.

¹⁹ Then he went to Nob, the city of the priests, and killed the priests' families—men and women, children and babies, and all the cattle, donkeys, and sheep.

²⁰ Only Abiathar, one of the sons of Ahimelech, escaped and fled to David.

²¹ When he told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD,

²² David exclaimed, "I knew it! When I saw Doeg there that day, I knew he would tell Saul. Now I have caused the death of all your father's family.

²³ Stay here with me, and I will protect you with my own life, for the same person wants to kill us both."

23 ¹ One day news came to David that the Philistines were at Keilah stealing grain from the threshing floors.

² David asked the LORD, "Should I go and attack them?" "Yes, go and save Keilah," the LORD told him.

³ But David's men said, "We're afraid even here in Judah. We certainly don't want to go to Keilah to fight the whole Philistine army!"

⁴ So David asked the LORD again, and again the LORD replied, "Go down to

Keilah, for I will help you conquer the Philistines."

⁵ So David and his men went to Keilah. They slaughtered the Philistines and took all their livestock and rescued the people of Keilah.

⁶ Abiathar the priest went to Keilah with David, taking the ephod with him to get answers for David from the LORD.

⁷ Saul soon learned that David was at Keilah. "Good!" he exclaimed. "We've got him now! God has handed him over to me, for he has trapped himself in a walled city!"

⁸ So Saul mobilized his entire army to march to Keilah and attack David and his men.

⁹ But David learned of Saul's plan and told Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod and ask the LORD what he should do.

¹⁰ And David prayed, "O LORD, God of Israel, I have heard that Saul is planning to come and destroy Keilah because I am here.

¹¹ Will the men of Keilah surrender me to him? And will Saul actually come as I have heard? O LORD, God of Israel, please tell me." And the LORD said, "He will come."

¹² Again David asked, "Will these men of Keilah really betray me and my men to Saul?" And the LORD replied, "Yes, they will betray you."

¹³ So David and his men—about six hundred of them now—left Keilah and began roaming the countryside. Word soon reached Saul that David had escaped, so he didn't go to Keilah after all.

¹⁴ David now stayed in the strongholds of the wilderness and in the hill country

of Ziph. Saul hunted him day after day, but God didn't let him be found.

¹⁵ One day near Horesh, David received the news that Saul was on the way to Ziph to search for him and kill him.

¹⁶ Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God.

¹⁷ "Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father is well aware."

¹⁸ So the two of them renewed their covenant of friendship before the LORD. Then Jonathan returned home, while David stayed at Horesh.

¹⁹ But now the men of Ziph went to Saul in Gibeah and betrayed David to him. "We know where David is hiding," they said. "He is in the strongholds of

Horesh on the hill of Hakilah, which is in the southern part of Jeshimon.

²⁰ Come down whenever you're ready, O king, and we will catch him and hand him over to you!"

²¹ "The LORD bless you," Saul said. "At last someone is concerned about me!"

²² Go and check again to be sure of where he is staying and who has seen him there, for I know that he is very crafty.

²³ Discover his hiding places, and come back with a more definite report. Then I'll go with you. And if he is in the area at all, I'll track him down, even if I have to search every hiding place in Judah!"

²⁴ So the men of Ziph returned home ahead of Saul. Meanwhile, David and his men had moved into the wilderness of Maon in the Arabah Valley south of Jeshimon.

²⁵ When David heard that Saul and his men were searching for him, he went even farther into the wilderness to the great rock, and he remained there in the wilderness of Maon. But Saul kept after him.

²⁶ He and David were now on opposite sides of a mountain. Just as Saul and his men began to close in on David and his men,

²⁷ an urgent message reached Saul that the Philistines were raiding Israel again.

²⁸ So Saul quit the chase and returned to fight the Philistines. Ever since that time, the place where David was camped has been called the Rock of Escape.

²⁹ David then went to live in the strongholds of En-gedi.

24 ¹ After Saul returned from fighting the Philistines, he was told that David had gone into the wilderness of En-gedi.

² So Saul chose three thousand special troops from throughout Israel and went to search for David and his men near the rocks of the wild goats.

³ At the place where the road passes some sheepfolds, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. But as it happened, David and his men were hiding in that very cave!

⁴ "Now's your opportunity!" David's men whispered to him. "Today is the day the LORD was talking about when he said, 'I will certainly put Saul into your power, to do with as you wish.'" Then David crept forward and cut off a piece of Saul's robe.

⁵ But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe.

⁶ "The LORD knows I shouldn't have done it," he said to his men. "It is a serious thing to attack the LORD's

anointed one, for the LORD himself has chosen him."

⁷ So David sharply rebuked his men and did not let them kill Saul. After Saul had left the cave and gone on his way,

⁸ David came out and shouted after him, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked around, David bowed low before him.

⁹ Then he shouted to Saul, "Why do you listen to the people who say I am trying to harm you?"

¹⁰ This very day you can see with your own eyes it isn't true. For the LORD placed you at my mercy back there in the cave, and some of my men told me to kill you, but I spared you. For I said, 'I will never harm him—he is the LORD's anointed one.'

¹¹ Look, my father, at what I have in my hand. It is a piece of your robe! I cut it off, but I didn't kill you. This proves

that I am not trying to harm you and that I have not sinned against you, even though you have been hunting for me to kill me.

¹² The LORD will decide between us. Perhaps the LORD will punish you for what you are trying to do to me, but I will never harm you.

¹³ As that old proverb says, 'From evil people come evil deeds.' So you can be sure I will never harm you.

¹⁴ Who is the king of Israel trying to catch anyway? Should he spend his time chasing one who is as worthless as a dead dog or a flea?

¹⁵ May the LORD judge which of us is right and punish the guilty one. He is my advocate, and he will rescue me from your power!"

¹⁶ Saul called back, "Is that really you, my son David?" Then he began to cry.

¹⁷ And he said to David, "You are a better man than I am, for you have repaid me good for evil.

¹⁸ Yes, you have been wonderfully kind to me today, for when the LORD put me in a place where you could have killed me, you didn't do it.

¹⁹ Who else would let his enemy get away when he had him in his power? May the LORD reward you well for the kindness you have shown me today.

²⁰ And now I realize that you are surely going to be king, and Israel will flourish under your rule.

²¹ Now, swear to me by the LORD that when that happens you will not kill my family and destroy my line of descendants!"

²² So David promised, and Saul went home. But David and his men went back to their stronghold.

25 ¹ Now Samuel died, and all Israel gathered for his funeral. They buried him near his home at Ramah. Then David moved down to the wilderness of Maon.

² There was a wealthy man from Maon who owned property near the village of Carmel. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, and it was sheep–shearing time.

³ This man’s name was Nabal, and his wife, Abigail, was a sensible and beautiful woman. But Nabal, a descendant of Caleb, was mean and dishonest in all his dealings.

⁴ When David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep,

⁵ he sent ten of his young men to Carmel. He told them to deliver this message:

⁶ "Peace and prosperity to you, your family, and everything you own!

⁷ I am told that you are shearing your sheep and goats. While your shepherds stayed among us near Carmel, we never harmed them, and nothing was ever stolen from them.

⁸ Ask your own servants, and they will tell you this is true. So would you please be kind to us, since we have come at a time of celebration? Please give us any provisions you might have on hand."

⁹ David's young men gave this message to Nabal and waited for his reply.

¹⁰ "Who is this fellow David?" Nabal sneered. "Who does this son of Jesse think he is? There are lots of servants these days who run away from their masters.

¹¹ Should I take my bread and water and the meat I've slaughtered for my shearers and give it to a band of outlaws who come from who knows where?"

¹² So David's messengers returned and told him what Nabal had said.

¹³ "Get your swords!" was David's reply as he strapped on his own. Four hundred men started off with David, and two hundred remained behind to guard their equipment.

¹⁴ Meanwhile, one of Nabal's servants went to Abigail and told her, "David sent men from the wilderness to talk to our master, and he insulted them.

¹⁵ But David's men were very good to us, and we never suffered any harm from them. Nothing was stolen from us the whole time they were with us.

¹⁶ In fact, day and night they were like a wall of protection to us and the sheep.

¹⁷ You'd better think fast, for there is going to be trouble for our master and his whole family. He's so ill-tempered that no one can even talk to him!"

¹⁸ Abigail lost no time. She quickly gathered two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, nearly a bushel of roasted grain, one hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred fig cakes. She packed them on donkeys and said to her servants,

¹⁹ "Go on ahead. I will follow you shortly." But she didn't tell her husband what she was doing.

²⁰ As she was riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, she saw David and his men coming toward her.

²¹ David had just been saying, "A lot of good it did to help this fellow. We protected his flocks in the wilderness, and nothing he owned was lost or stolen. But he has repaid me evil for good.

²² May God deal with me severely if even one man of his household is still alive tomorrow morning!"

²³ When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed low before him.

²⁴ She fell at his feet and said, "I accept all blame in this matter, my lord. Please listen to what I have to say.

²⁵ I know Nabal is a wicked and ill-tempered man; please don't pay any attention to him. He is a fool, just as his name suggests. But I never even saw the messengers you sent.

²⁶ "Now, my lord, as surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, since the LORD has kept you from murdering and taking vengeance into your own hands, let all your enemies be as cursed as Nabal is.

²⁷ And here is a present I have brought to you and your young men.

²⁸ Please forgive me if I have offended in any way. The LORD will surely reward you with a lasting dynasty, for you are

fighting the LORD's battles. And you have not done wrong throughout your entire life.

²⁹ "Even when you are chased by those who seek your life, you are safe in the care of the LORD your God, secure in his treasure pouch! But the lives of your enemies will disappear like stones shot from a sling!

³⁰ When the LORD has done all he promised and has made you leader of Israel,

³¹ don't let this be a blemish on your record. Then you won't have to carry on your conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed and vengeance. And when the LORD has done these great things for you, please remember me!"

³² David replied to Abigail, "Praise the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you to meet me today!

³³ Thank God for your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murdering the man and carrying out vengeance with my own hands.

³⁴ For I swear by the LORD, the God of Israel, who has kept me from hurting you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal's men would be alive tomorrow morning."

³⁵ Then David accepted her gifts and told her, "Return home in peace. We will not kill your husband."

³⁶ When Abigail arrived home, she found that Nabal had thrown a big party and was celebrating like a king. He was very drunk, so she didn't tell him anything about her meeting with David until the next morning.

³⁷ The next morning when he was sober, she told him what had happened. As a result he had a stroke, and he lay on his bed paralyzed.

³⁸ About ten days later, the LORD struck him and he died.

³⁹ When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise the LORD, who has paid back Nabal and kept me from doing it myself. Nabal has received the punishment for his sin." Then David wasted no time in sending messengers to Abigail to ask her to become his wife.

⁴⁰ When the messengers arrived at Carmel, they told Abigail, "David has sent us to ask if you will marry him."

⁴¹ She bowed low to the ground and responded, "Yes, I am even willing to become a slave to David's servants!"

⁴² Quickly getting ready, she took along five of her servant girls as attendants, mounted her donkey, and went with David's messengers. And so she became his wife.

⁴³ David also married Ahinoam from Jezreel, making both of them his wives.

⁴⁴ Saul, meanwhile, had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to a man from Gallim named Palti son of Laish.

26 ¹ Now some messengers from Ziph came back to Saul at Gibeah to tell him, "David is hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which overlooks Jeshimon."

² So Saul took three thousand of his best troops and went to hunt him down in the wilderness of Ziph.

³ Saul camped along the road beside the hill of Hakilah, near Jeshimon, where David was hiding. But David knew of Saul's arrival,

⁴ so he sent out spies to watch his movements.

⁵ David slipped over to Saul's camp one night to look around. Saul and his general, Abner son of Ner, were sleeping inside a ring formed by the slumbering warriors.

⁶ "Will anyone volunteer to go in there with me?" David asked Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother. "I'll go with you," Abishai replied.

⁷ So David and Abishai went right into Saul's camp and found him asleep, with his spear stuck in the ground beside his head. Abner and the warriors were lying asleep around him.

⁸ "God has surely handed your enemy over to you this time!" Abishai whispered to David. "Let me thrust that spear through him. I'll pin him to the ground, and I won't need to strike twice!"

⁹ "No!" David said. "Don't kill him. For who can remain innocent after attacking the LORD's anointed one?"

¹⁰ Surely the LORD will strike Saul down someday, or he will die in battle or of old age.

¹¹ But the LORD forbid that I should kill the one he has anointed! But I'll tell you what—we'll take his spear and his jug of water and then get out of here!"

¹² So David took the spear and jug of water that were near Saul's head. Then he and Abishai got away without anyone seeing them or even waking up, because the LORD had put Saul's men into a deep sleep.

¹³ David climbed the hill opposite the camp until he was at a safe distance.

¹⁴ Then he shouted down to Abner and Saul, "Wake up, Abner!" "Who is it?" Abner demanded.

¹⁵ "Well, Abner, you're a great man, aren't you?" David taunted. "Where in all Israel is there anyone as mighty? So why haven't you guarded your master the king when someone came to kill him?"

¹⁶ This isn't good at all! I swear by the LORD that you and your men deserve to die, because you failed to protect your master, the LORD's anointed! Look around! Where are the king's spear and the jug of water that were beside his head?"

¹⁷ Saul recognized David's voice and called out, "Is that you, my son David?" And David replied, "Yes, my lord the king.

¹⁸ Why are you chasing me? What have I done? What is my crime?

¹⁹ But now let my lord the king listen to his servant. If the LORD has stirred you up against me, then let him accept my offering. But if this is simply a human scheme, then may those involved be cursed by the LORD. For you have driven me from my home, so I can no longer live among the LORD's people and worship as I should.

²⁰ Must I die on foreign soil, far from the presence of the LORD? Why has the king of Israel come out to search for a single flea? Why does he hunt me down like a partridge on the mountains?"

²¹ Then Saul confessed, "I have sinned. Come back home, my son, and I will no longer try to harm you, for you valued my life today. I have been a fool and very, very wrong."

²² "Here is your spear, O king," David replied. "Let one of your young men come over and get it."

²³ The LORD gives his own reward for doing good and for being loyal, and I refused to kill you even when the LORD placed you in my power, for you are the LORD's anointed one.

²⁴ Now may the LORD value my life, even as I have valued yours today. May he rescue me from all my troubles."

²⁵ And Saul said to David, "Blessings on you, my son David. You will do heroic deeds and be a great conqueror." Then David went away, and Saul returned home.

27 ¹ But David kept thinking to himself, "Someday Saul is going to get me. The best thing for me to do is escape to the Philistines. Then Saul will stop hunting for me, and I will finally be safe."

² So David took his six hundred men and their families and went to live at Gath under the protection of King Achish.

³ David brought his two wives along with him—Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow.

⁴ Word soon reached Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he stopped hunting for him.

⁵ One day David said to Achish, "If it is all right with you, we would rather live in

one of the country towns instead of here in the royal city."

⁶ So Achish gave him the town of Ziklag (which still belongs to the kings of Judah to this day),

⁷ and they lived there among the Philistines for a year and four months.

⁸ David and his men spent their time raiding the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites—people who had lived near Shur, along the road to Egypt, since ancient times.

⁹ David didn't leave one person alive in the villages he attacked. He took the sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels, and clothing before returning home to see King Achish.

¹⁰ "Where did you make your raid today?" Achish would ask. And David would reply, "Against the south of Judah, the Jerahmeelites, and the Kenites."

¹¹ No one was left alive to come to Gath and tell where he had really been. This happened again and again while he was living among the Philistines.

¹² Achish believed David and thought to himself, "By now the people of Israel must hate him bitterly. Now he will have to stay here and serve me forever!"

28 ¹ About that time the Philistines mustered their armies for another war with Israel. King Achish told David, "You and your men will be expected to join me in battle."

² "Very well!" David agreed. "Now you will see for yourself what we can do." Then Achish told David, "I will make you my personal bodyguard for life."

³ Meanwhile, Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him. He was buried in Ramah, his hometown. And Saul had banned all mediums and psychics from the land of Israel.

⁴ The Philistines set up their camp at Shunem, and Saul and the armies of Israel camped at Gilboa.

⁵ When Saul saw the vast Philistine army, he became frantic with fear.

⁶ He asked the LORD what he should do, but the LORD refused to answer him, either by dreams or by sacred lots or by the prophets.

⁷ Saul then said to his advisers, "Find a woman who is a medium, so I can go and ask her what to do." His advisers replied, "There is a medium at Endor."

⁸ So Saul disguised himself by wearing ordinary clothing instead of his royal robes. Then he went to the woman's home at night, accompanied by two of his men. "I have to talk to a man who has died," he said. "Will you call up his spirit for me?"

⁹ "Are you trying to get me killed?" the woman demanded. "You know that

Saul has expelled all the mediums and psychics from the land. Why are you setting a trap for me?"

¹⁰ But Saul took an oath in the name of the LORD and promised, "As surely as the LORD lives, nothing bad will happen to you for doing this."

¹¹ Finally, the woman said, "Well, whose spirit do you want me to call up?" "Call up Samuel," Saul replied.

¹² When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed, "You've deceived me! You are Saul!"

¹³ "Don't be afraid!" the king told her. "What do you see?" "I see a god coming up out of the earth," she said.

¹⁴ "What does he look like?" Saul asked. "He is an old man wrapped in a robe," she replied. Saul realized that it was Samuel, and he fell to the ground before him.

¹⁵ "Why have you disturbed me by calling me back?" Samuel asked. "Because I am in deep trouble," Saul replied. "The Philistines are at war with us, and God has left me and won't reply by prophets or dreams. So I have called for you to tell me what to do."

¹⁶ But Samuel replied, "Why ask me if the LORD has left you and has become your enemy?"

¹⁷ The LORD has done just as he said he would. He has taken the kingdom from you and given it to your rival, David.

¹⁸ The LORD has done this because you did not obey his instructions concerning the Amalekites.

¹⁹ What's more, the LORD will hand you and the army of Israel over to the Philistines tomorrow, and you and your sons will be here with me. The LORD will bring the entire army of Israel down in defeat."

²⁰ Saul fell full length on the ground, paralyzed with fright because of Samuel's words. He was also faint with hunger, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.

²¹ When the woman saw how distraught he was, she said, "Sir, I obeyed your command at the risk of my life.

²² Now do what I say, and let me give you something to eat so you can regain your strength for the trip back."

²³ But Saul refused. The men who were with him also urged him to eat, so he finally yielded and got up from the ground and sat on the couch.

²⁴ The woman had been fattening a calf, so she hurried out and killed it. She kneaded dough and baked unleavened bread.

²⁵ She brought the meal to Saul and his men, and they ate it. Then they went out into the night.

29 ¹ The entire Philistine army now mobilized at Aphek, and the Israelites camped at the spring in Jezreel.

² As the Philistine rulers were leading out their troops in groups of one hundred and one thousand, David and his men marched at the rear with King Achish.

³ But the Philistine commanders demanded, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish told them, "This is David, the man who ran away from King Saul of Israel. He's been with me for years, and I've never found a single fault in him since he defected to me."

⁴ But the Philistine commanders were angry. "Send him back!" they demanded. "He can't go into the battle with us. What if he turns against us? Is there any better way for him to reconcile himself

with his master than by turning on us in battle?

⁵ Isn't this the same David about whom the women of Israel sing in their dances, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?"

⁶ So Achish finally summoned David and his men. "I swear by the LORD," he told them, "you are some of the finest men I've ever met. I think you should go with us, but the other Philistine rulers won't hear of it.

⁷ Please don't upset them, but go back quietly."

⁸ "What have I done to deserve this treatment?" David demanded. "Why can't I fight the enemies of my lord, the king?"

⁹ But Achish insisted, "As far as I'm concerned, you're as perfect as an angel of God. But my commanders are afraid to have you with them in the battle.

¹⁰ Now get up early in the morning, and leave with your men as soon as it gets light."

¹¹ So David headed back into the land of the Philistines, while the Philistine army went on to Jezreel.

30 ¹ Three days later, when David and his men arrived home at their town of Ziklag, they found that the Amalekites had made a raid into the Negev and had burned Ziklag to the ground.

² They had carried off the women and children and everyone else but without killing anyone.

³ When David and his men saw the ruins and realized what had happened to their families,

⁴ they wept until they could weep no more.

⁵ David's two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel, were among those captured.

⁶ David was now in serious trouble because his men were very bitter about losing their wives and children, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the LORD his God.

⁷ Then he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring me the ephod!" So Abiathar brought it.

⁸ Then David asked the LORD, "Should I chase them? Will I catch them?" And the LORD told him, "Yes, go after them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you!"

⁹ So David and his six hundred men set out, and they soon came to Besor Brook.

¹⁰ But two hundred of the men were too exhausted to cross the brook, so David continued the pursuit with his four hundred remaining troops.

¹¹ Some of David's troops found an Egyptian man in a field and brought him to David. They gave him some bread to eat and some water to drink.

¹² They also gave him part of a fig cake and two clusters of raisins because he hadn't had anything to eat or drink for three days and nights. It wasn't long before his strength returned.

¹³ "To whom do you belong, and where do you come from?" David asked him. "I am an Egyptian—the slave of an Amalekite," he replied. "My master left me behind three days ago because I was sick.

¹⁴ We were on our way back from raiding the Kerethites in the Negev, the territory of Judah, and the land of Caleb, and we had just burned Ziklag."

¹⁵ "Will you lead me to them?" David asked. The young man replied, "If you swear by God's name that you will not

kill me or give me back to my master, then I will guide you to them."

¹⁶ So the Egyptian led them to the Amalekite encampment. When David and his men arrived, the Amalekites were spread out across the fields, eating and drinking and dancing with joy because of the vast amount of plunder they had taken from the Philistines and the land of Judah.

¹⁷ David and his men rushed in among them and slaughtered them throughout that night and the entire next day until evening. None of the Amalekites escaped except four hundred young men who fled on camels.

¹⁸ David got back everything the Amalekites had taken, and he rescued his two wives.

¹⁹ Nothing was missing: small or great, son or daughter, nor anything else

that had been taken. David brought everything back.

²⁰ His troops rounded up all the flocks and herds and drove them on ahead. "These all belong to David as his reward!" they said.

²¹ When they reached Besor Brook and met the two hundred men who had been too tired to go with them, David greeted them joyfully.

²² But some troublemakers among David's men said, "They didn't go with us, so they can't have any of the plunder. Give them their wives and children, and tell them to be gone."

²³ But David said, "No, my brothers! Don't be selfish with what the LORD has given us. He has kept us safe and helped us defeat the enemy.

²⁴ Do you think anyone will listen to you when you talk like this? We share and

share alike—those who go to battle and those who guard the equipment."

²⁵ From then on David made this a law for all of Israel, and it is still followed.

²⁶ When he arrived at Ziklag, David sent part of the plunder to the leaders of Judah, who were his friends. "Here is a present for you, taken from the LORD's enemies," he said.

²⁷ The gifts were sent to the leaders of the following towns where David and his men had been: Bethel, Ramoth–negev, Jattir,

²⁸ Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa,

²⁹ Racal, the towns of the Jerahmeelites, the towns of the Kenites,

³⁰ Hormah, Bor–ashan, Athach,

³¹ Hebron, and all the other places they had visited.

31 ¹ Now the Philistines attacked Israel, forcing the Israelites to

flee. Many were slaughtered on the slopes of Mount Gilboa.

² The Philistines closed in on Saul and his sons, and they killed three of his sons—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malkishua.

³ The fighting grew very fierce around Saul, and the Philistine archers caught up with him and wounded him severely.

⁴ Saul groaned to his armor bearer, "Take your sword and kill me before these pagan Philistines run me through and humiliate me." But his armor bearer was afraid and would not do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it.

⁵ When his armor bearer realized that Saul was dead, he fell on his own sword and died beside the king.

⁶ So Saul, three of his sons, his armor bearer, and his troops all died together that same day.

⁷ When the Israelites on the other side of the Jezreel Valley and beyond the Jordan saw that their army had been routed and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their towns and fled. So the Philistines moved in and occupied their towns.

⁸ The next day, when the Philistines went out to strip the dead, they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa.

⁹ So they cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor. Then they proclaimed the news of Saul's death in their pagan temple and to the people throughout the land of Philistia.

¹⁰ They placed his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths, and they fastened his body to the wall of the city of Beth-shan.

¹¹ But when the people of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,

¹² their warriors traveled all night to Beth-shan and took the bodies of Saul and his sons down from the wall. They brought them to Jabesh, where they burned the bodies.

¹³ Then they took their remains and buried them beneath the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted for seven days.

2 Samuel

1 ¹ After the death of Saul, David returned from his victory over the Amalekites and spent two days in Ziklag.

² On the third day after David's return, a man arrived from the Israelite battlefront. He had torn his clothes and put dirt on his head to show that he was in mourning. He fell to the ground before David in deep respect.

³ "Where have you come from?" David asked. "I escaped from the Israelite camp," the man replied.

⁴ "What happened?" David demanded. "Tell me how the battle went." The man replied, "Our entire army fled. Many men are dead and wounded on the battlefield, and Saul and his son Jonathan have been killed."

⁵ "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are dead?" David demanded.

⁶ The young man answered, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa. I saw Saul there leaning on his spear with the enemy chariots closing in on him.

⁷ When he turned and saw me, he cried out for me to come to him. 'How can I help?' I asked him.

⁸ And he said to me, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am an Amalekite.'

⁹ Then he begged me, 'Come over here and put me out of my misery, for I am in terrible pain and want to die.'

¹⁰ "So I killed him," the Amalekite told David, "for I knew he couldn't live. Then I took his crown and one of his bracelets so I could bring them to you, my lord."

¹¹ David and his men tore their clothes in sorrow when they heard the news.

¹² They mourned and wept and fasted all day for Saul and his son Jonathan,

and for the LORD's army and the nation of Israel, because so many had died that day.

¹³ Then David said to the young man who had brought the news, "Where are you from?" And he replied, "I am a foreigner, an Amalekite, who lives in your land."

¹⁴ "Were you not afraid to kill the LORD's anointed one?" David asked.

¹⁵ Then David said to one of his men, "Kill him!" So the man thrust his sword into the Amalekite and killed him.

¹⁶ "You die self-condemned," David said, "for you yourself confessed that you killed the LORD's anointed one."

¹⁷ Then David composed a funeral song for Saul and Jonathan.

¹⁸ Later he commanded that it be taught to all the people of Judah. It is known as the Song of the Bow, and it is recorded in The Book of Jashar.

¹⁹ Your pride and joy, O Israel, lies dead on the hills! How the mighty heroes have fallen!

²⁰ Don't announce the news in Gath, or the Philistines will rejoice. Don't proclaim it in the streets of Ashkelon, or the pagans will laugh in triumph.

²¹ O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you or your slopes. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled; the shield of Saul will no longer be anointed with oil.

²² Both Saul and Jonathan killed their strongest foes; they did not return from battle empty-handed.

²³ How beloved and gracious were Saul and Jonathan! They were together in life and in death. They were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions.

²⁴ O women of Israel, weep for Saul, for he dressed you in fine clothing and gold ornaments.

²⁵ How the mighty heroes have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies dead upon the hills.

²⁶ How I weep for you, my brother Jonathan! Oh, how much I loved you! And your love for me was deep, deeper than the love of women!

²⁷ How the mighty heroes have fallen! Stripped of their weapons, they lie dead.

2 ¹ After this, David asked the LORD, "Should I move back to Judah?" And the LORD replied, "Yes." Then David asked, "Which town should I go to?" And the LORD replied, "Hebron."

² David's wives were Ahinoam from Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel. So David and his wives

³ and his men and their families all moved to Judah, and they settled near the town of Hebron.

⁴ Then Judah's leaders came to David and crowned him king over the tribe of

Judah. When David heard that the men of Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul,

⁵ he sent them this message: "May the LORD bless you for being so loyal to your king and giving him a decent burial.

⁶ May the LORD be loyal to you in return and reward you with his unfailing love! And I, too, will reward you for what you have done.

⁷ And now that Saul is dead, I ask you to be my strong and loyal subjects like the people of Judah, who have anointed me as their new king."

⁸ But Abner son of Ner, the commander of Saul's army, had already gone to Mahanaim with Saul's son Ishbosheth.

⁹ There he proclaimed Ishbosheth king over Gilead, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, the land of the Ashurites, and all the rest of Israel.

¹⁰ Ishbosheth was forty years old when he became king, and he ruled from

Mahanaim for two years. Meanwhile, the tribe of Judah remained loyal to David.

¹¹ David made Hebron his capital, and he ruled as king of Judah for seven and a half years.

¹² One day Abner led some of Ishbosheth's troops from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

¹³ About the same time, Joab son of Zeruah led David's troops from Hebron, and they met Abner at the pool of Gibeon. The two groups sat down there, facing each other from opposite sides of the pool.

¹⁴ Then Abner suggested to Joab, "Let's have a few of our warriors put on an exhibition of hand-to-hand combat." "All right," Joab agreed.

¹⁵ So twelve men were chosen from each side to fight against each other.

¹⁶ Each one grabbed his opponent by the hair and thrust his sword into the other's side so that all of them died. The place has been known ever since as the Field of Swords.

¹⁷ The two armies then began to fight each other, and by the end of the day Abner and the men of Israel had been defeated by the forces of David.

¹⁸ Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, the three sons of Zeruiah, were among David's forces that day. Asahel could run like a deer,

¹⁹ and he began chasing Abner. He was relentless and single-minded in his pursuit.

²⁰ When Abner looked back and saw him coming, he called out, "Is that you, Asahel?" "Yes, it is," he replied.

²¹ "Go fight someone else!" Abner warned. "Take on one of the younger men and strip him of his weapons." But

Asahel refused and kept right on chasing Abner.

²² Again Abner shouted to him, "Get away from here! I will never be able to face your brother Joab if I have to kill you!"

²³ But Asahel would not give up, so Abner thrust the butt end of his spear through Asahel's stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He stumbled to the ground and died there. And everyone who came by that spot stopped and stood still when they saw Asahel lying there.

²⁴ When Joab and Abishai found out what had happened, they set out after Abner. The sun was just going down as they arrived at the hill of Ammah near Giah, along the road to the wilderness of Gibeon.

²⁵ Abner's troops from the tribe of Benjamin regrouped there at the top of the hill to take a stand.

²⁶ Abner shouted down to Joab, "Must we always solve our differences with swords? Don't you realize the only thing we will gain is bitterness toward each other? When will you call off your men from chasing their Israelite brothers?"

²⁷ Then Joab said, "God only knows what would have happened if you hadn't spoken, for we would have chased you all night if necessary."

²⁸ So Joab blew his trumpet, and his men stopped chasing the troops of Israel.

²⁹ All that night Abner and his men retreated through the Jordan Valley. They crossed the Jordan River, traveling all through the morning, and they did not stop until they arrived at Mahanaim.

³⁰ Meanwhile, Joab and his men also returned home. When Joab counted his casualties, he discovered that only nineteen men were missing, in addition to Asahel.

³¹ But three hundred and sixty of Abner's men, all from the tribe of Benjamin, had been killed.

³² Joab and his men took Asahel's body to Bethlehem and buried him there beside his father. Then they traveled all night and reached Hebron at daybreak.

3 ¹ That was the beginning of a long war between those who had been loyal to Saul and those who were loyal to David. As time passed David became stronger and stronger, while Saul's dynasty became weaker and weaker.

² These were the sons who were born to David in Hebron: The oldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel.

³ The second was Kileab, whose mother was Abigail, the widow of Nabal from Carmel. The third was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur.

⁴ The fourth was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith. The fifth was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital.

⁵ The sixth was Ithream, whose mother was David's wife Eglah. These sons were all born to David in Hebron.

⁶ As the war went on, Abner became a powerful leader among those who were loyal to Saul's dynasty.

⁷ One day Ishbosheth, Saul's son, accused Abner of sleeping with one of his father's concubines, a woman named Rizpah.

⁸ Abner became furious. "Am I a Judean dog to be kicked around like this?" he shouted. "After all I have done for you and your father by not betraying you to

David, is this my reward—that you find fault with me about this woman?

⁹ May God deal harshly with me if I don't help David get all that the LORD has promised him!

¹⁰ I should just go ahead and give David the rest of Saul's kingdom. I should set him up as king over Israel as well as Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

¹¹ Ishbosheth didn't dare say another word because he was afraid of what Abner might do.

¹² Then Abner sent messengers to David, saying, "Let's make an agreement, and I will help turn the entire nation of Israel over to you."

¹³ "All right," David replied, "but I will not negotiate with you unless you bring back my wife Michal, Saul's daughter, when you come."

¹⁴ David then sent this message to Ishbosheth, Saul's son: "Give me back

my wife Michal, for I bought her with the lives of one hundred Philistines."

¹⁵ So Ishbosheth took Michal away from her husband Palti son of Laish.

¹⁶ Palti followed along behind her as far as Bahurim, weeping as he went. Then Abner told him, "Go back home!" So Palti returned.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, Abner had consulted with the leaders of Israel. "For some time now," he told them, "you have wanted to make David your king.

¹⁸ Now is the time! For the LORD has said, 'I have chosen David to save my people from the Philistines and from all their other enemies.'"

¹⁹ Abner also spoke with the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin. Then he went to Hebron to tell David that all the people of Israel and Benjamin supported him.

²⁰ When Abner came to Hebron with his twenty men, David entertained them with a great feast.

²¹ Then Abner said to David, "Let me go and call all the people of Israel to your side. They will make a covenant with you to make you their king. Then you will be able to rule over everything your heart desires." So David sent Abner safely on his way.

²² But just after Abner left, Joab and some of David's troops returned from a raid, bringing much plunder with them.

²³ When Joab was told that Abner had just been there visiting the king and had been sent away in safety,

²⁴ he rushed to see the king. "What have you done?" he demanded. "What do you mean by letting Abner get away?"

²⁵ You know perfectly well that he came to spy on you and to discover everything you are doing!"

²⁶ Joab then left David and sent messengers to catch up with Abner. They found him at the pool of Sirah and brought him back with them. But David knew nothing about it.

²⁷ When Abner arrived at Hebron, Joab took him aside at the gateway as if to speak with him privately. But then he drew his dagger and killed Abner in revenge for killing his brother Asahel.

²⁸ When David heard about it, he declared, "I vow by the LORD that I and my people are innocent of this crime against Abner.

²⁹ Joab and his family are the guilty ones. May his family in every generation be cursed with a man who has open sores or leprosy or who walks on crutches or who dies by the sword or who begs for food!"

³⁰ So Joab and his brother Abishai killed Abner because Abner had killed their brother Asahel at the battle of Gibeon.

³¹ Then David said to Joab and all those who were with him, "Tear your clothes and put on sackcloth. Go into deep mourning for Abner." And King David himself walked behind the procession to the grave.

³² They buried Abner in Hebron, and the king and all the people wept at his graveside.

³³ Then the king sang this funeral song for Abner: "Should Abner have died as fools die?

³⁴ Your hands were not bound; your feet were not chained. No, you were murdered—the victim of a wicked plot." All the people wept again for Abner.

³⁵ David had refused to eat anything the day of the funeral, and now everyone begged him to eat. But David had made

a vow, saying, "May God kill me if I eat anything before sundown."

³⁶ This pleased the people very much. In fact, everything the king did pleased them!

³⁷ So everyone in Judah and Israel knew that David was not responsible for Abner's death.

³⁸ Then King David said to the people, "Do you not realize that a great leader and a great man has fallen today in Israel?"

³⁹ And even though I am the anointed king, these two sons of Zeruah—Joab and Abishai—are too strong for me to control. So may the LORD repay these wicked men for their wicked deeds."

4 ¹ When Ishbosheth heard about Abner's death at Hebron, he lost all courage, and his people were paralyzed with fear.

² Now there were two brothers, Baanah and Recab, who were captains of Ishbosheth's raiding parties. They were sons of Rimmon, a member of the tribe of Benjamin who lived in Beeroth. The town of Beeroth is now part of Benjamin's territory

³ because the original people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim, where they still live as foreigners.

⁴ (Saul's son Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth, who was crippled as a child. He was five years old when Saul and Jonathan were killed at the battle of Jezreel. When news of the battle reached the capital, the child's nurse grabbed him and fled. But she fell and dropped him as she was running, and he became crippled as a result.)

⁵ One day Recab and Baanah, the sons of Rimmon from Beeroth, went to

Ishbosheth's home around noon as he was taking a nap.

⁶ The doorkeeper, who had been sifting wheat, became drowsy and fell asleep. So Recab and Baanah slipped past the doorkeeper, went into Ishbosheth's bedroom, and stabbed him in the stomach. Then they escaped.

⁷ But before leaving, they cut off his head as he lay there on his bed. Taking his head with them, they fled across the Jordan Valley through the night.

⁸ They arrived at Hebron and presented Ishbosheth's head to David. "Look!" they exclaimed. "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of your enemy Saul who tried to kill you. Today the LORD has given you revenge on Saul and his entire family!"

⁹ But David said to Recab and Baanah, "As surely as the LORD lives, the one

who saves me from my enemies, I will tell you the truth.

¹⁰ Once before, someone told me, ‘Saul is dead,’ thinking he was bringing me good news. But I seized him and killed him at Ziklag. That’s the reward I gave him for his news!

¹¹ Now what reward should I give the wicked men who have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed? Should I not also demand your very lives?"

¹² So David ordered his young men to kill them, and they did. They cut off their hands and feet and hung their bodies beside the pool in Hebron. Then they took Ishbosheth’s head and buried it in Abner’s tomb in Hebron.

5 ¹ Then all the tribes of Israel went to David at Hebron and told him, "We are all members of your family.

² For a long time, even while Saul was our king, you were the one who really led Israel. And the LORD has told you, 'You will be the shepherd of my people Israel. You will be their leader.'

³ So there at Hebron, David made a covenant with the leaders of Israel before the LORD. And they anointed him king of Israel.

⁴ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in all.

⁵ He had reigned over Judah from Hebron for seven years and six months, and from Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.

⁶ David then led his troops to Jerusalem to fight against the Jebusites. "You'll never get in here," the Jebusites taunted. "Even the blind and lame could keep you out!" For the Jebusites thought they were safe.

⁷ But David captured the fortress of Zion, now called the City of David.

⁸ When the insulting message from the defenders of the city reached David, he told his own troops, "Go up through the water tunnel into the city and destroy those 'lame' and 'blind' Jebusites. How I hate them." That is the origin of the saying, "The blind and the lame may not enter the house."

⁹ So David made the fortress his home, and he called it the City of David. He built additional fortifications around the city, starting at the Millo and working inward.

¹⁰ And David became more and more powerful, because the LORD God Almighty was with him.

¹¹ Then King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with carpenters and stonemasons to build

him a palace. Hiram also sent many cedar logs for lumber.

¹² And David realized that the LORD had made him king over Israel and had made his kingdom great for the sake of his people Israel.

¹³ After moving from Hebron to Jerusalem, David married more wives and concubines, and he had many sons and daughters.

¹⁴ These are the names of David's sons who were born in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

¹⁵ Ibhara, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,

¹⁶ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

¹⁷ When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king of Israel, they mobilized all their forces to capture him. But David was told they were coming and went into the stronghold.

¹⁸ The Philistines arrived and spread out across the valley of Rephaim.

¹⁹ So David asked the LORD, "Should I go out to fight the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The LORD replied, "Yes, go ahead. I will certainly give you the victory."

²⁰ So David went to Baal–perazim and defeated the Philistines there. "The LORD has done it!" David exclaimed. "He burst through my enemies like a raging flood!" So David named that place Baal–perazim (which means "the Lord who bursts through").

²¹ The Philistines had abandoned their idols there, so David and his troops confiscated them.

²² But after a while the Philistines returned and again spread out across the valley of Rephaim.

²³ And once again David asked the LORD what to do. "Do not attack them straight on," the LORD replied. "Instead,

circle around behind them and attack them near the balsam trees.

²⁴ When you hear a sound like marching feet in the tops of the balsam trees, attack! That will be the signal that the LORD is moving ahead of you to strike down the Philistines."

²⁵ So David did what the LORD commanded, and he struck down the Philistines all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

6 ¹ Then David mobilized thirty thousand special troops.

² He led them to Baalah of Judah to bring home the Ark of God, which bears the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim.

³ They placed the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the hillside home of Abinadab. Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, were guiding the cart

⁴ with the Ark of God on it, with Ahio walking in front.

⁵ David and all the people of Israel were celebrating before the LORD with all their might, singing songs and playing all kinds of musical instruments—lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals.

⁶ But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put out his hand to steady the Ark of God.

⁷ Then the LORD's anger blazed out against Uzzah for doing this, and God struck him dead beside the Ark of God.

⁸ David was angry because the LORD's anger had blazed out against Uzzah. He named that place Perez—uzzah (which means "outbreak against Uzzah"). It is still called that today.

⁹ David was now afraid of the LORD and asked, "How can I ever bring the Ark of the LORD back into my care?"

¹⁰ So David decided not to move the Ark of the LORD into the City of David. He took it instead to the home of Obed–edom of Gath.

¹¹ The Ark of the LORD remained there with the family of Obed–edom for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

¹² Then King David was told, "The LORD has blessed Obed–edom's home and everything he has because of the Ark of God." So David went there and brought the Ark to the City of David with a great celebration.

¹³ After the men who were carrying it had gone six steps, they stopped and waited so David could sacrifice an ox and a fattened calf.

¹⁴ And David danced before the LORD with all his might, wearing a priestly tunic.

¹⁵ So David and all Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD with much shouting and blowing of trumpets.

¹⁶ But as the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she was filled with contempt for him.

¹⁷ The Ark of the LORD was placed inside the special tent that David had prepared for it. And David sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD.

¹⁸ When he had finished, David blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty.

¹⁹ Then he gave a gift of food to every man and woman in Israel: a loaf of

bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins. Then everyone went home.

²⁰ When David returned home to bless his family, Michal came out to meet him and said in disgust, "How glorious the king of Israel looked today! He exposed himself to the servant girls like any indecent person might do!"

²¹ David retorted to Michal, "I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me above your father and his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the LORD. So I am willing to act like a fool in order to show my joy in the LORD.

²² Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, but I will be held in honor by the girls of whom you have spoken!"

²³ So Michal, the daughter of Saul, remained childless throughout her life.

7¹ When the LORD had brought peace to the land and King David was settled in his palace,

² David summoned Nathan the prophet. "Look!" David said. "Here I am living in this beautiful cedar palace, but the Ark of God is out in a tent!"

³ Nathan replied, "Go ahead and do what you have in mind, for the LORD is with you."

⁴ But that same night the LORD said to Nathan,

⁵ "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a temple to live in?

⁶ I have never lived in a temple, from the day I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until now. My home has always been a tent, moving from one place to another.

⁷ And I have never once complained to Israel's leaders, the shepherds of my

people Israel. I have never asked them, "Why haven't you built me a beautiful cedar temple?"

⁸ "Now go and say to my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I chose you to lead my people Israel when you were just a shepherd boy, tending your sheep out in the pasture.

⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies. Now I will make your name famous throughout the earth!

¹⁰ And I have provided a permanent homeland for my people Israel, a secure place where they will never be disturbed. It will be their own land where wicked nations won't oppress them as they did in the past,

¹¹ from the time I appointed judges to rule my people. And I will keep you safe from all your enemies. "And now the

LORD declares that he will build a house for you—a dynasty of kings!

¹² For when you die, I will raise up one of your descendants, and I will make his kingdom strong.

¹³ He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for my name. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will use other nations to punish him.

¹⁵ But my unfailing love will not be taken from him as I took it from Saul, whom I removed before you.

¹⁶ Your dynasty and your kingdom will continue for all time before me, and your throne will be secure forever.”

¹⁷ So Nathan went back to David and told him everything the LORD had said.

¹⁸ Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and prayed, "Who am

I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?

¹⁹ And now, Sovereign LORD, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving me a lasting dynasty! Do you deal with everyone this way, O Sovereign LORD?

²⁰ What more can I say? You know what I am really like, Sovereign LORD.

²¹ For the sake of your promise and according to your will, you have done all these great things and have shown them to me.

²² "How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you—there is no other God. We have never even heard of another god like you!

²³ What other nation on earth is like Israel? What other nation, O God, have you redeemed from slavery to be your own people? You made a great name for yourself when you rescued your people

from Egypt. You performed awesome miracles and drove out the nations and gods that stood in their way.

²⁴ You made Israel your people forever, and you, O LORD, became their God.

²⁵ "And now, O LORD God, do as you have promised concerning me and my family. Confirm it as a promise that will last forever.

²⁶ And may your name be honored forever so that all the world will say, 'The LORD Almighty is God over Israel!' And may the dynasty of your servant David be established in your presence.

²⁷ "O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, I have been bold enough to pray this prayer because you have revealed that you will build a house for me—an eternal dynasty!

²⁸ For you are God, O Sovereign LORD. Your words are truth, and you have

promised these good things to me, your servant.

²⁹ And now, may it please you to bless me and my family so that our dynasty may continue forever before you. For when you grant a blessing to your servant, O Sovereign LORD, it is an eternal blessing!"

8 ¹ After this, David subdued and humbled the Philistines by conquering Gath, their largest city.

² David also conquered the land of Moab. He made the people lie down on the ground in a row, and he measured them off in groups with a length of rope. He measured off two groups to be executed for every one group to be spared. The Moabites who were spared became David's servants and brought him tribute money.

³ David also destroyed the forces of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of

Zobah, when Hadadezer marched out to strengthen his control along the Euphrates River.

⁴ David captured seventeen hundred charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Then he crippled all but one hundred of the chariot horses.

⁵ When Arameans from Damascus arrived to help Hadadezer, David killed twenty-two thousand of them.

⁶ Then he placed several army garrisons in Damascus, the Aramean capital, and the Arameans became David's subjects and brought him tribute money. So the LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

⁷ David brought the gold shields of Hadadezer's officers to Jerusalem,

⁸ along with a large amount of bronze from Hadadezer's cities of Tebah and Berothai.

⁹ When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had destroyed the army of Hadadezer,

¹⁰ he sent his son Joram to congratulate David on his success. Hadadezer and Toi had long been enemies, and there had been many wars between them. Joram presented David with many gifts of silver, gold, and bronze.

¹¹ King David dedicated all these gifts to the LORD, along with the silver and gold he had set apart from the other nations he had subdued—

¹² Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Amalek—and from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

¹³ So David became very famous. After his return he destroyed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

¹⁴ He placed army garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites became David's subjects. This was another

example of how the LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

¹⁵ David reigned over all Israel and was fair to everyone.

¹⁶ Joab son of Zeruah was commander of the army. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian.

¹⁷ Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the court secretary.

¹⁸ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was captain of the king's bodyguard. David's sons served as priestly leaders.

9 ¹ One day David began wondering if anyone in Saul's family was still alive, for he had promised Jonathan that he would show kindness to them.

² He summoned a man named Ziba, who had been one of Saul's servants. "Are you Ziba?" the king asked. "Yes sir, I am," Ziba replied.

³ The king then asked him, "Is anyone still alive from Saul's family? If so, I want to show God's kindness to them in any way I can." Ziba replied, "Yes, one of Jonathan's sons is still alive, but he is crippled."

⁴ "Where is he?" the king asked. "In Lo-debar," Ziba told him, "at the home of Makir son of Ammiel."

⁵ So David sent for him and brought him from Makir's home.

⁶ His name was Mephibosheth; he was Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. When he came to David, he bowed low in great fear and said, "I am your servant."

⁷ But David said, "Don't be afraid! I've asked you to come so that I can be kind to you because of my vow to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the land that once belonged to your grandfather Saul,

and you may live here with me at the palace!"

⁸ Mephibosheth fell to the ground before the king. "Should the king show such kindness to a dead dog like me?" he exclaimed.

⁹ Then the king summoned Saul's servant Ziba and said, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family.

¹⁰ You and your sons and servants are to farm the land for him to produce food for his family. But Mephibosheth will live here at the palace with me." Ziba, who had fifteen sons and twenty servants, replied,

¹¹ "Yes, my lord; I will do all that you have commanded." And from that time on, Mephibosheth ate regularly with David, as though he were one of his own sons.

¹² Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica. And from then on, all the members of Ziba's household were Mephibosheth's servants.

¹³ And Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet, moved to Jerusalem to live at the palace.

10 ¹ Some time after this, King Nahash of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun became king.

² David said, "I am going to show complete loyalty to Hanun because his father, Nahash, was always completely loyal to me." So David sent ambassadors to express sympathy to Hanun about his father's death. But when David's ambassadors arrived in the land of Ammon,

³ Hanun's advisers said to their master, "Do you really think these men are coming here to honor your father? No! David has sent them to spy out the city

so that they can come in and conquer it!"

⁴ So Hanun seized David's ambassadors and shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their robes at the buttocks, and sent them back to David in shame.

⁵ When David heard what had happened, he sent messengers to tell the men to stay at Jericho until their beards grew out, for they were very embarrassed by their appearance.

⁶ Now the people of Ammon realized how seriously they had angered David, so they hired twenty thousand Aramean mercenaries from the lands of Beth-rehob and Zobah, one thousand from the king of Maacah, and twelve thousand from the land of Tob.

⁷ When David heard about this, he sent Joab and the entire Israelite army to fight them.

⁸ The Ammonite troops drew up their battle lines at the entrance of the city gates, while the Arameans from Zobah and Rehob and the men from Tob and Maacah positioned themselves to fight in the open fields.

⁹ When Joab saw that he would have to fight on two fronts, he chose the best troops in his army. He placed them under his personal command and led them out to fight the Arameans in the fields.

¹⁰ He left the rest of the army under the command of his brother Abishai, who was to attack the Ammonites.

¹¹ "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then come over and help me," Joab told his brother. "And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will come and help you."

¹² Be courageous! Let us fight bravely to save our people and the cities of our God. May the LORD's will be done."

¹³ When Joab and his troops attacked, the Arameans began to run away.

¹⁴ And when the Ammonites saw the Arameans running, they ran from Abishai and retreated into the city. After the battle was over, Joab returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ The Arameans now realized that they were no match for Israel. So when they regrouped,

¹⁶ they were joined by additional Aramean troops summoned by Hadadezer from the other side of the Euphrates River. These troops arrived at Helam under the command of Shobach, the commander of all Hadadezer's forces.

¹⁷ When David heard what was happening, he mobilized all Israel,

crossed the Jordan River, and led the army to Helam. The Arameans positioned themselves there in battle formation and then attacked David.

¹⁸ But again the Arameans fled from the Israelites. This time David's forces killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen, including Shobach, the commander of their army.

¹⁹ When Hadadezer and his Aramean allies realized they had been defeated by Israel, they surrendered to them and became their subjects. After that, the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites.

11 ¹ The following spring, the time of year when kings go to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to destroy the Ammonites. In the process they laid siege to the city of Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

² Late one afternoon David got out of bed after taking a nap and went for a stroll on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath.

³ He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

⁴ Then David sent for her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. (She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period.) Then she returned home.

⁵ Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent a message to inform David.

⁶ So David sent word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite."

⁷ When Uriah arrived, David asked him how Joab and the army were getting along and how the war was progressing.

⁸ Then he told Uriah, "Go on home and relax." David even sent a gift to Uriah after he had left the palace.

⁹ But Uriah wouldn't go home. He stayed that night at the palace entrance with some of the king's other servants.

¹⁰ When David heard what Uriah had done, he summoned him and asked, "What's the matter with you? Why didn't you go home last night after being away for so long?"

¹¹ Uriah replied, "The Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents, and Joab and his officers are camping in the open fields. How could I go home to wine and dine and sleep with my wife? I swear that I will never be guilty of acting like that."

¹² "Well, stay here tonight," David told him, "and tomorrow you may return to the army." So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next.

¹³ Then David invited him to dinner and got him drunk. But even then he couldn't get Uriah to go home to his wife. Again he slept at the palace entrance.

¹⁴ So the next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and gave it to Uriah to deliver.

¹⁵ The letter instructed Joab, "Station Uriah on the front lines where the battle is fiercest. Then pull back so that he will be killed."

¹⁶ So Joab assigned Uriah to a spot close to the city wall where he knew the enemy's strongest men were fighting.

¹⁷ And Uriah was killed along with several other Israelite soldiers.

¹⁸ Then Joab sent a battle report to David.

¹⁹ He told his messenger, "Report all the news of the battle to the king.

²⁰ But he might get angry and ask, 'Why did the troops go so close to the

city? Didn't they know there would be shooting from the walls?

²¹ Wasn't Gideon's son Abimelech killed at Thebez by a woman who threw a millstone down on him?' Then tell him, 'Uriah the Hittite was killed, too.'"

²² So the messenger went to Jerusalem and gave a complete report to David.

²³ "The enemy came out against us," he said. "And as we chased them back to the city gates,

²⁴ the archers on the wall shot arrows at us. Some of our men were killed, including Uriah the Hittite."

²⁵ "Well, tell Joab not to be discouraged," David said. "The sword kills one as well as another! Fight harder next time, and conquer the city!"

²⁶ When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

²⁷ When the period of mourning was over, David sent for her and brought her to the palace, and she became one of his wives. Then she gave birth to a son. But the LORD was very displeased with what David had done.

12 ¹ So the LORD sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: "There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor.

² The rich man owned many sheep and cattle.

³ The poor man owned nothing but a little lamb he had worked hard to buy. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man's own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter.

⁴ One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing a lamb from his own flocks for food, he

took the poor man's lamb and killed it and served it to his guest."

⁵ David was furious. "As surely as the LORD lives," he vowed, "any man who would do such a thing deserves to die!

⁶ He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity."

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! The LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul.

⁸ I gave you his house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more.

⁹ Why, then, have you despised the word of the LORD and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah and stolen his wife.

¹⁰ From this time on, the sword will be a constant threat to your family, because

you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own.

¹¹ "Because of what you have done, I, the LORD, will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man, and he will go to bed with them in public view.

¹² You did it secretly, but I will do this to you openly in the sight of all Israel."

¹³ Then David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "Yes, but the LORD has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin.

¹⁴ But you have given the enemies of the LORD great opportunity to despise and blaspheme him, so your child will die."

¹⁵ After Nathan returned to his home, the LORD made Bathsheba's baby deathly ill.

¹⁶ David begged God to spare the child. He went without food and lay all night on the bare ground.

¹⁷ The leaders of the nation pleaded with him to get up and eat with them, but he refused.

¹⁸ Then on the seventh day the baby died. David's advisers were afraid to tell him. "He was so broken up about the baby being sick," they said. "What will he do to himself when we tell him the child is dead?"

¹⁹ But when David saw them whispering, he realized what had happened. "Is the baby dead?" he asked. "Yes," they replied.

²⁰ Then David got up from the ground, washed himself, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. Then he went to the Tabernacle and worshiped the LORD. After that, he returned to the palace and ate.

²¹ His advisers were amazed. "We don't understand you," they told him. "While the baby was still living, you wept and refused to eat. But now that the baby is dead, you have stopped your mourning and are eating again."

²² David replied, "I fasted and wept while the child was alive, for I said, 'Perhaps the LORD will be gracious to me and let the child live.'

²³ But why should I fast when he is dead? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me."

²⁴ Then David comforted Bathsheba, his wife, and slept with her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved the child

²⁵ and sent word through Nathan the prophet that his name should be

Jedidiah—"beloved of the LORD"—because the LORD loved him.

²⁶ Meanwhile, Joab and the Israelite army were successfully ending their siege of Rabbah, the capital of Ammon.

²⁷ Joab sent messengers to tell David, "I have fought against Rabbah and captured its water supply.

²⁸ Now bring the rest of the army and finish the job, so you will get credit for the victory instead of me."

²⁹ So David led the rest of his army to Rabbah and captured it.

³⁰ David removed the crown from the king's head, and it was placed on David's own head. The crown was made of gold and set with gems, and it weighed about seventy-five pounds. David took a vast amount of plunder from the city.

³¹ He also made slaves of the people of Rabbah and forced them to labor with saws, picks, and axes, and to work in the

brick kilns. That is how he dealt with the people of all the Ammonite cities. Then David and his army returned to Jerusalem.

13 ¹ David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar. And Amnon, her half brother, fell desperately in love with her.

² Amnon became so obsessed with Tamar that he became ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible that he could ever fulfill his love for her.

³ Now Amnon had a very crafty friend—his cousin Jonadab. He was the son of David's brother Shimea.

⁴ One day Jonadab said to Amnon, "What's the trouble? Why should the son of a king look so dejected morning after morning?" So Amnon told him, "I am in love with Tamar, Absalom's sister."

⁵ "Well," Jonadab said, "I'll tell you what to do. Go back to bed and pretend

you are sick. When your father comes to see you, ask him to let Tamar come and prepare some food for you. Tell him you'll feel better if she feeds you."

⁶ So Amnon pretended to be sick. And when the king came to see him, Amnon asked him, "Please let Tamar come to take care of me and cook something for me to eat."

⁷ So David agreed and sent Tamar to Amnon's house to prepare some food for him.

⁸ When Tamar arrived at Amnon's house, she went to the room where he was lying down so he could watch her mix some dough. Then she baked some special bread for him.

⁹ But when she set the serving tray before him, he refused to eat. "Everyone get out of here," Amnon told his servants. So they all left.

¹⁰ Then he said to Tamar, "Now bring the food into my bedroom and feed it to me here." So Tamar took it to him.

¹¹ But as she was feeding him, he grabbed her and demanded, "Come to bed with me, my darling sister."

¹² "No, my brother!" she cried. "Don't be foolish! Don't do this to me! You know what a serious crime it is to do such a thing in Israel.

¹³ Where could I go in my shame? And you would be called one of the greatest fools in Israel. Please, just speak to the king about it, and he will let you marry me."

¹⁴ But Amnon wouldn't listen to her, and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her.

¹⁵ Then suddenly Amnon's love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. "Get out of here!" he snarled at her.

¹⁶ "No, no!" Tamar cried. "To reject me now is a greater wrong than what you have already done to me." But Amnon wouldn't listen to her.

¹⁷ He shouted for his servant and demanded, "Throw this woman out, and lock the door behind her!"

¹⁸ So the servant put her out. She was wearing a long, beautiful robe, as was the custom in those days for the king's virgin daughters.

¹⁹ But now Tamar tore her robe and put ashes on her head. And then, with her face in her hands, she went away crying.

²⁰ Her brother Absalom saw her and asked, "Is it true that Amnon has been with you? Well, don't be so upset. Since he's your brother anyway, don't worry about it." So Tamar lived as a desolate woman in Absalom's house.

²¹ When King David heard what had happened, he was very angry.

²² And though Absalom never spoke to Amnon about it, he hated Amnon deeply because of what he had done to his sister.

²³ Two years later, when Absalom's sheep were being sheared at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, Absalom invited all the king's sons to come to a feast.

²⁴ He went to the king and said, "My sheep-shearers are now at work. Would the king and his servants please come to celebrate the occasion with me?"

²⁵ The king replied, "No, my son. If we all came, we would be too much of a burden on you." Absalom pressed him, but the king wouldn't come, though he sent his thanks.

²⁶ "Well, then," Absalom said, "if you can't come, how about sending my brother Amnon instead?" "Why Amnon?" the king asked.

²⁷ But Absalom kept on pressing the king until he finally agreed to let all his sons attend, including Amnon.

²⁸ Absalom told his men, "Wait until Amnon gets drunk; then at my signal, kill him! Don't be afraid. I'm the one who has given the command. Take courage and do it!"

²⁹ So at Absalom's signal they murdered Amnon. Then the other sons of the king jumped on their mules and fled.

³⁰ As they were on the way back to Jerusalem, this report reached David: "Absalom has killed all your sons; not one is left alive!"

³¹ The king jumped up, tore his robe, and fell prostrate on the ground. His advisers also tore their clothes in horror and sorrow.

³² But just then Jonadab, the son of David's brother Shimea, arrived and said, "No, not all your sons have been killed!

It was only Amnon! Absalom has been plotting this ever since Amnon raped his sister Tamar.

³³ No, your sons aren't all dead! It was only Amnon."

³⁴ Meanwhile Absalom escaped. Then the watchman on the Jerusalem wall saw a great crowd coming toward the city from the west. He ran to tell the king, "I see a crowd of people coming from the Horonaim road along the side of the hill."

³⁵ "Look!" Jonadab told the king. "There they are now! Your sons are coming, just as I said."

³⁶ They soon arrived, weeping and sobbing, and the king and his officials wept bitterly with them.

³⁷ And David mourned many days for his son Amnon. Absalom fled to his grandfather, Talmai son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur.

³⁸ He stayed there in Geshur for three years.

³⁹ And David, now reconciled to Amnon's death, longed to be reunited with his son Absalom.

14 ¹ Joab realized how much the king longed to see Absalom.

² So he sent for a woman from Tekoa who had a reputation for great wisdom. He said to her, "Pretend you are in mourning; wear mourning clothes and don't bathe or wear any perfume. Act like a woman who has been in deep sorrow for a long time.

³ Then go to the king and tell him the story I am about to tell you." Then Joab told her what to say.

⁴ When the woman approached the king, she fell with her face down to the floor in front of him and cried out, "O king! Help me!"

⁵ "What's the trouble?" the king asked.
"I am a widow," she replied.

⁶ "My two sons had a fight out in the field. And since no one was there to stop it, one of them was killed.

⁷ Now the rest of the family is demanding, 'Let us have your son. We will execute him for murdering his brother. He doesn't deserve to inherit his family's property.' But if I do that, I will have no one left, and my husband's name and family will disappear from the face of the earth."

⁸ "Leave it to me," the king told her.
"Go home, and I'll see to it that no one touches him."

⁹ "Oh, thank you, my lord," she replied.
"And I'll take the responsibility if you are criticized for helping me like this."

¹⁰ "Don't worry about that!" the king said. "If anyone objects, bring them to

me. I can assure you they will never complain again!"

¹¹ Then she said, "Please swear to me by the LORD your God that you won't let anyone take vengeance against my son. I want no more bloodshed." "As surely as the LORD lives," he replied, "not a hair on your son's head will be disturbed!"

¹² "Please let me ask one more thing of you!" she said. "Go ahead," he urged. "Speak!"

¹³ She replied, "Why don't you do as much for all the people of God as you have promised to do for me? You have convicted yourself in making this decision, because you have refused to bring home your own banished son.

¹⁴ All of us must die eventually. Our lives are like water spilled out on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. That is why God tries to bring us back when we have been separated from

him. He does not sweep away the lives of those he cares about—and neither should you!

¹⁵ "But I have come to plead with you for my son because my life and my son's life have been threatened. I said to myself, 'Perhaps the king will listen to me

¹⁶ and rescue us from those who would cut us off from God's people.

¹⁷ Yes, the king will give us peace of mind again.' I know that you are like an angel of God and can discern good from evil. May the LORD your God be with you."

¹⁸ "I want to know one thing," the king replied. "Yes, my lord?" she asked.

¹⁹ "Did Joab send you here?" And the woman replied, "My lord the king, how can I deny it? Nobody can hide anything from you. Yes, Joab sent me and told me what to say.

²⁰ He did it to place the matter before you in a different light. But you are as wise as an angel of God, and you understand everything that happens among us!"

²¹ So the king sent for Joab and told him, "All right, go and bring back the young man Absalom."

²² Joab fell to the ground before the king and blessed him and said, "At last I know that I have gained your approval, for you have granted me this request!"

²³ Then Joab went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

²⁴ But the king gave this order: "Absalom may go to his own house, but he must never come into my presence." So Absalom did not see the king.

²⁵ Now no one in Israel was as handsome as Absalom. From head to foot, he was the perfect specimen of a man.

²⁶ He cut his hair only once a year, and then only because it was too heavy to carry around. When he weighed it out, it came to five pounds!

²⁷ He had three sons and one daughter. His daughter's name was Tamar, and she was very beautiful.

²⁸ Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years without getting to see the king.

²⁹ Then Absalom sent for Joab to ask him to intercede for him, but Joab refused to come. Absalom sent for him a second time, but again Joab refused to come.

³⁰ So Absalom said to his servants, "Go and set fire to Joab's barley field, the field next to mine." So they set his field on fire, as Absalom had commanded.

³¹ Then Joab came to Absalom and demanded, "Why did your servants set my field on fire?"

³² And Absalom replied, "Because I wanted you to ask the king why he brought me back from Geshur if he didn't intend to see me. I might as well have stayed there. Let me see the king; if he finds me guilty of anything, then let him execute me."

³³ So Joab told the king what Absalom had said. Then at last David summoned his estranged son, and Absalom came and bowed low before the king, and David kissed him.

15 ¹ After this, Absalom bought a chariot and horses, and he hired fifty footmen to run ahead of him.

² He got up early every morning and went out to the gate of the city. When people brought a case to the king for judgment, Absalom would ask where they were from, and they would tell him their tribe.

³ Then Absalom would say, "You've really got a strong case here! It's too bad the king doesn't have anyone to hear it.

⁴ I wish I were the judge. Then people could bring their problems to me, and I would give them justice!"

⁵ And when people tried to bow before him, Absalom wouldn't let them. Instead, he took them by the hand and embraced them.

⁶ So in this way, Absalom stole the hearts of all the people of Israel.

⁷ After four years, Absalom said to the king, "Let me go to Hebron to offer a sacrifice to the LORD in fulfillment of a vow I made to him.

⁸ For while I was at Geshur, I promised to sacrifice to him in Hebron if he would bring me back to Jerusalem."

⁹ "All right," the king told him. "Go and fulfill your vow." So Absalom went to Hebron.

¹⁰ But while he was there, he sent secret messengers to every part of Israel to stir up a rebellion against the king. "As soon as you hear the trumpets," his message read, "you will know that Absalom has been crowned king in Hebron."

¹¹ He took two hundred men from Jerusalem with him as guests, but they knew nothing of his intentions.

¹² While he was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel, one of David's counselors who lived in Giloh. Soon many others also joined Absalom, and the conspiracy gained momentum.

¹³ A messenger soon arrived in Jerusalem to tell King David, "All Israel has joined Absalom in a conspiracy against you!"

¹⁴ "Then we must flee at once, or it will be too late!" David urged his men. "Hurry! If we get out of the city before

he arrives, both we and the city of Jerusalem will be spared from disaster."

¹⁵ "We are with you," his advisers replied. "Do what you think is best."

¹⁶ So the king and his household set out at once. He left no one behind except ten of his concubines to keep the palace in order.

¹⁷ The king and his people set out on foot, and they paused at the edge of the city

¹⁸ to let David's troops move past to lead the way. There were six hundred Gittites who had come with David from Gath, along with the king's bodyguard.

¹⁹ Then the king turned to Ittai, the captain of the Gittites, and asked, "Why are you coming with us? Go on back with your men to King Absalom, for you are a guest in Israel, a foreigner in exile.

²⁰ You arrived only yesterday, and now should I force you to wander with us? I

don't even know where we will go. Go on back and take your troops with you, and may the LORD show you his unfailing love and faithfulness."

²¹ But Ittai said to the king, "I vow by the LORD and by your own life that I will go wherever you go, no matter what happens—whether it means life or death."

²² David replied, "All right, come with us." So Ittai and his six hundred men and their families went along.

²³ There was deep sadness throughout the land as the king and his followers passed by. They crossed the Kidron Valley and then went out toward the wilderness.

²⁴ Abiathar and Zadok and the Levites took the Ark of the Covenant of God and set it down beside the road. Then they offered sacrifices there until everyone had passed by.

²⁵ David instructed Zadok to take the Ark of God back into the city. "If the LORD sees fit," David said, "he will bring me back to see the Ark and the Tabernacle again.

²⁶ But if he is through with me, then let him do what seems best to him."

²⁷ Then the king told Zadok the priest, "Look, here is my plan. You and Abiathar should return quietly to the city with your son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan.

²⁸ I will stop at the shallows of the Jordan River and wait there for a message from you. Let me know what happens in Jerusalem before I disappear into the wilderness."

²⁹ So Zadok and Abiathar took the Ark of God back to the city and stayed there.

³⁰ David walked up the road that led to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. His head was covered and his feet

were bare as a sign of mourning. And the people who were with him covered their heads and wept as they climbed the mountain.

³¹ When someone told David that his adviser Ahithophel was now backing Absalom, David prayed, "O LORD, let Ahithophel give Absalom foolish advice!"

³² As they reached the spot at the top of the Mount of Olives where people worshiped God, David found Hushai the Arkite waiting for him. Hushai had torn his clothing and put dirt on his head as a sign of mourning.

³³ But David told him, "If you go with me, you will only be a burden.

³⁴ Return to Jerusalem and tell Absalom, 'I will now be your adviser, just as I was your father's adviser in the past.' Then you can frustrate and counter Ahithophel's advice.

³⁵ Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, are there. Tell them the plans that are being made to capture me,

³⁶ and they will send their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan to find me and tell me what is going on."

³⁷ So David's friend Hushai returned to Jerusalem, getting there just as Absalom arrived.

16 ¹ David was just past the top of the hill when Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, caught up with him. He was leading two donkeys loaded with two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred bunches of summer fruit, and a skin of wine.

² "What are these for?" the king asked Ziba. And Ziba replied, "The donkeys are for your people to ride on, and the bread and summer fruit are for the young men to eat. The wine is to be taken with

you into the wilderness for those who become faint."

³ "And where is Mephibosheth?" the king asked him. "He stayed in Jerusalem," Ziba replied. "He said, 'Today I will get back the kingdom of my grandfather Saul.'"

⁴ "In that case," the king told Ziba, "I give you everything Mephibosheth owns." "Thank you, sir," Ziba replied. "I will always do whatever you want me to do."

⁵ As David and his party passed Bahurim, a man came out of the village cursing them. It was Shimei son of Gera, a member of Saul's family.

⁶ He threw stones at the king and the king's officers and all the mighty warriors who surrounded them.

⁷ "Get out of here, you murderer, you scoundrel!" he shouted at David.

⁸ "The LORD is paying you back for murdering Saul and his family. You stole his throne, and now the LORD has given it to your son Absalom. At last you will taste some of your own medicine, you murderer!"

⁹ "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king?" Abishai son of Zeruah demanded. "Let me go over and cut off his head!"

¹⁰ "No!" the king said. "What am I going to do with you sons of Zeruah! If the LORD has told him to curse me, who am I to stop him?"

¹¹ Then David said to Abishai and the other officers, "My own son is trying to kill me. Shouldn't this relative of Saul have even more reason to do so? Leave him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him to do it."

¹² And perhaps the LORD will see that I am being wronged and will bless me because of these curses."

¹³ So David and his men continued on, and Shimei kept pace with them on a nearby hillside, cursing as he went and throwing stones at David and tossing dust into the air.

¹⁴ The king and all who were with him grew weary along the way, so they rested when they reached the Jordan River.

¹⁵ Meanwhile, Absalom and his men arrived at Jerusalem, accompanied by Ahithophel.

¹⁶ When David's friend Hushai the Arkite arrived, he went immediately to see Absalom. "Long live the king!" he exclaimed. "Long live the king!"

¹⁷ "Is this the way you treat your friend David?" Absalom asked him. "Why aren't you with him?"

¹⁸ "I'm here because I work for the man who is chosen by the LORD and by Israel," Hushai replied.

¹⁹ "And anyway, why shouldn't I serve you? I helped your father, and now I will help you!"

²⁰ Then Absalom turned to Ahithophel and asked him, "What should I do next?"

²¹ Ahithophel told him, "Go and sleep with your father's concubines, for he has left them here to keep the house. Then all Israel will know that you have insulted him beyond hope of reconciliation, and they will give you their support."

²² So they set up a tent on the palace roof where everyone could see it, and Absalom went into the tent to sleep with his father's concubines.

²³ Absalom followed Ahithophel's advice, just as David had done. For every word Ahithophel spoke seemed as wise

as though it had come directly from the mouth of God.

17 ¹ Now Ahithophel urged Absalom, "Let me choose twelve thousand men to start out after David tonight.

² I will catch up to him while he is weary and discouraged. He and his troops will panic, and everyone will run away. Then I will kill only the king,

³ and I will bring all the people back to you as a bride returns to her husband. After all, it is only this man's life that you seek. Then all the people will remain unharmed and peaceful."

⁴ This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the other leaders of Israel.

⁵ But then Absalom said, "Bring in Hushai the Arkite. Let's see what he thinks about this."

⁶ When Hushai arrived, Absalom told him what Ahithophel had said. Then he asked, "What is your opinion? Should we

follow Ahithophel's advice? If not, speak up."

⁷ "Well," Hushai replied, "this time I think Ahithophel has made a mistake.

⁸ You know your father and his men; they are mighty warriors. Right now they are probably as enraged as a mother bear who has been robbed of her cubs. And remember that your father is an experienced soldier. He won't be spending the night among the troops.

⁹ He has probably already hidden in some pit or cave. And when he comes out and attacks and a few of your men fall, there will be panic among your troops, and everyone will start shouting that your men are being slaughtered.

¹⁰ Then even the bravest of them, though they have the heart of a lion, will be paralyzed with fear. For all Israel knows what a mighty man your father is and how courageous his warriors are.

¹¹ "I suggest that you mobilize the entire army of Israel, bringing them from as far away as Dan and Beersheba. That way you will have an army as numerous as the sand on the seashore. And I think that you should personally lead the troops.

¹² When we find David, we can descend on him like the dew that falls to the ground, so that not one of his men is left alive.

¹³ And if David has escaped into some city, you will have the entire army of Israel there at your command. Then we can take ropes and drag the walls of the city into the nearest valley until every stone is torn down."

¹⁴ Then Absalom and all the leaders of Israel said, "Hushai's advice is better than Ahithophel's." For the LORD had arranged to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, which really was the better

plan, so that he could bring disaster upon Absalom!

¹⁵ Then Hushai reported to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, what Ahithophel had said and what he himself had suggested instead.

¹⁶ "Quick!" he told them. "Find David and urge him not to stay at the shallows of the Jordan River tonight. He must go across at once into the wilderness beyond. Otherwise he will die and his entire army with him."

¹⁷ Jonathan and Ahimaaz had been staying at En-rogel so as not to be seen entering and leaving the city. Arrangements had been made for a servant girl to bring them the message they were to take to King David.

¹⁸ But a boy saw them leaving En-rogel to go to David, and he told Absalom about it. Meanwhile, they escaped to

Bahurim, where a man hid them inside a well in his courtyard.

¹⁹ The man's wife put a cloth over the top of the well with grain on it to dry in the sun; so no one suspected they were there.

²⁰ When Absalom's men arrived, they asked her, "Have you seen Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" She replied, "They were here, but they crossed the brook." Absalom's men looked for them without success and returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ Then the two men crawled out of the well and hurried on to King David. "Quick!" they told him, "cross the Jordan tonight!" And they told him how Ahithophel had advised that he be captured and killed.

²² So David and all the people with him went across the Jordan River during the night, and they were all on the other bank before dawn.

²³ Meanwhile, Ahithophel was publicly disgraced when Absalom refused his advice. So he saddled his donkey, went to his hometown, set his affairs in order, and hanged himself. He died there and was buried beside his father.

²⁴ David soon arrived at Mahanaim. By now, Absalom had mobilized the entire army of Israel and was leading his troops across the Jordan River.

²⁵ Absalom had appointed Amasa as commander of his army, replacing Joab, who had been commander under David. (Amasa was Joab's cousin. His father was Jether, an Ishmaelite. His mother, Abigail daughter of Nahash, was the sister of Joab's mother, Zeruah.)

²⁶ Absalom and the Israelite army set up camp in the land of Gilead.

²⁷ When David arrived at Mahanaim, he was warmly greeted by Shobi son of Nahash of Rabbah, an Ammonite, and by

Makir son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and by Barzillai of Gilead from Rogelim.

²⁸ They brought sleeping mats, cooking pots, serving bowls, wheat and barley flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils,

²⁹ honey, butter, sheep, and cheese for David and those who were with him. For they said, "You must all be very tired and hungry and thirsty after your long march through the wilderness."

18 ¹ David now appointed generals and captains to lead his troops.

² One-third were placed under Joab, one-third under Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruah, and one-third under Ittai the Gittite. The king told his troops, "I am going out with you."

³ But his men objected strongly. "You must not go," they urged. "If we have to turn and run—and even if half of us die—it will make no difference to Absalom's troops; they will be looking

only for you. You are worth ten thousand of us, and it is better that you stay here in the city and send us help if we need it."

⁴ "If you think that's the best plan, I'll do it," the king finally agreed. So he stood at the gate of the city as all the divisions of troops passed by.

⁵ And the king gave this command to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai: "For my sake, deal gently with young Absalom." And all the troops heard the king give this order to his commanders.

⁶ So the battle began in the forest of Ephraim,

⁷ and the Israelite troops were beaten back by David's men. There was a great slaughter, and twenty thousand men laid down their lives that day.

⁸ The battle raged all across the countryside, and more men died

because of the forest than were killed by the sword.

⁹ During the battle, Absalom came unexpectedly upon some of David's men. He tried to escape on his mule, but as he rode beneath the thick branches of a great oak, his head got caught. His mule kept going and left him dangling in the air.

¹⁰ One of David's men saw what had happened and told Joab, "I saw Absalom dangling in a tree."

¹¹ "What?" Joab demanded. "You saw him there and didn't kill him? I would have rewarded you with ten pieces of silver and a hero's belt!"

¹² "I wouldn't do it for a thousand pieces of silver," the man replied. "We all heard the king say to you and Abishai and Ittai, 'For my sake, please don't harm young Absalom.'"

¹³ And if I had betrayed the king by killing his son—and the king would certainly find out who did it—you yourself would be the first to abandon me."

¹⁴ "Enough of this nonsense," Joab said. Then he took three daggers and plunged them into Absalom's heart as he dangled from the oak still alive.

¹⁵ Ten of Joab's young armor bearers then surrounded Absalom and killed him.

¹⁶ Then Joab blew the trumpet, and his men returned from chasing the army of Israel.

¹⁷ They threw Absalom's body into a deep pit in the forest and piled a great heap of stones over it. And the army of Israel fled to their homes.

¹⁸ During his lifetime, Absalom had built a monument to himself in the King's Valley, for he had said, "I have no son

to carry on my name." He named the monument after himself, and it is known as Absalom's Monument to this day.

¹⁹ Then Zadok's son Ahimaaz said, "Let me run to the king with the good news that the LORD has saved him from his enemy Absalom."

²⁰ "No," Joab told him, "it wouldn't be good news to the king that his son is dead. You can be my messenger some other time, but not today."

²¹ Then Joab said to a man from Cush, "Go tell the king what you have seen." The man bowed and ran off.

²² But Ahimaaz continued to plead with Joab, "Whatever happens, please let me go, too." "Why should you go, my son?" Joab replied. "There will be no reward for you."

²³ "Yes, but let me go anyway," he begged. Joab finally said, "All right, go ahead." Then Ahimaaz took a shortcut

across the plain of the Jordan and got to Mahanaim ahead of the man from Cush.

²⁴ While David was sitting at the city gate, the watchman climbed to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked, he saw a lone man running toward them.

²⁵ He shouted the news down to David, and the king replied, "If he is alone, he has news." As the messenger came closer,

²⁶ the watchman saw another man running toward them. He shouted down, "Here comes another one!" The king replied, "He also will have news."

²⁷ "The first man runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok," the watchman said. "He is a good man and comes with good news," the king replied.

²⁸ Then Ahimaaz cried out to the king, "All is well!" He bowed low with his face to the ground and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has handed over

the rebels who dared to stand against you."

²⁹ "What about young Absalom?" the king demanded. "Is he all right?" Ahimaaz replied, "When Joab told me to come, there was a lot of commotion. But I didn't know what was happening."

³⁰ "Wait here," the king told him. So Ahimaaz stepped aside.

³¹ Then the man from Cush arrived and said, "I have good news for my lord the king. Today the LORD has rescued you from all those who rebelled against you."

³² "What about young Absalom?" the king demanded. "Is he all right?" And the Cushite replied, "May all of your enemies, both now and in the future, be as that young man is!"

³³ The king was overcome with emotion. He went up to his room over the gateway and burst into tears. And as he went, he cried, "O my son Absalom!

My son, my son Absalom! If only I could have died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son."

19¹ Word soon reached Joab that the king was weeping and mourning for Absalom.

² As the troops heard of the king's deep grief for his son, the joy of that day's victory was turned into deep sadness.

³ They crept back into the city as though they were ashamed and had been beaten in battle.

⁴ The king covered his face with his hands and kept on weeping, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

⁵ Then Joab went to the king's room and said to him, "We saved your life today and the lives of your sons, your daughters, and your wives and concubines. Yet you act like this, making us feel ashamed, as though we had done something wrong.

⁶ You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that we mean nothing to you. If Absalom had lived and all of us had died, you would be pleased.

⁷ Now go out there and congratulate the troops, for I swear by the LORD that if you don't, not a single one of them will remain here tonight. Then you will be worse off than you have ever been."

⁸ So the king went out and sat at the city gate, and as the news spread throughout the city that he was there, everyone went to him. Meanwhile, the Israelites who supported Absalom had fled to their homes.

⁹ And throughout the tribes of Israel there was much discussion and argument going on. The people were saying, "The king saved us from our enemies, the Philistines, but Absalom chased him out of the country.

¹⁰ Now Absalom, whom we anointed to rule over us, is dead. Let's ask David to come back and be our king again."

¹¹ Then King David sent Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, to say to the leaders of Judah, "Why are you the last ones to reinstate the king? For I have heard that all Israel is ready, and only you are holding out.

¹² Yet you are my relatives, my own tribe, my own flesh and blood! Why are you the last ones to welcome me back?"

¹³ And David told them to tell Amasa, "Since you are my nephew, may God strike me dead if I do not appoint you as commander of my army in place of Joab."

¹⁴ Then Amasa convinced all the leaders of Judah, and they responded unanimously. They sent word to the king, "Return to us, and bring back all those who are with you."

¹⁵ So the king started back to Jerusalem. And when he arrived at the Jordan River, the people of Judah came to Gilgal to meet him and escort him across the river.

¹⁶ Then Shimei son of Gera, the man from Bahurim in Benjamin, hurried across with the men of Judah to welcome King David.

¹⁷ A thousand men from the tribe of Benjamin were with him, including Ziba, the servant of Saul, and Ziba's fifteen sons and twenty servants. They rushed down to the Jordan to arrive ahead of the king.

¹⁸ They all crossed the ford and worked hard ferrying the king's household across the river, helping them in every way they could. As the king was about to cross the river, Shimei fell down before him.

¹⁹ "My lord the king, please forgive me," he pleaded. "Forget the terrible thing I did when you left Jerusalem.

²⁰ I know how much I sinned. That is why I have come here today, the very first person in all Israel to greet you."

²¹ Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said, "Shimei should die, for he cursed the LORD's anointed king!"

²² "What am I going to do with you sons of Zeruiah!" David exclaimed. "This is not a day for execution but for celebration! I am once again the king of Israel!"

²³ Then, turning to Shimei, David vowed, "Your life will be spared."

²⁴ Now Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, arrived from Jerusalem to meet the king. He had not washed his feet or clothes nor trimmed his beard since the day the king left Jerusalem.

²⁵ "Why didn't you come with me, Mephibosheth?" the king asked him.

²⁶ Mephibosheth replied, "My lord the king, my servant Ziba deceived me. I told him, 'Saddle my donkey so that I can go with the king.' For as you know I am crippled.

²⁷ Ziba has slandered me by saying that I refused to come. But I know that you are like an angel of God, so do what you think is best.

²⁸ All my relatives and I could expect only death from you, my lord, but instead you have honored me among those who eat at your own table! So how can I complain?"

²⁹ "All right," David replied. "My decision is that you and Ziba will divide your land equally between you."

³⁰ "Give him all of it," Mephibosheth said. "I am content just to have you back again, my lord!"

³¹ Barzillai of Gilead now arrived from Rogelim to conduct the king across the Jordan.

³² He was very old, about eighty, and very wealthy. He was the one who had provided food for the king during his stay in Mahanaim.

³³ "Come across with me and live in Jerusalem," the king said to Barzillai. "I will take care of you there."

³⁴ "No," he replied, "I am far too old for that."

³⁵ I am eighty years old today, and I can no longer enjoy anything. Food and wine are no longer tasty, and I cannot hear the musicians as they play. I would only be a burden to my lord the king.

³⁶ Just to go across the river with you is all the honor I need!

³⁷ Then let me return again to die in my own town, where my father and mother are buried. But here is my son

Kimham. Let him go with you and receive whatever good things you want to give him."

³⁸ "Good," the king agreed. "Kimham will go with me, and I will do for him whatever I would have done for you."

³⁹ So all the people crossed the Jordan with the king. After David had blessed and embraced him, Barzillai returned to his own home.

⁴⁰ The king then went on to Gilgal, taking Kimham with him. All the army of Judah and half the army of Israel escorted him across the river.

⁴¹ But the men of Israel complained to the king that the men of Judah had gotten to do most of the work in helping him cross the Jordan.

⁴² "Why not?" the men of Judah replied. "The king is one of our own tribe. Why should this make you angry? We have

charged him nothing. And he hasn't fed us or even given us gifts!"

⁴³ "But there are ten tribes in Israel," the others replied. "So we have ten times as much right to the king as you do. Why did you treat us with such contempt? Remember, we were the first to speak of bringing him back to be our king again." The argument continued back and forth, and the men of Judah were very harsh in their replies.

20 ¹ Then a troublemaker named Sheba son of Bicri, a man from the tribe of Benjamin, blew a trumpet and shouted, "We have nothing to do with David. We want no part of this son of Jesse. Come on, you men of Israel, let's all go home!"

² So the men of Israel deserted David and followed Sheba. But the men of Judah stayed with their king and

escorted him from the Jordan River to Jerusalem.

³ When the king arrived at his palace in Jerusalem, he instructed that the ten concubines he had left to keep house should be placed in seclusion. Their needs were to be cared for, he said, but he would no longer sleep with them. So each of them lived like a widow until she died.

⁴ Then the king instructed Amasa to mobilize the army of Judah within three days and to report back at that time.

⁵ So Amasa went out to notify the troops, but it took him longer than the three days he had been given.

⁶ Then David said to Abishai, "That troublemaker Sheba is going to hurt us more than Absalom did. Quick, take my troops and chase after him before he gets into a fortified city where we can't reach him."

⁷ So Abishai and Joab set out after Sheba with an elite guard from Joab's army and the king's own bodyguard.

⁸ As they arrived at the great stone in Gibeon, Amasa met them, coming from the opposite direction. Joab was wearing his uniform with a dagger strapped to his belt. As he stepped forward to greet Amasa, he secretly slipped the dagger from its sheath.

⁹ "How are you, my cousin?" Joab said and took him by the beard with his right hand as though to kiss him.

¹⁰ Amasa didn't notice the dagger in his left hand, and Joab stabbed him in the stomach with it so that his insides gushed out onto the ground. Joab did not need to strike again, and Amasa soon died. Joab and his brother Abishai left him lying there and continued after Sheba.

¹¹ One of Joab's young officers shouted to Amasa's troops, "If you are for Joab and David, come and follow Joab."

¹² But Amasa lay in his blood in the middle of the road, and Joab's officer saw that a crowd was gathering around to stare at him. So he pulled him off the road into a field and threw a cloak over him.

¹³ With Amasa's body out of the way, everyone went on with Joab to capture Sheba.

¹⁴ Meanwhile, Sheba had traveled across Israel to mobilize his own clan of Bicri at the city of Abel-beth-maacah.

¹⁵ When Joab's forces arrived, they attacked Abel-beth-maacah and built a ramp against the city wall and began battering it down.

¹⁶ But a wise woman in the city called out to Joab, "Listen to me, Joab. Come over here so I can talk to you."

¹⁷ As he approached, the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" "I am," he replied. So she said, "Listen carefully to your servant." "I'm listening," he said.

¹⁸ Then she continued, "There used to be a saying, 'If you want to settle an argument, ask advice at the city of Abel.'

¹⁹ I am one who is peace loving and faithful in Israel. But you are destroying a loyal city. Why do you want to destroy what belongs to the LORD?"

²⁰ And Joab replied, "Believe me, I don't want to destroy your city!

²¹ All I want is a man named Sheba son of Bicri from the hill country of Ephraim, who has revolted against King David. If you hand him over to me, we will leave the city in peace." "All right," the woman replied, "we will throw his head over the wall to you."

²² Then the woman went to the people with her wise advice, and they cut off

Sheba's head and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet and called his troops back from the attack, and they all returned to their homes. Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.

²³ Joab once again became the commander of David's army. Benaiah son of Jehoiada was commander of the king's bodyguard.

²⁴ Adoniram was in charge of the labor force. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian.

²⁵ Sheva was the court secretary. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests.

²⁶ Ira the Jairite was David's personal priest.

21 ¹ There was a famine during David's reign that lasted for three years, so David asked the LORD about it. And the LORD said, "The famine has come because Saul and his family are guilty of murdering the Gibeonites."

² So King David summoned the Gibeonites. They were not part of Israel but were all that was left of the nation of the Amorites. Israel had sworn not to kill them, but Saul, in his zeal, had tried to wipe them out.

³ David asked them, "What can I do for you to make amends? Tell me so that the LORD will bless his people again."

⁴ "Well, money won't do it," the Gibeonites replied. "And we don't want to see the Israelites executed in revenge." "What can I do then?" David asked. "Just tell me and I will do it for you."

⁵ Then they replied, "It was Saul who planned to destroy us, to keep us from having any place at all in Israel.

⁶ So let seven of Saul's sons or grandsons be handed over to us, and we will execute them before the LORD at

Gibeon, on the mountain of the LORD."

"All right," the king said, "I will do it."

⁷ David spared Jonathan's son Mephibosheth, who was Saul's grandson, because of the oath David and Jonathan had sworn before the LORD.

⁸ But he gave them Saul's two sons Armoni and Mephibosheth, whose mother was Rizpah daughter of Aiah. He also gave them the five sons of Saul's daughter Merab, the wife of Adriel son of Barzillai from Meholah.

⁹ The men of Gibeon executed them on the mountain before the LORD. So all seven of them died together at the beginning of the barley harvest.

¹⁰ Then Rizpah, the mother of two of the men, spread sackcloth on a rock and stayed there the entire harvest season. She prevented vultures from tearing at their bodies during the day and stopped wild animals from eating them at night.

¹¹ When David learned what Rizpah, Saul's concubine, had done,

¹² he went to the people of Jabesh-gilead and asked for the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. (When Saul and Jonathan had died in a battle with the Philistines, it was the people of Jabesh-gilead who had retrieved their bodies from the public square of the Philistine city of Beth-shan.)

¹³ So David brought the bones of Saul and Jonathan, as well as the bones of the men the Gibeonites had executed.

¹⁴ He buried them all in the tomb of Kish, Saul's father, at the town of Zela in the land of Benjamin. After that, God ended the famine in the land of Israel.

¹⁵ Once again the Philistines were at war with Israel. And when David and his men were in the thick of battle, David became weak and exhausted.

¹⁶ Ishbi-benob was a descendant of the giants; his bronze spearhead weighed more than seven pounds, and he was armed with a new sword. He had cornered David and was about to kill him.

¹⁷ But Abishai son of Zeruah came to his rescue and killed the Philistine. After that, David's men declared, "You are not going out to battle again! Why should we risk snuffing out the light of Israel?"

¹⁸ After this, there was another battle against the Philistines at Gob. As they fought, Sibbecai from Hushah killed Saph, another descendant of the giants.

¹⁹ In still another battle at Gob, Elhanan son of Jair from Bethlehem killed the brother of Goliath of Gath. The handle of his spear was as thick as a weaver's beam!

²⁰ In another battle with the Philistines at Gath, a huge man with six fingers on

each hand and six toes on each foot—a descendant of the giants—

²¹ defied and taunted Israel. But he was killed by Jonathan, the son of David's brother Shimea.

²² These four Philistines were descended from the giants of Gath, but they were killed by David and his warriors.

22 ¹ David sang this song to the LORD after the LORD had rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul.

² These are the words he sang: "The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;

³ my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the strength of my salvation, and my stronghold, my high tower, my savior, the one who saves me from violence.

⁴ I will call on the LORD, who is worthy of praise, for he saves me from my enemies.

⁵ "The waves of death surrounded me; the floods of destruction swept over me.

⁶ The grave wrapped its ropes around me; death itself stared me in the face.

⁷ But in my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I called to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry reached his ears.

⁸ "Then the earth quaked and trembled; the foundations of the heavens shook; they quaked because of his anger.

⁹ Smoke poured from his nostrils; fierce flames leaped from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him.

¹⁰ He opened the heavens and came down; dark storm clouds were beneath his feet.

¹¹ Mounted on a mighty angel, he flew, soaring on the wings of the wind.

¹² He shrouded himself in darkness, veiling his approach with dense rain clouds.

¹³ A great brightness shone before him, and bolts of lightning blazed forth.

¹⁴ The LORD thundered from heaven; the Most High gave a mighty shout.

¹⁵ He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies; his lightning flashed, and they were confused.

¹⁶ Then at the command of the LORD, at the blast of his breath, the bottom of the sea could be seen, and the foundations of the earth were laid bare.

¹⁷ "He reached down from heaven and rescued me; he drew me out of deep waters.

¹⁸ He delivered me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me and were too strong for me.

¹⁹ They attacked me at a moment when I was weakest, but the LORD upheld me.

²⁰ He led me to a place of safety; he rescued me because he delights in me.

²¹ The LORD rewarded me for doing right; he compensated me because of my innocence.

²² For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not turned from my God to follow evil.

²³ For all his laws are constantly before me; I have never abandoned his principles.

²⁴ I am blameless before God; I have kept myself from sin.

²⁵ The LORD rewarded me for doing right, because of my innocence in his sight.

²⁶ "To the faithful you show yourself faithful; to those with integrity you show integrity.

²⁷ To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the wicked you show yourself hostile.

²⁸ You rescue those who are humble,
but your eyes are on the proud to
humiliate them.

²⁹ O LORD, you are my light; yes, LORD,
you light up my darkness.

³⁰ In your strength I can crush an army;
with my God I can scale any wall.

³¹ "As for God, his way is perfect. All
the LORD's promises prove true. He
is a shield for all who look to him for
protection.

³² For who is God except the LORD?
Who but our God is a solid rock?

³³ God is my strong fortress; he has
made my way safe.

³⁴ He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
leading me safely along the mountain
heights.

³⁵ He prepares me for battle; he
strengthens me to draw a bow of bronze.

³⁶ You have given me the shield of your
salvation; your help has made me great.

37 You have made a wide path for my feet to keep them from slipping.

38 "I chased my enemies and destroyed them; I did not stop until they were conquered.

39 I consumed them; I struck them down so they could not get up; they fell beneath my feet.

40 You have armed me with strength for the battle; you have subdued my enemies under my feet.

41 You made them turn and run; I have destroyed all who hated me.

42 They called for help, but no one came to rescue them. They cried to the LORD, but he refused to answer them.

43 I ground them as fine as the dust of the earth; I swept them into the gutter like dirt.

44 "You gave me victory over my accusers. You preserved me as the ruler

over nations; people I don't even know now serve me.

⁴⁵ Foreigners cringe before me; as soon as they hear of me, they submit.

⁴⁶ They all lose their courage and come trembling from their strongholds.

⁴⁷ "The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock! May God, the rock of my salvation, be exalted!

⁴⁸ He is the God who pays back those who harm me; he subdues the nations under me

⁴⁹ and rescues me from my enemies. You hold me safe beyond the reach of my enemies; you save me from violent opponents.

⁵⁰ For this, O LORD, I will praise you among the nations; I will sing joyfully to your name.

⁵¹ You give great victories to your king; you show unfailing love to your anointed, to David and all his descendants forever."

23 ¹ These are the last words of David: "David, the son of Jesse, speaks—David, the man to whom God gave such wonderful success, David, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, David, the sweet psalmist of Israel.

² "The Spirit of the LORD speaks through me; his words are upon my tongue.

³ The God of Israel spoke. The Rock of Israel said to me: 'The person who rules righteously, who rules in the fear of God, ⁴ he is like the light of the morning, like the sunrise bursting forth in a cloudless sky, like the refreshing rains that bring tender grass from the earth.'

⁵ "It is my family God has chosen! Yes, he has made an everlasting covenant with me. His agreement is eternal, final, sealed. He will constantly look after my safety and success.

⁶ But the godless are like thorns to be thrown away, for they tear the hand that touches them.

⁷ One must be armed to chop them down; they will be utterly consumed with fire."

⁸ These are the names of David's mightiest men. The first was Jashobeam the Hacmonite, who was commander of the Three—the three greatest warriors among David's men. He once used his spear to kill eight hundred enemy warriors in a single battle.

⁹ Next in rank among the Three was Eleazar son of Dodai, a descendant of Ahoah. Once Eleazar and David stood together against the Philistines when the entire Israelite army had fled.

¹⁰ He killed Philistines until his hand was too tired to lift his sword, and the LORD gave him a great victory that day.

The rest of the army did not return until it was time to collect the plunder!

¹¹ Next in rank was Shammah son of Agee from Harar. One time the Philistines gathered at Lehi and attacked the Israelites in a field full of lentils. The Israelite army fled,

¹² but Shammah held his ground in the middle of the field and beat back the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.

¹³ Once during harvesttime, when David was at the cave of Adullam, the Philistine army was camped in the valley of Rephaim. The Three (who were among the Thirty—an elite group among David's fighting men) went down to meet him there.

¹⁴ David was staying in the stronghold at the time, and a Philistine detachment had occupied the town of Bethlehem.

¹⁵ David remarked longingly to his men, "Oh, how I would love some of that good water from the well in Bethlehem, the one by the gate."

¹⁶ So the Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew some water from the well, and brought it back to David. But he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out before the LORD.

¹⁷ "The LORD forbid that I should drink this!" he exclaimed. "This water is as precious as the blood of these men who risked their lives to bring it to me." So David did not drink it. This is an example of the exploits of the Three.

¹⁸ Abishai son of Zeruiah, the brother of Joab, was the leader of the Thirty. He once used his spear to kill three hundred enemy warriors in a single battle. It was by such feats that he became as famous as the Three.

¹⁹ Abishai was the most famous of the Thirty and was their commander, though he was not one of the Three.

²⁰ There was also Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant warrior from Kabzeel. He did many heroic deeds, which included killing two of Moab's mightiest warriors. Another time he chased a lion down into a pit. Then, despite the snow and slippery ground, he caught the lion and killed it.

²¹ Another time, armed only with a club, he killed a great Egyptian warrior who was armed with a spear. Benaiah wrenched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with it.

²² These are some of the deeds that made Benaiah almost as famous as the Three.

²³ He was more honored than the other members of the Thirty, though he was

not one of the Three. And David made him commander of his bodyguard.

²⁴ Other members of the Thirty included: Asahel, Joab's brother; Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem;

²⁵ Shammah from Harod; Elika from Harod;

²⁶ Helez from Pelon; Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa;

²⁷ Abiezer from Anathoth; Sibbecai from Hushah;

²⁸ Zalmon from Ahoah; Maharai from Netophah;

²⁹ Heled son of Baanah from Netophah; Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah (from the tribe of Benjamin);

³⁰ Benaiah from Pirathon; Hurai from Nahale-gaash;

³¹ Abi-albon the Arbathite; Azmaveth from Bahurim;

³² Eliahba from Shaalbon; the sons of Jashen;

³³ Jonathan son of Shagee from Harar;
Ahiam son of Sharar from Harar;

³⁴ Eliphelet son of Ahasbai from
Maacah; Eliam son of Ahithophel from
Giloh;

³⁵ Hezro from Carmel; Paarai from Arba;

³⁶ Igal son of Nathan from Zobah; Bani
from Gad;

³⁷ Zelek from Ammon; Naharai from
Beeroth (Joab's armor bearer);

³⁸ Ira from Jattir; Gareb from Jattir;

³⁹ Uriah the Hittite. There were
thirty–seven in all.

24 ¹ Once again the anger of the
LORD burned against Israel, and
he caused David to harm them by taking
a census. "Go and count the people of
Israel and Judah," the LORD told him.

² So the king said to Joab, the
commander of his army, "Take a census
of all the people in the land—from
Dan in the north to Beersheba in the

south—so that I may know how many people there are."

³ But Joab replied to the king, "May the LORD your God let you live until there are a hundred times as many people in your kingdom as there are now! But why do you want to do this?"

⁴ But the king insisted that they take the census, so Joab and his officers went out to count the people of Israel.

⁵ First they crossed the Jordan and camped at Aroer, south of the town in the valley, in the direction of Gad. Then they went on to Jazer,

⁶ then to Gilead in the land of Tahtimhodshi and to Dan—jaan and around to Sidon.

⁷ Then they came to the stronghold of Tyre, and all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites. Finally, they went south to Judah as far as Beersheba.

⁸ Having gone through the entire land, they completed their task in nine months and twenty days and then returned to Jerusalem.

⁹ Joab reported the number of people to the king. There were 800,000 men of military age in Israel and 500,000 in Judah.

¹⁰ But after he had taken the census, David's conscience began to bother him. And he said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly and shouldn't have taken the census. Please forgive me, LORD, for doing this foolish thing."

¹¹ The next morning the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, who was David's seer. This was the message:

¹² "Go and say to David, 'This is what the LORD says: I will give you three choices. Choose one of these punishments, and I will do it.'"

¹³ So Gad came to David and asked him, "Will you choose three years of famine throughout the land, three months of fleeing from your enemies, or three days of severe plague throughout your land? Think this over and let me know what answer to give the LORD."

¹⁴ "This is a desperate situation!" David replied to Gad. "But let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great. Do not let me fall into human hands."

¹⁵ So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel that morning, and it lasted for three days. Seventy thousand people died throughout the nation.

¹⁶ But as the death angel was preparing to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD relented and said to the angel, "Stop! That is enough!" At that moment the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁷ When David saw the angel, he said to the LORD, "I am the one who has sinned and done wrong! But these people are innocent—what have they done? Let your anger fall against me and my family."

¹⁸ That day Gad came to David and said to him, "Go and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

¹⁹ So David went to do what the LORD had commanded him.

²⁰ When Araunah saw the king and his men coming toward him, he came forward and bowed before the king with his face to the ground.

²¹ "Why have you come, my lord?" Araunah asked. And David replied, "I have come to buy your threshing floor and to build an altar to the LORD there, so that the LORD will stop the plague."

²² "Take it, my lord, and use it as you wish," Araunah said to David. "Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and you can use the threshing tools and ox yokes for wood to build a fire on the altar.

²³ I will give it all to you, and may the LORD your God accept your sacrifice."

²⁴ But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on buying it, for I cannot present burnt offerings to the LORD my God that have cost me nothing." So David paid him fifty pieces of silver for the threshing floor and the oxen.

²⁵ David built an altar there to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And the LORD answered his prayer, and the plague was stopped.

1 Kings

1 ¹ Now King David was very old, and no matter how many blankets covered him, he could not keep warm.

² So his advisers told him, "We will find a young virgin who will wait on you and be your nurse. She will lie in your arms and keep you warm."

³ So they searched throughout the country for a beautiful girl, and they found Abishag from Shunem and brought her to the king.

⁴ The girl was very beautiful, and she waited on the king and took care of him. But the king had no sexual relations with her.

⁵ About that time David's son Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, decided to make himself king in place of his aged

father. So he provided himself with chariots and horses and recruited fifty men to run in front of him.

⁶ Now his father, King David, had never disciplined him at any time, even by asking, "What are you doing?" Adonijah was a very handsome man and had been born next after Absalom.

⁷ Adonijah took Joab son of Zeruah and Abiathar the priest into his confidence, and they agreed to help him become king.

⁸ But among those who remained loyal to David and refused to support Adonijah were Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David's personal bodyguard.

⁹ Adonijah went to the stone of Zoheleth near the spring of En-rogel, where he sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened calves. He invited all his brothers—the other sons of King

David—and all the royal officials of Judah.

¹⁰ But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, or Benaiah, or the king's bodyguard, or his brother Solomon.

¹¹ Then Nathan the prophet went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and asked her, "Did you realize that Haggith's son, Adonijah, has made himself king and that our lord David doesn't even know about it?"

¹² If you want to save your own life and the life of your son Solomon, follow my counsel.

¹³ Go at once to King David and say to him, 'My lord, didn't you promise me that my son Solomon would be the next king and would sit upon your throne? Then why has Adonijah become king?'

¹⁴ And while you are still talking with him, I will come and confirm everything you have said."

¹⁵ So Bathsheba went into the king's bedroom. He was very old now, and Abishag was taking care of him.

¹⁶ Bathsheba bowed low before him. "What can I do for you?" he asked her.

¹⁷ She replied, "My lord, you vowed to me by the LORD your God that my son Solomon would be the next king and would sit on your throne.

¹⁸ But instead, Adonijah has become the new king, and you do not even know about it.

¹⁹ He has sacrificed many oxen, fattened calves, and sheep, and he has invited all your sons and Abiathar the priest and Joab, the commander of the army. But he did not invite your servant Solomon.

²⁰ And now, my lord the king, all Israel is waiting for your decision as to who will become king after you.

²¹ If you do not act, my son Solomon and I will be treated as criminals as soon as you are dead."

²² While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived.

²³ The king's advisers told him, "Nathan the prophet is here to see you." Nathan went in and bowed low before the king.

²⁴ He asked, "My lord, have you decided that Adonijah will be the next king and that he will sit on your throne?"

²⁵ Today he has sacrificed many oxen, fattened calves, and sheep, and he has invited your sons to attend the celebration. He also invited Joab, the commander of the army, and Abiathar the priest. They are feasting and drinking with him and shouting, 'Long live King Adonijah!'

²⁶ But I myself, your servant, was not invited; neither were Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, nor Solomon.

²⁷ Has my lord really done this without letting any of his servants know who should be the next king?"

²⁸ "Call Bathsheba," David said. So she came back in and stood before the king.

²⁹ And the king vowed, "As surely as the LORD lives, who has rescued me from every danger,

³⁰ today I decree that your son Solomon will be the next king and will sit on my throne, just as I swore to you before the LORD, the God of Israel."

³¹ Then Bathsheba bowed low before him again and exclaimed, "May my lord King David live forever!"

³² Then King David ordered, "Call Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came into the king's presence,

³³ the king said to them, "Take Solomon and my officers down to Gihon Spring. Solomon is to ride on my personal mule.

³⁴ There Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet are to anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpets and shout, 'Long live King Solomon!'

³⁵ When you bring him back here, he will sit on my throne. He will succeed me as king, for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah."

³⁶ "Amen!" Benaiah son of Jehoiada replied. "May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, decree it to be so.

³⁷ And may the LORD be with Solomon as he has been with you, and may he make Solomon's reign even greater than yours!"

³⁸ So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the king's bodyguard took Solomon down to Gihon Spring, and Solomon rode on King David's personal mule.

³⁹ There Zadok the priest took a flask of olive oil from the sacred tent and poured

it on Solomon's head. Then the trumpets were blown, and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!"

⁴⁰ And all the people returned with Solomon to Jerusalem, playing flutes and shouting for joy. The celebration was so joyous and noisy that the earth shook with the sound.

⁴¹ Adonijah and his guests heard the celebrating and shouting just as they were finishing their banquet. When Joab heard the sound of trumpets, he asked, "What's going on? Why is the city in such an uproar?"

⁴² And while he was still speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest arrived. "Come in," Adonijah said to him, "for you are a good man. You must have good news."

⁴³ "Not at all!" Jonathan replied. "Our lord King David has just declared Solomon king!"

⁴⁴ The king sent him down to Gihon Spring with Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, protected by the king's bodyguard. They had him ride on the king's own mule,

⁴⁵ and Zadok and Nathan have anointed him as the new king. They have just returned, and the whole city is celebrating and rejoicing. That's what all the noise is about.

⁴⁶ Moreover, Solomon is now sitting on the royal throne as king.

⁴⁷ All the royal officials went to King David and congratulated him, saying, 'May your God make Solomon's fame even greater than your own, and may Solomon's kingdom be even greater than yours!' Then the king bowed his head in worship as he lay in his bed,

⁴⁸ and he spoke these words: 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who

today has chosen someone to sit on my throne while I am still alive to see it.'"

⁴⁹ Then all of Adonijah's guests jumped up in panic from the banquet table and quickly went their separate ways.

⁵⁰ Adonijah himself was afraid of Solomon, so he rushed to the sacred tent and caught hold of the horns of the altar.

⁵¹ Word soon reached Solomon that Adonijah had seized the horns of the altar and that he was pleading, "Let Solomon swear today that he will not kill me!"

⁵² Solomon replied, "If he proves himself to be loyal, he will not be harmed. But if he does not, he will die."

⁵³ So King Solomon summoned Adonijah, and they brought him down from the altar. He came and bowed low before the king, and Solomon dismissed him, saying, "Go on home."

2¹ As the time of King David's death approached, he gave this charge to his son Solomon:

² "I am going where everyone on earth must someday go. Take courage and be a man.

³ Observe the requirements of the LORD your God and follow all his ways. Keep each of the laws, commands, regulations, and stipulations written in the law of Moses so that you will be successful in all you do and wherever you go.

⁴ If you do this, then the LORD will keep the promise he made to me: 'If your descendants live as they should and follow me faithfully with all their heart and soul, one of them will always sit on the throne of Israel.'

⁵ "And there is something else. You know that Joab son of Zeruiah murdered my two army commanders, Abner son

of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He pretended that it was an act of war, but it was done in a time of peace, staining his belt and sandals with the blood of war.

⁶ Do with him what you think best, but don't let him die in peace.

⁷ "Be kind to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead. Make them permanent guests of the king, for they took care of me when I fled from your brother Absalom.

⁸ "And remember Shimei son of Gera, the man from Bahurim in Benjamin. He cursed me with a terrible curse as I was fleeing to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan River, I swore by the LORD that I would not kill him.

⁹ But that oath does not make him innocent. You are a wise man, and you will know how to arrange a bloody death for him."

¹⁰ Then David died and was buried in the City of David.

¹¹ He had reigned over Israel for forty years, seven of them in Hebron and thirty–three in Jerusalem.

¹² Solomon succeeded him as king, replacing his father, David, and he was firmly established on the throne.

¹³ One day Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, came to see Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. "Have you come to make trouble?" she asked him. "No," he said, "I come in peace.

¹⁴ In fact, I have a favor to ask of you." "What is it?" she asked.

¹⁵ He replied, "As you know, the kingdom was mine; everyone expected me to be the next king. But the tables were turned, and everything went to my brother instead; for that is the way the LORD wanted it.

¹⁶ So now I have just one favor to ask of you. Please don't turn me down." "What is it?" she asked.

¹⁷ He replied, "Speak to King Solomon on my behalf, for I know he will do anything you request. Ask him to give me Abishag, the girl from Shunem, as my wife."

¹⁸ "All right," Bathsheba replied. "I will speak to the king for you."

¹⁹ So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak on Adonijah's behalf. The king rose from his throne to meet her, and he bowed down before her. When he sat down on his throne again, he ordered that a throne be brought for his mother, and she sat at his right hand.

²⁰ "I have one small request to make of you," she said. "I hope you won't turn me down." "What is it, my mother?" he asked. "You know I won't refuse you."

²¹ "Then let your brother Adonijah marry Abishag, the girl from Shunem," she replied.

²² "How can you possibly ask me to give Abishag to Adonijah?" Solomon demanded. "You might as well be asking me to give him the kingdom! You know that he is my older brother, and that he has Abiathar the priest and Joab son of Zeruah on his side."

²³ Then King Solomon swore solemnly by the LORD: "May God strike me dead if Adonijah has not sealed his fate with this request.

²⁴ The LORD has confirmed me and placed me on the throne of my father, David; he has established my dynasty as he promised. So as surely as the LORD lives, Adonijah will die this very day!"

²⁵ So King Solomon ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada to execute him, and Adonijah was put to death.

²⁶ Then the king said to Abiathar the priest, "Go back to your home in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not kill you now, because you carried the Ark of the Sovereign LORD for my father, and you suffered right along with him through all his troubles."

²⁷ So Solomon deposed Abiathar from his position as priest of the LORD, thereby fulfilling the decree the LORD had made at Shiloh concerning the descendants of Eli.

²⁸ Although he had not followed Absalom earlier, Joab had also joined Adonijah's revolt. When Joab heard about Adonijah's death, he ran to the sacred tent of the LORD and caught hold of the horns of the altar.

²⁹ When news of this reached King Solomon, he sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada to execute him.

³⁰ Benaiah went into the sacred tent of the LORD and said to Joab, "The king orders you to come out!" But Joab answered, "No, I will die here." So Benaiah returned to the king and told him what Joab had said.

³¹ "Do as he said," the king replied. "Kill him there beside the altar and bury him. This will remove the guilt of his senseless murders from me and from my father's family.

³² Then the LORD will repay him for the murders of two men who were more righteous and better than he. For my father was no party to the deaths of Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah.

³³ May Joab and his descendants be forever guilty of these murders, and may the LORD grant peace to David and his descendants and to his throne forever."

³⁴ So Benaiah son of Jehoiada returned to the sacred tent and killed Joab, and Joab was buried at his home in the wilderness.

³⁵ Then the king appointed Benaiah to command the army in place of Joab, and he installed Zadok the priest to take the place of Abiathar.

³⁶ The king then sent for Shimei and told him, "Build a house here in Jerusalem and live there. But don't step outside the city to go anywhere else.

³⁷ On the day you cross the Kidron Valley, you will surely die; your blood will be on your own head."

³⁸ Shimei replied, "Your sentence is fair; I will do whatever my lord the king commands." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem for a long time.

³⁹ But three years later, two of Shimei's slaves escaped to King Achish of Gath. When Shimei learned where they were,

⁴⁰ he saddled his donkey and went to Gath to search for them. When he had found them, he took them back to Jerusalem.

⁴¹ Solomon heard that Shimei had left Jerusalem and had gone to Gath and returned.

⁴² So he sent for Shimei and demanded, "Didn't I make you swear by the LORD and warn you not to go anywhere else, or you would surely die? And you replied, 'The sentence is fair; I will do as you say.'

⁴³ Then why haven't you kept your oath to the LORD and obeyed my command?"

⁴⁴ The king also said to Shimei, "You surely remember all the wicked things you did to my father, King David. May the LORD punish you for them.

⁴⁵ But may I receive the LORD's rich blessings, and may one of David's descendants always sit on this throne."

⁴⁶ Then, at the king's command, Benaiah son of Jehoiada took Shimei outside and killed him. So the kingdom was now firmly in Solomon's grip.

3 ¹ Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and married one of his daughters. He brought her to live in the City of David until he could finish building his palace and the Temple of the LORD and the wall around the city.

² At that time the people of Israel sacrificed their offerings at local altars, for a temple honoring the name of the LORD had not yet been built.

³ Solomon loved the LORD and followed all the instructions of his father, David, except that Solomon, too, offered sacrifices and burned incense at the local altars.

⁴ The most important of these altars was at Gibeon, so the king went there

and sacrificed one thousand burnt offerings.

⁵ That night the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"

⁶ Solomon replied, "You were wonderfully kind to my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued this great kindness to him today by giving him a son to succeed him.

⁷ O LORD my God, now you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around.

⁸ And here I am among your own chosen people, a nation so great they are too numerous to count!

⁹ Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and

wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great nation of yours?"

¹⁰ The Lord was pleased with Solomon's reply and was glad that he had asked for wisdom.

¹¹ So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people and have not asked for a long life or riches for yourself or the death of your enemies—

¹² I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding mind such as no one else has ever had or ever will have!

¹³ And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and honor! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life!

¹⁴ And if you follow me and obey my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life."

¹⁵ Then Solomon woke up and realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem and stood before the Ark of the Lord's covenant, where he sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then he invited all his officials to a great banquet.

¹⁶ Some time later, two prostitutes came to the king to have an argument settled.

¹⁷ "Please, my lord," one of them began, "this woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a baby while she was with me in the house.

¹⁸ Three days later, she also had a baby. We were alone; there were only two of us in the house.

¹⁹ But her baby died during the night when she rolled over on it.

²⁰ Then she got up in the night and took my son from beside me while I was

asleep. She laid her dead child in my arms and took mine to sleep beside her.

²¹ And in the morning when I tried to nurse my son, he was dead! But when I looked more closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn't my son at all."

²² Then the other woman interrupted, "It certainly was your son, and the living child is mine." "No," the first woman said, "the dead one is yours, and the living one is mine." And so they argued back and forth before the king.

²³ Then the king said, "Let's get the facts straight. Both of you claim the living child is yours, and each says that the dead child belongs to the other.

²⁴ All right, bring me a sword." So a sword was brought to the king.

²⁵ Then he said, "Cut the living child in two and give half to each of these women!"

²⁶ Then the woman who really was the mother of the living child, and who loved him very much, cried out, "Oh no, my lord! Give her the child—please do not kill him!" But the other woman said, "All right, he will be neither yours nor mine; divide him between us!"

²⁷ Then the king said, "Do not kill him, but give the baby to the woman who wants him to live, for she is his mother!"

²⁸ Word of the king's decision spread quickly throughout all Israel, and the people were awed as they realized the great wisdom God had given him to render decisions with justice.

4 ¹ So Solomon was king over all Israel, ² and these were his high officials: Azariah son of Zadok was the priest.

³ Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, were court secretaries. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian.

⁴ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was commander of the army. Zadok and Abiathar were the priests.

⁵ Azariah son of Nathan presided over the district governors. Zabud son of Nathan, a priest, was a trusted adviser to the king.

⁶ Ahishar was manager of palace affairs. Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the labor force.

⁷ Solomon also had twelve district governors who were over all Israel. They were responsible for providing food from the people for the king's household. Each of them arranged provisions for one month of the year.

⁸ These are the names of the twelve governors: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim.

⁹ Ben-deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elon-bethhanan.

¹⁰ Ben-hesed, in Arubboth, including Socoh and all the land of Hopher.

¹¹ Ben-abinadab, in Naphoth-dor. (He was married to Taphath, one of Solomon's daughters.)

¹² Baana son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, all of Beth-shan near Zarethan below Jezreel, and all the territory from Beth-shan to Abel-meholah and over to Jokmeam.

¹³ Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead, including the Towns of Jair (named for Jair son of Manasseh) in Gilead, and in the Argob region of Bashan, including sixty great fortified cities with gates barred with bronze.

¹⁴ Ahinadab son of Iddo, in Mahanaim.

¹⁵ Ahimaaz, in Naphtali. (He was married to Basemath, another of Solomon's daughters.)

¹⁶ Baana son of Hushai, in Asher and in Aloth.

¹⁷ Jehoshaphat son of Paruah, in Issachar.

¹⁸ Shimei son of Ela, in Benjamin.

¹⁹ Geber son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, including the territories of King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan. And there was one governor over the land of Judah.

²⁰ The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They were very contented, with plenty to eat and drink.

²¹ King Solomon ruled all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far south as the border of Egypt. The conquered peoples of those lands sent tribute money to Solomon and continued to serve him throughout his lifetime.

²² The daily food requirements for Solomon's palace were 150 bushels of choice flour and 300 bushels of meal,

²³ ten oxen from the fattening pens, twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep or goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl.

²⁴ Solomon's dominion extended over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphseh to Gaza. And there was peace throughout the entire land.

²⁵ Throughout the lifetime of Solomon, all of Judah and Israel lived in peace and safety. And from Dan to Beersheba, each family had its own home and garden.

²⁶ Solomon had four thousand stalls for his chariot horses and twelve thousand horses.

²⁷ The district governors faithfully provided food for King Solomon and his court, each during his assigned month.

²⁸ They also brought the necessary barley and straw for the royal horses in the stables.

²⁹ God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge too vast to be measured.

³⁰ In fact, his wisdom exceeded that of all the wise men of the East and the wise men of Egypt.

³¹ He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman, Calcol, and Darda—the sons of Mahol. His fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations.

³² He composed some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs.

³³ He could speak with authority about all kinds of plants, from the great cedar of Lebanon to the tiny hyssop that grows from cracks in a wall. He could also speak about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish.

³⁴ And kings from every nation sent their ambassadors to listen to the wisdom of Solomon.

5 ¹ King Hiram of Tyre had always been a loyal friend of David, so when he learned that David's son Solomon was the new king of Israel, Hiram sent ambassadors to congratulate him.

² Then Solomon sent this message back to Hiram:

³ "You know that my father, David, was not able to build a Temple to honor the name of the LORD his God because of the many wars he waged with surrounding nations. He could not build until the LORD gave him victory over all his enemies.

⁴ But now the LORD my God has given me peace on every side, and I have no enemies and all is well.

⁵ So I am planning to build a Temple to honor the name of the LORD my God, just as he instructed my father that I should do. For the LORD told him, 'Your

son, whom I will place on your throne, will build the Temple to honor my name.'

⁶ Now please command that cedars from Lebanon be cut for me. Let my men work alongside yours, and I will pay your men whatever wages you ask. As you know, there is no one among us who can cut timber like you Sidonians!"

⁷ When Hiram received Solomon's message, he was very pleased and said, "Praise the LORD for giving David a wise son to be king of the great nation of Israel."

⁸ Then he sent this reply to Solomon: "I have received your message, and I will do as you have asked concerning the timber. I can supply you with both cedar and cypress.

⁹ My servants will bring the logs from the Lebanon mountains to the Mediterranean Sea and build them into rafts. We will float them along the coast

to whatever place you choose. Then we will break the rafts apart and deliver the timber to you. You can pay me with food for my household."

¹⁰ So Hiram produced for Solomon as much cedar and cypress timber as he desired.

¹¹ In return Solomon sent him an annual payment of 100,000 bushels of wheat for his household and 110,000 gallons of olive oil.

¹² So the LORD gave great wisdom to Solomon just as he had promised. And Hiram and Solomon made a formal alliance of peace.

¹³ Then King Solomon enlisted 30,000 laborers from all Israel.

¹⁴ He sent them to Lebanon in shifts, 10,000 every month, so that each man would be one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of this labor force.

¹⁵ Solomon also enlisted 70,000 common laborers, 80,000 stonecutters in the hill country,

¹⁶ and 3,600 foremen to supervise the work.

¹⁷ At the king's command, the stonecutters quarried and shaped costly blocks of stone for the foundation of the Temple.

¹⁸ Men from the city of Gebal helped Solomon's and Hiram's builders prepare the timber and stone for the Temple.

6 ¹ It was in midspring, during the fourth year of Solomon's reign, that he began the construction of the Temple of the LORD. This was 480 years after the people of Israel were delivered from their slavery in the land of Egypt.

² The Temple that King Solomon built for the LORD was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

³ The foyer at the front of the Temple was 30 feet wide, running across the entire width of the Temple. It projected outward 15 feet from the front of the Temple.

⁴ Solomon also made narrow, recessed windows throughout the Temple.

⁵ A complex of rooms was built against the outer walls of the Temple, all the way around the sides and rear of the building.

⁶ The complex was three stories high, the bottom floor being 7 1/2 feet wide, the second floor 9 feet wide, and the top floor 10 1/2 feet wide. The rooms were connected to the walls of the Temple by beams resting on ledges built out from the wall. So the beams were not inserted into the walls themselves.

⁷ The stones used in the construction of the Temple were prefinished at the quarry, so the entire structure was built

without the sound of hammer, ax, or any other iron tool at the building site.

⁸ The entrance to the bottom floor was on the south side of the Temple. There were winding stairs going up to the second floor, and another flight of stairs between the second and third floors.

⁹ After completing the Temple structure, Solomon put in a ceiling made of beams and planks of cedar.

¹⁰ As already stated, there was a complex of rooms on three sides of the building, attached to the Temple walls by cedar timbers. Each story of the complex was 7 1/2 feet high.

¹¹ Then the LORD gave this message to Solomon:

¹² "Concerning this Temple you are building, if you keep all my laws and regulations and obey all my commands, I will fulfill through you the promise I made to your father, David.

¹³ I will live among the people of Israel and never forsake my people."

¹⁴ So Solomon finished building the Temple.

¹⁵ The entire inside, from floor to ceiling, was paneled with wood. He paneled the walls and ceilings with cedar, and he used cypress for the floors.

¹⁶ He partitioned off an inner sanctuary—the Most Holy Place—at the far end of the Temple. It was 30 feet deep and was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling.

¹⁷ The main room of the Temple, outside the Most Holy Place, was 60 feet long.

¹⁸ Cedar paneling completely covered the stone walls throughout the Temple, and the paneling was decorated with carvings of gourds and open flowers.

¹⁹ Solomon prepared the inner sanctuary in the rear of the Temple,

where the Ark of the LORD's covenant would be placed.

²⁰ This inner sanctuary was 30 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 30 feet high. Solomon overlaid its walls and ceiling with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar made of cedar.

²¹ Then he overlaid the rest of the Temple's interior with pure gold, and he made gold chains to protect the entrance to the Most Holy Place.

²² So he finished overlaying the entire Temple with gold, including the altar that belonged to the Most Holy Place.

²³ Within the inner sanctuary Solomon placed two cherubim made of olive wood, each 15 feet tall.

²⁴ The wingspan of each of the cherubim was 15 feet, each wing being 7 1/2 feet long.

²⁵ The two cherubim were identical in shape and size;

²⁶ each was 15 feet tall.

²⁷ Solomon placed them side by side in the inner sanctuary of the Temple. Their outspread wings reached from wall to wall, while their inner wings touched at the center of the room.

²⁸ He overlaid the two cherubim with gold.

²⁹ All the walls of the inner sanctuary and the main room were decorated with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers.

³⁰ The floor in both rooms was overlaid with gold.

³¹ For the entrance to the inner sanctuary, Solomon made double doors of olive wood with five-sided doorposts.

³² These doors were decorated with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and the doors were overlaid with gold.

³³ Then he made four–sided doorposts of olive wood for the entrance to the Temple.

³⁴ There were two folding doors of cypress wood, and each door was hinged to fold back upon itself.

³⁵ These doors were decorated with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and the doors were overlaid with gold.

³⁶ The walls of the inner courtyard were built so that there was one layer of cedar beams after every three layers of hewn stone.

³⁷ The foundation of the LORD's Temple was laid in midspring of the fourth year of Solomon's reign.

³⁸ The entire building was completed in every detail by midautumn of the eleventh year of his reign. So it took seven years to build the Temple.

7¹ Solomon also built a palace for himself, and it took him thirteen years to complete the construction.

² One of Solomon's buildings was called the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. It was 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. The great cedar ceiling beams rested on four rows of cedar pillars.

³ It had a cedar roof supported by forty-five rafters that rested on three rows of pillars, fifteen in each row.

⁴ On each of the side walls there were three rows of windows facing each other.

⁵ All the doorways were rectangular in frame; they were in sets of three, facing each other.

⁶ He also built the Hall of Pillars, which was 75 feet long and 45 feet wide. There was a porch at its front, covered by a canopy that was supported by pillars.

⁷ There was also the Hall of the Throne, also known as the Hall of Judgment,

where Solomon sat to hear legal matters. It was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling.

⁸ Solomon's living quarters surrounded a courtyard behind this hall; they were built the same way. He also built similar living quarters for Pharaoh's daughter, one of his wives.

⁹ All these buildings were built entirely from huge, costly blocks of stone, cut and trimmed to exact measure on all sides.

¹⁰ Some of the huge foundation stones were 15 feet long, and some were 12 feet long.

¹¹ The costly blocks of stone used in the walls were also cut to measure, and cedar beams were also used.

¹² The walls of the great courtyard were built so that there was one layer of cedar beams after every three layers of hewn stone, just like the walls of the inner

courtyard of the LORD's Temple with its entrance foyer.

¹³ King Solomon then asked for a man named Hiram to come from Tyre,

¹⁴ for he was a craftsman skilled in bronze work. He was half Israelite, since his mother was a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father had been a foundry worker from Tyre. So he came to work for King Solomon.

¹⁵ Hiram cast two bronze pillars, each 27 feet tall and 18 feet in circumference.

¹⁶ For the tops of the pillars he made capitals of molded bronze, each 7 1/2 feet tall.

¹⁷ Each capital was decorated with seven sets of latticework and interwoven chains.

¹⁸ He also made two rows of pomegranates that encircled the latticework to decorate the capitals over the pillars.

¹⁹ The capitals on the columns inside the foyer were shaped like lilies, and they were 6 feet tall.

²⁰ Each capital on the two pillars had two hundred pomegranates in two rows around them, beside the rounded surface next to the latticework.

²¹ Hiram set the pillars at the entrance of the Temple, one toward the south and one toward the north. He named the one on the south Jakin, and the one on the north Boaz.

²² The capitals on the pillars were shaped like lilies. And so the work on the pillars was finished.

²³ Then Hiram cast a large round tank, 15 feet across from rim to rim; it was called the Sea. It was 7 1/2 feet deep and about 45 feet in circumference.

²⁴ The Sea was encircled just below its rim by two rows of decorative gourds. There were about six gourds per foot all

the way around, and they had been cast as part of the tank.

²⁵ The Sea rested on a base of twelve bronze oxen, all facing outward. Three faced north, three faced west, three faced south, and three faced east.

²⁶ The walls of the Sea were about three inches thick, and its rim flared out like a cup and resembled a lily blossom. It could hold about 11,000 gallons of water.

²⁷ Hiram also made ten bronze water carts, each 6 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 4 1/2 feet tall.

²⁸ They were constructed with side panels braced with crossbars.

²⁹ Both the panels and the crossbars were decorated with carved lions, oxen, and cherubim. Above and below the lions and oxen were wreath decorations.

³⁰ Each of these carts had four bronze wheels and bronze axles. At each corner

of the carts were supporting posts for the bronze basins; these supports were decorated with carvings of wreaths on each side.

³¹ The top of each cart had a circular frame for the basin. It projected 1 1/2 feet above the cart's top like a round pedestal, and its opening was 2 1/4 feet across; it was decorated on the outside with carvings of wreaths. The panels of the carts were square, not round.

³² Under the panels were four wheels that were connected to axles that had been cast as one unit with the cart. The wheels were 2 1/4 feet in diameter

³³ and were similar to chariot wheels. The axles, spokes, rims, and hubs were all cast from molten bronze.

³⁴ There were supports at each of the four corners of the carts, and these, too, were cast as one unit with the cart.

³⁵ Around the top of each cart there was a rim 9 inches wide. The supports and side panels were cast as one unit with the cart.

³⁶ Carvings of cherubim, lions, and palm trees decorated the panels and supports wherever there was room, and there were wreaths all around.

³⁷ All ten water carts were the same size and were made alike, for each was cast from the same mold.

³⁸ Hiram also made ten bronze basins, one for each cart. Each basin was 6 feet across and could hold 220 gallons of water.

³⁹ He arranged five water carts on the south side of the Temple and five on the north side. The Sea was placed at the southeast corner of the Temple.

⁴⁰ He also made the necessary pots, shovels, and basins. So at last Hiram completed everything King Solomon had

assigned him to make for the Temple of the LORD:

⁴¹ two pillars, two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars, two networks of chains that decorated the capitals,

⁴² four hundred pomegranates that hung from the chains on the capitals (two rows of pomegranates for each of the chain networks that were hung around the capitals on top of the pillars),

⁴³ the ten water carts holding the ten basins,

⁴⁴ the Sea and the twelve oxen under it,

⁴⁵ the pots, the shovels, and the basins.

All these utensils for the Temple of the LORD that Hiram made for Solomon were made of burnished bronze.

⁴⁶ The king had them cast in clay molds in the Jordan Valley between Succoth and Zarethan.

⁴⁷ Solomon did not weigh all the utensils because there were so many;

the weight of the bronze could not be measured.

⁴⁸ So Solomon made all the furnishings of the Temple of the LORD: the gold altar, the gold table for the Bread of the Presence,

⁴⁹ the gold lampstands, five on the south and five on the north, in front of the Most Holy Place, the flower decorations, lamps, and tongs, all of gold,

⁵⁰ the cups, lamp snuffers, basins, dishes, and firepans, all of pure gold, the doors for the entrances to the Most Holy Place and the main room of the Temple, with their fronts overlaid with gold.

⁵¹ So King Solomon finished all his work on the Temple of the LORD. Then Solomon brought all the gifts his father, David, had dedicated—the silver, the gold, and the other utensils—and he

stored them in the treasuries of the LORD's Temple.

8¹ Solomon then summoned the leaders of all the tribes and families of Israel to assemble in Jerusalem. They were to bring the Ark of the LORD's covenant from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion, to its new place in the Temple.

² They all assembled before the king at the annual Festival of Shelters in early autumn.

³ When all the leaders of Israel arrived, the priests picked up the Ark.

⁴ Then the priests and Levites took the Ark of the LORD, along with the Tabernacle and all its sacred utensils, and carried them up to the Temple.

⁵ King Solomon and the entire community of Israel sacrificed sheep and oxen before the Ark in such numbers that no one could keep count!

⁶ Then the priests carried the Ark of the LORD's covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple—the Most Holy Place—and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim.

⁷ The cherubim spread their wings over the Ark, forming a canopy over the Ark and its carrying poles.

⁸ These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the front entrance of the Temple's main room—the Holy Place—but not from outside it. They are still there to this day.

⁹ Nothing was in the Ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed there at Mount Sinai, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel as they were leaving the land of Egypt.

¹⁰ As the priests came out of the inner sanctuary, a cloud filled the Temple of the LORD.

¹¹ The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the LORD filled the Temple.

¹² Then Solomon prayed, "O LORD, you have said that you would live in thick darkness.

¹³ But I have built a glorious Temple for you, where you can live forever!"

¹⁴ Then the king turned around to the entire community of Israel standing before him and gave this blessing:

¹⁵ "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has kept the promise he made to my father, David.

¹⁶ For he told my father, 'From the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city among the tribes of Israel as the place where a temple should be built to honor my name. But now I have chosen David to be king over my people.'

¹⁷ Then Solomon said, "My father, David, wanted to build this Temple to honor the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁸ But the LORD told him, 'It is right for you to want to build the Temple to honor my name,

¹⁹ but you are not the one to do it. One of your sons will build it instead.'

²⁰ "And now the LORD has done what he promised, for I have become king in my father's place. I have built this Temple to honor the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

²¹ And I have prepared a place there for the Ark, which contains the covenant that the LORD made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt."

²² Then Solomon stood with his hands lifted toward heaven before the altar of the LORD in front of the entire community of Israel.

²³ He prayed, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven or earth. You keep your promises and show unfailing love to all who obey you and are eager to do your will.

²⁴ You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth, and today you have fulfilled it with your own hands.

²⁵ And now, O LORD, God of Israel, carry out your further promise to your servant David, my father. For you said to him, 'If your descendants guard their behavior as you have done, they will always reign over Israel.'

²⁶ Now, O God of Israel, fulfill this promise to your servant David, my father.

²⁷ "But will God really live on earth? Why, even the highest heavens cannot

contain you. How much less this Temple I have built!

²⁸ Listen to my prayer and my request, O LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is making to you today.

²⁹ May you watch over this Temple both day and night, this place where you have said you would put your name. May you always hear the prayers I make toward this place.

³⁰ May you hear the humble and earnest requests from me and your people Israel when we pray toward this place. Yes, hear us from heaven where you live, and when you hear, forgive.

³¹ "If someone wrongs another person and is required to take an oath of innocence in front of the altar at this Temple,

³² then hear from heaven and judge between your servants—the accuser

and the accused. Punish the guilty party and acquit the one who is innocent.

³³ "If your people Israel are defeated by their enemies because they have sinned against you, and if they turn to you and call on your name and pray to you here in this Temple,

³⁴ then hear from heaven and forgive their sins and return them to this land you gave their ancestors.

³⁵ "If the skies are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this Temple and confess your name and turn from their sins because you have punished them,

³⁶ then hear from heaven and forgive the sins of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them to do what is right, and send rain on your land that you have given to your people as their special possession.

³⁷ "If there is a famine in the land, or plagues, or crop disease, or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people's enemies are in the land besieging their towns—whatever the trouble is—

³⁸ and if your people offer a prayer concerning their troubles or sorrow, raising their hands toward this Temple,

³⁹ then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive. Give your people whatever they deserve, for you alone know the human heart.

⁴⁰ Then they will fear you and walk in your ways as long as they live in the land you gave to our ancestors.

⁴¹ "And when foreigners hear of you and come from distant lands to worship your great name—

⁴² for they will hear of you and of your mighty miracles and your power—and when they pray toward this Temple,

⁴³ then hear from heaven where you live, and grant what they ask of you. Then all the people of the earth will come to know and fear you, just as your own people Israel do. They, too, will know that this Temple I have built bears your name.

⁴⁴ "If your people go out at your command to fight their enemies, and if they pray to the LORD toward this city that you have chosen and toward this Temple that I have built for your name,

⁴⁵ then hear their prayers from heaven and uphold their cause.

⁴⁶ "If they sin against you—and who has never sinned?—you may become angry with them and let their enemies conquer them and take them captive to a foreign land far or near.

⁴⁷ But in that land of exile, they may turn to you again in repentance and pray,

‘We have sinned, done evil, and acted wickedly.’

⁴⁸ Then if they turn to you with their whole heart and soul and pray toward the land you gave to their ancestors, toward this city you have chosen, and toward this Temple I have built to honor your name,

⁴⁹ then hear their prayers from heaven where you live. Uphold their cause

⁵⁰ and forgive your people who have sinned against you. Make their captors merciful to them,

⁵¹ for they are your people—your special possession—whom you brought out of the iron-smelting furnace of Egypt.

⁵² "May your eyes be open to my requests and to the requests of your people Israel. Hear and answer them whenever they cry out to you.

⁵³ For when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O Sovereign LORD, you told your servant Moses that you had separated Israel from among all the nations of the earth to be your own special possession."

⁵⁴ When Solomon finished making these prayers and requests to the LORD, he stood up in front of the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands raised toward heaven.

⁵⁵ He stood there and shouted this blessing over the entire community of Israel:

⁵⁶ "Praise the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the wonderful promises he gave through his servant Moses.

⁵⁷ May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never forsake us.

⁵⁸ May he give us the desire to do his will in everything and to obey all the commands, laws, and regulations that he gave our ancestors.

⁵⁹ And may these words that I have prayed in the presence of the LORD be before him constantly, day and night, so that the LORD our God may uphold my cause and the cause of his people Israel, fulfilling our daily needs.

⁶⁰ May people all over the earth know that the LORD is God and that there is no other god.

⁶¹ And may you, his people, always be faithful to the LORD our God. May you always obey his laws and commands, just as you are doing today."

⁶² Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices to the LORD.

⁶³ Solomon sacrificed peace offerings to the LORD numbering 22,000 oxen and

120,000 sheep. And so the king and all Israel dedicated the Temple of the LORD.

⁶⁴ That same day the king dedicated the central area of the courtyard in front of the LORD's Temple. He offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of peace offerings there, because the bronze altar in the LORD's presence was too small to handle so many offerings.

⁶⁵ Then Solomon and all Israel celebrated the Festival of Shelters in the presence of the LORD their God. A large crowd had gathered from as far away as Lebo-hamath in the north to the brook of Egypt in the south. The celebration went on for fourteen days in all—seven days for the dedication of the altar and seven days for the Festival of Shelters.

⁶⁶ After the festival was over, Solomon sent the people home. They blessed the king as they went, and they were all joyful and happy because the LORD had

been good to his servant David and to his people Israel.

9¹ So Solomon finished building the Temple of the LORD, as well as the royal palace. He completed everything he had planned to do.

² Then the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had done before at Gibeon.

³ The LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your request. I have set apart this Temple you have built so that my name will be honored there forever. I will always watch over it and care for it.

⁴ As for you, if you will follow me with integrity and godliness, as David your father did, always obeying my commands and keeping my laws and regulations,

⁵ then I will establish the throne of your dynasty over Israel forever. For I made this promise to your father, David: 'You

will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.'

⁶ "But if you or your descendants abandon me and disobey my commands and laws, and if you go and worship other gods,

⁷ then I will uproot the people of Israel from this land I have given them. I will reject this Temple that I have set apart to honor my name. I will make Israel an object of mockery and ridicule among the nations.

⁸ And though this Temple is impressive now, it will become an appalling sight for all who pass by. They will scoff and ask, 'Why did the LORD do such terrible things to his land and to his Temple?'

⁹ And the answer will be, 'Because his people forgot the LORD their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and they worshiped other gods instead.'

That is why the LORD has brought all these disasters upon them.'"

¹⁰ Now at the end of the twenty years during which Solomon built the Temple of the LORD and the royal palace,

¹¹ Solomon gave twenty towns in the land of Galilee to King Hiram of Tyre as payment for all the cedar and cypress lumber and gold he had furnished for the construction of the buildings.

¹² Hiram came from Tyre to see the towns Solomon had given him, but he was not at all pleased with them.

¹³ "What kind of towns are these, my brother?" he asked. "These towns are worthless!" So Hiram called that area Cabul—"worthless"—as it is still known today.

¹⁴ Hiram had sent Solomon nine thousand pounds of gold.

¹⁵ This is the account of the forced labor that Solomon conscripted to build

the LORD's Temple, the royal palace, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, and the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

¹⁶ (The king of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer, killing the Canaanite population and burning it down. He gave the city to his daughter as a wedding gift when she married Solomon.

¹⁷ So Solomon rebuilt the city of Gezer.) He also built up the towns of Lower Beth-horon,

¹⁸ Baalath, and Tamar in the desert, within his land.

¹⁹ He built towns as supply centers and constructed cities where his chariots and horses could be kept. He built to his heart's content in Jerusalem and Lebanon and throughout the entire realm.

²⁰ There were still some people living in the land who were not Israelites,

including Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

²¹ These were descendants of the nations that Israel had not completely destroyed. So Solomon conscripted them for his labor force, and they serve in the labor force to this day.

²² But Solomon did not conscript any of the Israelites for forced labor. Instead, he assigned them to serve as fighting men, government officials, officers in his army, commanders of his chariots, and charioteers.

²³ He also appointed 550 of them to supervise the various projects.

²⁴ After Solomon moved his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, from the City of David to the new palace he had built for her, he constructed the Millo.

²⁵ Three times each year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the LORD on the altar he

had built. He also burned incense to the LORD. And so he finished the work of building the Temple.

²⁶ Later King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion–geber, a port near Elath in the land of Edom, along the shore of the Red Sea.

²⁷ Hiram sent experienced crews of sailors to sail the ships with Solomon's men.

²⁸ They sailed to Ophir and brought back to Solomon some sixteen tons of gold.

10¹ When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's reputation, which brought honor to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions.

² She arrived in Jerusalem with a large group of attendants and a great caravan of camels loaded with spices, huge quantities of gold, and precious jewels.

When she met with Solomon, they talked about everything she had on her mind.

³ Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her.

⁴ When the queen of Sheba realized how wise Solomon was, and when she saw the palace he had built,

⁵ she was breathless. She was also amazed at the food on his tables, the organization of his officials and their splendid clothing, the cup-bearers and their robes, and the burnt offerings Solomon made at the Temple of the LORD.

⁶ She exclaimed to the king, "Everything I heard in my country about your achievements and wisdom is true!

⁷ I didn't believe it until I arrived here and saw it with my own eyes. Truly I had not heard the half of it! Your wisdom

and prosperity are far greater than what I was told.

⁸ How happy these people must be! What a privilege for your officials to stand here day after day, listening to your wisdom!

⁹ The LORD your God is great indeed! He delights in you and has placed you on the throne of Israel. Because the LORD loves Israel with an eternal love, he has made you king so you can rule with justice and righteousness."

¹⁰ Then she gave the king a gift of nine thousand pounds of gold, and great quantities of spices and precious jewels. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to Solomon.

¹¹ (When Hiram's ships brought gold from Ophir, they also brought rich cargoes of almug wood and precious jewels.

¹² The king used the almug wood to make railings for the Temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and to construct harps and lyres for the musicians. Never before or since has there been such a supply of beautiful almug wood.)

¹³ King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba whatever she asked for, besides all the other customary gifts he had so generously given. Then she and all her attendants left and returned to their own land.

¹⁴ Each year Solomon received about twenty–five tons of gold.

¹⁵ This did not include the additional revenue he received from merchants and traders, all the kings of Arabia, and the governors of the land.

¹⁶ King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold, each containing over fifteen pounds of gold.

¹⁷ He also made three hundred smaller shields of hammered gold, each containing nearly four pounds of gold. The king placed these shields in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁸ Then the king made a huge ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold.

¹⁹ The throne had six steps and a rounded back. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with the figure of a lion standing on each side of the throne.

²⁰ Solomon made twelve other lion figures, one standing on each end of each of the six steps. No other throne in all the world could be compared with it!

²¹ All of King Solomon's drinking cups were solid gold, as were all the utensils in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. They were not made of silver because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's day!

²² The king had a fleet of trading ships that sailed with Hiram's fleet. Once every three years the ships returned, loaded down with gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

²³ So King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king in all the earth.

²⁴ People from every nation came to visit him and to hear the wisdom God had given him.

²⁵ Year after year, everyone who came to visit brought him gifts of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

²⁶ Solomon built up a huge force of chariots and horses. He had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses. He stationed many of them in the chariot cities, and some near him in Jerusalem.

²⁷ The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. And valuable

cedarwood was as common as the sycamore wood that grows in the foothills of Judah.

²⁸ Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Cilicia; the king's traders acquired them from Cilicia at the standard price.

²⁹ At that time, Egyptian chariots delivered to Jerusalem could be purchased for 600 pieces of silver, and horses could be bought for 150 pieces of silver. Many of these were then resold to the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

11 ¹ Now King Solomon loved many foreign women. Besides Pharaoh's daughter, he married women from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and from among the Hittites.

² The LORD had clearly instructed his people not to intermarry with those nations, because the women they

married would lead them to worship their gods. Yet Solomon insisted on loving them anyway.

³ He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. And sure enough, they led his heart away from the LORD.

⁴ In Solomon's old age, they turned his heart to worship their gods instead of trusting only in the LORD his God, as his father, David, had done.

⁵ Solomon worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites.

⁶ Thus, Solomon did what was evil in the LORD's sight; he refused to follow the LORD completely, as his father, David, had done.

⁷ On the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, he even built a shrine for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab,

and another for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites.

⁸ Solomon built such shrines for all his foreign wives to use for burning incense and sacrificing to their gods.

⁹ The LORD was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

¹⁰ He had warned Solomon specifically about worshiping other gods, but Solomon did not listen to the LORD's command.

¹¹ So now the LORD said to him, "Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my laws, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants.

¹² But for the sake of your father, David, I will not do this while you are still alive. I will take the kingdom away from your son.

¹³ And even so, I will let him be king of one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city."

¹⁴ Then the LORD raised up Hadad the Edomite, a member of Edom's royal family, to be an enemy against Solomon.

¹⁵ Years before, David had gone to Edom with Joab, his army commander, to bury some Israelites who had died in battle. While there, the Israelite army had killed nearly every male in Edom.

¹⁶ Joab and the army had stayed there for six months, killing them.

¹⁷ But Hadad and a few of his father's royal officials had fled. (Hadad was a very small child at the time.)

¹⁸ They escaped from Midian and went to Paran, where others joined them. Then they traveled to Egypt and went to Pharaoh, who gave them a home, food, and some land.

¹⁹ Pharaoh grew very fond of Hadad, and he gave him a wife—the sister of Queen Tahpenes.

²⁰ She bore him a son, Genubath, who was brought up in Pharaoh's palace among Pharaoh's own sons.

²¹ When the news reached Hadad in Egypt that David and his commander Joab were both dead, he said to Pharaoh, "Let me return to my own country."

²² "Why?" Pharaoh asked him. "What do you lack here? How have we disappointed you that you want to go home?" "Nothing is wrong," he replied. "But even so, I must return home."

²³ God also raised up Rezon son of Eliada to be an enemy against Solomon. Rezon had fled from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah,

²⁴ and had become the leader of a gang of rebels. After David conquered

Hadadezer, Rezon and his men fled to Damascus, where he became king.

²⁵ Rezon was Israel's bitter enemy for the rest of Solomon's reign, and he made trouble, just as Hadad did. Rezon hated Israel intensely and continued to reign in Aram.

²⁶ Another rebel leader was Jeroboam son of Nebat, one of Solomon's own officials. He came from the city of Zeredah in Ephraim, and his mother was Zeruah, a widow.

²⁷ This is the story behind his rebellion. Solomon was rebuilding the Millo and repairing the walls of the city of his father, David.

²⁸ Jeroboam was a very capable young man, and when Solomon saw how industrious he was, he put him in charge of the labor force from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

²⁹ One day as Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh met him on the road, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone in a field,

³⁰ and Ahijah took the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.

³¹ Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten of these pieces, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and I will give ten of the tribes to you!

³² But I will leave him one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel.

³³ For Solomon has abandoned me and worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians; Chemosh, the god of Moab; and Molech, the god of the Ammonites. He has not followed my ways and done

what is pleasing in my sight. He has not obeyed my laws and regulations as his father, David, did.

³⁴ "But I will not take the entire kingdom from Solomon at this time. For the sake of my servant David, the one whom I chose and who obeyed my commands and laws, I will let Solomon reign for the rest of his life.

³⁵ But I will take the kingdom away from his son and give ten of the tribes to you.

³⁶ His son will have one tribe so that the descendants of David my servant will continue to reign in Jerusalem, the city I have chosen to be the place for my name.

³⁷ And I will place you on the throne of Israel, and you will rule over all that your heart desires.

³⁸ If you listen to what I tell you and follow my ways and do whatever I consider to be right, and if you obey

my laws and commands, as my servant David did, then I will always be with you. I will establish an enduring dynasty for you as I did for David, and I will give Israel to you.

³⁹ But I will punish the descendants of David because of Solomon's sin—though not forever.'"

⁴⁰ Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but he fled to King Shishak of Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.

⁴¹ The rest of the events in Solomon's reign, including his wisdom, are recorded in The Book of the Acts of Solomon.

⁴² Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years.

⁴³ When Solomon died, he was buried in the city of his father, David. Then his son Rehoboam became the next king.

12 ¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king.

² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of Solomon's death, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon.

³ The leaders of Israel sent for Jeroboam, and the whole assembly of Israel went to speak with Rehoboam.

⁴ "Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects."

⁵ Rehoboam replied, "Give me three days to think this over. Then come back for my answer." So the people went away.

⁶ Then King Rehoboam went to discuss the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?"

⁷ The older counselors replied, "If you are willing to serve the people today and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects."

⁸ But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and who were now his advisers.

⁹ "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

¹⁰ The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist—if you think he was hard on you, just wait and see what I'll be like!'"

¹¹ Yes, my father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!"

¹² Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to hear Rehoboam's decision, just as the king had requested.

¹³ But Rehoboam spoke harshly to them, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors

¹⁴ and followed the counsel of his younger advisers. He told the people, "My father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!"

¹⁵ So the king paid no attention to the people's demands. This turn of events was the will of the LORD, for it fulfilled the LORD's message to Jeroboam son of Nebat through the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.

¹⁶ When all Israel realized that the king had rejected their request, they shouted, "Down with David and his dynasty! We have no share in Jesse's son! Let's go home, Israel! Look out for your own

house, O David!" So the people of Israel returned home.

¹⁷ But Rehoboam continued to rule over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

¹⁸ King Rehoboam sent Adoniram, who was in charge of the labor force, to restore order, but all Israel stoned him to death. When this news reached King Rehoboam, he quickly jumped into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem.

¹⁹ The northern tribes of Israel have refused to be ruled by a descendant of David to this day.

²⁰ When the people of Israel learned of Jeroboam's return from Egypt, they called an assembly and made him king over all Israel. So only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the family of David.

²¹ When Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, he mobilized the armies of Judah and Benjamin—180,000 select

troops—to fight against the army of Israel and to restore the kingdom to himself.

²² But God said to Shemaiah, the man of God,

²³ "Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the people of Judah and Benjamin,

²⁴ 'This is what the LORD says: Do not fight against your relatives, the Israelites. Go back home, for what has happened is my doing!'" So they obeyed the message of the LORD and went home, as the LORD had commanded.

²⁵ Jeroboam then built up the city of Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and it became his capital. Later he went and built up the town of Peniel.

²⁶ Jeroboam thought to himself, "Unless I am careful, the kingdom will return to the dynasty of David.

²⁷ When they go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple of the LORD, they will again give their allegiance to King Rehoboam of Judah. They will kill me and make him their king instead."

²⁸ So on the advice of his counselors, the king made two gold calves. He said to the people, "It is too much trouble for you to worship in Jerusalem. O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!"

²⁹ He placed these calf idols at the southern and northern ends of Israel—in Bethel and in Dan.

³⁰ This became a great sin, for the people worshiped them, traveling even as far as Dan.

³¹ Jeroboam built shrines at the pagan high places and ordained priests from the rank and file of the people—those who were not from the priestly tribe of Levi.

³² Jeroboam also instituted a religious festival in Bethel, held on a day in midautumn, similar to the annual Festival of Shelters in Judah. There at Bethel he himself offered sacrifices to the calves he had made. And it was at Bethel that he appointed priests for the pagan shrines he had made.

³³ So on the appointed day in midautumn, a day that he himself had designated, Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar at Bethel. He instituted a religious festival for Israel, and he went up to the altar to burn incense.

13 ¹ At the LORD's command, a man of God from Judah went to Bethel, and he arrived there just as Jeroboam was approaching the altar to offer a sacrifice.

² Then at the LORD's command, he shouted, "O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: A child named Josiah will

be born into the dynasty of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests from the pagan shrines who come here to burn incense, and human bones will be burned on you."

³ That same day the man of God gave a sign to prove his message, and he said, "The LORD has promised to give this sign: This altar will split apart, and its ashes will be poured out on the ground."

⁴ King Jeroboam was very angry with the man of God for speaking against the altar. So he pointed at the man and shouted, "Seize that man!" But instantly the king's hand became paralyzed in that position, and he couldn't pull it back.

⁵ At the same time a wide crack appeared in the altar, and the ashes poured out, just as the man of God had predicted in his message from the LORD.

⁶ The king cried out to the man of God, "Please ask the LORD your God to

restore my hand again!" So the man of God prayed to the LORD, and the king's hand became normal again.

⁷ Then the king said to the man of God, "Come to the palace with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift."

⁸ But the man of God said to the king, "Even if you gave me half of everything you own, I would not go with you. I would not eat any food or drink any water in this place.

⁹ For the LORD gave me this command: 'You must not eat any food or drink any water while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.'

¹⁰ So he left Bethel and went home another way.

¹¹ As it happened, there was an old prophet living in Bethel, and his sons came home and told him what the man

of God had done in Bethel that day. They also told him what he had said to the king.

¹² The old prophet asked them, "Which way did he go?" So they told their father which road the man of God had taken.

¹³ "Quick, saddle the donkey," the old man said. And when they had saddled the donkey for him,

¹⁴ he rode after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak tree. The old prophet asked him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" "Yes," he replied, "I am."

¹⁵ Then he said to the man of God, "Come home with me and eat some food."

¹⁶ "No, I cannot," he replied. "I am not allowed to eat any food or drink any water here in this place.

¹⁷ For the LORD gave me this command: 'You must not eat any food or drink any

water while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.'"

¹⁸ But the old prophet answered, "I am a prophet, too, just as you are. And an angel gave me this message from the LORD: 'Bring him home with you, and give him food to eat and water to drink.'" But the old man was lying to him.

¹⁹ So they went back together, and the man of God ate some food and drank some water at the prophet's home.

²⁰ Then while they were sitting at the table, a message from the LORD came to the old prophet.

²¹ He cried out to the man of God from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: You have defied the LORD's message and have disobeyed the command the LORD your God gave you.

²² You came back to this place and ate food and drank water where he told you

not to eat or drink. Because of this, your body will not be buried in the grave of your ancestors."

²³ Now after the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet saddled his own donkey for him,

²⁴ and the man of God started off again. But as he was traveling along, a lion came out and killed him. His body lay there on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it.

²⁵ People came by and saw the body lying in the road and the lion standing beside it, and they went and reported it in Bethel, where the old prophet lived.

²⁶ When the old prophet heard the report, he said, "It is the man of God who disobeyed the LORD's command. The LORD has fulfilled his word by causing the lion to attack and kill him."

²⁷ Then the prophet said to his sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they saddled a donkey,

²⁸ and he went out and found the body lying in the road. The donkey and lion were still standing there beside it, for the lion had not eaten the body nor attacked the donkey.

²⁹ So the prophet laid the body of the man of God on the donkey and took it back to the city to mourn over him and bury him.

³⁰ He laid the body in his own grave, crying out in grief, "Oh, my brother!"

³¹ Afterward the prophet said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried. Lay my bones beside his bones.

³² For the message the LORD told him to proclaim against the altar in Bethel and against the pagan shrines in the towns of Samaria will surely come true."

³³ But even after this, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil ways. He continued to choose priests from the rank and file of the people. Anyone who wanted to could become a priest for the pagan shrines.

³⁴ This became a great sin and resulted in the destruction of Jeroboam's kingdom and the death of all his family.

14 ¹ At that time Jeroboam's son Abijah became very sick.

² So Jeroboam told his wife, "Disguise yourself so that no one will recognize you as the queen. Then go to the prophet Ahijah at Shiloh—the man who told me I would become king.

³ Take him a gift of ten loaves of bread, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and ask him what will happen to the boy."

⁴ So Jeroboam's wife went to Ahijah's home at Shiloh. He was an old man now and could no longer see.

⁵ But the LORD had told Ahijah, "Jeroboam's wife will come here, pretending to be someone else. She will ask you about her son, for he is very sick. You must give her the answer that I give you."

⁶ So when Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he called out, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you pretending to be someone else?" Then he told her, "I have bad news for you.

⁷ Give your husband, Jeroboam, this message from the LORD, the God of Israel: 'I promoted you from the ranks of the common people and made you ruler over my people Israel.

⁸ I ripped the kingdom away from the family of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like my servant David, who obeyed my commands and followed me with all his heart and always did whatever I wanted him to do.

⁹ You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made other gods and have made me furious with your gold calves. And since you have turned your back on me,

¹⁰ I will bring disaster on your dynasty and kill all your sons, slave or free alike. I will burn up your royal dynasty as one burns up trash until it is all gone.

¹¹ I, the LORD, vow that the members of your family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures."

¹² Then Ahijah said to Jeroboam's wife, "Go on home, and when you enter the city, the child will die.

¹³ All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only member of your family who will have a proper burial, for this child is the only good thing that the LORD, the God of Israel, sees in the entire family of Jeroboam.

¹⁴ And the LORD will raise up a king over Israel who will destroy the family of Jeroboam. This will happen today, even now!

¹⁵ Then the LORD will shake Israel like a reed whipped about in a stream. He will uproot the people of Israel from this good land that he gave their ancestors and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, for they have angered the LORD by worshiping Asherah poles.

¹⁶ He will abandon Israel because Jeroboam sinned and made all of Israel sin along with him."

¹⁷ So Jeroboam's wife returned to Tirzah, and the child died just as she walked through the door of her home.

¹⁸ When the people of Israel buried him, they mourned for him, as the LORD had promised through the prophet Ahijah.

¹⁹ The rest of the events of Jeroboam's reign, all his wars and how he ruled, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁰ Jeroboam reigned in Israel twenty-two years. When Jeroboam died, his son Nadab became the next king.

²¹ Meanwhile, Rehoboam son of Solomon was king in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen from among all the tribes of Israel as the place to honor his name. Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonite woman.

²² During Rehoboam's reign, the people of Judah did what was evil in the LORD's sight, arousing his anger with their sin, for it was even worse than that of their ancestors.

²³ They built pagan shrines and set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree.

²⁴ There were even shrine prostitutes throughout the land. The people imitated the detestable practices of the pagan nations the LORD had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

²⁵ In the fifth year of King Rehoboam's reign, King Shishak of Egypt came up and attacked Jerusalem.

²⁶ He ransacked the Temple of the LORD and the royal palace and stole everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made.

²⁷ Afterward Rehoboam made bronze shields as substitutes, and he entrusted them to the care of the palace guard officers.

²⁸ Whenever the king went to the Temple of the LORD, the guards would

carry them along and then return them to the guardroom.

²⁹ The rest of the events in Rehoboam's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

³⁰ There was constant war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

³¹ When Rehoboam died, he was buried among his ancestors in the City of David. His mother was Naamah, an Ammonite woman. Then his son Abijam became the next king.

15 ¹ Abijam began to rule over Judah in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel.

² He reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother was Maacah, the daughter of Absalom.

³ He committed the same sins as his father before him, and his heart was not

right with the LORD his God, as the heart of his ancestor David had been.

⁴ But for David's sake, the LORD his God allowed his dynasty to continue, and he gave Abijam a son to rule after him in Jerusalem.

⁵ For David had done what was pleasing in the LORD's sight and had obeyed the LORD's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite.

⁶ There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam throughout Abijam's reign.

⁷ The rest of the events in Abijam's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. There was constant war between Abijam and Jeroboam.

⁸ When Abijam died, he was buried in the City of David. Then his son Asa became the next king.

⁹ Asa began to rule over Judah in the twentieth year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel.

¹⁰ He reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother was Maacah, the daughter of Absalom.

¹¹ Asa did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, as his ancestor David had done.

¹² He banished the shrine prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols his ancestors had made.

¹³ He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made an obscene Asherah pole. He cut down the pole and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

¹⁴ Although the pagan shrines were not completely removed, Asa remained faithful to the LORD throughout his life.

¹⁵ He brought into the Temple of the LORD the silver and gold and the utensils that he and his father had dedicated.

¹⁶ There was constant war between King Asa of Judah and King Baasha of Israel.

¹⁷ King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from entering or leaving King Asa's territory in Judah.

¹⁸ Asa responded by taking all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the LORD's Temple and the royal palace. He sent it with some of his officials to Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon and grandson of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus, along with this message:

¹⁹ "Let us renew the treaty that existed between your father and my father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold.

Break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel so that he will leave me alone."

²⁰ Ben-hadad agreed to King Asa's request and sent his armies to attack Israel. They conquered the towns of Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Kinnereth, with all the land of Naphtali.

²¹ As soon as Baasha of Israel heard what was happening, he abandoned his project of fortifying Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah.

²² Then King Asa sent an order throughout Judah, requiring that everyone, without exception, help to carry away the building stones and timbers that Baasha had been using to fortify Ramah. Asa used these materials to fortify the town of Geba in Benjamin and the town of Mizpah.

²³ The rest of the events in Asa's reign, the extent of his power, and the names of the cities he built are recorded in The

Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.
In his old age his feet became diseased.

²⁴ When Asa died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jehoshaphat became the next king.

²⁵ Nadab son of Jeroboam began to rule over Israel in the second year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Israel two years.

²⁶ But he did what was evil in the LORD's sight and followed the example of his father, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit.

²⁷ Then Baasha son of Ahijah, from the tribe of Issachar, plotted against Nadab and assassinated him while he and the Israelite army were laying siege to the Philistine town of Gibbethon.

²⁸ Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of King Asa's reign in Judah, and he became the next king of Israel.

²⁹ He immediately killed all the descendants of King Jeroboam, so that not one of the royal family was left, just as the LORD had promised concerning Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.

³⁰ This was done because Jeroboam had aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, by the sins he had committed and the sins he had led Israel to commit.

³¹ The rest of the events in Nadab's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

³² There was constant war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel.

³³ Baasha began to rule over Israel in the third year of King Asa's reign in Judah. Baasha reigned in Tirzah twenty-four years.

³⁴ But he did what was evil in the LORD's sight and followed the example

of Jeroboam, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit.

16 ¹ This message from the LORD was delivered to King Baasha by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani:

² "I lifted you out of the dust to make you ruler of my people Israel, but you have followed the evil example of Jeroboam. You have aroused my anger by causing my people to sin.

³ So now I will destroy you and your family, just as I destroyed the descendants of Jeroboam son of Nebat.

⁴ Those of your family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by the vultures."

⁵ The rest of the events in Baasha's reign and the extent of his power are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

⁶ When Baasha died, he was buried in Tirzah. Then his son Elah became the next king.

⁷ This message from the LORD had been spoken against Baasha and his family through the prophet Jehu son of Hanani. It was delivered because Baasha had done what was evil in the LORD's sight, arousing him to anger by his sins, just like the family of Jeroboam, and also because Baasha had destroyed the family of Jeroboam.

⁸ Elah son of Baasha began to rule over Israel from Tirzah in the twenty–sixth year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Israel two years.

⁹ Then Zimri, who commanded half of the royal chariots, made plans to kill him. One day in Tirzah, Elah was getting drunk at the home of Arza, the supervisor of the palace.

¹⁰ Zimri walked in and struck him down and killed him. This happened in the twenty–seventh year of King Asa’s reign in Judah. Then Zimri became the next king.

¹¹ Zimri immediately killed the entire royal family of Baasha, and he did not leave a single male child. He even destroyed distant relatives and friends.

¹² So Zimri destroyed the dynasty of Baasha as the LORD had promised through the prophet Jehu.

¹³ This happened because of the sins of Baasha and his son Elah and because of all the sins they led Israel to commit, arousing the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, with their idols.

¹⁴ The rest of the events in Elah’s reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁵ Zimri began to rule over Israel from Tirzah in the twenty–seventh year of King

Asa's reign in Judah, but he reigned only seven days. When the army of Israel, which was then engaged in attacking the Philistine town of Gibbethon,

¹⁶ heard that Zimri had assassinated the king, they chose Omri, commander of the army, as their new king.

¹⁷ So Omri led the army of Israel away from Gibbethon to attack Tirzah, Israel's capital.

¹⁸ When Zimri saw that the city had been taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned it down over himself and died in the flames.

¹⁹ For he, too, had done what was evil in the LORD's sight and followed the example of Jeroboam, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit.

²⁰ The rest of the events of Zimri's reign and his conspiracy are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

²¹ But now the people of Israel were divided into two groups. Half the people tried to make Tibni son of Ginath their king, while the other half supported Omri.

²² But Omri's supporters defeated the supporters of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni was killed, and Omri became the next king.

²³ Omri began to rule over Israel in the thirty-first year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned twelve years in all, six of them in Tirzah.

²⁴ Then Omri bought the hill now known as Samaria from its owner, Shemer, for 150 pounds of silver. He built a city on it and called the city Samaria in honor of Shemer.

²⁵ But Omri did what was evil in the LORD's sight, even more than any of the kings before him.

²⁶ He followed the example of Jeroboam, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit. Thus, he aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel.

²⁷ The rest of the events in Omri's reign, the extent of his power, and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁸ When Omri died, he was buried in Samaria. Then his son Ahab became the next king.

²⁹ Ahab son of Omri began to rule over Israel in the thirty–eighth year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twenty–two years.

³⁰ But Ahab did what was evil in the LORD's sight, even more than any of the kings before him.

³¹ And as though it were not enough to live like Jeroboam, he married Jezebel,

the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to worship Baal.

³² First he built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria.

³³ Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to arouse the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him.

³⁴ It was during his reign that Hiel, a man from Bethel, rebuilt Jericho. When he laid the foundations, his oldest son, Abiram, died. And when he finally completed it by setting up the gates, his youngest son, Segub, died. This all happened according to the message from the LORD concerning Jericho spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

17 ¹ Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, "As surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives—the God whom I worship and serve—there will be no dew or rain

during the next few years unless I give the word!"

² Then the LORD said to Elijah,

³ "Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook at a place east of where it enters the Jordan River.

⁴ Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food."

⁵ So Elijah did as the LORD had told him and camped beside Kerith Brook.

⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook.

⁷ But after a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land.

⁸ Then the LORD said to Elijah,

⁹ "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. There is a widow there who will feed you. I have given her my instructions."

¹⁰ So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, "Would you please bring me a cup of water?"

¹¹ As she was going to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a bite of bread, too."

¹² But she said, "I swear by the LORD your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die."

¹³ But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and cook that 'last meal,' but bake me a little loaf of bread first. Afterward there will still be enough food for you and your son.

¹⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There will always be plenty

of flour and oil left in your containers until the time when the LORD sends rain and the crops grow again!"

¹⁵ So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her son continued to eat from her supply of flour and oil for many days.

¹⁶ For no matter how much they used, there was always enough left in the containers, just as the LORD had promised through Elijah.

¹⁷ Some time later, the woman's son became sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally he died.

¹⁸ She then said to Elijah, "O man of God, what have you done to me? Have you come here to punish my sins by killing my son?"

¹⁹ But Elijah replied, "Give me your son." And he took the boy's body from her, carried him up to the upper room, where he lived, and laid the body on his bed.

²⁰ Then Elijah cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, why have you brought tragedy on this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?"

²¹ And he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, please let this child's life return to him."

²² The LORD heard Elijah's prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he came back to life!

²³ Then Elijah brought him down from the upper room and gave him to his mother. "Look, your son is alive!" he said.

²⁴ Then the woman told Elijah, "Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the LORD truly speaks through you."

18 ¹ After many months passed, in the third year of the drought, the

LORD said to Elijah, "Go and present yourself to King Ahab. Tell him that I will soon send rain!"

² So Elijah went to appear before Ahab. Meanwhile, the famine had become very severe in Samaria.

³ So Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Now Obadiah was a devoted follower of the LORD.

⁴ Once when Jezebel had tried to kill all the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had hidden one hundred of them in two caves. He had put fifty prophets in each cave and had supplied them with food and water.)

⁵ Ahab said to Obadiah, "We must check every spring and valley to see if we can find enough grass to save at least some of my horses and mules."

⁶ So they divided the land between them. Ahab went one way by himself,

and Obadiah went another way by himself.

⁷ As Obadiah was walking along, he saw Elijah coming toward him. Obadiah recognized him at once and fell to the ground before him. "Is it really you, my lord Elijah?" he asked.

⁸ "Yes, it is," Elijah replied. "Now go and tell your master I am here."

⁹ "Oh, sir," Obadiah protested, "what harm have I done to you that you are sending me to my death at the hands of Ahab?"

¹⁰ For I swear by the LORD your God that the king has searched every nation and kingdom on earth from end to end to find you. And each time when he was told, 'Elijah isn't here,' King Ahab forced the king of that nation to swear to the truth of his claim.

¹¹ And now you say, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here'!

¹² But as soon as I leave you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you away to who knows where. When Ahab comes and cannot find you, he will kill me. Yet I have been a true servant of the LORD all my life.

¹³ Has no one told you, my lord, about the time when Jezebel was trying to kill the LORD's prophets? I hid a hundred of them in two caves and supplied them with food and water.

¹⁴ And now you say, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here'! Sir, if I do that, I'm as good as dead!"

¹⁵ But Elijah said, "I swear by the LORD Almighty, in whose presence I stand, that I will present myself to Ahab today."

¹⁶ So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come, and Ahab went out to meet him.

¹⁷ "So it's you, is it—Israel's troublemaker?" Ahab asked when he saw him.

¹⁸ "I have made no trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the LORD and have worshiped the images of Baal instead.

¹⁹ Now bring all the people of Israel to Mount Carmel, with all 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who are supported by Jezebel."

²⁰ So Ahab summoned all the people and the prophets to Mount Carmel.

²¹ Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How long are you going to waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent.

²² Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only prophet of the LORD who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets.

²³ Now bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose whichever one they wish and cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood of their altar, but without setting fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood on the altar, but not set fire to it.

²⁴ Then call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God!" And all the people agreed.

²⁵ Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "You go first, for there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls and prepare it and call on the name of your god. But do not set fire to the wood."

²⁶ So they prepared one of the bulls and placed it on the altar. Then they

called on the name of Baal all morning, shouting, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no reply of any kind. Then they danced wildly around the altar they had made.

²⁷ About noontime Elijah began mocking them. "You'll have to shout louder," he scoffed, "for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or he is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or he is asleep and needs to be wakened!"

²⁸ So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out.

²⁹ They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no reply, no voice, no answer.

³⁰ Then Elijah called to the people, "Come over here!" They all crowded

around him as he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down.

³¹ He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel,

³² and he used the stones to rebuild the LORD's altar. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons.

³³ He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood. Then he said, "Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood." After they had done this,

³⁴ he said, "Do the same thing again!" And when they were finished, he said, "Now do it a third time!" So they did as he said,

³⁵ and the water ran around the altar and even overflowed the trench.

³⁶ At the customary time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet

walked up to the altar and prayed, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command.

³⁷ O LORD, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself."

³⁸ Immediately the fire of the LORD flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the ditch!

³⁹ And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces and cried out, "The LORD is God! The LORD is God!"

⁴⁰ Then Elijah commanded, "Seize all the prophets of Baal. Don't let a single one escape!" So the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and killed them there.

⁴¹ Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go and enjoy a good meal! For I hear a mighty rainstorm coming!"

⁴² So Ahab prepared a feast. But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and fell to the ground and prayed.

⁴³ Then he said to his servant, "Go and look out toward the sea." The servant went and looked, but he returned to Elijah and said, "I didn't see anything." Seven times Elijah told him to go and look, and seven times he went.

⁴⁴ Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, "I saw a little cloud about the size of a hand rising from the sea." Then Elijah shouted, "Hurry to Ahab and tell him, 'Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don't hurry, the rain will stop you!'"

⁴⁵ And sure enough, the sky was soon black with clouds. A heavy wind brought

a terrific rainstorm, and Ahab left quickly for Jezreel.

⁴⁶ Now the LORD gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel.

19 ¹ When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel what Elijah had done and that he had slaughtered the prophets of Baal.

² So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods also kill me if by this time tomorrow I have failed to take your life like those whom you killed."

³ Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there.

⁴ Then he went on alone into the desert, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough,

LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

⁵ Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!"

⁶ He looked around and saw some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

⁷ Then the angel of the LORD came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, for there is a long journey ahead of you."

⁸ So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God.

⁹ There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the LORD said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

¹¹ "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

¹² And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper.

¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood

at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He replied again, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

¹⁵ Then the LORD told him, "Go back the way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram.

¹⁶ Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel–meholah to replace you as my prophet.

¹⁷ Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha!

¹⁸ Yet I will preserve seven thousand others in Israel who have never bowed to Baal or kissed him!"

¹⁹ So Elijah went and found Elisha son of Shaphat plowing a field with a team of oxen. There were eleven teams of oxen ahead of him, and he was plowing with the twelfth team. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak across his shoulders and walked away again.

²⁰ Elisha left the oxen standing there, ran after Elijah, and said to him, "First let me go and kiss my father and mother good-bye, and then I will go with you!" Elijah replied, "Go on back! But consider what I have done to you."

²¹ Elisha then returned to his oxen, killed them, and used the wood from the plow to build a fire to roast their flesh. He passed around the meat to the other plowmen, and they all ate. Then he went with Elijah as his assistant.

20¹ Now King Ben–hadad of Aram mobilized his army, supported by the chariots and horses of thirty–two allied kings. They went to besiege Samaria, the Israelite capital, and launched attacks against it.

² Ben–hadad sent messengers into the city to relay this message to King Ahab of Israel: "This is what Ben–hadad says:

³ 'Your silver and gold are mine, and so are the best of your wives and children!'"

⁴ "All right, my lord," Ahab replied. "All that I have is yours!"

⁵ Soon Ben–hadad's messengers returned again and said, "This is what Ben–hadad says: 'I have already demanded that you give me your silver, gold, wives, and children.

⁶ But about this time tomorrow I will send my officials to search your palace and the homes of your people. They

will take away everything you consider valuable!"

⁷ Then Ahab summoned all the leaders of the land and said to them, "Look how this man is stirring up trouble! I already agreed when he sent the message demanding that I give him my wives and children and silver and gold."

⁸ "Don't give in to any more demands," the leaders and people advised.

⁹ So Ahab told the messengers from Ben-hadad, "Say this to my lord the king: 'I will give you everything you asked for the first time, but this last demand of yours I simply cannot meet.'" So the messengers returned to Ben-hadad with the response.

¹⁰ Then Ben-hadad sent this message to Ahab: "May the gods bring tragedy on me, and even worse than that, if there remains enough dust from Samaria to

provide more than a handful for each of my soldiers."

¹¹ The king of Israel sent back this answer: "A warrior still dressing for battle should not boast like a warrior who has already won."

¹² This reply of Ahab's reached Ben-hadad and the other kings as they were drinking in their tents. "Prepare to attack!" Ben-hadad commanded his officers. So they prepared to attack the city.

¹³ Then a prophet came to see King Ahab and told him, "This is what the LORD says: Do you see all these enemy forces? Today I will hand them all over to you. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

¹⁴ Ahab asked, "How will he do it?" And the prophet replied, "This is what the LORD says: The troops of the provincial commanders will do it." "Should we

attack first?" Ahab asked. "Yes," the prophet answered.

¹⁵ So Ahab mustered the troops of the 232 provincial commanders. Then he called out the rest of his army of seven thousand men.

¹⁶ About noontime, as Ben-hadad and the thirty-two allied kings were still in their tents getting drunk,

¹⁷ the troops of the provincial commanders marched out of the city. As they approached, Ben-hadad's scouts reported to him, "Some troops are coming from Samaria."

¹⁸ "Take them alive," Ben-hadad commanded, "whether they have come for peace or for war."

¹⁹ But by now Ahab's provincial commanders had led the army out to fight.

²⁰ Each Israelite soldier killed his Aramean opponent, and suddenly the

entire Aramean army panicked and fled. The Israelites chased them, but King Ben-hadad and a few others escaped on horses.

²¹ However, the other horses and chariots were destroyed, and the Arameans were killed in a great slaughter.

²² Afterward the prophet said to King Ahab, "Get ready for another attack by the king of Aram next spring."

²³ After their defeat, Ben-hadad's officers said to him, "The Israelite gods are gods of the hills; that is why they won. But we can beat them easily on the plains.

²⁴ Only this time replace the kings with field commanders!

²⁵ Recruit another army like the one you lost. Give us the same number of horses, chariots, and men, and we will fight against them in the plains. There's

not a shadow of a doubt that we will beat them." So King Ben-hadad did as they suggested.

²⁶ The following spring he called up the Aramean army and marched out against Israel, this time at Aphek.

²⁷ Israel then mustered its army, set up supply lines, and moved into the battle. But the Israelite army looked like two little flocks of goats in comparison to the vast Aramean forces that filled the countryside!

²⁸ Then the man of God went to the king of Israel and said, "This is what the LORD says: The Arameans have said that the LORD is a god of the hills and not of the plains. So I will help you defeat this vast army. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

²⁹ The two armies camped opposite each other for seven days, and on the seventh day the battle began. The

Israelites killed 100,000 Aramean foot soldiers in one day.

³⁰ The rest fled behind the walls of Aphek, but the wall fell on them and killed another 27,000. Ben-hadad fled into the city and hid in a secret room.

³¹ Ben-hadad's officers said to him, "Sir, we have heard that the kings of Israel are very merciful. So let's humble ourselves by wearing sackcloth and putting ropes on our heads. Then perhaps King Ahab will let you live."

³² So they put on sackcloth and ropes and went to the king of Israel and begged, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let me live!'" The king of Israel responded, "Is he still alive? He is my brother!"

³³ The men were quick to grasp at this straw of hope, and they replied, "Yes, your brother Ben-hadad!" "Go and get him," the king of Israel told them. And

when Ben-hadad arrived, Ahab invited him up into his chariot!

³⁴ Ben-hadad told him, "I will give back the towns my father took from your father, and you may establish places of trade in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria." Then Ahab said, "I will let you go under these conditions." So they made a treaty, and Ben-hadad was set free.

³⁵ Meanwhile, the LORD instructed one of the group of prophets to say to another man, "Strike me!" But the man refused to strike the prophet.

³⁶ Then the prophet told him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, a lion will kill you as soon as you leave me." And sure enough, when he had gone, a lion attacked and killed him.

³⁷ Then the prophet turned to another man and said, "Strike me!" So he struck the prophet and wounded him.

³⁸ The prophet waited for the king beside the road, having placed a bandage over his eyes to disguise himself.

³⁹ As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, "Sir, I was in the battle, and a man brought me a prisoner. He said, 'Guard this man; if for any reason he gets away, you will either die or pay a fine of seventy-five pounds of silver!'

⁴⁰ But while I was busy doing something else, the prisoner disappeared!" "Well, it's your own fault," the king replied. "You have determined your own judgment."

⁴¹ Then the prophet pulled the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

⁴² And the prophet told him, "This is what the LORD says: Because you have spared the man I said must be destroyed, now you must die in his place, and your people will die instead of his people."

⁴³ So the king of Israel went home to Samaria angry and sullen.

21 ¹ King Ahab had a palace in Jezreel, and near the palace was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth.

² One day Ahab said to Naboth, "Since your vineyard is so convenient to the palace, I would like to buy it to use as a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange, or if you prefer, I will pay you for it."

³ But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance that was passed down by my ancestors."

⁴ So Ahab went home angry and sullen because of Naboth's answer. The king went to bed with his face to the wall and refused to eat!

⁵ "What in the world is the matter?" his wife, Jezebel, asked him. "What has

made you so upset that you are not eating?"

⁶ "I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard or to trade it, and he refused!" Ahab told her.

⁷ "Are you the king of Israel or not?" Jezebel asked. "Get up and eat and don't worry about it. I'll get you Naboth's vineyard!"

⁸ So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and other leaders of the city where Naboth lived.

⁹ In her letters she commanded: "Call the citizens together for fasting and prayer and give Naboth a place of honor.

¹⁰ Find two scoundrels who will accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

¹¹ So the elders and other leaders followed the instructions Jezebel had written in the letters.

¹² They called for a fast and put Naboth at a prominent place before the people.

¹³ Then two scoundrels accused him before all the people of cursing God and the king. So he was dragged outside the city and stoned to death.

¹⁴ The city officials then sent word to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned to death."

¹⁵ When Jezebel heard the news, she said to Ahab, "You know the vineyard Naboth wouldn't sell you? Well, you can have it now! He's dead!"

¹⁶ So Ahab immediately went down to the vineyard to claim it.

¹⁷ But the LORD said to Elijah, who was from Tishbe,

¹⁸ "Go down to meet King Ahab, who rules in Samaria. He will be at Naboth's vineyard in Jezreel, taking possession of it.

¹⁹ Give him this message: 'This is what the LORD says: Isn't killing Naboth bad enough? Must you rob him, too? Because you have done this, dogs will lick your blood outside the city just as they licked the blood of Naboth!'"

²⁰ "So my enemy has found me!" Ahab exclaimed to Elijah. "Yes," Elijah answered, "I have come because you have sold yourself to what is evil in the LORD's sight.

²¹ The LORD is going to bring disaster to you and sweep you away. He will not let a single one of your male descendants, slave or free alike, survive in Israel!

²² He is going to destroy your family as he did the family of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the family of Baasha son of Ahijah, for you have made him very angry and have led all of Israel into sin.

²³ The LORD has also told me that the dogs of Jezreel will eat the body of your wife, Jezebel, at the city wall.

²⁴ The members of your family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures."

²⁵ No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the LORD's sight as did Ahab, for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him.

²⁶ He was especially guilty because he worshiped idols just as the Amorites had done—the people whom the LORD had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

²⁷ When Ahab heard this message, he tore his clothing, dressed in sackcloth, and fasted. He even slept in sackcloth and went about in deep mourning.

²⁸ Then another message from the LORD came to Elijah, who was from Tishbe:

²⁹ "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has done this, I will not do what I promised during his lifetime. It will happen to his sons; I will destroy all his descendants."

22 ¹ For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel.

² Then during the third year, King Jehoshaphat of Judah went to visit King Ahab of Israel.

³ During the visit, Ahab said to his officials, "Do you realize that the Arameans are still occupying our city of Ramoth-gilead? And we haven't done a thing about it!"

⁴ Then he turned to Jehoshaphat and asked, "Will you join me in fighting against Ramoth-gilead?" And Jehoshaphat replied to King Ahab, "Why,

of course! You and I are brothers, and my troops are yours to command. Even my horses are at your service."

⁵ Then Jehoshaphat added, "But first let's find out what the LORD says."

⁶ So King Ahab summoned his prophets, about four hundred of them, and asked them, "Should I go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?" They all replied, "Go right ahead! The Lord will give you a glorious victory!"

⁷ But Jehoshaphat asked, "Isn't there a prophet of the LORD around, too? I would like to ask him the same question."

⁸ King Ahab replied, "There is still one prophet of the LORD, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me! His name is Micaiah son of Imlah." "You shouldn't talk like that," Jehoshaphat said. "Let's hear what he has to say."

⁹ So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Quick! Go and get Micaiah son of Imlah."

¹⁰ King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, dressed in their royal robes, were sitting on thrones at the threshing floor near the gate of Samaria. All of Ahab's prophets were prophesying there in front of them.

¹¹ One of them, Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, made some iron horns and proclaimed, "This is what the LORD says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans to death!"

¹² All the other prophets agreed. "Yes," they said, "go up to Ramoth-gilead and be victorious, for the LORD will give you victory!"

¹³ Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah said to him, "Look, all the prophets are promising victory

for the king. Be sure that you agree with them and promise success."

¹⁴ But Micaiah replied, "As surely as the LORD lives, I will say only what the LORD tells me to say."

¹⁵ When Micaiah arrived before the king, Ahab asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?" And Micaiah replied, "Go right ahead! The LORD will give the king a glorious victory!"

¹⁶ But the king replied sharply, "How many times must I demand that you speak only the truth when you speak for the LORD?"

¹⁷ So Micaiah told him, "In a vision I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, 'Their master has been killed. Send them home in peace.'"

¹⁸ "Didn't I tell you?" the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat. "He does it every

time. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me."

¹⁹ Then Micaiah continued, "Listen to what the LORD says! I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven around him, on his right and on his left.

²⁰ And the LORD said, 'Who can entice Ahab to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so that he can be killed there?' There were many suggestions,

²¹ until finally a spirit approached the LORD and said, 'I can do it!'

²² "'How will you do this?' the LORD asked. "And the spirit replied, 'I will go out and inspire all Ahab's prophets to speak lies.' "'You will succeed,' said the LORD. 'Go ahead and do it.'

²³ "So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of your prophets. For the LORD has determined disaster for you."

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah walked up to Micaiah and slapped him across the face. "When did the Spirit of the LORD leave me to speak to you?" he demanded.

²⁵ And Micaiah replied, "You will find out soon enough when you find yourself hiding in some secret room!"

²⁶ King Ahab of Israel then ordered, "Arrest Micaiah and take him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to my son Joash.

²⁷ Give them this order from the king: 'Put this man in prison, and feed him nothing but bread and water until I return safely from the battle!'"

²⁸ But Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me!" Then he added to those standing around, "Take note of what I have said."

²⁹ So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah led their armies against Ramoth-gilead.

³⁰ Now King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "As we go into battle, I will disguise myself so no one will recognize me, but you wear your royal robes." So Ahab disguised himself, and they went into battle.

³¹ Now the king of Aram had issued these orders to his thirty-two charioteers: "Attack only the king of Israel!"

³² So when the Aramean charioteers saw Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, they went after him. "There is the king of Israel!" they shouted. But when Jehoshaphat cried out,

³³ the charioteers realized he was not the king of Israel, and they stopped chasing him.

³⁴ An Aramean soldier, however, randomly shot an arrow at the Israelite troops, and the arrow hit the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. "Get me out of here!" Ahab groaned to the driver of his chariot. "I have been badly wounded!"

³⁵ The battle raged all that day, and Ahab was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran down to the floor of his chariot, and as evening arrived he died.

³⁶ Just as the sun was setting, the cry ran through his troops: "It's all over—return home!"

³⁷ So the king died, and his body was taken to Samaria and buried there.

³⁸ Then his chariot was washed beside the pool of Samaria, where the prostitutes bathed, and dogs came and licked the king's blood, just as the LORD had promised.

³⁹ The rest of the events in Ahab's reign and the story of the ivory palace and the cities he built are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

⁴⁰ When Ahab died, he was buried among his ancestors. Then his son Ahaziah became the next king.

⁴¹ Jehoshaphat son of Asa began to rule over Judah in the fourth year of King Ahab's reign in Israel.

⁴² He was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi.

⁴³ Jehoshaphat was a good king, following the example of his father, Asa. He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight. During his reign, however, he failed to remove all the pagan shrines, and the people still offered sacrifices and burned incense there.

⁴⁴ Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

⁴⁵ The rest of the events in Jehoshaphat's reign, the extent of his power, and the wars he waged are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

⁴⁶ He banished from the land the rest of the shrine prostitutes, who still continued their practices from the days of his father, Asa.

⁴⁷ There was no king in Edom at that time, only a deputy.

⁴⁸ Jehoshaphat also built a fleet of trading ships to sail to Ophir for gold. But the ships never set sail, for they were wrecked at Ezion-geber.

⁴⁹ At that time Ahaziah son of Ahab proposed to Jehoshaphat, "Let my men sail an expedition with your men." But Jehoshaphat refused the offer.

⁵⁰ When Jehoshaphat died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jehoram became the next king.

⁵¹ Ahaziah son of Ahab began to rule over Israel in the seventeenth year of King Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria two years.

⁵² But he did what was evil in the LORD's sight, following the example of his father and mother and the example of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had led Israel into the sin of idolatry.

⁵³ He served Baal and worshiped him, arousing the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, just as his father had done.

2 Kings

1 ¹ After King Ahab's death, the nation of Moab declared its independence from Israel.

² One day Israel's new king, Ahaziah, fell through the latticework of an upper room at his palace in Samaria, and he was seriously injured. So he sent messengers to the temple of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether he would recover.

³ But the angel of the LORD told Elijah, who was from Tishbe, "Go and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Why are you going to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether the king will get well? Is there no God in Israel?'"

⁴ Now, therefore, this is what the LORD says: You will never leave the bed on which you are lying, but you will surely die.'" So Elijah went to deliver the message.

⁵ When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, "Why have you returned so soon?"

⁶ They replied, "A man came up to us and said, 'Go back to the king and give him this message from the LORD: Why are you sending men to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether you will get well? Is there no God in Israel? Now, since you have done this, you will never leave the bed on which you are lying, but you will surely die.'"

⁷ "Who was this man?" the king demanded. "What did he look like?"

⁸ They replied, "He was a hairy man, and he wore a leather belt around his

waist." "It was Elijah from Tishbe!" the king exclaimed.

⁹ Then he sent an army captain with fifty soldiers to arrest him. They found him sitting on top of a hill. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king has commanded you to come along with us."

¹⁰ But Elijah replied to the captain, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and killed them all.

¹¹ So the king sent another captain with fifty men. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king says that you must come down right away."

¹² Elijah replied, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your fifty men!" And again the fire of God fell from heaven and killed them all.

¹³ Once more the king sent a captain with fifty men. But this time the captain fell to his knees before Elijah. He pleaded with him, "O man of God, please spare my life and the lives of these, your fifty servants.

¹⁴ See how the fire from heaven has destroyed the first two groups. But now please spare my life!"

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Don't be afraid. Go with him." So Elijah got up and went to the king.

¹⁶ And Elijah said to the king, "This is what the LORD says: Why did you send messengers to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether you will get well? Is there no God in Israel? Now, since you have done this, you will never leave the bed on which you are lying, but you will surely die."

¹⁷ So Ahaziah died, just as the LORD had promised through Elijah. Since Ahaziah

did not have a son to succeed him, his brother Joram became the next king. This took place in the second year of the reign of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

¹⁸ The rest of the events in Ahaziah's reign are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

2¹ When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal.

² And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!" So they went on together to Bethel.

³ The group of prophets from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the LORD is going to take your

master away from you today?" "Quiet!" Elisha answered. "Of course I know it."

⁴ Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to Jericho." But Elisha replied again, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together to Jericho.

⁵ Then the group of prophets from Jericho came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?" "Quiet!" he answered again. "Of course I know it."

⁶ Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the LORD has told me to go to the Jordan River." But again Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together.

⁷ Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance

as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River.

⁸ Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground!

⁹ When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "What can I do for you before I am taken away?" And Elisha replied, "Please let me become your rightful successor."

¹⁰ "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah replied. "If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won't."

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between them, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven.

¹² Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and charioteers of Israel!" And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his robe in two.

¹³ Then Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak and returned to the bank of the Jordan River.

¹⁴ He struck the water with the cloak and cried out, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" Then the river divided, and Elisha went across.

¹⁵ When the group of prophets from Jericho saw what happened, they exclaimed, "Elisha has become Elijah's successor!" And they went to meet him and bowed down before him.

¹⁶ "Sir," they said, "just say the word and fifty of our strongest men will search the wilderness for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has left him on

some mountain or in some valley." "No," Elisha said, "don't send them."

¹⁷ But they kept urging him until he was embarrassed, and he finally said, "All right, send them." So fifty men searched for three days but did not find Elijah.

¹⁸ Elisha was still at Jericho when they returned. "Didn't I tell you not to go?" he asked.

¹⁹ Now the leaders of the town of Jericho visited Elisha. "We have a problem, my lord," they told him. "This town is located in beautiful natural surroundings, as you can see. But the water is bad, and the land is unproductive."

²⁰ Elisha said, "Bring me a new bowl with salt in it." So they brought it to him.

²¹ Then he went out to the spring that supplied the town with water and threw the salt into it. And he said, "This is what the LORD says: I have made this water

wholesome. It will no longer cause death or infertility."

²² And sure enough! The water has remained wholesome ever since, just as Elisha said.

²³ Elisha left Jericho and went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of boys from the town began mocking and making fun of him. "Go away, you baldhead!" they chanted. "Go away, you baldhead!"

²⁴ Elisha turned around and looked at them, and he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them.

²⁵ From there Elisha went to Mount Carmel and finally returned to Samaria.

3 ¹ Ahab's son Joram began to rule over Israel in the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twelve years.

² He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, but he was not as wicked as his father and mother. He at least tore down the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had set up.

³ Nevertheless he continued in the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led the people of Israel to commit.

⁴ King Mesha of Moab and his people were sheep breeders. They used to pay the king of Israel an annual tribute of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

⁵ But after Ahab's death, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

⁶ So King Joram mustered the army of Israel and marched from Samaria.

⁷ On the way, he sent this message to King Jehoshaphat of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you help me fight him?" And Jehoshaphat replied, "Why, of course! You and I are

brothers, and my troops are yours to command. Even my horses are at your service."

⁸ Then Jehoshaphat asked, "What route will we take?" "We will attack from the wilderness of Edom," Joram replied.

⁹ The king of Edom and his troops joined them, and all three armies traveled along a roundabout route through the wilderness for seven days. But there was no water for the men or their pack animals.

¹⁰ "What should we do?" the king of Israel cried out. "The LORD has brought the three of us here to let the king of Moab defeat us."

¹¹ But King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD with us? If there is, we can ask the LORD what to do." One of King Joram's officers replied, "Elisha son of Shaphat

is here. He used to be Elijah's personal assistant."

¹² Jehoshaphat said, "Then the LORD will speak through him." So the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom went to consult with Elisha.

¹³ "I want no part of you," Elisha said to the king of Israel. "Go to the pagan prophets of your father and mother!" But King Joram said, "No! For it was the LORD who called us three kings here to be destroyed by the king of Moab!"

¹⁴ Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I would not bother with you except for my respect for King Jehoshaphat of Judah.

¹⁵ Now bring me someone who can play the harp." While the harp was being played, the power of the LORD came upon Elisha,

¹⁶ and he said, "This is what the LORD says: This dry valley will be filled with pools of water!

¹⁷ You will see neither wind nor rain, says the LORD, but this valley will be filled with water. You will have plenty for yourselves and for your cattle and your other animals.

¹⁸ But this is only a simple thing for the LORD, for he will make you victorious over the army of Moab!

¹⁹ You will conquer the best of their cities, even the fortified ones. You will cut down all their trees, stop up all their springs, and ruin all their good land with stones."

²⁰ And sure enough, the next day at about the time when the morning sacrifice was offered, water suddenly appeared! It was flowing from the direction of Edom, and soon there was water everywhere.

²¹ Meanwhile, when the people of Moab heard about the three armies marching against them, they mobilized every man who could fight, young and old, and stationed themselves along their border.

²² But when they got up the next morning, the sun was shining across the water, making it look as red as blood.

²³ "It's blood!" the Moabites exclaimed. "The three armies have attacked and killed each other! Let's go and collect the plunder!"

²⁴ When they arrived at the Israelite camp, the army of Israel rushed out and attacked the Moabites, who turned and ran. The army of Israel chased them into the land of Moab, destroying everything as they went.

²⁵ They destroyed the cities, covered their good land with stones, stopped up the springs, and cut down the good

trees. Finally, only Kir-hareseth was left, but even that came under attack.

²⁶ When the king of Moab saw that he was losing the battle, he led seven hundred of his warriors in a desperate attempt to break through the enemy lines near the king of Edom, but they failed to escape.

²⁷ So he took his oldest son, who would have been the next king, and sacrificed him as a burnt offering on the wall. As a result, the anger against Israel was great, so they withdrew and returned to their own land.

4 ¹ One day the widow of one of Elisha's fellow prophets came to Elisha and cried out to him, "My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he feared the LORD. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves."

² "What can I do to help you?" Elisha asked. "Tell me, what do you have in the house?" "Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil," she replied.

³ And Elisha said, "Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors.

⁴ Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting the jars aside as they are filled."

⁵ So she did as she was told. Her sons brought many jars to her, and she filled one after another.

⁶ Soon every container was full to the brim! "Bring me another jar," she said to one of her sons. "There aren't any more!" he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing.

⁷ When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, "Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and

there will be enough money left over to support you and your sons."

⁸ One day Elisha went to the town of Shunem. A wealthy woman lived there, and she invited him to eat some food. From then on, whenever he passed that way, he would stop there to eat.

⁹ She said to her husband, "I am sure this man who stops in from time to time is a holy man of God.

¹⁰ Let's make a little room for him on the roof and furnish it with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. Then he will have a place to stay whenever he comes by."

¹¹ One day Elisha returned to Shunem, and he went up to his room to rest.

¹² He said to his servant Gehazi, "Tell the woman I want to speak to her."
When she arrived,

¹³ Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell her that we appreciate the kind concern she has

shown us. Now ask her what we can do for her. Does she want me to put in a good word for her to the king or to the commander of the army?" "No," she replied, "my family takes good care of me."

¹⁴ Later Elisha asked Gehazi, "What do you think we can do for her?" He suggested, "She doesn't have a son, and her husband is an old man."

¹⁵ "Call her back again," Elisha told him. When the woman returned, Elisha said to her as she stood in the doorway,

¹⁶ "Next year at about this time you will be holding a son in your arms!" "No, my lord!" she protested. "Please don't lie to me like that, O man of God."

¹⁷ But sure enough, the woman soon became pregnant. And at that time the following year she had a son, just as Elisha had said.

¹⁸ One day when her child was older, he went out to visit his father, who was working with the harvesters.

¹⁹ Suddenly he complained, "My head hurts! My head hurts!" His father said to one of the servants, "Carry him home to his mother."

²⁰ So the servant took him home, and his mother held him on her lap. But around noontime he died.

²¹ She carried him up to the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and left him there.

²² She sent a message to her husband: "Send one of the servants and a donkey so that I can hurry to the man of God and come right back."

²³ "Why today?" he asked. "It is neither a new moon festival nor a Sabbath." But she said, "It's all right."

²⁴ So she saddled the donkey and said to the servant, "Hurry! Don't slow down on my account unless I tell you to."

²⁵ As she approached the man of God at Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her in the distance. He said to Gehazi, "Look, the woman from Shunem is coming.

²⁶ Run out to meet her and ask her, 'Is everything all right with you, with your husband, and with your child?'" "Yes," the woman told Gehazi, "everything is fine."

²⁷ But when she came to the man of God at the mountain, she fell to the ground before him and caught hold of his feet. Gehazi began to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone. Something is troubling her deeply, and the LORD has not told me what it is."

²⁸ Then she said, "It was you, my lord, who said I would have a son. And didn't I tell you not to raise my hopes?"

²⁹ Then Elisha said to Gehazi, "Get ready to travel; take my staff and go! Don't talk to anyone along the way. Go quickly and lay the staff on the child's face."

³⁰ But the boy's mother said, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I won't go home unless you go with me." So Elisha returned with her.

³¹ Gehazi hurried on ahead and laid the staff on the child's face, but nothing happened. There was no sign of life. He returned to meet Elisha and told him, "The child is still dead."

³² When Elisha arrived, the child was indeed dead, lying there on the prophet's bed.

³³ He went in alone and shut the door behind him and prayed to the LORD.

³⁴ Then he lay down on the child's body, placing his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his hands on the child's hands. And the child's body began to grow warm again!

³⁵ Elisha got up and walked back and forth in the room a few times. Then he stretched himself out again on the child. This time the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

³⁶ Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. "Call the child's mother!" he said. And when she came in, Elisha said, "Here, take your son!"

³⁷ She fell at his feet, overwhelmed with gratitude. Then she picked up her son and carried him downstairs.

³⁸ Elisha now returned to Gilgal, but there was a famine in the land. One day as the group of prophets was seated before him, he said to his servant, "Put

on a large kettle and make some stew for these men."

³⁹ One of the young men went out into the field to gather vegetables and came back with a pocketful of wild gourds. He shredded them and put them into the kettle without realizing they were poisonous.

⁴⁰ But after the men had eaten a bite or two they cried out, "Man of God, there's poison in this stew!" So they would not eat it.

⁴¹ Elisha said, "Bring me some flour." Then he threw it into the kettle and said, "Now it's all right; go ahead and eat." And then it did not harm them!

⁴² One day a man from Baal-shalishah brought the man of God a sack of fresh grain and twenty loaves of barley bread made from the first grain of his harvest. Elisha said, "Give it to the group of prophets so they can eat."

⁴³ "What?" his servant exclaimed. "Feed one hundred people with only this?" But Elisha repeated, "Give it to the group of prophets so they can eat, for the LORD says there will be plenty for all. There will even be some left over!"

⁴⁴ And sure enough, there was plenty for all and some left over, just as the LORD had promised.

5 ¹ The king of Aram had high admiration for Naaman, the commander of his army, because through him the LORD had given Aram great victories. But though Naaman was a mighty warrior, he suffered from leprosy.

² Now groups of Aramean raiders had invaded the land of Israel, and among their captives was a young girl who had been given to Naaman's wife as a maid.

³ One day the girl said to her mistress, "I wish my master would go to see the

prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy."

⁴ So Naaman told the king what the young girl from Israel had said.

⁵ "Go and visit the prophet," the king told him. "I will send a letter of introduction for you to carry to the king of Israel." So Naaman started out, taking as gifts 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothing.

⁶ The letter to the king of Israel said: "With this letter I present my servant Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy."

⁷ When the king of Israel read it, he tore his clothes in dismay and said, "This man sends me a leper to heal! Am I God, that I can kill and give life? He is only trying to find an excuse to invade us again."

⁸ But when Elisha, the man of God, heard about the king's reaction, he sent this message to him: "Why are you so

upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will learn that there is a true prophet here in Israel."

⁹ So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and waited at the door of Elisha's house.

¹⁰ But Elisha sent a messenger out to him with this message: "Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of leprosy."

¹¹ But Naaman became angry and stalked away. "I thought he would surely come out to meet me!" he said. "I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the LORD his God and heal me!

¹² Aren't the Abana River and Pharpar River of Damascus better than all the rivers of Israel put together? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be

healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage.

¹³ But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply to go and wash and be cured!"

¹⁴ So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his flesh became as healthy as a young child's, and he was healed!

¹⁵ Then Naaman and his entire party went back to find the man of God. They stood before him, and Naaman said, "I know at last that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Now please accept my gifts."

¹⁶ But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept any gifts." And though Naaman

urged him to take the gifts, Elisha refused.

¹⁷ Then Naaman said, "All right, but please allow me to load two of my mules with earth from this place, and I will take it back home with me. From now on I will never again offer any burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the LORD.

¹⁸ However, may the LORD pardon me in this one thing. When my master the king goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship there and leans on my arm, may the LORD pardon me when I bow, too."

¹⁹ "Go in peace," Elisha said. So Naaman started home again.

²⁰ But Gehazi, Elisha's servant, said to himself, "My master should not have let this Aramean get away without accepting his gifts. As surely as the

LORD lives, I will chase after him and get something from him."

²¹ So Gehazi set off after him. When Naaman saw him running after him, he climbed down from his chariot and went to meet him. "Is everything all right?" Naaman asked.

²² "Yes," Gehazi said, "but my master has sent me to tell you that two young prophets from the hill country of Ephraim have just arrived. He would like 75 pounds of silver and two sets of clothing to give to them."

²³ "By all means, take 150 pounds of silver," Naaman insisted. He gave him two sets of clothing, tied up the money in two bags, and sent two of his servants to carry the gifts for Gehazi.

²⁴ But when they arrived at the hill, Gehazi took the gifts from the servants and sent the men back. Then he hid the gifts inside the house.

²⁵ When he went in to his master, Elisha asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" "I haven't been anywhere," he replied.

²⁶ But Elisha asked him, "Don't you realize that I was there in spirit when Naaman stepped down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to receive money and clothing and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and servants?"

²⁷ Because you have done this, you and your children and your children's children will suffer from Naaman's leprosy forever." When Gehazi left the room, he was leprous; his skin was as white as snow.

6¹ One day the group of prophets came to Elisha and told him, "As you can see, this place where we meet with you is too small.

² Let's go down to the Jordan River, where there are plenty of logs. There we can build a new place for us to meet."

"All right," he told them, "go ahead."

³ "Please come with us," someone suggested. "I will," he said.

⁴ When they arrived at the Jordan, they began cutting down trees.

⁵ But as one of them was chopping, his ax head fell into the river. "Ah, my lord!" he cried. "It was a borrowed ax!"

⁶ "Where did it fall?" the man of God asked. When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water. Then the ax head rose to the surface and floated.

⁷ "Grab it," Elisha said to him. And the man reached out and grabbed it.

⁸ When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, "We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place."

⁹ But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, "Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there."

¹⁰ So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God, warning the people there to be on their guard. This happened several times.

¹¹ The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called in his officers and demanded, "Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?"

¹² "It's not us, my lord," one of the officers replied. "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"

¹³ The king commanded, "Go and find out where Elisha is, and we will send

troops to seize him." And the report came back: "Elisha is at Dothan."

¹⁴ So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city.

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. "Ah, my lord, what will we do now?" he cried out to Elisha.

¹⁶ "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!"

¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" The LORD opened his servant's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

¹⁸ As the Aramean army advanced toward them, Elisha prayed, "O LORD,

please make them blind." And the LORD did as Elisha asked.

¹⁹ Then Elisha went out and told them, "You have come the wrong way! This isn't the right city! Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria.

²⁰ As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, "O LORD, now open their eyes and let them see." And the LORD did, and they discovered that they were in Samaria.

²¹ When the king of Israel saw them, he shouted to Elisha, "My father, should I kill them?"

²² "Of course not!" Elisha told him. "Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them home again to their master."

²³ So the king made a great feast for them and then sent them home to their

king. After that, the Aramean raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.

²⁴ Some time later, however, King Ben-hadad of Aram mobilized his entire army and besieged Samaria.

²⁵ As a result there was a great famine in the city. After a while even a donkey's head sold for two pounds of silver, and a cup of dove's dung cost about two ounces of silver.

²⁶ One day as the king of Israel was walking along the wall of the city, a woman called to him, "Please help me, my lord the king!"

²⁷ "If the LORD doesn't help you, what can I do?" he retorted. "I have neither food nor wine to give you."

²⁸ But then the king asked, "What is the matter?" She replied, "This woman proposed that we eat my son one day and her son the next.

²⁹ So we cooked my son and ate him. Then the next day I said, 'Kill your son so we can eat him,' but she had hidden him."

³⁰ When the king heard this, he tore his clothes in despair. And as the king walked along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing sackcloth underneath next to his skin.

³¹ "May God kill me if I don't execute Elisha son of Shaphat this very day," the king vowed.

³² Elisha was sitting in his house at a meeting with the leaders of Israel when the king sent a messenger to summon him. But before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the leaders, "A murderer has sent a man to kill me. When he arrives, shut the door and keep him out. His master will soon follow him."

³³ While Elisha was still saying this, the messenger arrived. And the king said, "It

is the LORD who has brought this trouble on us! Why should I wait any longer for the LORD?"

7 ¹ Elisha replied, "Hear this message from the LORD! This is what the LORD says: By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of fine flour will cost only half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost only half an ounce of silver."

² The officer assisting the king said to the man of God, "That couldn't happen even if the LORD opened the windows of heaven!" But Elisha replied, "You will see it happen, but you won't be able to eat any of it!"

³ Now there were four men with leprosy sitting at the entrance of the city gates. "Why should we sit here waiting to die?" they asked each other.

⁴ "We will starve if we stay here, and we will starve if we go back into the city. So

we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway."

⁵ So that evening they went out to the camp of the Arameans, but no one was there!

⁶ For the Lord had caused the whole army of Aram to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sounds of a great army approaching. "The king of Israel has hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us!" they cried out.

⁷ So they panicked and fled into the night, abandoning their tents, horses, donkeys, and everything else, and they fled for their lives.

⁸ When the lepers arrived at the edge of the camp, they went into one tent after another, eating, drinking wine, and

carrying out silver and gold and clothing and hiding it.

⁹ Finally, they said to each other, "This is not right. This is wonderful news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone! If we wait until morning, some terrible calamity will certainly fall upon us. Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace."

¹⁰ So they went back to the city and told the gatekeepers what had happened—that they had gone out to the Aramean camp and no one was there! The horses and donkeys were tethered and the tents were all in order, but there was not a single person around.

¹¹ Then the gatekeepers shouted the news to the people in the palace.

¹² The king got out of bed in the middle of the night and told his officers, "I know what has happened. The Arameans know we are starving, so they have left

their camp and have hidden in the fields. They are expecting us to leave the city, and then they will take us alive and capture the city."

¹³ One of his officers replied, "We had better send out scouts to check into this. Let them take five of the remaining horses. If something happens to them, it won't be a greater loss than if they stay here and die with the rest of us."

¹⁴ So two chariots with horses were prepared, and the king sent scouts to see what had happened to the Aramean army.

¹⁵ They went all the way to the Jordan River, following a trail of clothing and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in their mad rush to escape. The scouts returned and told the king about it.

¹⁶ Then the people of Samaria rushed out and plundered the Aramean camp.

So it was true that five quarts of fine flour were sold that day for half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain were sold for half an ounce of silver, just as the LORD had promised.

¹⁷ The king appointed his officer to control the traffic at the gate, but he was knocked down and trampled to death as the people rushed out. So everything happened exactly as the man of God had predicted when the king came to his house.

¹⁸ The man of God had said to the king, "By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of fine flour will cost half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost half an ounce of silver."

¹⁹ The king's officer had replied, "That couldn't happen even if the LORD opened the windows of heaven!" And the man of God had said, "You will see

it happen, but you won't be able to eat any of it!"

²⁰ And so it was, for the people trampled him to death at the gate!

8 ¹ Elisha had told the woman whose son he had brought back to life, "Take your family and move to some other place, for the LORD has called for a famine on Israel that will last for seven years."

² So the woman did as the man of God instructed. She took her family and lived in the land of the Philistines for seven years.

³ After the famine ended she returned to the land of Israel, and she went to see the king about getting back her house and land.

⁴ As she came in, the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God. The king had just said, "Tell me

some stories about the great things Elisha has done."

⁵ And Gehazi was telling the king about the time Elisha had brought a boy back to life. At that very moment, the mother of the boy walked in to make her appeal to the king. "Look, my lord!" Gehazi exclaimed. "Here is the woman now, and this is her son—the very one Elisha brought back to life!"

⁶ "Is this true?" the king asked her. And she told him that it was. So he directed one of his officials to see to it that everything she had lost was restored to her, including the value of any crops that had been harvested during her absence.

⁷ Now Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Aram, where King Ben-hadad lay sick. Someone told the king that the man of God had come.

⁸ When the king heard the news, he said to Hazael, "Take a gift to the man of

God. Then tell him to ask the LORD if I will get well again."

⁹ So Hazael loaded down forty camels with the finest products of Damascus as a gift for Elisha. He went in to him and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, has sent me to ask you if he will recover."

¹⁰ And Elisha replied, "Go and tell him, 'You will recover.' But the LORD has shown me that he will actually die!"

¹¹ Elisha stared at Hazael with a fixed gaze until Hazael became uneasy. Then the man of God started weeping.

¹² "What's the matter, my lord?" Hazael asked him. Elisha replied, "I know the terrible things you will do to the people of Israel. You will burn their fortified cities, kill their young men, dash their children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women!"

¹³ Then Hazael replied, "How could a nobody like me ever accomplish such a great feat?" But Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you are going to be the king of Aram."

¹⁴ When Hazael went back, the king asked him, "What did Elisha tell you?" And Hazael replied, "He told me that you will surely recover."

¹⁵ But the next day Hazael took a blanket, soaked it in water, and held it over the king's face until he died. Then Hazael became the next king of Aram.

¹⁶ Jehoram son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah began to rule over Judah in the fifth year of King Joram's reign in Israel. Joram was the son of Ahab.

¹⁷ Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years.

¹⁸ But Jehoram followed the example of the kings of Israel and was as wicked

as King Ahab, for he had married one of Ahab's daughters. So Jehoram did what was evil in the LORD's sight.

¹⁹ But the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for he had made a covenant with David and promised that his descendants would continue to rule forever.

²⁰ During Jehoram's reign, the Edomites revolted against Judah and crowned their own king.

²¹ So Jehoram went with all his chariots to attack the town of Zair. The Edomites surrounded him and his charioteers, but he escaped at night under cover of darkness. Jehoram's army, however, deserted him and fled.

²² Edom has been independent from Judah to this day. The town of Libnah revolted about that same time.

²³ The rest of the events in Jehoram's reign and all his deeds are recorded in

The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁴ When Jehoram died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Ahaziah became the next king.

²⁵ Ahaziah son of Jehoram began to rule over Judah in the twelfth year of King Joram's reign in Israel. King Joram was the son of Ahab.

²⁶ Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel.

²⁷ Ahaziah followed the evil example of King Ahab's family, doing what was evil in the LORD's sight, because he was related by marriage to the family of Ahab.

²⁸ Ahaziah joined King Joram of Israel in his war against King Hazael of Aram at

Ramoth–gilead. When King Joram was wounded in the battle,

²⁹ he returned to Jezreel to recover from his wounds. While Joram was there, King Ahaziah of Judah went to visit him.

9 ¹ Meanwhile, Elisha the prophet had summoned a member of the group of prophets. "Get ready to go to Ramoth–gilead," he told him. "Take this vial of olive oil with you,

² and find Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi. Call him into a back room away from his friends,

³ and pour the oil over his head. Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you to be the king over Israel.' Then open the door and run for your life!"

⁴ So the young prophet did as he was told and went to Ramoth–gilead.

⁵ When he arrived there, he found Jehu sitting in a meeting with the other

army officers. "I have a message for you, Commander," he said. "For which one of us?" Jehu asked. "For you, Commander," he replied.

⁶ So Jehu left the others and went into the house. Then the young prophet poured the oil over Jehu's head and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I anoint you king over the LORD's people, Israel.

⁷ You are to destroy the family of Ahab, your master. In this way, I will avenge the murder of my prophets and all the LORD's servants who were killed by Jezebel.

⁸ The entire family of Ahab must be wiped out—every male, slave and free alike, in Israel.

⁹ I will destroy the family of Ahab as I destroyed the families of Jeroboam son of Nebat and of Baasha son of Ahijah.

¹⁰ Dogs will eat Ahab's wife, Jezebel, at the plot of land in Jezreel, and no one will bury her." Then the young prophet opened the door and ran.

¹¹ Jehu went back to his fellow officers, and one of them asked him, "What did that crazy fellow want? Is everything all right?" "You know the way such a man babbles on," Jehu replied.

¹² "You're lying," they said. "Tell us." So Jehu told them what the man had said and that at the LORD's command he had been anointed king over Israel.

¹³ They quickly spread out their cloaks on the bare steps and blew a trumpet, shouting, "Jehu is king!"

¹⁴ So Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi formed a conspiracy against King Joram. (Now Joram had been with the army at Ramoth-gilead, defending Israel against the forces of King Hazael of Aram.)

¹⁵ But Joram had been wounded in the fighting and had returned to Jezreel to recover from his wounds.) So Jehu told the men with him, "Since you want me to be king, don't let anyone escape to Jezreel to report what we have done."

¹⁶ Then Jehu got into a chariot and rode to Jezreel to find King Joram, who was lying there wounded. King Ahaziah of Judah was there, too, for he had gone to visit him.

¹⁷ The watchman on the tower of Jezreel saw Jehu and his company approaching, so he shouted to Joram, "I see a company of troops coming!" "Send out a rider to find out if they are coming in peace," King Joram shouted back.

¹⁸ So a rider went out to meet Jehu and said, "The king wants to know whether you are coming in peace." Jehu replied, "What do you know about peace? Get behind me!" The watchman called out to

the king, "The rider has met them, but he is not returning."

¹⁹ So the king sent out a second rider. He rode up to them and demanded, "The king wants to know whether you come in peace." Again Jehu answered, "What do you know about peace? Get behind me!"

²⁰ The watchman exclaimed, "The rider has met them, but he isn't returning either! It must be Jehu son of Nimshi, for he is driving so recklessly."

²¹ "Quick! Get my chariot ready!" King Joram commanded. Then King Joram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah rode out in their chariots to meet Jehu. They met him at the field that had belonged to Naboth of Jezreel.

²² King Joram demanded, "Do you come in peace, Jehu?" Jehu replied, "How can there be peace as long as the idolatry

and witchcraft of your mother, Jezebel, are all around us?"

²³ Then King Joram reined the chariot horses around and fled, shouting to King Ahaziah, "Treason, Ahaziah!"

²⁴ Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow pierced his heart, and he sank down dead in his chariot.

²⁵ Jehu said to Bidkar, his officer, "Throw him into the field of Naboth of Jezreel. Do you remember when you and I were riding along behind his father, Ahab? The LORD pronounced this message against him:

²⁶ 'I solemnly swear that I will repay him here on Naboth's property, says the LORD, for the murder of Naboth and his sons that I saw yesterday.' So throw him out on Naboth's field, just as the LORD said."

²⁷ When King Ahaziah of Judah saw what was happening, he fled along the road to Beth-haggan. Jehu rode after him, shouting, "Shoot him, too!" So they shot Ahaziah in his chariot at the Ascent of Gur, near Ibleam. He was able to go on as far as Megiddo, but he died there.

²⁸ His officials took him by chariot to Jerusalem, where they buried him with his ancestors in the City of David.

²⁹ Ahaziah's reign over Judah had begun in the eleventh year of King Joram's reign in Israel.

³⁰ When Jezebel, the queen mother, heard that Jehu had come to Jezreel, she painted her eyelids and fixed her hair and sat at a window.

³¹ When Jehu entered the gate of the palace, she shouted at him, "Have you come in peace, you murderer? You are just like Zimri, who murdered his master!"

³² Jehu looked up and saw her at the window and shouted, "Who is on my side?" And two or three eunuchs looked out at him.

³³ "Throw her down!" Jehu yelled. So they threw her out the window, and some of her blood splattered against the wall and on the horses. And Jehu trampled her body under his horses' hooves.

³⁴ Then Jehu went into the palace and ate and drank. Afterward he said, "Someone go and bury this cursed woman, for she is the daughter of a king."

³⁵ But when they went out to bury her, they found only her skull, her feet, and her hands.

³⁶ When they returned and told Jehu, he stated, "This fulfills the message from the LORD, which he spoke through his servant Elijah from Tishbe: 'At the plot

of land in Jezreel, dogs will eat Jezebel's flesh.

³⁷ Her body will be scattered like dung on the field of Jezreel, so that no one will be able to recognize her."

10¹ Now Ahab had seventy sons living in the city of Samaria. So Jehu wrote a letter and sent copies to Samaria, to the officials of the city, to the leaders of the people, and to the guardians of King Ahab's sons. The letter said,

² "The king's sons are with you, and you have at your disposal chariots, horses, a fortified city, and weapons. As soon as you receive this letter,

³ select the best qualified of King Ahab's sons to be your king, and prepare to fight for Ahab's dynasty."

⁴ But they were paralyzed with fear and said, "Two kings couldn't stand against this man! What can we do?"

⁵ So the palace and city administrators, together with the other leaders and the guardians of the king's sons, sent this message to Jehu: "We are your servants and will do anything you tell us. We will not make anyone king; do whatever you think is best."

⁶ Jehu responded with a second letter: "If you are on my side and are going to obey me, bring the heads of the king's sons to me at Jezreel at about this time tomorrow." Now the seventy sons of the king were being cared for by the leaders of Samaria, where they had been raised since childhood.

⁷ When the letter arrived, the leaders killed all seventy of the king's sons. They placed their heads in baskets and presented them to Jehu at Jezreel.

⁸ A messenger went to Jehu and said, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons." So Jehu ordered, "Pile them

in two heaps at the entrance of the city gate, and leave them there until morning."

⁹ In the morning he went out and spoke to the crowd that had gathered around them. "You aren't to blame," he told them. "I am the one who conspired against my master and killed him. But who killed all these?"

¹⁰ You can be sure that the message of the LORD that was spoken concerning Ahab's family will not fail. The LORD declared through his servant Elijah that this would happen."

¹¹ Then Jehu killed all of Ahab's relatives living in Jezreel and all his important officials, personal friends, and priests. So Ahab was left without a single survivor.

¹² Then Jehu set out for Samaria. Along the way, while he was at Beth-eked of the Shepherds,

¹³ he met some relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah. "Who are you?" he asked them. And they replied, "We are relatives of King Ahaziah. We are going to visit the sons of King Ahab and the queen mother."

¹⁴ "Take them alive!" Jehu shouted to his men. And they captured all forty-two of them and killed them at the well of Beth-eked. None of them escaped.

¹⁵ When Jehu left there, he met Jehonadab son of Recab, who was coming to meet him. After they had greeted each other, Jehu said to him, "Are you as loyal to me as I am to you?" "Yes, I am," Jehonadab replied. "If you are," Jehu said, "then give me your hand." So Jehonadab put out his hand, and Jehu helped him into the chariot.

¹⁶ Then Jehu said, "Now come with me, and see how devoted I am to the LORD." So Jehonadab rode along with him.

¹⁷ When Jehu arrived in Samaria, he killed everyone who was left there from Ahab's family, just as the LORD had promised through Elijah.

¹⁸ Then Jehu called a meeting of all the people of the city and said to them, "Ahab hardly worshiped Baal at all compared to the way I will worship him!

¹⁹ Summon all the prophets and worshipers of Baal, and call together all his priests. See to it that every one of them comes, for I am going to offer a great sacrifice to Baal. Any of Baal's worshipers who fail to come will be put to death." But Jehu's plan was to destroy all the worshipers of Baal.

²⁰ Then Jehu ordered, "Prepare a solemn assembly to worship Baal!" So they did.

²¹ He sent messengers throughout all Israel summoning those who worshiped

Baal. They all came and filled the temple of Baal from one end to the other.

²² And Jehu instructed the keeper of the wardrobe, "Be sure that every worshiper of Baal wears one of these robes." So robes were given to them.

²³ Then Jehu went into the temple of Baal with Jehonadab son of Recab. Jehu said to the worshipers of Baal, "Make sure that only those who worship Baal are here. Don't let anyone in who worships the LORD!"

²⁴ So they were all inside the temple to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had surrounded the building with eighty of his men and had warned them, "If you let anyone escape, you will pay for it with your own life."

²⁵ As soon as Jehu had finished sacrificing the burnt offering, he commanded his guards and officers, "Go in and kill all of them. Don't let a

single one escape!" So they killed them all with their swords, and the guards and officers dragged their bodies outside. Then Jehu's men went into the fortress of the temple of Baal.

²⁶ They dragged out the sacred pillar used in the worship of Baal and destroyed it.

²⁷ They broke down the sacred pillar of Baal and wrecked the temple of Baal, converting it into a public toilet. That is what it is used for to this day.

²⁸ Thus, Jehu destroyed every trace of Baal worship from Israel.

²⁹ He did not, however, destroy the gold calves at Bethel and Dan, the great sin that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

³⁰ Nonetheless the LORD said to Jehu, "You have done well in following my instructions to destroy the family of Ahab. Because of this I will cause your

descendants to be the kings of Israel down to the fourth generation."

³¹ But Jehu did not obey the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit.

³² At about that time the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel's territory. King Hazael conquered several sections of the country

³³ east of the Jordan River, including all of Gilead, Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh. He conquered the area from the town of Aroer by the Arnon Gorge to as far north as Gilead and Bashan.

³⁴ The rest of the events in Jehu's reign and all his deeds and achievements are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵ When Jehu died, he was buried with his ancestors in Samaria. Then his son Jehoahaz became the next king.

³⁶ In all, Jehu reigned over Israel from Samaria for twenty–eight years.

11 ¹ When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah of Judah, learned that her son was dead, she set out to destroy the rest of the royal family.

² But Ahaziah's sister Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Ahaziah's infant son, Joash, and stole him away from among the rest of the king's children, who were about to be killed. Jehosheba put Joash and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah, so the child was not murdered.

³ Joash and his nurse remained hidden in the Temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled over the land.

⁴ In the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada the priest summoned the

commanders, the Carite mercenaries, and the guards to come to the Temple of the LORD. He made a pact with them and made them swear an oath of loyalty there in the LORD's Temple; then he showed them the king's son.

⁵ Jehoiada told them, "This is what you must do. A third of you who are on duty on the Sabbath are to guard the royal palace itself.

⁶ Another third of you are to stand guard at the Sur Gate. And the final third must stand guard behind the palace guard. These three groups will all guard the palace.

⁷ The other two units who are off duty on the Sabbath must stand guard for the king at the LORD's Temple.

⁸ Form a bodyguard for the king and keep your weapons in hand. Any unauthorized person who approaches

you must be killed. Stay right beside the king at all times."

⁹ So the commanders did everything just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. The commanders took charge of the men reporting for duty that Sabbath, as well as those who were going off duty. They brought them all to Jehoiada the priest,
¹⁰ and he supplied them with the spears and shields that had once belonged to King David and were stored in the Temple of the LORD.

¹¹ The guards stationed themselves around the king, with their weapons ready. They formed a line from the south side of the Temple around to the north side and all around the altar.

¹² Then Jehoiada brought out Joash, the king's son, and placed the crown on his head. He presented Joash with a copy of God's covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and all the

people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"

¹³ When Athaliah heard all the noise made by the guards and the people, she hurried to the LORD's Temple to see what was happening.

¹⁴ And she saw the newly crowned king standing in his place of authority by the pillar, as was the custom at times of coronation. The officers and trumpeters were surrounding him, and people from all over the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. When Athaliah saw all this, she tore her clothes in despair and shouted, "Treason! Treason!"

¹⁵ Then Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders who were in charge of the troops, "Take her out of the Temple, and kill anyone who tries to rescue her. Do not kill her here in the Temple of the LORD."

¹⁶ So they seized her and led her out to the gate where horses enter the palace grounds, and she was killed there.

¹⁷ Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people.

¹⁸ And all the people of the land went over to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They demolished the altars and smashed the idols to pieces, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. Jehoiada the priest stationed guards at the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁹ Then the commanders, the Carite mercenaries, the guards, and all the people of the land escorted the king from the Temple of the LORD. They went through the gate of the guards and into the palace, and the king took his seat on the royal throne.

²⁰ So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was peaceful because Athaliah had been killed at the king's palace.

²¹ Joash was seven years old when he became king.

12 ¹ Joash began to rule over Judah in the seventh year of King Jehu's reign in Israel. He reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother was Zibiah, from Beersheba.

² All his life Joash did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight because Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

³ Yet even so, he did not destroy the pagan shrines, and the people still offered sacrifices and burned incense there.

⁴ One day King Joash said to the priests, "Collect all the money brought as a sacred offering to the LORD's Temple,

whether it is a regular assessment, a payment of vows, or a voluntary gift.

⁵ Let the priests take some of that money to pay for whatever repairs are needed at the Temple."

⁶ But by the twenty-third year of Joash's reign, the priests still had not repaired the Temple.

⁷ So King Joash called for Jehoiada and the other priests and asked them, "Why haven't you repaired the Temple? Don't use any more gifts for your own needs. From now on, it must all be spent on getting the Temple into good condition."

⁸ So the priests agreed not to collect any more money from the people, and they also agreed not to undertake the repairs of the Temple themselves.

⁹ Then Jehoiada the priest bored a hole in the lid of a large chest and set it on the right-hand side of the altar at the entrance of the Temple of the LORD.

The priests guarding the entrance put all of the people's contributions into the chest.

¹⁰ Whenever the chest became full, the court secretary and the high priest counted the money that had been brought to the LORD's Temple and put it into bags.

¹¹ Then they gave the money to the construction supervisors, who used it to pay the people working on the LORD's Temple—the carpenters, the builders,

¹² the masons, and the stonecutters. They also used the money to buy timber and cut stone for repairing the LORD's Temple, and they paid any other expenses related to the Temple's restoration.

¹³ The money brought to the Temple was not used for making silver cups, lamp snuffers, basins, trumpets, or other

articles of gold or silver for the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁴ It was paid out to the workmen, who used it for the Temple repairs.

¹⁵ No accounting was required from the construction supervisors, because they were honest and faithful workers.

¹⁶ However, the money that was contributed for guilt offerings and sin offerings was not brought into the LORD's Temple. It was given to the priests for their own use.

¹⁷ About this time King Hazael of Aram went to war against Gath and captured it. Then he turned to attack Jerusalem.

¹⁸ King Joash collected all the sacred objects that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, the previous kings of Judah, had dedicated, along with what he himself had dedicated. He sent them all to Hazael, along with all the gold in the treasuries of the LORD's Temple and

the royal palace. So Hazael called off his attack on Jerusalem.

¹⁹ The rest of the events in Joash's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁰ But his officers plotted against him and assassinated him at Beth-millo on the road to Silla.

²¹ The assassins were Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer—both trusted advisers. Joash was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Amaziah became the next king.

13 ¹ Jehoahaz son of Jehu began to rule over Israel in the twenty-third year of King Joash's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria seventeen years.

² But he did what was evil in the LORD's sight. He followed the example of Jeroboam son of Nebat, continuing

the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

³ So the LORD was very angry with Israel, and he allowed King Hazael of Aram and his son Ben-hadad to defeat them time after time.

⁴ Then Jehoahaz prayed for the LORD's help, and the LORD heard his prayer. The LORD could see how terribly the king of Aram was oppressing Israel.

⁵ So the LORD raised up a deliverer to rescue the Israelites from the tyranny of the Arameans. Then Israel lived in safety again as they had in former days.

⁶ But they continued to sin, following the evil example of Jeroboam. They even set up an Asherah pole in Samaria.

⁷ Finally, Jehoahaz's army was reduced to fifty mounted troops, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers. The king of Aram had killed the others like they were dust under his feet.

⁸ The rest of the events in Jehoahaz's reign and all his deeds, including the extent of his power, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

⁹ When Jehoahaz died, he was buried in Samaria with his ancestors. Then his son Jehoash became the next king.

¹⁰ Jehoash son of Jehoahaz began to rule over Israel in the thirty–seventh year of King Joash's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria sixteen years.

¹¹ But he did what was evil in the LORD's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

¹² The rest of the events in Jehoash's reign and all his deeds, including the extent of his power and his war with King Amaziah of Judah, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

¹³ When Jehoash died, he was buried with his ancestors in Samaria. Then his son Jeroboam II became the next king.

¹⁴ When Elisha was in his last illness, King Jehoash of Israel visited him and wept over him. "My father! My father! The chariots and charioteers of Israel!" he cried.

¹⁵ Elisha told him, "Get a bow and some arrows." And the king did as he was told.

¹⁶ Then Elisha told the king of Israel to put his hand on the bow, and Elisha laid his own hands on the king's hands.

¹⁷ Then he commanded, "Open that eastern window," and he opened it. Then he said, "Shoot!" So he did. Then Elisha proclaimed, "This is the LORD's arrow, full of victory over Aram, for you will completely conquer the Arameans at Aphek.

¹⁸ Now pick up the other arrows and strike them against the ground." So the

king picked them up and struck the ground three times.

¹⁹ But the man of God was angry with him. "You should have struck the ground five or six times!" he exclaimed. "Then you would have beaten Aram until they were entirely destroyed. Now you will be victorious only three times."

²⁰ Then Elisha died and was buried. Groups of Moabite raiders used to invade the land each spring.

²¹ Once when some Israelites were burying a man, they spied a band of these raiders. So they hastily threw the body they were burying into the tomb of Elisha. But as soon as the body touched Elisha's bones, the dead man revived and jumped to his feet!

²² King Hazael of Aram had oppressed Israel during the entire reign of King Jehoahaz.

²³ But the LORD was gracious to the people of Israel, and they were not totally destroyed. He pitied them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And to this day he still has not completely destroyed them or banished them from his presence.

²⁴ King Hazael of Aram died, and his son Ben-hadad became the next king.

²⁵ Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz recaptured from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the towns that Hazael had taken from Jehoash's father, Jehoahaz. Jehoash defeated Ben-hadad on three occasions, and so recovered the Israelite towns.

14 ¹ Amaziah son of Joash began to rule over Judah in the second year of the reign of King Jehoash of Israel.

² Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned

in Jerusalem twenty–nine years. His mother was Jehoaddin, from Jerusalem.

³ Amaziah did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, but not like his ancestor David. Instead, he followed the example of his father, Joash.

⁴ Amaziah did not destroy the pagan shrines, where the people offered sacrifices and burned incense.

⁵ When Amaziah was well established as king, he executed the men who had assassinated his father.

⁶ However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the LORD written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "Parents must not be put to death for the sins of their children, nor the children for the sins of their parents. Those worthy of death must be executed for their own crimes."

⁷ It was Amaziah who killed ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

He also conquered Sela and changed its name to Joktheel, as it is called to this day.

⁸ One day Amaziah sent this challenge to Israel's king Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz and grandson of Jehu: "Come and meet me in battle!"

⁹ But King Jehoash of Israel replied to King Amaziah of Judah with this story: "Out in the Lebanon mountains a thistle sent a message to a mighty cedar tree: 'Give your daughter in marriage to my son.' But just then a wild animal came by and stepped on the thistle, crushing it!

¹⁰ You have indeed destroyed Edom and are very proud about it. Be content with your victory and stay at home! Why stir up trouble that will bring disaster on you and the people of Judah?"

¹¹ But Amaziah refused to listen, so King Jehoash of Israel mobilized his army against King Amaziah of Judah. The two

armies drew up their battle lines at Beth–shemesh in Judah.

¹² Judah was routed by the army of Israel, and its army scattered and fled for home.

¹³ King Jehoash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah at Beth–shemesh and marched on to Jerusalem. Then Jehoash ordered his army to demolish six hundred feet of Jerusalem’s wall, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate.

¹⁴ He carried off all the gold and silver and all the utensils from the Temple of the LORD, as well as from the palace treasury. He also took hostages and returned to Samaria.

¹⁵ The rest of the events in Jehoash’s reign, including the extent of his power and his war with King Amaziah of Judah, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁶ When Jehoash died, he was buried with his ancestors in Samaria. Then his son Jeroboam II became the next king.

¹⁷ King Amaziah of Judah lived on for fifteen years after the death of King Jehoash of Israel.

¹⁸ The rest of the events in Amaziah's reign are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁹ There was a conspiracy against Amaziah's life in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But his enemies sent assassins after him, and they killed him there.

²⁰ They brought him back to Jerusalem on a horse, and he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David.

²¹ The people of Judah then crowned Amaziah's sixteen-year-old son, Uzziah, as their next king.

²² After his father's death, Uzziah rebuilt the town of Elath and restored it to Judah.

²³ Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, began to rule over Israel in the fifteenth year of King Amaziah's reign in Judah. Jeroboam reigned in Samaria forty-one years.

²⁴ He did what was evil in the LORD's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

²⁵ Jeroboam II recovered the territories of Israel between Lebo-hamath and the Dead Sea, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had promised through Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher.

²⁶ For the LORD saw the bitter suffering of everyone in Israel, and how they had absolutely no one to help them.

²⁷ And because the LORD had not said he would blot out the name of Israel completely, he used Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, to save them.

²⁸ The rest of the events in the reign of Jeroboam II and all his deeds, including the extent of his power, his wars, and how he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁹ When Jeroboam II died, he was buried with his ancestors, the kings of Israel. Then his son Zechariah became the next king.

15 ¹ Uzziah son of Amaziah began to rule over Judah in the twenty–seventh year of the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel.

² He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in

Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem.

³ He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, just as his father, Amaziah, had done.

⁴ But he did not destroy the pagan shrines, where the people offered sacrifices and burned incense.

⁵ The LORD struck the king with leprosy, which lasted until the day of his death; he lived in a house by himself. The king's son Jotham was put in charge of the royal palace, and he governed the people of the land.

⁶ The rest of the events in Uzziah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

⁷ When Uzziah died, he was buried near his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jotham became the next king.

⁸ Zechariah son of Jeroboam II began to rule over Israel in the thirty-eighth

year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria six months.

⁹ Zechariah did what was evil in the LORD's sight, as his ancestors had done. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

¹⁰ Then Shallum son of Jabesh conspired against Zechariah, assassinated him in public, and became the next king.

¹¹ The rest of the events in Zechariah's reign are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

¹² So the LORD's message to Jehu came true: "Your descendants will be kings of Israel down to the fourth generation."

¹³ Shallum son of Jabesh began to rule over Israel in the thirty-ninth year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. Shallum reigned in Samaria only one month.

¹⁴ Then Menahem son of Gadi went to Samaria from Tirzah and assassinated him, and he became the next king.

¹⁵ The rest of the events in Shallum's reign, including his conspiracy, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁶ At that time Menahem destroyed the town of Tappuah and all the surrounding countryside as far as Tirzah, because its citizens refused to surrender the town. He killed the entire population and ripped open the pregnant women.

¹⁷ Menahem son of Gadi began to rule over Israel in the thirty–ninth year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria ten years.

¹⁸ But Menahem did what was evil in the LORD's sight. During his entire reign, he refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

¹⁹ Then King Tiglath–pileser of Assyria invaded the land. But Menahem paid him thirty–seven tons of silver to gain his support in tightening his grip on royal power.

²⁰ Menahem extorted the money from the rich of Israel, demanding that each of them pay twenty ounces of silver in the form of a special tax. So the king of Assyria turned from attacking Israel and did not stay in the land.

²¹ The rest of the events in Menahem’s reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

²² When Menahem died, his son Pekahiah became the next king.

²³ Pekahiah son of Menahem began to rule over Israel in the fiftieth year of King Uzziah’s reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria two years.

²⁴ But Pekahiah did what was evil in the LORD's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

²⁵ Then Pekah son of Remaliah, the commander of Pekahiah's army, conspired against him. With fifty men from Gilead, Pekah assassinated the king, along with Argob and Arieah, in the citadel of the palace at Samaria. Pekah then became the next king of Israel.

²⁶ The rest of the events in Pekahiah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

²⁷ Pekah son of Remaliah began to rule over Israel in the fifty-second year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twenty years.

²⁸ But Pekah did what was evil in the LORD's sight. He refused to turn from

the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

²⁹ During his reign, King Tiglath–pileser of Assyria attacked Israel again, and he captured the towns of Ijon, Abel–beth–maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. He also conquered the regions of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali, and he took the people to Assyria as captives.

³⁰ Then Hoshea son of Elah conspired against Pekah and assassinated him. He began to rule over Israel in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah.

³¹ The rest of the events in Pekah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

³² Jotham son of Uzziah began to rule over Judah in the second year of King Pekah's reign in Israel.

³³ He was twenty–five years old when he became king, and he reigned in

Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

³⁴ Jotham did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, just as his father Uzziah had done.

³⁵ But he did not destroy the pagan shrines, where the people offered sacrifices and burned incense. He was the one who rebuilt the upper gate of the Temple of the LORD.

³⁶ The rest of the events in Jotham's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

³⁷ In those days the LORD began to send King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel to attack Judah.

³⁸ When Jotham died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Ahaz became the next king.

16 ¹ Ahaz son of Jotham began to rule over Judah in the

seventeenth year of King Pekah's reign in Israel.

² Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. He did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the LORD his God, as his ancestor David had done.

³ Instead, he followed the example of the kings of Israel, even sacrificing his own son in the fire. He imitated the detestable practices of the pagan nations the LORD had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

⁴ He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the pagan shrines and on the hills and under every green tree.

⁵ Then King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel declared war on Ahaz. They besieged Jerusalem but did not conquer it.

⁶ At that time the king of Edom recovered the town of Elath for Edom. He drove out the people of Judah and sent Edomites to live there, as they do to this day.

⁷ King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath–pileser of Assyria with this message: "I am your servant and your vassal. Come up and rescue me from the attacking armies of Aram and Israel."

⁸ Then Ahaz took the silver and gold from the Temple of the LORD and the palace treasury and sent it as a gift to the Assyrian king.

⁹ So the Assyrians attacked the Aramean capital of Damascus and led its population away as captives, resettling them in Kir. They also killed King Rezin.

¹⁰ King Ahaz then went to Damascus to meet with King Tiglath–pileser of Assyria. While he was there, he noticed an unusual altar. So he sent a model of

the altar to Uriah the priest, along with its design in full detail.

¹¹ Uriah built an altar just like it by following the king's instructions, and it was ready for the king when he returned from Damascus.

¹² When the king returned, he inspected the altar and made offerings on it.

¹³ The king presented a burnt offering and a grain offering, poured a drink offering over it, and sprinkled the blood of peace offerings on it.

¹⁴ Then King Ahaz removed the old bronze altar from the front of the LORD's Temple, which had stood between the entrance and the new altar, and placed it on the north side of the new altar.

¹⁵ He said to Uriah the priest, "Use the new altar for the morning sacrifices of burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering and

grain offering, and the offerings of the people, including their drink offerings. The blood from the burnt offerings and sacrifices should be sprinkled over the new altar. The old bronze altar will be only for my personal use."

¹⁶ Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz instructed him.

¹⁷ Then the king removed the side panels and basins from the portable water carts. He also removed the Sea from the backs of the bronze oxen and placed it on the stone pavement.

¹⁸ In deference to the king of Assyria, he also removed the canopy that had been constructed inside the palace for use on the Sabbath day, as well as the king's outer entrance to the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁹ The rest of the events in Ahaz's reign and his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁰ When Ahaz died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Hezekiah became the next king.

17 ¹ Hoshea son of Elah began to rule over Israel in the twelfth year of King Ahaz's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria nine years.

² He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, but not as much as the kings of Israel who ruled before him.

³ King Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked and defeated King Hoshea, so Israel was forced to pay heavy annual tribute to Assyria.

⁴ Then Hoshea conspired against the king of Assyria by asking King So of Egypt to help him shake free of Assyria's power and by refusing to pay the annual tribute to Assyria. When the king of Assyria discovered this treachery, he arrested him and put him in prison for his rebellion.

⁵ Then the king of Assyria invaded the entire land, and for three years he besieged Samaria.

⁶ Finally, in the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign, Samaria fell, and the people of Israel were exiled to Assyria. They were settled in colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and among the cities of the Medes.

⁷ This disaster came upon the nation of Israel because the people worshiped other gods, sinning against the LORD their God, who had brought them safely out of their slavery in Egypt.

⁸ They had imitated the practices of the pagan nations the LORD had driven from the land before them, as well as the practices the kings of Israel had introduced.

⁹ The people of Israel had also secretly done many things that were not pleasing

to the LORD their God. They built pagan shrines for themselves in all their towns, from the smallest outpost to the largest walled city.

¹⁰ They set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles at the top of every hill and under every green tree.

¹¹ They burned incense at the shrines, just like the nations the LORD had driven from the land ahead of them. So the people of Israel had done many evil things, arousing the LORD's anger.

¹² Yes, they worshiped idols, despite the LORD's specific and repeated warnings.

¹³ Again and again the LORD had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: "Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and laws, which are contained in the whole law that I commanded your ancestors and which I gave you through my servants the prophets."

¹⁴ But the Israelites would not listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors and refused to believe in the LORD their God.

¹⁵ They rejected his laws and the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and they despised all his warnings. They worshiped worthless idols and became worthless themselves. They followed the example of the nations around them, disobeying the LORD's command not to imitate them.

¹⁶ They defied all the commands of the LORD their God and made two calves from metal. They set up an Asherah pole and worshiped Baal and all the forces of heaven.

¹⁷ They even sacrificed their own sons and daughters in the fire. They consulted fortune-tellers and used sorcery and sold themselves to evil, arousing the LORD's anger.

¹⁸ And because the LORD was angry, he swept them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained in the land.

¹⁹ But even the people of Judah refused to obey the commands of the LORD their God. They walked down the same evil paths that Israel had established.

²⁰ So the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel. He punished them by handing them over to their attackers until they were destroyed.

²¹ For when the LORD tore Israel away from the kingdom of David, they chose Jeroboam son of Nebat as their king. Then Jeroboam drew Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin.

²² And the people of Israel persisted in all the evil ways of Jeroboam. They did not turn from these sins of idolatry

²³ until the LORD finally swept them away, just as all his prophets had warned

would happen. So Israel was carried off to the land of Assyria, where they remain to this day.

²⁴ And the king of Assyria transported groups of people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and resettled them in the towns of Samaria, replacing the people of Israel. So the Assyrians took over Samaria and the other towns of Israel.

²⁵ But since these foreign settlers did not worship the LORD when they first arrived, the LORD sent lions among them to kill some of them.

²⁶ So a message was sent to the king of Assyria: "The people whom you have resettled in the towns of Israel do not know how to worship the God of the land. He has sent lions among them to destroy them because they have not worshiped him correctly."

²⁷ The king of Assyria then commanded, "Send one of the exiled priests from Samaria back to Israel. Let him teach the new residents the religious customs of the God of the land."

²⁸ So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria returned to Bethel and taught the new residents how to worship the LORD.

²⁹ But these various groups of foreigners also continued to worship their own gods. In town after town where they lived, they placed their idols at the pagan shrines that the people of Israel had built.

³⁰ Those from Babylon worshiped idols of their god Succoth-benoth. Those from Cuthah worshiped their god Nergal. And those from Hamath worshiped Ashima.

³¹ The Avvites worshiped their gods Nibhaz and Tartak. And the people from

Sepharvaim even burned their own children as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Anammelech.

³² These new residents worshiped the LORD, but they appointed from among themselves priests to offer sacrifices at the pagan shrines.

³³ And though they worshiped the LORD, they continued to follow the religious customs of the nations from which they came.

³⁴ And this is still going on among them today. They follow their former practices instead of truly worshiping the LORD and obeying the laws, regulations, instructions, and commands he gave the descendants of Jacob, whose name he changed to Israel.

³⁵ For the LORD had made a covenant with the descendants of Jacob and commanded them: "Do not worship any

other gods or bow before them or serve them or offer sacrifices to them.

³⁶ Worship only the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt with such mighty miracles and power. You must worship him and bow before him; offer sacrifices to him alone.

³⁷ Be careful to obey all the laws, regulations, instructions, and commands that he wrote for you. You must not worship any other gods.

³⁸ Do not forget the covenant I made with you, and do not worship other gods.

³⁹ You must worship only the LORD your God. He is the one who will rescue you from all your enemies."

⁴⁰ But the people would not listen and continued to follow their old ways.

⁴¹ So while these new residents worshiped the LORD, they also

worshiped their idols. And to this day their descendants do the same.

18 ¹ Hezekiah son of Ahaz began to rule over Judah in the third year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel.

² He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

³ He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, just as his ancestor David had done.

⁴ He removed the pagan shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, and knocked down the Asherah poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had begun to worship it by burning incense to it. The bronze serpent was called Nehushtan.

⁵ Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was never another king like him in the land of Judah, either before or after his time.

⁶ He remained faithful to the LORD in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the LORD had given Moses.

⁷ So the LORD was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did. He revolted against the king of Assyria and refused to pay him tribute.

⁸ He also conquered the Philistines as far distant as Gaza and its territory, from their smallest outpost to their largest walled city.

⁹ During the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked Israel and began a siege on the city of Samaria.

¹⁰ Three years later, during the sixth year of King Hezekiah's reign and the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, Samaria fell.

¹¹ At that time the king of Assyria deported the Israelites to Assyria and put them in colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and among the cities of the Medes.

¹² For they had refused to listen to the LORD their God. Instead, they had violated his covenant—all the laws the LORD had given through his servant Moses.

¹³ In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them.

¹⁴ King Hezekiah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. I will pay whatever tribute money you demand if you will

only go away." The king of Assyria then demanded a settlement of more than eleven tons of silver and about one ton of gold.

¹⁵ To gather this amount, King Hezekiah used all the silver stored in the Temple of the LORD and in the palace treasury.

¹⁶ Hezekiah even stripped the gold from the doors of the LORD's Temple and from the doorposts he had overlaid with gold, and he gave it all to the Assyrian king.

¹⁷ Nevertheless the king of Assyria sent his commander in chief, his field commander, and his personal representative from Lachish with a huge army to confront King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. The Assyrians stopped beside the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is bleached.

¹⁸ They summoned King Hezekiah, but the king sent these officials to meet

with them: Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian.

¹⁹ Then the Assyrian king's personal representative sent this message to King Hezekiah: "This is what the great king of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you so confident?

²⁰ Do you think that mere words can substitute for military skill and strength? Which of your allies will give you any military backing against Assyria?

²¹ Will Egypt? If you lean on Egypt, you will find it to be a stick that breaks beneath your weight and pierces your hand. The pharaoh of Egypt is completely unreliable!

²² "But perhaps you will say, 'We are trusting in the LORD our God!' But isn't he the one who was insulted by King Hezekiah? Didn't Hezekiah tear down his

shrines and altars and make everyone in Judah worship only at the altar here in Jerusalem?

²³ "I'll tell you what! My master, the king of Assyria, will strike a bargain with you. If you can find two thousand horsemen in your entire army, he will give you two thousand horses for them to ride on!

²⁴ With your tiny army, how can you think of challenging even the weakest contingent of my master's troops, even with the help of Egypt's chariots and horsemen?

²⁵ What's more, do you think we have invaded your land without the LORD's direction? The LORD himself told us, 'Go and destroy it!'"

²⁶ Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the king's representative, "Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it well. Don't

speak in Hebrew, for the people on the wall will hear."

²⁷ But Sennacherib's representative replied, "My master wants everyone in Jerusalem to hear this, not just you. He wants them to know that if you do not surrender, this city will be put under siege. The people will become so hungry and thirsty that they will eat their own dung and drink their own urine."

²⁸ Then he stood and shouted in Hebrew to the people on the wall, "Listen to this message from the great king of Assyria!

²⁹ This is what the king says: Don't let King Hezekiah deceive you. He will never be able to rescue you from my power.

³⁰ Don't let him fool you into trusting in the LORD by saying, 'The LORD will rescue us! This city will never be handed over to the Assyrian king.'

³¹ "Don't listen to Hezekiah! These are the terms the king of Assyria is offering: Make peace with me—open the gates and come out. Then I will allow each of you to continue eating from your own garden and drinking from your own well.

³² Then I will arrange to take you to another land like this one—a country with bountiful harvests of grain and wine, bread and vineyards, olive trees and honey—a land of plenty. Choose life instead of death! "Don't listen to Hezekiah when he tries to mislead you by saying, 'The LORD will rescue us!'

³³ Have the gods of any other nations ever saved their people from the king of Assyria?

³⁴ What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? And what about the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did they rescue Samaria from my power?

³⁵ What god of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? Name just one! So what makes you think that the LORD can rescue Jerusalem?"

³⁶ But the people were silent and did not answer because Hezekiah had told them not to speak.

³⁷ Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian, went back to Hezekiah. They tore their clothes in despair, and they went in to see the king and told him what the Assyrian representative had said.

19 ¹ When King Hezekiah heard their report, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the Temple of the LORD to pray.

² And he sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the court

secretary, and the leading priests, all dressed in sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

³ They told him, "This is what King Hezekiah says: This is a day of trouble, insult, and disgrace. It is like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to deliver it.

⁴ But perhaps the LORD your God has heard the Assyrian representative defying the living God and will punish him for his words. Oh, pray for those of us who are left!"

⁵ After King Hezekiah's officials delivered the king's message to Isaiah,

⁶ the prophet replied, "Say to your master, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech against me from the Assyrian king's messengers.

⁷ Listen! I myself will move against him, and the king will receive a report from

Assyria telling him that he is needed at home. Then I will make him want to return to his land, where I will have him killed with a sword.'"

⁸ Meanwhile, the Assyrian representative left Jerusalem and went to consult his king, who had left Lachish and was attacking Libnah.

⁹ Soon afterward King Sennacherib received word that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading an army to fight against him. Before leaving to meet the attack, he sent this message back to Hezekiah in Jerusalem:

¹⁰ "This message is for King Hezekiah of Judah. Don't let this God you trust deceive you with promises that Jerusalem will not be captured by the king of Assyria.

¹¹ You know perfectly well what the kings of Assyria have done wherever they have gone. They have crushed

everyone who stood in their way! Why should you be any different?

¹² Have the gods of other nations rescued them—such nations as Gozan, Haran, Rezep, and the people of Eden who were in Tel-assar? The former kings of Assyria destroyed them all!

¹³ What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?"

¹⁴ After Hezekiah received the letter and read it, he went up to the LORD's Temple and spread it out before the LORD.

¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed this prayer before the LORD: "O LORD, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim! You alone are God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You alone created the heavens and the earth.

¹⁶ Listen to me, O LORD, and hear! Open your eyes, O LORD, and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words of defiance against the living God.

¹⁷ "It is true, LORD, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all these nations, just as the message says.

¹⁸ And they have thrown the gods of these nations into the fire and burned them. But of course the Assyrians could destroy them! They were not gods at all—only idols of wood and stone shaped by human hands.

¹⁹ Now, O LORD our God, rescue us from his power; then all the kingdoms of the earth will know that you alone, O LORD, are God."

²⁰ Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer about King Sennacherib of Assyria.

²¹ This is the message that the LORD has spoken against him: ‘The virgin daughter of Zion despises you and laughs at you. The daughter of Jerusalem scoffs and shakes her head as you flee.

²² ‘Whom do you think you have been insulting and ridiculing? Against whom did you raise your voice? At whom did you look in such proud condescension? It was the Holy One of Israel!

²³ By your messengers you have mocked the Lord. You have said, "With my many chariots I have conquered the highest mountains—yes, the remotest peaks of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars and its choicest cypress trees. I have reached its farthest corners and explored its deepest forests.

²⁴ I have dug wells in many a foreign land and refreshed myself with their water. I even stopped up the rivers

of Egypt so that my armies could go across!"

²⁵ 'But have you not heard? It was I, the LORD, who decided this long ago. Long ago I planned what I am now causing to happen, that you should crush fortified cities into heaps of rubble.

²⁶ That is why their people have so little power and are such easy prey for you. They are as helpless as the grass, as easily trampled as tender green shoots. They are like grass sprouting on a housetop, easily scorched by the sun.

²⁷ 'But I know you well—your comings and goings and all you do. I know the way you have raged against me.

²⁸ And because of your arrogance against me, which I have heard for myself, I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your mouth. I will make you return by the road on which you came.'

²⁹ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Here is the proof that the LORD will protect this city from Assyria's king. This year you will eat only what grows up by itself, and next year you will eat what springs up from that. But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them; you will tend vineyards and eat their fruit.

³⁰ And you who are left in Judah, who have escaped the ravages of the siege, will take root again in your own soil, and you will flourish and multiply.

³¹ For a remnant of my people will spread out from Jerusalem, a group of survivors from Mount Zion. The passion of the LORD Almighty will make this happen!

³² "And this is what the LORD says about the king of Assyria: His armies will not enter Jerusalem to shoot their arrows. They will not march outside its

gates with their shields and build banks of earth against its walls.

³³ The king will return to his own country by the road on which he came. He will not enter this city, says the LORD.

³⁴ For my own honor and for the sake of my servant David, I will defend it."

³⁵ That night the angel of the LORD went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian troops. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere.

³⁶ Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there.

³⁷ One day while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with their swords. They then escaped to the land of Ararat, and another son,

Esarhaddon, became the next king of Assyria.

20¹ About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: "This is what the LORD says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness."

² When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,

³ "Remember, O LORD, how I have always tried to be faithful to you and do what is pleasing in your sight." Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

⁴ But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to him from the LORD:

⁵ "Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David,

says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the LORD.

⁶ I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will do this to defend my honor and for the sake of my servant David.'"

⁷ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah's servants, "Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil." They did this, and Hezekiah recovered!

⁸ Meanwhile, Hezekiah had said to Isaiah, "What sign will the LORD give to prove that he will heal me and that I will go to the Temple of the LORD three days from now?"

⁹ Isaiah replied, "This is the sign that the LORD will give you to prove he will do as he promised. Would you like the

shadow on the sundial to go forward ten steps or backward ten steps?"

¹⁰ "The shadow always moves forward," Hezekiah replied. "Make it go backward instead."

¹¹ So Isaiah asked the LORD to do this, and he caused the shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!

¹² Soon after this, Merodach–baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah his best wishes and a gift, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been very sick.

¹³ Hezekiah welcomed the Babylonian envoys and showed them everything in his treasure–houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the aromatic oils. He also took them to see his armory and showed them all his other treasures—everything! There was nothing in his palace or kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.

¹⁴ Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did those men want? Where were they from?" Hezekiah replied, "They came from the distant land of Babylon."

¹⁵ "What did they see in your palace?" Isaiah asked. "They saw everything," Hezekiah replied. "I showed them everything I own—all my treasures."

¹⁶ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from the LORD:

¹⁷ The time is coming when everything you have—all the treasures stored up by your ancestors—will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD.

¹⁸ Some of your own descendants will be taken away into exile. They will become eunuchs who will serve in the palace of Babylon's king."

¹⁹ Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "This message you have given me from the

LORD is good." But the king was thinking, "At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime."

²⁰ The rest of the events in Hezekiah's reign, including the extent of his power and how he built a pool and dug a tunnel to bring water into the city, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

²¹ When Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh became the next king.

21 ¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty–five years. His mother was Hephzibah.

² He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, imitating the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the LORD had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

³ He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father, Hezekiah, had destroyed. He

constructed altars for Baal and set up an Asherah pole, just as King Ahab of Israel had done. He also bowed before all the forces of heaven and worshiped them.

⁴ He even built pagan altars in the Temple of the LORD, the place where the LORD had said his name should be honored.

⁵ He built these altars for all the forces of heaven in both courtyards of the LORD's Temple.

⁶ Manasseh even sacrificed his own son in the fire. He practiced sorcery and divination, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the LORD's sight, arousing his anger.

⁷ Manasseh even took an Asherah pole he had made and set it up in the Temple, the very place where the LORD had told David and his son Solomon: "My name will be honored here forever in

this Temple and in Jerusalem—the city I have chosen from among all the other tribes of Israel.

⁸ If the Israelites will obey my commands—the whole law that was given through my servant Moses—I will not send them into exile from this land that I gave their ancestors."

⁹ But the people refused to listen, and Manasseh led them to do even more evil than the pagan nations whom the LORD had destroyed when the Israelites entered the land.

¹⁰ Then the LORD said through his servants the prophets:

¹¹ "King Manasseh of Judah has done many detestable things. He is even more wicked than the Amorites, who lived in this land before Israel. He has led the people of Judah into idolatry.

¹² So this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I will bring such disaster on

Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of those who hear about it will tingle with horror.

¹³ I will judge Jerusalem by the same standard I used for Samaria and by the same measure I used for the family of Ahab. I will wipe away the people of Jerusalem as one wipes a dish and turns it upside down.

¹⁴ Then I will reject even those few of my people who are left, and I will hand them over as plunder for their enemies.

¹⁵ For they have done great evil in my sight and have angered me ever since their ancestors came out of Egypt."

¹⁶ Manasseh also murdered many innocent people until Jerusalem was filled from one end to the other with innocent blood. This was in addition to the sin that he caused the people of Judah to commit, leading them to do evil in the LORD's sight.

¹⁷ The rest of the events in Manasseh's reign and all his deeds, including the sins he committed, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁸ When Manasseh died, he was buried in the palace garden, the garden of Uzza. Then his son Amon became the next king.

¹⁹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. His mother was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz from Jotbah.

²⁰ He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as his father, Manasseh, had done.

²¹ He followed the example of his father, worshiping the same idols that his father had worshiped.

²² He abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors, and he refused to follow the LORD's ways.

²³ Then Amon's own servants plotted against him and assassinated him in his palace.

²⁴ But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah the next king.

²⁵ The rest of the events in Amon's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁶ He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza. Then his son Josiah became the next king.

22 ¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath.

² He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight and followed the example

of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right.

³ In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and grandson of Meshullam, the court secretary, to the Temple of the LORD. He told him,

⁴ "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him count the money the gatekeepers have collected from the people at the LORD's Temple.

⁵ Entrust this money to the men assigned to supervise the Temple's restoration. Then they can use it to pay workers to repair the Temple of the LORD.

⁶ They will need to hire carpenters, builders, and masons. Also have them buy the timber and the cut stone needed to repair the Temple.

⁷ But there will be no need for the construction supervisors to keep account

of the money they receive, for they are honest people."

⁸ Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the LORD's Temple!" Then Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it.

⁹ Shaphan returned to the king and reported, "Your officials have given the money collected at the Temple of the LORD to the workers and supervisors at the Temple."

¹⁰ Shaphan also said to the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a scroll." So Shaphan read it to the king.

¹¹ When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair.

¹² Then he gave these orders to Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the court

secretary, and Asaiah the king's personal adviser:

¹³ "Go to the Temple and speak to the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah. Ask him about the words written in this scroll that has been found. The LORD's anger is burning against us because our ancestors have not obeyed the words in this scroll. We have not been doing what this scroll says we must do."

¹⁴ So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the newer Mishneh section of Jerusalem to consult with the prophet Huldah. She was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, the keeper of the Temple wardrobe.

¹⁵ She said to them, "The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go and tell the man who sent you,

¹⁶ 'This is what the LORD says: I will destroy this city and its people, just as I stated in the scroll you read.

¹⁷ For my people have abandoned me and worshiped pagan gods, and I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger is burning against this place, and it will not be quenched.'

¹⁸ "But go to the king of Judah who sent you to seek the LORD and tell him: 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the message you have just heard:

¹⁹ You were sorry and humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I said against this city and its people, that this land would be cursed and become desolate. You tore your clothing in despair and wept before me in repentance. So I have indeed heard you, says the LORD.

²⁰ I will not send the promised disaster against this city until after you have died and been buried in peace. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this place.'" So they took her message back to the king.

23 ¹ Then the king summoned all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem.

² And the king went up to the Temple of the LORD with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and the priests, and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. There the king read to them the entire Book of the Covenant that had been found in the LORD's Temple.

³ The king took his place of authority beside the pillar and renewed the covenant in the LORD's presence. He pledged to obey the LORD by keeping all his commands, regulations, and laws with all his heart and soul. In this way, he

confirmed all the terms of the covenant that were written in the scroll, and all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

⁴ Then the king instructed Hilkiah the high priest and the leading priests and the Temple gatekeepers to remove from the LORD's Temple all the utensils that were used to worship Baal, Asherah, and all the forces of heaven. The king had all these things burned outside Jerusalem on the terraces of the Kidron Valley, and he carried the ashes away to Bethel.

⁵ He did away with the pagan priests, who had been appointed by the previous kings of Judah, for they had burned incense at the pagan shrines throughout Judah and even in the vicinity of Jerusalem. They had also offered incense to Baal, and to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and to all the forces of heaven.

⁶ The king removed the Asherah pole from the LORD's Temple and took it outside Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley, where he burned it. Then he ground the pole to dust and threw the dust in the public cemetery.

⁷ He also tore down the houses of the shrine prostitutes that were inside the Temple of the LORD, where the women wove coverings for the Asherah pole.

⁸ Josiah brought back to Jerusalem all the priests of the LORD, who were living in other towns of Judah. He also defiled all the pagan shrines, where they had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba. He destroyed the shrines at the entrance to the gate of Joshua, the governor of Jerusalem. This gate was located to the left of the city gate as one enters the city.

⁹ The priests who had served at the pagan shrines were not allowed to serve

at the LORD's altar in Jerusalem, but they were allowed to eat unleavened bread with the other priests.

¹⁰ Then the king defiled the altar of Topheth in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so no one could ever again use it to sacrifice a son or daughter in the fire as an offering to Molech.

¹¹ He removed from the entrance of the LORD's Temple the horse statues that the former kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were near the quarters of Nathan-melech the eunuch, an officer of the court. The king also burned the chariots dedicated to the sun.

¹² Josiah tore down the altars that the kings of Judah had built on the palace roof above the upper room of Ahaz. The king destroyed the altars that Manasseh had built in the two courtyards of the LORD's Temple. He smashed them to bits

and scattered the pieces in the Kidron Valley.

¹³ The king also desecrated the pagan shrines east of Jerusalem and south of the Mount of Corruption, where King Solomon of Israel had built shrines for Ashtoreth, the detestable goddess of the Sidonians; and for Chemosh, the detestable god of the Moabites; and for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites.

¹⁴ He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah poles. Then he desecrated these places by scattering human bones over them.

¹⁵ The king also tore down the altar at Bethel, the pagan shrine that Jeroboam son of Nebat had made when he led Israel into sin. Josiah crushed the stones to dust and burned the Asherah pole.

¹⁶ Then as Josiah was looking around, he noticed several tombs in the side

of the hill. He ordered that the bones be brought out, and he burned them on the altar at Bethel to desecrate it. This happened just as the LORD had promised through the man of God as Jeroboam stood beside the altar at the festival. Then Josiah turned and looked up at the tomb of the man of God who had predicted these things.

¹⁷ "What is that monument over there?" Josiah asked. And the people of the town told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted the very things that you have just done to the altar at Bethel!"

¹⁸ Josiah replied, "Leave it alone. Don't disturb his bones." So they did not burn his bones or those of the old prophet from Samaria.

¹⁹ Then Josiah demolished all the buildings at the pagan shrines in the towns of Samaria, just as he had done

at Bethel. They had been built by the various kings of Israel and had made the LORD very angry.

²⁰ He executed the priests of the pagan shrines on their own altars, and he burned human bones on the altars to desecrate them. Finally, he returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ King Josiah then issued this order to all the people: "You must celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in the Book of the Covenant."

²² There had not been a Passover celebration like that since the time when the judges ruled in Israel, throughout all the years of the kings of Israel and Judah.

²³ This Passover was celebrated to the LORD in Jerusalem during the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign.

²⁴ Josiah also exterminated the mediums and psychics, the household

gods, and every other kind of idol worship, both in Jerusalem and throughout the land of Judah. He did this in obedience to all the laws written in the scroll that Hilkiah the priest had found in the LORD's Temple.

²⁵ Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and soul and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since.

²⁶ Even so, the LORD's anger burned against Judah because of all the great evils of King Manasseh, and he did not hold back his fierce anger from them.

²⁷ For the LORD had said, "I will destroy Judah just as I have destroyed Israel. I will banish the people from my presence and reject my chosen city of Jerusalem and the Temple where my name was to be honored."

²⁸ The rest of the events in Josiah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

²⁹ While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, went to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out with his army to fight him, but King Neco killed him when they met at Megiddo.

³⁰ Josiah's officers took his body back in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people anointed his son Jehoahaz and made him the next king.

³¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah.

³² He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as his ancestors had done.

³³ Pharaoh Neco put Jehoahaz in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath to prevent him from ruling from Jerusalem. He also demanded that Judah pay 7,500 pounds of silver and 75 pounds of gold as tribute.

³⁴ Pharaoh Neco then installed Eliakim, another of Josiah's sons, to reign in place of his father, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt as a prisoner, where he died.

³⁵ In order to get the silver and gold demanded as tribute by Pharaoh Neco, Jehoiakim collected a tax from the people of Judah, requiring them to pay in proportion to their wealth.

³⁶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother was Zebidah, the daughter of Pedaiah from Rumah.

³⁷ He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as his ancestors had done.

24 ¹ During Jehoiakim's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded the land of Judah. Jehoiakim surrendered and paid him tribute for three years but then rebelled.

² Then the LORD sent bands of Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders against Judah to destroy it, just as the LORD had promised through his prophets.

³ These disasters happened to Judah according to the LORD's command. He had decided to remove Judah from his presence because of the many sins of Manasseh.

⁴ He had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not forgive this.

⁵ The rest of the events in Jehoiakim's reign and all his deeds are recorded in

The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

⁶ When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became the next king.

⁷ The king of Egypt never returned after that, for the king of Babylon occupied the entire area formerly claimed by Egypt—from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan from Jerusalem.

⁹ Jehoiachin did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as his father had done.

¹⁰ During Jehoiachin's reign, the officers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up against Jerusalem and besieged it.

¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived at the city during the siege.

¹² Then King Jehoiachin, along with his advisers, nobles, and officials, and the queen mother, surrendered to the Babylonians. In the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he took Jehoiachin prisoner.

¹³ As the LORD had said beforehand, Nebuchadnezzar carried away all the treasures from the LORD's Temple and the royal palace. They cut apart all the gold vessels that King Solomon of Israel had placed in the Temple.

¹⁴ King Nebuchadnezzar took ten thousand captives from Jerusalem, including all the princes and the best of the soldiers, craftsmen, and smiths. So only the poorest people were left in the land.

¹⁵ Nebuchadnezzar led King Jehoiachin away as a captive to Babylon, along with his wives and officials, the queen mother, and all Jerusalem's elite.

¹⁶ He also took seven thousand of the best troops and one thousand craftsmen and smiths, all of whom were strong and fit for war.

¹⁷ Then the king of Babylon installed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as the next king, and he changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah.

¹⁹ But Zedekiah did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as Jehoiakim had done.

²⁰ So the LORD, in his anger, finally banished the people of Jerusalem and Judah from his presence and sent them into exile. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

25 ¹ So on January 15, during the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign,

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his entire army against Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and built siege ramps against its walls.

² Jerusalem was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah's reign.

³ By July 18 of Zedekiah's eleventh year, the famine in the city had become very severe, with the last of the food entirely gone.

⁴ Then a section of the city wall was broken down, and all the soldiers made plans to escape from the city. But since the city was surrounded by the Babylonians, they waited for nightfall and fled through the gate between the two walls behind the king's gardens. They made a dash across the fields, in the direction of the Jordan Valley.

⁵ But the Babylonians chased after them and caught the king on the plains

of Jericho, for by then his men had all abandoned him.

⁶ They brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was passed against him.

⁷ The king of Babylon made Zedekiah watch as all his sons were killed. Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in bronze chains, and led him away to Babylon.

⁸ On August 14 of that year, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, an official of the Babylonian king, arrived in Jerusalem.

⁹ He burned down the Temple of the LORD, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He destroyed all the important buildings in the city.

¹⁰ Then the captain of the guard supervised the entire Babylonian army as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem.

¹¹ Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, then took as exiles those who remained in the city, along with the rest of the people and the troops who had declared their allegiance to the king of Babylon.

¹² But the captain of the guard allowed some of the poorest people to stay behind in Judah to care for the vineyards and fields.

¹³ The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the bronze water carts, and the bronze Sea that were at the LORD's Temple, and they carried all the bronze away to Babylon.

¹⁴ They also took all the pots, shovels, lamp snuffers, dishes, and all the other bronze utensils used for making sacrifices at the Temple.

¹⁵ Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, also took the firepans and basins, and all the other utensils made of pure gold or silver.

¹⁶ The bronze from the two pillars, the water carts, and the Sea was too great to be weighed. These things had been made for the LORD's Temple in the days of King Solomon.

¹⁷ Each of the pillars was 27 feet tall. The bronze capital on top of each pillar was 7 1/2 feet high and was decorated with a network of bronze pomegranates all the way around.

¹⁸ The captain of the guard took with him as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, his assistant Zephaniah, and the three chief gatekeepers.

¹⁹ And of the people still hiding in the city, he took an officer of the Judean army, five of the king's personal advisers, the army commander's chief secretary, who was in charge of recruitment, and sixty other citizens.

²⁰ Nebuzaradan the commander took them all to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

²¹ And there at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them all put to death. So the people of Judah were sent into exile from their land.

²² Then King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan as governor over the people left in Judah.

²³ When all the army commanders and their men learned that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they joined him at Mizpah. These included Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and all their men.

²⁴ Gedaliah vowed to them that the Babylonian officials meant them no harm. "Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and all will go well for you," he promised.

²⁵ But in midautumn of that year, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and grandson of Elishama, who was of the royal family, went to Mizpah with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and everyone with him, both Judeans and Babylonians.

²⁶ Then all the people of Judah, from the least to the greatest, as well as the army commanders, fled in panic to Egypt, for they were afraid of what the Babylonians would do to them.

²⁷ In the thirty–seventh year of King Jehoiachin’s exile in Babylon, Evil–merodach ascended to the Babylonian throne. He was kind to Jehoiachin and released him from prison on April 2 of that year.

²⁸ He spoke pleasantly to Jehoiachin and gave him preferential treatment over all the other exiled kings in Babylon.

²⁹ He supplied Jehoiachin with new clothes to replace his prison garb and

allowed him to dine at the king's table for the rest of his life.

³⁰ The Babylonian king also gave him a regular allowance to cover his living expenses until the day of his death.

1 Chronicles

1 ¹ The descendants of Adam were Seth, Enosh,
² Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared,
³ Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech,
⁴ and Noah. The sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

⁵ The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

⁶ The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁷ The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.

⁸ The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁹ The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca.

The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

¹⁰ Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was known across the earth as a heroic warrior.

¹¹ Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites,

¹² Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.

¹³ Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites,

¹⁴ Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites,

¹⁵ Hivites, Arkites, Sinites,

¹⁶ Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites.

¹⁷ The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

¹⁸ Arphaxad was the father of Shelah. Shelah was the father of Eber.

¹⁹ Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg—"division"—for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups and dispersed. His brother's name was Joktan.

²⁰ Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

²¹ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

²² Obal, Abimael, Sheba,

²³ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan.

²⁴ So this is the family line descended from Shem: Arphaxad, Shelah,

²⁵ Eber, Peleg, Reu,

²⁶ Serug, Nahor, Terah,

²⁷ and Abram, later known as Abraham.

²⁸ The sons of Abraham were Isaac and Ishmael.

²⁹ The sons of Ishmael were Nebaioth (the oldest), Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,

³⁰ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema,

³¹ Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael.

³² The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine, were Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan were Sheba and Dedan.

³³ The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were sons of Abraham by his concubine Keturah.

³⁴ Abraham was the father of Isaac. The sons of Isaac were Esau and Israel.

³⁵ The sons of Esau were Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

³⁶ The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, Kenaz, and Amalek, who was born to Timna.

³⁷ The sons of Reuel were Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

³⁸ The sons of Seir were Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

³⁹ The sons of Lotan were Hori and Heman. Lotan's sister was named Timna.

⁴⁰ The sons of Shobal were Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. The sons of Zibeon were Aiah and Anah.

⁴¹ The son of Anah was Dishon. The sons of Dishon were Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

⁴² The sons of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. The sons of Dishan were Uz and Aran.

⁴³ These are the kings who ruled in Edom before there were kings in Israel: Bela son of Beor, who ruled from his city of Dinhabah.

⁴⁴ When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah became king.

⁴⁵ When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites became king.

⁴⁶ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad became king and ruled from the city of Avith. He was the one who destroyed the Midianite army in the land of Moab.

⁴⁷ When Hadad died, Samlah from the city of Masrekah became king.

⁴⁸ When Samlah died, Shaul from the city of Rehoboth on the Euphrates River became king.

⁴⁹ When Shaul died, Baal-hanan son of Acbor became king.

⁵⁰ When Baal-hanan died, Hadad became king and ruled from the city of Pau. His wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred and granddaughter of Me-zahab.

⁵¹ Then Hadad died. The clan leaders of Edom were Timna, Alvah, Jetheth,

⁵² Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,

⁵³ Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,

⁵⁴ Magdiel, and Iram. These were the clan leaders of Edom.

2 ¹ The sons of Israel were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun,

² Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

³ Judah had three sons through Bathshua, a Canaanite woman. Their names were Er, Onan, and Shelah. But the oldest son, Er, was a wicked man, so the LORD killed him.

⁴ Later Judah had twin sons through Tamar, his widowed daughter-in-law. Their names were Perez and Zerah. So Judah had five sons in all.

⁵ The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

⁶ The sons of Zerah were Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Darda —five in all.

⁷ Achan son of Carmi, one of Zerah's descendants, brought disaster on Israel by taking plunder that had been set apart for the LORD.

⁸ The son of Ethan was Azariah.

⁹ The sons of Hezron were Jerahmeel, Ram, and Caleb.

¹⁰ Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon, a leader of Judah.

¹¹ Nahshon was the father of Salmon. Salmon was the father of Boaz.

¹² Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse.

¹³ Jesse's first son was Eliab, his second was Abinadab, his third was Shimea,

¹⁴ his fourth was Nethanel, his fifth was Raddai,

¹⁵ his sixth was Ozem, and his seventh was David.

¹⁶ Their sisters were named Zeruah and Abigail. Zeruah had three sons named Abishai, Joab, and Asahel.

¹⁷ Abigail married a man named Jether, an Ishmaelite, and they had a son named Amasa.

¹⁸ Hezron's son Caleb had two wives named Azubah and Jerioth. Azubah's sons were named Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon.

¹⁹ After Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrathah, and they had a son named Hur.

²⁰ Hur was the father of Uri. Uri was the father of Bezalel.

²¹ When Hezron was sixty years old, he married Gilead's sister, the daughter of Makir. They had a son named Segub.

²² Segub was the father of Jair, who ruled twenty-three towns in the land of Gilead.

²³ (Later Geshur and Aram captured the Towns of Jair and also took Kenath and its sixty surrounding villages.) All these were descendants of Makir, the father of Gilead.

²⁴ Soon after Hezron died in the town of Caleb—ephrathah, his wife Abijah gave birth to a son named Ashhur (the father of Tekoa).

²⁵ The sons of Jerahmeel, the oldest son of Hezron, were Ram (the oldest), Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah.

²⁶ Jerahmeel had a second wife named Atarah. She was the mother of Onam.

²⁷ The sons of Ram, the oldest son of Jerahmeel, were Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.

²⁸ The sons of Onam were Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai were Nadab and Abishur.

²⁹ The sons of Abishur and his wife Abihail were Ahban and Molid.

³⁰ The sons of Nadab were Seled and Appaim. Seled died without children,

³¹ but Appaim had a son named Ishi. The son of Ishi was Sheshan. Sheshan had a descendant named Ahlai.

³² Shammai's brother, Jada, had two sons named Jether and Jonathan. Jether died without children,

³³ but Jonathan had two sons named Peleth and Zaza. These were all descendants of Jerahmeel.

³⁴ Sheshan had no sons, though he did have daughters. He also had an Egyptian servant named Jarha.

³⁵ Sheshan gave one of his daughters to be the wife of Jarha, and they had a son named Attai.

³⁶ Attai was the father of Nathan. Nathan was the father of Zabad.

³⁷ Zabad was the father of Ephlal. Ephlal was the father of Obed.

³⁸ Obed was the father of Jehu. Jehu was the father of Azariah.

³⁹ Azariah was the father of Helez. Helez was the father of Eleasah.

⁴⁰ Eleasah was the father of Sismai. Sismai was the father of Shallum.

⁴¹ Shallum was the father of Jekamiah. Jekamiah was the father of Elishama.

⁴² The oldest son of Caleb, the brother of Jerahmeel, was Mesha, the father of Ziph. Caleb's second son was Mareshah, the father of Hebron.

⁴³ The sons of Hebron were Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema.

⁴⁴ Shema was the father of Raham. Raham was the father of Jorkeam. Rekem was the father of Shammai.

⁴⁵ The son of Shammai was Maon. Maon was the father of Beth-zur.

⁴⁶ Caleb's concubine Ephah gave birth to Haran, Moza, and Gazez. Haran was the father of Gazez.

⁴⁷ The sons of Jahdai were Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph.

⁴⁸ Another of Caleb's concubines, Maacah, gave birth to Sheber and Tirhanah.

⁴⁹ She also gave birth to Shaaph (the father of Madmannah) and Sheva (the father of Macbenah and Gibeah). Caleb also had a daughter named Acsah.

⁵⁰ These were all descendants of Caleb. The sons of Hur, the oldest son of Caleb's wife Ephrathah, were Shobal (the father of Kiriath-jearim),

⁵¹ Salma (the father of Bethlehem), and Hareph (the father of Beth-gader).

⁵² The descendants of Shobal (the father of Kiriath-jearim) were Haroeh, half the Manahathites,

⁵³ and the families of Kiriath-jearim—the Ithrites, Puthites, Shumathites, and

Mishraites, from whom came the people of Zorah and Eshtaol.

⁵⁴ The descendants of Salma were Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atrothbeth-joab, the other half of the Manahathites, the Zorites,

⁵⁵ and the families of scribes living at Jabez—the Tirathites, Shimeathites, and Sucathites. All these were Kenites who descended from Hammath, the father of the family of Recab.

3 ¹ These were the sons who were born to David in Hebron: The oldest was Amnon, whose mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel. The second was Kileab, whose mother was Abigail from Carmel.

² The third was Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. The fourth was Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith.

³ The fifth was Shephatiah, whose mother was Abital. The sixth was Ithream, whose mother was Eglah.

⁴ These six sons were born to David in Hebron, where he reigned seven and a half years. Then David moved the capital to Jerusalem, where he reigned another thirty–three years.

⁵ The sons born to David in Jerusalem included Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon. Bathsheba, the daughter of Ammiel, was the mother of these sons.

⁶ David also had nine other sons: Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet,

⁷ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia,

⁸ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

⁹ These were the sons of David, not including the sons of his concubines. David also had a daughter named Tamar.

¹⁰ The descendants of Solomon were Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat,

¹¹ Jehoram, Ahaziah, Joash,

¹² Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham,

¹³ Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh,

¹⁴ Amon, and Josiah.

¹⁵ The sons of Josiah were Johanan (the oldest), Jehoiakim (the second), Zedekiah (the third), and Jehoahaz (the fourth).

¹⁶ Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin; he, in turn, was succeeded by his uncle Zedekiah.

¹⁷ The sons of Jehoiachin, who was taken prisoner by the Babylonians, were Shealtiel,

¹⁸ Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.

¹⁹ The sons of Pedaiah were Zerubbabel and Shimei. The sons of Zerubbabel were Meshullam and Hananiah. He also had a daughter named Shelomith.

²⁰ His five other sons were Hashubah, Ohel, Berekiah, Hasadiah, and Jushabhesed.

²¹ The sons of Hananiah were Pelatiah and Jeshaiiah. Jeshaiiah's son was Rephaiah. Rephaiah's son was Arnan. Arnan's son was Obadiah. Obadiah's son was Shecaniah.

²² Shecaniah's descendants were Shemaiah and his sons, Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat—six in all.

²³ The sons of Neariah were Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam—three in all.

²⁴ The sons of Elioenai were Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani—seven in all.

4 ¹ Some of the descendants of Judah were Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal.

² Shobal's son Reaiah was the father of Jahath. Jahath was the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites.

³ The descendants of Etam were Jezreel, Ishma, Idbash, Hazzelelponi (his daughter),

⁴ Penuel (the father of Gedor), and Ezer (the father of Hushah). These were the descendants of Hur (the firstborn of Ephrathah), the ancestor of Bethlehem.

⁵ Ashhur (the father of Tekoa) had two wives, named Helah and Naarah.

⁶ Naarah gave birth to Ahuzzam, Hopher, Temeni, and Haahashtari.

⁷ Helah gave birth to Zereth, Izhar, Ethnan,

⁸ and Koz, who became the ancestor of Anub, Zobebah, and all the families of Aharhel son of Harum.

⁹ There was a man named Jabez who was more distinguished than any of his brothers. His mother named him Jabez because his birth had been so painful.

¹⁰ He was the one who prayed to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless

me and extend my lands! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!" And God granted him his request.

¹¹ Kelub (the brother of Shuhah) was the father of Mehir. Mehir was the father of Eshton.

¹² Eshton was the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah. Tehinnah was the father of Ir-nahash. These were the descendants of Recah.

¹³ The sons of Kenaz were Othniel and Seraiah. Othniel's sons were Hathath and Meonothai.

¹⁴ Meonothai was the father of Ophrah. Seraiah was the father of Joab, the founder of the Valley of Craftsmen, so called because many craftsmen lived there.

¹⁵ The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh were Iru, Elah, and Naam. The son of Elah was Kenaz.

¹⁶ The sons of Jehallelel were Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.

¹⁷ The sons of Ezraah were Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. Mered married an Egyptian woman, who became the mother of Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah (the father of Eshtemoa).

¹⁸ Mered also married a woman of Judah, who became the mother of Jered (the father of Gedor), Heber (the father of Soco), and Jekuthiel (the father of Zanoah). Mered's Egyptian wife was named Bithiah, and she was an Egyptian princess.

¹⁹ Hodiah's wife was the sister of Naham. One of her sons was the father of Keilah the Garmite, and another was the father of Eshtemoa the Maacathite.

²⁰ The sons of Shimon were Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. The descendants of Ishi were Zoheth and Ben-zoheth.

²¹ Shelah was one of Judah's sons. The descendants of Shelah were Er (the father of Lecah), Laadah (the father of Mareshah), the families of linen workers at Beth-ashbea,

²² Jokim, the people of Cozeba, Joash, and Saraph, who ruled over Moab and Jashubi-lehem. These names all come from ancient records.

²³ They were the potters who lived in Netaim and Gederah. They all worked for the king.

²⁴ The sons of Simeon were Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul.

²⁵ The descendants of Shaul were Shallum, Mibsam, and Mishma.

²⁶ The descendants of Mishma were Hammuel, Zaccur, and Shimei.

²⁷ Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters, but none of his brothers had large families. So Simeon's tribe never became as large as the tribe of Judah.

²⁸ They lived in Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual,

²⁹ Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad,

³⁰ Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag,

³¹ Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-biri, and Shaaraim. These towns were under their control until the time of King David.

³² Their descendants also lived in Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Token, and Ashan—five towns

³³ and their surrounding villages as far away as Baalath. This was their territory, and these names are recorded in their family genealogy.

³⁴ Other descendants of Simeon included Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah,

³⁵ Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah, son of Seraiah, son of Asiel,

³⁶ Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah,

³⁷ and Ziza son of Shiphi, son of Allon, son of Jedaiah, son of Shimri, son of Shemaiah.

³⁸ These were the names of some of the leaders of Simeon's wealthy clans, ³⁹ who traveled to the region of Gedor, in the east part of the valley, seeking pastureland for their flocks.

⁴⁰ They found lush pastures there, and the land was quiet and peaceful. Some of Ham's descendants had been living in the region of Gedor.

⁴¹ But during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah, the leaders of Simeon invaded it and completely destroyed the homes of the descendants of Ham and of the Meunites. They killed everyone who lived there and took the land for themselves, because they wanted its good pastureland for their flocks.

⁴² Five hundred of these invaders from the tribe of Simeon went to Mount Seir,

led by Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel—all sons of Ishi.

⁴³ They destroyed the few Amalekites who had survived, and they have lived there ever since.

5 ¹ The oldest son of Israel was Reuben. But since he dishonored his father by sleeping with one of his father's concubines, his birthright was given to the sons of his brother Joseph. For this reason, Reuben is not listed in the genealogy as the firstborn son.

² It was the descendants of Judah that became the most powerful tribe and provided a ruler for the nation, but the birthright belonged to Joseph.

³ The sons of Reuben, the oldest son of Israel, were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

⁴ The descendants of Joel were Shemaiah, Gog, Shimei,

⁵ Micah, Reaiah, Baal,

⁶ and Beerah. Beerah was the leader of the Reubenites when they were taken into captivity by King Tiglath–pileser of Assyria.

⁷ Beerah's relatives are listed in their genealogy by their clans: Jeiel (the leader), Zechariah,

⁸ and Bela son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel. These Reubenites lived in the area that stretches from Aroer to Nebo and Baal–meon.

⁹ And since they had so many cattle in the land of Gilead, they spread eastward toward the edge of the desert that stretches to the Euphrates River.

¹⁰ During the reign of Saul, the Reubenites defeated the Hagarites in battle. Then they moved into the Hagarite settlements all along the eastern edge of Gilead.

¹¹ Across from the Reubenites in the land of Bashan lived the descendants

of Gad, who were spread as far east as Salecah.

¹² Joel was the leader in the land of Bashan, and Shapham was second-in-command, along with Janai and Shaphat.

¹³ Their relatives, the leaders of seven other clans, were Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and Eber.

¹⁴ These were all descendants of Abihail son of Huri, son of Jaroah, son of Gilead, son of Michael, son of Jeshishai, son of Jahdo, son of Buz.

¹⁵ Ahi son of Abdiel, son of Guni, was the leader of their clans.

¹⁶ The Gadites lived in the land of Gilead, in Bashan and its villages, and throughout the Sharon Plain.

¹⁷ All of these were listed in the genealogical records during the days of King Jotham of Judah and King Jeroboam of Israel.

¹⁸ There were 44,760 skilled warriors in the armies of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. They were all skilled in combat and armed with shields, swords, and bows.

¹⁹ They waged war against the Hagarites, the Jeturites, the Naphishites, and the Nodabites.

²⁰ They cried out to God during the battle, and he answered their prayer because they trusted in him. So the Hagarites and all their allies were defeated.

²¹ The plunder taken from the Hagarites included 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, 2,000 donkeys, and 100,000 captives.

²² Many of the Hagarites were killed in the battle because God was fighting against them. So they lived in their land until they were taken away into exile.

²³ The half-tribe of Manasseh spread through the land from Bashan to Baal-

hermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon. They were very numerous.

²⁴ These were the leaders of their clans: Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel. Each of these men had a great reputation as a warrior and leader.

²⁵ But they were unfaithful and violated their covenant with the God of their ancestors. They worshiped the gods of the nations that God had destroyed.

²⁶ So the God of Israel caused King Pul of Assyria (also known as Tiglath–pileser) to invade the land and lead away the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half–tribe of Manasseh as captives. The Assyrians exiled them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the Gozan River, where they remain to this day.

6 ¹ The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

² The descendants of Kohath included Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

³ The children of Amram were Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁴ Eleazar was the father of Phinehas. Phinehas was the father of Abishua.

⁵ Abishua was the father of Bukki. Bukki was the father of Uzzi.

⁶ Uzzi was the father of Zeremiah. Zeremiah was the father of Meraioth.

⁷ Meraioth was the father of Amariah. Amariah was the father of Ahitub.

⁸ Ahitub was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Ahimaaz.

⁹ Ahimaaz was the father of Azariah. Azariah was the father of Johanan.

¹⁰ Johanan was the father of Azariah, the high priest at the Temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem.

¹¹ Azariah was the father of Amariah. Amariah was the father of Ahitub.

¹² Ahitub was the father of Zadok.
Zadok was the father of Shallum.

¹³ Shallum was the father of Hilkiah.
Hilkiah was the father of Azariah.

¹⁴ Azariah was the father of Seraiah.
Seraiah was the father of Jehozadak,

¹⁵ who went into exile when the LORD
sent the people of Judah and Jerusalem
into captivity under Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁶ The sons of Levi were Gershon,
Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁷ The descendants of Gershon included
Libni and Shimei.

¹⁸ The descendants of Kohath included
Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹⁹ The descendants of Merari included
Mahli and Mushi. The following were
the Levite clans, listed according to their
ancestral descent:

²⁰ The descendants of Gershon included
Libni, Jahath, Zimmah,

²¹ Joah, Iddo, Zerah, and Jeatherai.

²² The descendants of Kohath included Amminadab, Korah, Assir,

²³ Elkanah, Abiasaph, Assir,

²⁴ Tahath, Uriel, Uziah, and Shaul.

²⁵ The descendants of Elkanah included Amasai, Ahimoth,

²⁶ Elkanah, Zophai, Nahath,

²⁷ Eliab, Jeroham, Elkanah, and Samuel.

²⁸ The sons of Samuel were Joel (the older) and Abijah (the second).

²⁹ The descendants of Merari included Mahli, Libni, Shimei, Uzzah,

³⁰ Shimea, Haggiah, and Asaiah.

³¹ David assigned the following men to lead the music at the house of the LORD after he put the Ark there.

³² They ministered with music there at the Tabernacle until Solomon built the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. Then they carried on their work there, following all the regulations handed down to them.

³³ These are the men who served, along with their sons: Heman the musician was from the clan of Kohath. His genealogy was traced back through Joel, Samuel,

³⁴ Elkanah, Jeroham, Eliel, Toah,

³⁵ Zuph, Elkanah, Mahath, Amasai,

³⁶ Elkanah, Joel, Azariah, Zephaniah,

³⁷ Tahath, Assir, Abiasaph, Korah,

³⁸ Izhar, Kohath, Levi, and Israel.

³⁹ Heman's first assistant was Asaph from the clan of Gershon. Asaph's genealogy was traced back through Berekiah, Shimea,

⁴⁰ Michael, Baaseiah, Malkijah,

⁴¹ Ethni, Zerah, Adaiah,

⁴² Ethan, Zimmah, Shimei,

⁴³ Jahath, Gershon, and Levi.

⁴⁴ Heman's second assistant was Ethan from the clan of Merari. Ethan's genealogy was traced back through Kishi, Abdi, Malluch,

⁴⁵ Hashabiah, Amaziah, Hilkiyah,

⁴⁶ Amzi, Bani, Shemer,

⁴⁷ Mahli, Mushi, Merari, and Levi.

⁴⁸ Their relatives, also Levites, were appointed to various other tasks in the Tabernacle, the house of God.

⁴⁹ Only Aaron and his descendants served as priests. They presented the offerings on the altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense, and they performed all the other duties related to the Most Holy Place. They made atonement for Israel by following all the commands that Moses, the servant of God, had given them.

⁵⁰ The descendants of Aaron were Eleazar, Phinehas, Abishua,

⁵¹ Bukki, Uzzi, Zerahiah,

⁵² Meraioth, Amariah, Ahitub,

⁵³ Zadok, and Ahimaaz.

⁵⁴ This is a record of the towns and territory assigned by means of sacred

lots to the descendants of Aaron who were from the clan of Kohath.

⁵⁵ This included Hebron and its surrounding pasturelands in Judah,

⁵⁶ but the fields and outlying areas were given to Caleb son of Jephunneh.

⁵⁷ So the descendants of Aaron were given the following towns, each with its surrounding pasturelands: Hebron (a city of refuge), Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa,

⁵⁸ Holon, Debir,

⁵⁹ Ain, Juttah, and Beth–shemesh.

⁶⁰ And from the territory of Benjamin they were given Gibeon, Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth, each with its pasturelands. So a total of thirteen towns was given to the descendants of Aaron.

⁶¹ The remaining descendants of Kohath received ten towns from the territory of the half–tribe of Manasseh by means of sacred lots.

⁶² The descendants of Gershon received by sacred lots thirteen towns from the territories of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and from the Bashan area of Manasseh, east of the Jordan.

⁶³ The descendants of Merari received by sacred lots twelve towns from the territories of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

⁶⁴ So the people of Israel assigned all these towns and pasturelands to the Levites.

⁶⁵ The towns in the territories of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, mentioned above, were also assigned by means of sacred lots.

⁶⁶ The descendants of Kohath received from the territory of Ephraim these towns, each with its surrounding pasturelands:

⁶⁷ Shechem (a city of refuge in the hill country of Ephraim), Gezer,

⁶⁸ Jokmeam, Beth-horon,

⁶⁹ Aijalon, and Gath–rimmon.

⁷⁰ The remaining descendants of Kohath were assigned these towns from the territory of the half–tribe of Manasseh: Aner and Bileam, each with its pasturelands.

⁷¹ The descendants of Gershon received from the territory of the half–tribe of Manasseh the town of Golan in Bashan with its pasturelands and Ashtaroth with its pasturelands.

⁷² From the territory of Issachar, they were given Kedesh, Daberath,

⁷³ Ramoth, and Anem, with their pasturelands.

⁷⁴ From the territory of Asher, they received Mashal, Abdon,

⁷⁵ Hukok, and Rehob, each with its pasturelands.

⁷⁶ From the territory of Naphtali, they were given Kedesh in Galilee,

Hammon, and Kiriathaim, each with its pasturelands.

⁷⁷ The remaining descendants of Merari received from the territory of Zebulun the towns of Jokneam, Kartah, Rimmono, and Tabor, each with its pasturelands.

⁷⁸ From the territory of Reuben, east of the Jordan River opposite Jericho, they received Bezer (a desert town), Jahaz,

⁷⁹ Kedemoth, and Mephaath, each with its pasturelands.

⁸⁰ And from the territory of Gad, they received Ramoth in Gilead, Mahanaim,

⁸¹ Heshbon, and Jazer, each with its pasturelands.

7 ¹ The four sons of Issachar were Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron.

² The sons of Tola were Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Shemuel. Each of them was the leader of an ancestral clan. At the time of King David, the total

number of men available for military service from these families was 22,600.

³ The son of Uzzi was Izrahiah. The sons of Izrahiah were Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Isshiah. These five became the leaders of clans.

⁴ The total number of men available for military service among their descendants was 36,000, for all five of them had many wives and many sons.

⁵ The total number of men available for military service from all the clans of the tribe of Issachar was 87,000. All of them were listed in their tribal genealogy.

⁶ Three of Benjamin's sons were Bela, Beker, and Jediael.

⁷ The sons of Bela were Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri. These five warriors were the leaders of clans. The total number of men available for military service among their descendants

was 22,034. All of them were listed in their family genealogy.

⁸ The sons of Beker were Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth.

⁹ According to their family genealogy, there were 20,200 men available for military service among their descendants, in addition to their clan leaders.

¹⁰ The son of Jediael was Bilhan. The sons of Bilhan were Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Kenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar.

¹¹ They were the leaders of the clans of Jediael, and their descendants included 17,200 men available for military service.

¹² The sons of Ir were Shuppim and Huppim. Hushim was the son of Aher.

¹³ The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem. They were all descendants of Jacob's wife Bilhah.

¹⁴ The sons of Manasseh, born to his Aramean concubine, were Asriel and Makir. Makir was the father of Gilead.

¹⁵ Makir found wives for Huppim and Shuppim. Makir's sister was named Maacah. One of his descendants was Zelophehad, who had only daughters.

¹⁶ Makir's wife, Maacah, gave birth to a son whom she named Peresh. His brother's name was Sheresh. The sons of Peresh were Ulam and Rakem.

¹⁷ The son of Ulam was Bedan. All these were considered Gileadites, descendants of Makir son of Manasseh.

¹⁸ Makir's sister Hammoleketh gave birth to Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah.

¹⁹ The sons of Shemida were Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

²⁰ The descendants of Ephraim were Shuthelah, Bered, Tahath, Eleadah, Tahath,

²¹ Zabad, and Shuthelah. Ephraim's sons Ezer and Elead were killed trying to steal livestock from the local farmers near Gath.

²² Their father, Ephraim, mourned for them a long time, and his relatives came to comfort him.

²³ Afterward Ephraim slept with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Ephraim named him Beriah because of the tragedy his family had suffered.

²⁴ Ephraim had a daughter named Sheerah. She built the towns of Lower and Upper Beth-horon and Uzen-sheerah.

²⁵ Ephraim's line of descent was Rephah, Resheph, Telah, Tahan,

²⁶ Ladan, Ammihud, Elishama,

²⁷ Nun, and Joshua.

²⁸ The descendants of Ephraim lived in the territory that included Bethel and its

surrounding towns to the south, Naaran to the east, Gezer and its villages to the west, and Shechem and its surrounding villages to the north as far as Ayyah and its towns.

²⁹ Along the border of Manasseh were the towns of Beth-shan, Taanach, Megiddo, Dor, and their surrounding villages. The descendants of Joseph son of Israel lived in these towns.

³⁰ The sons of Asher were Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah. They had a sister named Serah.

³¹ The sons of Beriah were Heber and Malkiel (the father of Birzaith).

³² The sons of Heber were Japhlet, Shomer, and Hotham. They had a sister named Shua.

³³ The sons of Japhlet were Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashvath.

³⁴ The sons of Shomer were Ahi, Rohgah, Hubbah, and Aram.

³⁵ The sons of his brother Helem were Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal.

³⁶ The sons of Zophah were Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah,

³⁷ Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Beera.

³⁸ The sons of Jether were Jephunneh, Pispah, and Ara.

³⁹ The sons of Ulla were Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia.

⁴⁰ Each of these descendants of Asher was the head of an ancestral clan. They were all skilled warriors and prominent leaders. There were 26,000 men available for military service among the descendants listed in their tribal genealogy.

8 ¹ The sons of Benjamin, in order of age, included Bela (the oldest), Ashbel, Aharah,

² Nohah, and Rapha.

³ The sons of Bela were Addar, Gera, Abihud,

⁴ Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah,

⁵ Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram.

⁶ The sons of Ehud, leaders of the clans living at Geba, were driven out and moved to Manahath.

⁷ Ehud's sons were Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera. Gera, the father of Uzza and Ahihud, led them when they moved.

⁸ After Shaharaim divorced his wives Hushim and Baara, he had children in the land of Moab.

⁹ Hodesh, his new wife, gave birth to Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam,

¹⁰ Jeuz, Sakia, and Mirmah. These sons all became the leaders of clans.

¹¹ Shaharaim's wife Hushim had already given birth to Abitub and Elpaal.

¹² The sons of Elpaal were Eber, Misham, Shemed (who built Ono and Lod and their villages),

¹³ Beriah, and Shema. They were the leaders of the clans living in Aijalon, and they drove out the inhabitants of Gath.

¹⁴ Ahio, Shashak, Jeremoth,

¹⁵ Zebadiah, Arad, Eder,

¹⁶ Michael, Ishpah, and Joha were the sons of Beriah.

¹⁷ Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber,

¹⁸ Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal.

¹⁹ Jakim, Zicri, Zabdi,

²⁰ Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel,

²¹ Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei.

²² Ishpan, Eber, Eliel,

²³ Abdon, Zicri, Hanan,

²⁴ Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah,

²⁵ Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the sons of Shashak.

²⁶ Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah,

²⁷ Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zicri were the sons of Jeroham.

²⁸ These were the leaders of the ancestral clans, and they were listed in their tribal genealogy. They all lived in Jerusalem.

²⁹ Jeiel (the father of Gibeon) lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah,
³⁰ and his oldest son was named Abdon. Jeiel's other sons were Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,

³¹ Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah,

³² and Mikloth, who was the father of Shimeam. All these families lived near each other in Jerusalem.

³³ Ner was the father of Kish. Kish was the father of Saul. Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malkishua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.

³⁴ Jonathan was the father of Meribbaal. Meribbaal was the father of Micah.

³⁵ Micah was the father of Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz.

³⁶ Ahaz was the father of Jadah. Jadah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri. Zimri was the father of Moza.

³⁷ Moza was the father of Binea. Binea was the father of Rephaiah. Rephaiah was the father of Eleasah. Eleasah was the father of Azel.

³⁸ Azel had six sons: Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

³⁹ Azel's brother Eshek had three sons: Ulam (the oldest), Jeush (the second), and Eliphelet (the third).

⁴⁰ The sons of Ulam were all skilled warriors and expert archers. They had many sons and grandsons—150 in all. All these were descendants of Benjamin.

9¹ All Israel was listed in the genealogical record in The Book of the Kings of Israel. The people of Judah were exiled to Babylon because they were unfaithful to the LORD.

² The first to return to their property in their former towns were common people. With them came some of the priests, Levites, and Temple assistants.

³ People from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh came and settled in Jerusalem.

⁴ One family that returned was that of Uthai son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, a descendant of Perez son of Judah.

⁵ Others returned from the Shilonite clan, including Asaiah (the oldest) and his sons.

⁶ From the Zerahite clan, Jeuel returned with his relatives. In all, 690 families from the tribe of Judah returned.

⁷ From the tribe of Benjamin came Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Hodaviah, son of Hassenuah;

⁸ Ibneiah son of Jeroham; Elah son of Uzzi, son of Micri; Meshullam son of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of Ibnijah.

⁹ These men were all leaders of clans, and they were listed in their tribal genealogy. In all, 956 families from the tribe of Benjamin returned.

¹⁰ Among the priests who returned were Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jakin,

¹¹ Azariah son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub. Azariah was the chief officer of the house of God.

¹² Other returning priests were Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pashhur, son of Malkijah, and Maasai son of Adiel, son of Jahzerah, son of Meshullam, son of Meshillemith, son of Immer.

¹³ In all, 1,760 priests returned. They were heads of clans and very able men. They were responsible for ministering at the house of God.

¹⁴ The Levites who returned were Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, a descendant of Merari;

¹⁵ Bakbakkar; Heresh; Galal; Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zicri, son of Asaph;

¹⁶ Obadiah son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun; and Berekiah son of Asa, son of Elkanah, who lived in the area of Netophah.

¹⁷ The gatekeepers who returned were Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their relatives. Shallum was the chief gatekeeper.

¹⁸ Prior to this time, they were responsible for the King's Gate on the east side. These men served as gatekeepers for the camps of the Levites.

¹⁹ Shallum was the son of Kore, a descendant of Abiasaph, from the clan of Korah. He and his relatives, the Korahites, were responsible for

guarding the entrance to the sanctuary, just as their ancestors had guarded the Tabernacle in the camp of the LORD.

²⁰ Phinehas son of Eleazar had been in charge of the gatekeepers in earlier times, and the LORD had been with him.

²¹ And later Zechariah son of Meshelemiah had been responsible for guarding the entrance to the Tabernacle.

²² In all, there were 212 gatekeepers in those days, and they were listed by genealogies in their villages. David and Samuel the seer had appointed their ancestors because they were reliable men.

²³ These gatekeepers and their descendants, by their divisions, were responsible for guarding the entrance to the house of the LORD, the house that was formerly a tent.

²⁴ The gatekeepers were stationed on all four sides—east, west, north, and south.

²⁵ From time to time, their relatives in the villages came to share their duties for seven-day periods.

²⁶ The four chief gatekeepers, all Levites, were in an office of great trust, for they were responsible for the rooms and treasuries at the house of God.

²⁷ They would spend the night around the house of God, since it was their duty to guard it. It was also their job to open the gates every morning.

²⁸ Some of the gatekeepers were assigned to care for the various utensils used in worship. They checked them in and out to avoid any loss.

²⁹ Others were responsible for the furnishings, the items in the sanctuary, and the supplies such as choice flour, wine, olive oil, incense, and spices.

³⁰ But it was the priests who prepared the spices and incense.

³¹ Mattithiah, a Levite and the oldest son of Shallum the Korahite, was entrusted with baking the bread used in the offerings.

³² And some members of the clan of Kohath were in charge of preparing the bread to be set on the table each Sabbath day.

³³ The musicians, all prominent Levites, lived at the Temple. They were exempt from other responsibilities there since they were on duty at all hours.

³⁴ All these men lived in Jerusalem. They were the heads of Levite families and were listed as prominent leaders in their tribal genealogy.

³⁵ Jeiel (the father of Gibeon) lived in Gibeon. His wife's name was Maacah,

³⁶ and his oldest son was named Abdon. Jeiel's other sons were Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,

³⁷ Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth.

³⁸ Mikloth was the father of Shimeam. All these families lived near each other in Jerusalem.

³⁹ Ner was the father of Kish. Kish was the father of Saul. Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malkishua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.

⁴⁰ Jonathan was the father of Meribbaal. Meribbaal was the father of Micah.

⁴¹ The sons of Micah were Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and Ahaz.

⁴² Ahaz was the father of Jadah. Jadah was the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri. Zimri was the father of Moza.

⁴³ Moza was the father of Binea. Binea's son was Rephaiah. Rephaiah's son was Eleasah. Eleasah's son was Azel.

⁴⁴ Azel had six sons, and their names were Azrikam, Bokeru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

10 ¹ Now the Philistines attacked Israel, forcing the Israelites to flee. Many were slaughtered on the slopes of Mount Gilboa.

² The Philistines closed in on Saul and his sons, and they killed three of his sons—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malkishua.

³ The fighting grew very fierce around Saul, and the Philistine archers caught up with him and wounded him severely.

⁴ Saul groaned to his armor bearer, "Take your sword and run me through before these pagan Philistines come and humiliate me." But his armor bearer was afraid and would not do it. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it.

⁵ When his armor bearer realized that Saul was dead, he fell on his own sword and died.

⁶ So Saul and his three sons died there together, bringing his dynasty to an end.

⁷ When the Israelites in the Jezreel Valley saw that their army had been routed and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their towns and fled. So the Philistines moved in and occupied their towns.

⁸ The next day when the Philistines went out to strip the dead, they found the bodies of Saul and his sons on Mount Gilboa.

⁹ So they stripped off Saul's armor and cut off his head. Then they proclaimed the news of Saul's death before their idols and to the people throughout the land of Philistia.

¹⁰ They placed his armor in the temple of their gods, and they fastened his head to the wall in the temple of Dagon.

¹¹ But when the people of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,

¹² their warriors went out and brought the bodies of Saul and his three sons back to Jabesh. Then they buried their remains beneath the oak tree at Jabesh, and they fasted for seven days.

¹³ So Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD. He failed to obey the LORD's command, and he even consulted a medium

¹⁴ instead of asking the LORD for guidance. So the LORD killed him and turned his kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

11 ¹ Then all Israel went to David at Hebron and told him, "We are all members of your family.

² For a long time, even while Saul was our king, you were the one who really led Israel. And the LORD your God has told you, 'You will be the shepherd of my people Israel. You will be their leader.'

³ So there at Hebron David made a covenant with the leaders of Israel before the LORD. They anointed him king of Israel, just as the LORD had promised through Samuel.

⁴ Then David and all Israel went to Jerusalem (or Jebus, as it used to be called), where the Jebusites, original inhabitants of the land, lived.

⁵ The people of Jebus said to David, "You will never get in here!" But David captured the fortress of Zion, now called the City of David.

⁶ David had said to his troops, "Whoever leads the attack against the Jebusites will become the commander of my armies!" And Joab, the son of David's sister

Zeruiah, led the attack, so he became the commander of David's armies.

⁷ David made the fortress his home, and that is why it is called the City of David.

⁸ He extended the city from the Millo to the surrounding area, while Joab rebuilt the rest of Jerusalem.

⁹ And David became more and more powerful, because the LORD Almighty was with him.

¹⁰ These are the leaders of David's mighty men. Together with all Israel, they determined to make David their king, just as the LORD had promised concerning Israel.

¹¹ Here is the record of David's mightiest men: The first was Jashobeam the Hacmonite, who was commander of the Three—the three greatest warriors among David's men. He once used

his spear to kill three hundred enemy warriors in a single battle.

¹² Next in rank among the Three was Eleazar son of Dodai, a descendant of Ahoah.

¹³ He was with David in the battle against the Philistines at Pas-dammim. The battle took place in a field full of barley, and the Israelite army fled.

¹⁴ But Eleazar and David held their ground in the middle of the field and beat back the Philistines. So the LORD saved them by giving them a great victory.

¹⁵ Once when David was at the rock near the cave of Adullam, the Philistine army was camped in the valley of Rephaim. The Three (who were among the Thirty—an elite group among David's fighting men) went down to meet him there.

¹⁶ David was staying in the stronghold at the time, and a Philistine detachment had occupied the town of Bethlehem.

¹⁷ David remarked longingly to his men, "Oh, how I would love some of that good water from the well in Bethlehem, the one by the gate."

¹⁸ So the Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew some water from the well, and brought it back to David. But David refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out before the LORD.

¹⁹ "God forbid that I should drink this!" he exclaimed. "This water is as precious as the blood of these men who risked their lives to bring it to me." So David did not drink it. This is an example of the exploits of the Three.

²⁰ Abishai, the brother of Joab, was the leader of the Thirty. He once used his spear to kill three hundred enemy warriors in a single battle. It was by such

feats that he became as famous as the Three.

²¹ Abishai was the most famous of the Thirty and was their commander, though he was not one of the Three.

²² There was also Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant warrior from Kabzeel. He did many heroic deeds, which included killing two of Moab's mightiest warriors. Another time he chased a lion down into a pit. Then, despite the snow and slippery ground, he caught the lion and killed it.

²³ Another time, armed with only a club, he killed an Egyptian warrior who was seven and a half feet tall and whose spear was as thick as a weaver's beam. Benaiah wrenched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with it.

²⁴ These are some of the deeds that made Benaiah as famous as the Three.

²⁵ He was more honored than the other members of the Thirty, though he was not one of the Three. And David made him commander of his bodyguard.

²⁶ These were also included among David's mighty men: Asahel, Joab's brother; Elhanan son of Dodo from Bethlehem;

²⁷ Shammah from Harod; Helez from Pelon;

²⁸ Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa; Abiezer from Anathoth;

²⁹ Sibbecai from Hushah; Zalmon from Ahoah;

³⁰ Maharai from Netophah; Heled son of Baanah from Netophah;

³¹ Ithai son of Ribai from Gibeah (from the tribe of Benjamin); Benaiah from Pirathon;

³² Hurai from near Nahale-gaash; Abi-albon the Arbathite;

³³ Azmaveth from Bahurim; Eliahba from Shaalbon;

³⁴ the sons of Jashen from Gizon; Jonathan son of Shagee from Harar;

³⁵ Ahiam son of Sharar from Harar; Eliphai son of Ur;

³⁶ Hephher from Mekerah; Ahijah from Pelon;

³⁷ Hezro from Carmel; Paarai son of Ezbai;

³⁸ Joel, the brother of Nathan; Mibhar son of Hagri;

³⁹ Zelek from Ammon; Naharai from Beeroth (Joab's armor bearer);

⁴⁰ Ira from Jattir; Gareb from Jattir;

⁴¹ Uriah the Hittite; Zabad son of Ahlai;

⁴² Adina son of Shiza, the Reubenite leader who had thirty men with him;

⁴³ Hanan son of Maacah; Joshaphat from Mithna;

⁴⁴ Uzzia from Ashtaroth; Shama and Jeiel, the sons of Hotham, from Aroer;

⁴⁵ Jedaiel son of Shimri; Joha, his brother, from Tiz;

⁴⁶ Eliel from Mahavah; Jeribai and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam; Ithmah from Moab;

⁴⁷ Eliel and Obed; Jaasiel from Zobah.

12 ¹ The following men joined David at Ziklag while he was hiding from Saul son of Kish. They were among the warriors who fought beside David in battle.

² All of them were expert archers, and they could shoot arrows or sling stones with their left hand as well as their right. They were all relatives of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin.

³ Their leader was Ahiezer son of Shemaah from Gibeah; his brother Joash was second-in-command. These were the other warriors: Jeziel and Pelet, sons of Azmaveth; Beracah and Jehu from Anathoth;

⁴ Ishmaiah from Gibeon, a famous warrior and leader among the Thirty; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, and Jozabad from Gederah;

⁵ Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, and Shephatiah from Haruph;

⁶ Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, who were Korahites;

⁷ Joelah and Zebadiah, sons of Jeroham from Gedor.

⁸ Some brave and experienced warriors from the tribe of Gad also defected to David while he was at the stronghold in the wilderness. They were expert with both shield and spear, as fierce as lions and as swift as deer on the mountains.

⁹ Ezer was their leader. Obadiah was second. Eliab was third.

¹⁰ Mishmannah was fourth. Jeremiah was fifth.

¹¹ Attai was sixth. Eliel was seventh.

¹² Johanan was eighth. Elzabad was ninth.

¹³ Jeremiah was tenth. Macbannai was eleventh.

¹⁴ These warriors from Gad were army commanders. The weakest among them could take on a hundred regular troops, and the strongest could take on a thousand!

¹⁵ They crossed the Jordan River during its seasonal flooding at the beginning of the year and drove out all the people living in the lowlands on both the east and west banks.

¹⁶ Others from Benjamin and Judah came to David at the stronghold.

¹⁷ David went out to meet them and said, "If you have come in peace to help me, we are friends. But if you have come to betray me to my enemies when I am innocent, then may the God of our ancestors see and judge you."

¹⁸ Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who later became a leader among the Thirty, and he said, "We are yours, David! We are on your side, son of Jesse. Peace and prosperity be with you, and success to all who help you, for your God is the one who helps you." So David let them join him, and he made them officers over his troops.

¹⁹ Some men from Manasseh defected from the Israelite army and joined David when he went with the Philistines to fight against Saul. But as it turned out, the Philistine leaders refused to let David and his men go with them. After much discussion, they sent them back, for they said, "It will cost us our lives if David switches loyalties to Saul and turns against us."

²⁰ Here is a list of the men from Manasseh who defected to David as he was returning to Ziklag: Adnah, Jozabad,

Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai. Each commanded a thousand troops from the tribe of Manasseh.

²¹ They helped David chase down bands of raiders, for they were all brave and able warriors who became commanders in his army.

²² Day after day more men joined David until he had a great army, like the army of God.

²³ These are the numbers of armed warriors who joined David at Hebron. They were all eager to see David become king instead of Saul, just as the LORD had promised.

²⁴ From the tribe of Judah, there were 6,800 warriors armed with shields and spears.

²⁵ From the tribe of Simeon, there were 7,100 warriors.

²⁶ From the tribe of Levi, there were 4,600 troops.

²⁷ This included Jehoiada, leader of the family of Aaron, who had 3,700 under his command.

²⁸ This also included Zadok, a young warrior, with twenty-two members of his family who were all officers.

²⁹ From the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's relatives, there were 3,000 warriors. Most of the men from Benjamin had remained loyal to Saul until this time.

³⁰ From the tribe of Ephraim, there were 20,800 warriors, each famous in his own clan.

³¹ From the half-tribe of Manasseh west of the Jordan, 18,000 men were sent for the express purpose of helping David become king.

³² From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the temper of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.

³³ From the tribe of Zebulun, there were 50,000 skilled warriors. They were fully armed and prepared for battle and completely loyal to David.

³⁴ From the tribe of Naphtali, there were 1,000 officers and 37,000 warriors armed with shields and spears.

³⁵ From the tribe of Dan, there were 28,600 warriors, all prepared for battle.

³⁶ From the tribe of Asher, there were 40,000 trained warriors, all prepared for battle.

³⁷ From the east side of the Jordan River—where the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh lived—there were 120,000 troops armed with every kind of weapon.

³⁸ All these men came in battle array to Hebron with the single purpose of making David the king of Israel. In fact, all Israel agreed that David should be their king.

³⁹ They feasted and drank with David for three days, for preparations had been made by their relatives for their arrival.

⁴⁰ And people from as far away as Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali brought food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen. Vast supplies of flour, fig cakes, raisins, wine, olive oil, cattle, and sheep were brought to the celebration. There was great joy throughout the land of Israel.

13 ¹ David consulted with all his officials, including the generals and captains of his army.

² Then he addressed the entire assembly of Israel as follows: "If you approve and if it is the will of the LORD our God, let us send messages to all the Israelites throughout the land, including the priests and Levites in their towns and pasturelands. Let us invite them to come and join us."

³ It is time to bring back the Ark of our God, for we neglected it during the reign of Saul."

⁴ The whole assembly agreed to this, for the people could see it was the right thing to do.

⁵ So David summoned all the people of Israel, from one end of the country to the other, to join in bringing the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim.

⁶ Then David and all Israel went to Baalah of Judah (also called Kiriath-jearim) to bring back the Ark of God, which bears the name of the LORD who is enthroned between the cherubim.

⁷ They transported the Ark of God from the house of Abinadab on a new cart, with Uzzah and Ahio guiding it.

⁸ David and all Israel were celebrating before God with all their might, singing and playing all kinds of musical

instruments—lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals, and trumpets.

⁹ But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put out his hand to steady the Ark.

¹⁰ Then the LORD's anger blazed out against Uzzah, and he struck him dead because he had laid his hand on the Ark. So Uzzah died there in the presence of God.

¹¹ David was angry because the LORD's anger had blazed out against Uzzah. He named that place Perez—uzzah (which means "outbreak against Uzzah"). It is still called that today.

¹² David was now afraid of God and asked, "How can I ever bring the Ark of God back into my care?"

¹³ So David decided not to move the Ark into the City of David. He took it instead to the home of Obed—edom of Gath.

¹⁴ The Ark of God remained there with the family of Obed–edom for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

14 ¹ Now King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with stonemasons and carpenters to build him a palace. Hiram also sent many cedar logs for lumber.

² And David realized that the LORD had made him king over Israel and had made his kingdom very great for the sake of his people Israel.

³ Then David married more wives in Jerusalem, and they had many sons and daughters.

⁴ These are the names of David's sons who were born in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

⁵ Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet,

⁶ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia,

⁷ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

⁸ When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they mobilized all their forces to capture him. But David was told they were coming, so he and his men marched out to meet them.

⁹ The Philistines had arrived in the valley of Rephaim and raided it.

¹⁰ So David asked God, "Should I go out to fight the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The LORD replied, "Yes, go ahead. I will give you the victory."

¹¹ So David and his troops went to Baal-perazim and defeated the Philistines there. "God has done it!" David exclaimed. "He used me to burst through my enemies like a raging flood!" So that place was named Baal-perazim (which means "the Lord who bursts through").

¹² The Philistines had abandoned their idols there, so David gave orders to burn them up.

¹³ But after a while, the Philistines returned and raided the valley again.

¹⁴ And once again David asked God what to do. "Do not attack them straight on," God replied. "Instead, circle around behind them and attack them near the balsam trees.

¹⁵ When you hear a sound like marching feet in the tops of the balsam trees, attack! That will be the signal that God is moving ahead of you to strike down the Philistines."

¹⁶ So David did what God commanded, and he struck down the Philistine army all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

¹⁷ So David's fame spread everywhere, and the LORD caused all the nations to fear David.

15 ¹ David now built several buildings for himself in the City of David. He also prepared a place for the Ark of God and set up a special tent there to shelter it.

² Then he issued these instructions: "When we transport the Ark of God this time, no one except the Levites may carry it. The LORD has chosen them to carry the Ark of the LORD and to minister before him forever."

³ Then David summoned all the Israelites to Jerusalem to bring the Ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for it.

⁴ These are the priests and Levites who were called together:

⁵ There were 120 from the clan of Kohath, with Uriel as their leader.

⁶ There were 220 from the clan of Merari, with Asaiah as their leader.

⁷ There were 130 from the clan of Gershon, with Joel as their leader.

⁸ There were 200 descendants of Elizaphan, with Shemaiah as their leader.

⁹ There were 80 descendants of Hebron, with Eliel as their leader.

¹⁰ There were 112 descendants of Uzziel, with Amminadab as their leader.

¹¹ Then David summoned the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, and these Levite leaders: Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab.

¹² He said to them, "You are the leaders of the Levite families. You must purify yourselves and all your fellow Levites, so you can bring the Ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it.

¹³ Because you Levites did not carry the Ark the first time, the anger of the LORD our God burst out against us. We failed

to ask God how to move it in the proper way."

¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites purified themselves in order to bring the Ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ Then the Levites carried the Ark of God on their shoulders with its carrying poles, just as the LORD had instructed Moses.

¹⁶ David also ordered the Levite leaders to appoint a choir of Levites who were singers and musicians to sing joyful songs to the accompaniment of lyres, harps, and cymbals.

¹⁷ So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel, Asaph son of Berekiah, and Ethan son of Kushaiah from the clan of Merari to direct the musicians.

¹⁸ The following men were chosen as their assistants: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab,

Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, and the gatekeepers, Obed–edom and Jeiel.

¹⁹ Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were chosen to sound the bronze cymbals.

²⁰ Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah were chosen to play the lyres.

²¹ Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed–edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah were chosen to play the harps.

²² Kenaniah, the head Levite, was chosen as the choir leader because of his skill.

²³ Berekiah and Elkanah were chosen to guard the Ark.

²⁴ Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer—all of whom were priests—were chosen to blow the trumpets as they marched in front of the Ark of God. Obed–edom and Jehiah were chosen to guard the Ark.

²⁵ Then David and the leaders of Israel and the generals of the army went to the home of Obed–edom to bring the Ark of the LORD’s covenant up to Jerusalem with a great celebration.

²⁶ And because God was clearly helping the Levites as they carried the Ark of the LORD’s covenant, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven lambs.

²⁷ David was dressed in a robe of fine linen, as were the Levites who carried the Ark, the singers, and Kenaniah the song leader. David was also wearing a priestly tunic.

²⁸ So all Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD’s covenant to Jerusalem with shouts of joy, the blowing of horns and trumpets, the crashing of cymbals, and loud playing on harps and lyres.

²⁹ But as the Ark of the LORD’s covenant entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from

her window. When she saw King David dancing and leaping for joy, she was filled with contempt for him.

16 ¹ So they brought the Ark of God into the special tent David had prepared for it, and they sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.

² When he had finished, David blessed the people in the name of the LORD.

³ Then he gave a gift of food to every man and woman in Israel: a loaf of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins.

⁴ David appointed the following Levites to lead the people in worship before the Ark of the LORD by asking for his blessings and giving thanks and praise to the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁵ Asaph, the leader of this group, sounded the cymbals. His assistants were Zechariah (the second), then Jeiel,

Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed—edom, and Jeiel. They played the harps and lyres.

⁶ The priests, Benaiah and Jahaziel, played the trumpets regularly before the Ark of God's covenant.

⁷ That day David gave to Asaph and his fellow Levites this song of thanksgiving to the LORD:

⁸ Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done.

⁹ Sing to him; yes, sing his praises. Tell everyone about his miracles.

¹⁰ Exult in his holy name; O worshipers of the LORD, rejoice!

¹¹ Search for the LORD and for his strength, and keep on searching.

¹² Think of the wonderful works he has done, the miracles, and the judgments he handed down,

¹³ O children of Israel, God's servant, O descendants of Jacob, God's chosen one.

¹⁴ He is the LORD our God. His rule is seen throughout the land.

¹⁵ He always stands by his covenant—the commitment he made to a thousand generations.

¹⁶ This is the covenant he made with Abraham and the oath he swore to Isaac.

¹⁷ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to the people of Israel as a never-ending treaty:

¹⁸ "I will give you the land of Canaan as your special possession."

¹⁹ He said this when they were few in number, a tiny group of strangers in Canaan.

²⁰ They wandered back and forth between nations, from one kingdom to another.

²¹ Yet he did not let anyone oppress them. He warned kings on their behalf:

²² "Do not touch these people I have chosen, and do not hurt my prophets."

²³ Let the whole earth sing to the LORD! Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.

²⁴ Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

²⁵ Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be revered above all gods.

²⁶ The gods of other nations are merely idols, but the LORD made the heavens!

²⁷ Honor and majesty surround him; strength and beauty are in his dwelling.

²⁸ O nations of the world, recognize the LORD, recognize that the LORD is glorious and strong.

²⁹ Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come to worship him. Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor.

³⁰ Let all the earth tremble before him. The world is firmly established and cannot be shaken.

³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice! Tell all the nations that the LORD is king.

³² Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the fields and their crops burst forth with joy!

³³ Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise before the LORD! For he is coming to judge the earth.

³⁴ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

³⁵ Cry out, "Save us, O God of our salvation! Gather and rescue us from among the nations, so we can thank your holy name and rejoice and praise you."

³⁶ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And all the people shouted "Amen!" and praised the LORD.

³⁷ David arranged for Asaph and his fellow Levites to minister regularly before the Ark of the LORD's covenant, doing whatever needed to be done each day.

³⁸ This group included Obed—edom (son of Jeduthun), Hosah, and sixty—eight other Levites as gatekeepers.

³⁹ Meanwhile, David stationed Zadok the priest and his fellow priests at the Tabernacle of the LORD on the hill of Gibeon, where they continued to minister before the LORD.

⁴⁰ They sacrificed the regular burnt offerings to the LORD each morning and evening on the altar set aside for that purpose, obeying everything written in the law of the LORD, which he had given to Israel.

⁴¹ David also appointed Heman, Jeduthun, and the others chosen by

name to give thanks to the LORD, "for his faithful love endures forever."

⁴² They used their trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments to accompany the songs of praise to God. And the sons of Jeduthun were appointed as gatekeepers.

⁴³ Then all the people returned to their homes, and David returned home to bless his family.

17 ¹ Now when David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in this beautiful cedar palace, but the Ark of the LORD's covenant is out in a tent!"

² Nathan replied, "Go ahead with what you have in mind, for God is with you."

³ But that same night God said to Nathan,

⁴ "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build me a temple to live in.

⁵ I have never lived in a temple, from the day I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until now. My home has always been a tent, moving from one place to another.

⁶ And I never once complained to Israel's leaders, the shepherds of my people. I have never asked them, "Why haven't you built me a beautiful cedar temple?"

⁷ "Now go and say to my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I chose you to lead my people Israel when you were just a shepherd boy, tending your sheep out in the pasture.

⁸ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies. Now I will make your name famous throughout the earth!

⁹ And I have provided a permanent homeland for my people Israel, a secure place where they will never be disturbed.

It will be their own land where wicked nations won't oppress them as they did in the past,

¹⁰ from the time I appointed judges to rule my people. And I will subdue all your enemies. "And now I declare that the LORD will build a house for you—a dynasty of kings!

¹¹ For when you die, I will raise up one of your sons, and I will make his kingdom strong.

¹² He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for me. And I will establish his throne forever.

¹³ I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will not take my unfailing love from him as I took it from Saul, who ruled before you.

¹⁴ I will establish him over my dynasty and my kingdom for all time, and his throne will be secure forever."

¹⁵ So Nathan went back to David and told him everything the LORD had said.

¹⁶ Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and prayed, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?"

¹⁷ And now, O God, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving me a lasting dynasty! You speak as though I were someone very great, O LORD God!

¹⁸ What more can I say about the way you have honored me? You know what I am really like.

¹⁹ For my sake, O LORD, and according to your will, you have done all these great things and have made them known.

²⁰ "O LORD, there is no one like you—there is no other God. We have never even heard of another god like you!

²¹ What other nation on earth is like Israel? What other nation, O God, have you redeemed from slavery to be your own people? You made a great name for yourself when you rescued your people from Egypt. You performed awesome miracles and drove out the nations that stood in their way.

²² You chose Israel to be your people forever, and you, O LORD, have become their God.

²³ "And now, O LORD, do as you have promised concerning me and my family. May it be a promise that will last forever.

²⁴ And may your name be established and honored forever so that all the world will say, 'The LORD Almighty is God over Israel!' And may the dynasty of your servant David be established in your presence.

²⁵ "O my God, I have been bold enough to pray this prayer because you have

revealed that you will build a house for me—an eternal dynasty!

²⁶ For you are God, O LORD. And you have promised these good things to me, your servant.

²⁷ And now, it has pleased you to bless me and my family so that our dynasty will continue forever before you. For when you grant a blessing, O LORD, it is an eternal blessing!"

18 ¹ After this, David subdued and humbled the Philistines by conquering Gath and its surrounding towns.

² David also conquered the land of Moab, and the Moabites became David's subjects and brought him tribute money.

³ Then David destroyed the forces of King Hadadezer of Zobah, as far as Hamath, when Hadadezer marched out to strengthen his control along the Euphrates River.

⁴ David captured one thousand chariots, seven thousand charioteers, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Then he crippled all but one hundred of the chariot horses.

⁵ When Arameans from Damascus arrived to help Hadadezer, David killed twenty-two thousand of them.

⁶ Then he placed several army garrisons in Damascus, the Aramean capital, and the Arameans became David's subjects and brought him tribute money. So the LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

⁷ David brought the gold shields of Hadadezer's officers to Jerusalem,

⁸ along with a large amount of bronze from Hadadezer's cities of Tebah and Cun. Later Solomon melted the bronze and used it for the Temple. He molded it into the bronze Sea, the pillars, and

the various bronze utensils used at the Temple.

⁹ When King Toi of Hamath heard that David had destroyed the army of King Hadadezer of Zobah,

¹⁰ he sent his son Joram to congratulate David on his success. Hadadezer and Toi had long been enemies, and there had been many wars between them. Joram presented David with many gifts of gold, silver, and bronze.

¹¹ King David dedicated all these gifts to the LORD, along with the silver and gold he had taken from the other nations he had subdued—Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and Amalek.

¹² Abishai son of Zeruah destroyed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

¹³ He placed army garrisons throughout Edom, and all the Edomites became David's subjects. This was another

example of how the LORD made David victorious wherever he went.

¹⁴ David reigned over all Israel and was fair to everyone.

¹⁵ Joab son of Zeruah was commander of the army. Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian.

¹⁶ Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were the priests. Seraiah was the court secretary.

¹⁷ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was captain of the king's bodyguard. David's sons served as the king's chief assistants.

19 ¹ Some time after this, King Nahash of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun became king.

² David said, "I am going to show complete loyalty to Hanun because his father, Nahash, was always completely loyal to me." So David sent ambassadors to express sympathy to Hanun about his father's death. But when David's

ambassadors arrived in the land of Ammon,

³ Hanun's advisers said to him, "Do you really think these men are coming here to honor your father? No! David has sent them to spy out the land so that they can come in and conquer it!"

⁴ So Hanun seized David's ambassadors and shaved their beards, cut off their robes at the buttocks, and sent them back to David in shame.

⁵ When David heard what had happened, he sent messengers to tell the men to stay at Jericho until their beards grew out, for they were very embarrassed by their appearance.

⁶ Now the people of Ammon realized how seriously they had angered David, so Hanun and the Ammonites sent thirty-eight tons of silver to hire chariots and troops from Aram-naharaim, Aram-maacah, and Zobah.

⁷ They also hired thirty–two thousand chariots and secured the support of the king of Maacah and his army. These forces camped at Medeba, where they were joined by the Ammonite troops that Hanun had recruited from his own towns.

⁸ When David heard about this, he sent Joab and all his warriors to fight them.

⁹ The Ammonite troops drew up their battle lines at the gate of the city, while the other kings positioned themselves to fight in the open fields.

¹⁰ When Joab saw that he would have to fight on two fronts, he chose the best troops in his army. He placed them under his personal command and led them out to fight the Arameans in the fields.

¹¹ He left the rest of the army under the command of his brother Abishai, who was to attack the Ammonites.

¹² "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then come over and help me," Joab told his brother. "And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will help you.

¹³ Be courageous! Let us fight bravely to save our people and the cities of our God. May the LORD's will be done."

¹⁴ When Joab and his troops attacked, the Arameans began to run away.

¹⁵ And when the Ammonites saw the Arameans running, they ran from Abishai and retreated into the city. Then Joab returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁶ The Arameans now realized that they were no match for Israel, so they summoned additional Aramean troops from the other side of the Euphrates River. These troops arrived under the command of Shobach, the commander of all Hadadezer's forces.

¹⁷ When David heard what was happening, he mobilized all Israel,

crossed the Jordan River, and positioned his troops in battle formation. Then he engaged the enemy troops in battle, and they fought against him.

¹⁸ But again the Arameans fled from the Israelites. This time David's forces killed seven thousand charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers, including Shobach, the commander of their army.

¹⁹ When the servants of Hadadezer realized they had been defeated by Israel, they surrendered to David and became his subjects. After that, the Arameans were no longer willing to help the Ammonites.

20 ¹ The following spring, the time of year when kings go to war, Joab led the Israelite army in successful attacks against the towns and villages of the Ammonites. In the process they laid siege to the city of Rabbah and

destroyed it. But David had stayed behind in Jerusalem.

² When David arrived at Rabbah, he removed the crown from the king's head, and it was placed on David's own head. The crown was made of gold and set with gems, and it weighed about seventy-five pounds. David took a vast amount of plunder from the city.

³ He also made slaves of the people of Rabbah and forced them to labor with saws, picks, and axes. That is how he dealt with the people of all the Ammonite cities. Then David and his army returned to Jerusalem.

⁴ After this, war broke out with the Philistines at Gezer. As they fought, Sibbecai from Hushah killed Saph, a descendant of the giants, and so the Philistines were subdued.

⁵ During another battle with the Philistines, Elhanan son of Jair killed

Lahmi, the brother of Goliath of Gath. The handle of Lahmi's spear was as thick as a weaver's beam!

⁶ In another battle with the Philistines at Gath, a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—a descendant of the giants—

⁷ defied and taunted Israel. But he was killed by Jonathan, the son of David's brother Shimea.

⁸ These Philistines were descendants of the giants of Gath, but they were killed by David and his warriors.

21 ¹ Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take a census of the Israelites.

² David gave these orders to Joab and his commanders: "Take a census of all the people in the land—from Beersheba in the south to Dan in the north—and bring me the totals so I may know how many there are."

³ But Joab replied, "May the LORD increase the number of his people a hundred times over! But why, my lord, do you want to do this? Are they not all your servants? Why must you cause Israel to sin?"

⁴ But the king insisted that Joab take the census, so Joab traveled throughout Israel to count the people. Then he returned to Jerusalem

⁵ and reported the number of people to David. There were 1,100,000 men of military age in Israel, and 470,000 in Judah.

⁶ But Joab did not include the tribes of Levi and Benjamin in the census because he was so distressed at what the king had made him do.

⁷ God was very displeased with the census, and he punished Israel for it.

⁸ Then David said to God, "I have sinned greatly and shouldn't have taken the

census. Please forgive me for doing this foolish thing."

⁹ Then the LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer. This was the message:

¹⁰ "Go and say to David, 'This is what the LORD says: I will give you three choices. Choose one of these punishments, and I will do it.'"

¹¹ So Gad came to David and said, "These are the choices the LORD has given you.

¹² You may choose three years of famine, three months of destruction by your enemies, or three days of severe plague as the angel of the LORD brings devastation throughout the land of Israel. Think this over and let me know what answer to give the LORD."

¹³ "This is a desperate situation!" David replied to Gad. "But let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very

great. Do not let me fall into human hands."

¹⁴ So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand people died as a result.

¹⁵ And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But just as the angel was preparing to destroy it, the LORD relented and said to the death angel, "Stop! That is enough!" At that moment the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁶ David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth with his sword drawn, stretched out over Jerusalem. So David and the leaders of Israel put on sackcloth to show their distress and fell down with their faces to the ground.

¹⁷ And David said to God, "I am the one who called for the census! I am the one

who has sinned and done wrong! But these people are innocent—what have they done? O LORD my God, let your anger fall against me and my family, but do not destroy your people."

¹⁸ Then the angel of the LORD told Gad to instruct David to build an altar to the LORD at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁹ So David obeyed the instructions the LORD had given him through Gad.

²⁰ Araunah, who was busy threshing wheat at the time, turned and saw the angel there. His four sons, who were with him, ran away and hid.

²¹ When Araunah saw the king approaching, he left his threshing floor and bowed to the ground before David.

²² David said to Araunah, "Let me buy this threshing floor from you at its full price. Then I will build an altar to the

LORD there, so that he will stop the plague."

²³ "Take it, my lord, and use it as you wish," Araunah said to David. "Here are oxen for the burnt offerings, and you can use the threshing tools for wood to build a fire on the altar. And take the wheat for the grain offering. I will give it all to you."

²⁴ But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying what it is worth. I cannot take what is yours and give it to the LORD. I will not offer a burnt offering that has cost me nothing!"

²⁵ So David gave Araunah six hundred pieces of gold in payment for the threshing floor.

²⁶ David built an altar there to the LORD and sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. And when David prayed, the LORD answered him by sending fire from

heaven to burn up the offering on the altar.

²⁷ Then the LORD spoke to the angel, who put the sword back into its sheath.

²⁸ When David saw that the LORD had answered his prayer, he offered sacrifices there at Araunah's threshing floor.

²⁹ At that time, the Tabernacle of the LORD and the altar that Moses made in the wilderness were located at the hill of Gibeon.

³⁰ But David was not able to go there to inquire of God, because he was terrified by the drawn sword of the angel of the LORD.

22 ¹ Then David said, "This will be the location for the Temple of the LORD God and the place of the altar for Israel's burnt offerings!"

² So David gave orders to call together the foreigners living in Israel, and he assigned them the task of preparing

blocks of stone for building the Temple of God.

³ David provided large amounts of iron for the nails that would be needed for the doors in the gates and for the clamps, and more bronze than they could ever weigh.

⁴ He also provided innumerable cedar logs, for the men of Tyre and Sidon had brought vast amounts of cedar to David.

⁵ David said, "My son Solomon is still young and inexperienced, and the Temple of the LORD must be a magnificent structure, famous and glorious throughout the world. So I will begin making preparations for it now." So David collected vast amounts of building materials before his death.

⁶ Then David sent for his son Solomon and instructed him to build a Temple for the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁷ "I wanted to build a Temple to honor the name of the LORD my God," David told him.

⁸ "But the LORD said to me, 'You have killed many men in the great battles you have fought. And since you have shed so much blood before me, you will not be the one to build a Temple to honor my name.

⁹ But you will have a son who will experience peace and rest. I will give him peace with his enemies in all the surrounding lands. His name will be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel during his reign.

¹⁰ He is the one who will build a Temple to honor my name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

¹¹ "Now, my son, may the LORD be with you and give you success as you follow

his instructions in building the Temple of the LORD your God.

¹² And may the LORD give you wisdom and understanding, that you may obey the law of the LORD your God as you rule over Israel.

¹³ For if you carefully obey the laws and regulations that the LORD gave to Israel through Moses, you will be successful. Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or lose heart!

¹⁴ "I have worked hard to provide materials for building the Temple of the LORD—nearly four thousand tons of gold, nearly forty thousand tons of silver, and so much iron and bronze that it cannot be weighed. I have also gathered lumber and stone for the walls, though you may need to add more.

¹⁵ You have many skilled stonemasons and carpenters and craftsmen of every kind available to you.

¹⁶ They are expert goldsmiths and silversmiths and workers of bronze and iron. Now begin the work, and may the LORD be with you!"

¹⁷ Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to assist Solomon in this project.

¹⁸ "The LORD your God is with you," he declared. "He has given you peace with the surrounding nations. He has handed them over to me, and they are now subject to the LORD and his people.

¹⁹ Now seek the LORD your God with all your heart. Build the sanctuary of the LORD God so that you can bring the Ark of the LORD's covenant and the holy vessels of God into the Temple built to honor the LORD's name."

23 ¹ When David was an old man, he appointed his son Solomon to be king over Israel.

² David summoned all the political leaders of Israel, together with the

priests and Levites, for the coronation ceremony.

³ All the Levites who were thirty years old or older were counted, and the total came to thirty–eight thousand.

⁴ Then David said, "Twenty–four thousand of them will supervise the work at the Temple of the LORD. Six thousand are to serve as officials and judges.

⁵ Four thousand will work as gatekeepers, and another four thousand will praise the LORD with the musical instruments I have made."

⁶ Then David divided the Levites into divisions named after the clans descended from the three sons of Levi—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

⁷ The Gershonite family units were defined by their lines of descent from Libni and Shimei, the sons of Gershon.

⁸ Three of the descendants of Libni were Jehiel (the family leader), Zetham, and Joel.

⁹ These were the leaders of the family of Libni. Three of the descendants of Shimei were Shelomoth, Haziël, and Haran.

¹⁰ Four other descendants of Shimei were Jahath, Ziza, Jeush, and Beriah.

¹¹ Jahath was the family leader, and Ziza was next. Jeush and Beriah were counted as a single family because neither had many sons.

¹² The descendants of Kohath included Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹³ The sons of Amram were Aaron and Moses. Aaron and his descendants were set apart to dedicate the most holy things, to offer sacrifices in the LORD's presence, to serve the LORD, and to pronounce blessings in his name forever.

¹⁴ As for Moses, the man of God, his sons were included with the tribe of Levi.

¹⁵ The sons of Moses were Gershom and Eliezer.

¹⁶ The descendants of Gershom included Shebuel, the family leader.

¹⁷ Eliezer had only one son, Rehabiah, the family leader. Rehabiah had numerous descendants.

¹⁸ The descendants of Izhar included Shelomith, the family leader.

¹⁹ The descendants of Hebron included Jeriah (the family leader), Amariah (the second), Jahaziel (the third), and Jekameam (the fourth).

²⁰ The descendants of Uzziel included Micah (the family leader) and Isshiah (the second).

²¹ The descendants of Merari included Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli were Eleazar and Kish.

²² Eleazar died with no sons, only daughters. His daughters married their cousins, the sons of Kish.

²³ The three sons of Mushi were Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth.

²⁴ These were the descendants of Levi by clans, the leaders of their family groups, registered carefully by name. Each had to be twenty years old or older to qualify for service in the house of the LORD.

²⁵ For David said, "The LORD, the God of Israel, has given us peace, and he will always live in Jerusalem.

²⁶ Now the Levites will no longer need to carry the Tabernacle and its utensils from place to place."

²⁷ It was according to David's final instructions that all the Levites twenty years old or older were registered for service.

²⁸ The work of the Levites was to assist the priests, the descendants of Aaron, as they served at the house of the LORD. They also took care of the courtyards and side rooms, helped perform the ceremonies of purification, and served in many other ways in the house of God.

²⁹ They were in charge of the sacred bread that was set out on the table, the choice flour for the grain offerings, the wafers made without yeast, the cakes cooked in olive oil, and the other mixed breads. They were also responsible to check all the weights and measures.

³⁰ And each morning and evening they stood before the LORD to sing songs of thanks and praise to him.

³¹ They assisted with the burnt offerings that were presented to the LORD on Sabbath days, at new moon celebrations, and at all the appointed festivals. The proper number of Levites served in the

LORD's presence at all times, following all the procedures they had been given.

³² And so, under the supervision of the priests, the Levites watched over the Tabernacle and the Temple and faithfully carried out their duties of service at the house of the LORD.

24 ¹ This is how Aaron's descendants, the priests, were divided into groups for service. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

² But Nadab and Abihu died before their father did, and they had no sons. So only Eleazar and Ithamar were left to carry on as priests.

³ With the help of Zadok, who was a descendant of Eleazar, and of Ahimelech, who was a descendant of Ithamar, David divided Aaron's descendants into groups according to their various duties.

⁴ Eleazar's descendants were divided into sixteen groups and Ithamar's into

eight, for there were more family leaders among the descendants of Eleazar.

⁵ All tasks were assigned to the various groups by means of sacred lots so that no preference would be shown, for there were many qualified officials serving God in the sanctuary from among the descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar.

⁶ Shemaiah son of Nethanel, a Levite, acted as secretary and wrote down the names and assignments in the presence of the king, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech son of Abiathar, and the family leaders of the priests and Levites. The descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar took turns casting lots.

⁷ The first lot fell to Jehoiarib. The second lot fell to Jedaiah.

⁸ The third lot fell to Harim. The fourth lot fell to Seorim.

⁹ The fifth lot fell to Malkijah. The sixth lot fell to Mijamin.

¹⁰ The seventh lot fell to Hakkoz. The eighth lot fell to Abijah.

¹¹ The ninth lot fell to Jeshua. The tenth lot fell to Shecaniah.

¹² The eleventh lot fell to Eliashib. The twelfth lot fell to Jakim.

¹³ The thirteenth lot fell to Huppah. The fourteenth lot fell to Jeshebeab.

¹⁴ The fifteenth lot fell to Bilgah. The sixteenth lot fell to Immer.

¹⁵ The seventeenth lot fell to Hezir. The eighteenth lot fell to Happizzez.

¹⁶ The nineteenth lot fell to Pethahiah. The twentieth lot fell to Jehezkel.

¹⁷ The twenty-first lot fell to Jakin. The twenty-second lot fell to Gamul.

¹⁸ The twenty-third lot fell to Delaiah. The twenty-fourth lot fell to Maaziah.

¹⁹ Each group carried out its duties in the house of the LORD according to the

procedures established by their ancestor Aaron in obedience to the commands of the LORD, the God of Israel.

²⁰ These were the other family leaders descended from Levi: From the descendants of Amram, the leader was Shebuel. From the descendants of Shebuel, the leader was Jehdeiah.

²¹ From the descendants of Rehabiah, the leader was Isshiah.

²² From the descendants of Izhar, the leader was Shelomith. From the descendants of Shelomith, the leader was Jahath.

²³ From the descendants of Hebron, Jeriah was the leader, Amariah was second-in-command, Jahaziel was third, and Jekameam was fourth.

²⁴ From the descendants of Uzziel, the leader was Micah. From the descendants of Micah, the leader was Shamir,

²⁵ along with Isshiah, the brother of Micah. From the descendants of Isshiah, the leader was Zechariah.

²⁶ From the descendants of Merari, the leaders were Mahli and Mushi. From the descendants of Jaaziah, the leader was Beno.

²⁷ From the descendants of Merari through Jaaziah, the leaders were Beno, Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri.

²⁸ From the descendants of Mahli, the leader was Eleazar, though he had no sons.

²⁹ From the descendants of Kish, the leader was Jerahmeel.

³⁰ From the descendants of Mushi, the leaders were Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the descendants of Levi in their various families.

³¹ Like the descendants of Aaron, they were assigned to their duties by means of sacred lots, without regard to age or

rank. It was done in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the family leaders of the priests and the Levites.

25 ¹ David and the army commanders then appointed men from the families of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun to proclaim God's messages to the accompaniment of harps, lyres, and cymbals. Here is a list of their names and their work:

² From the sons of Asaph, there were Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asarelah. They worked under the direction of their father, Asaph, who proclaimed God's messages by the king's orders.

³ Jeduthun had six sons: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah. They worked under the direction of their father, Jeduthun, who proclaimed God's messages to the accompaniment of the harp, offering thanks and praise to the LORD.

⁴ Heman's sons were Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shubael, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Geddalti, Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth.

⁵ All these were the sons of Heman, the king's seer, for God had honored him with fourteen sons and three daughters.

⁶ All these men were under the direction of their fathers as they made music at the house of the LORD. Their responsibilities included the playing of cymbals, lyres, and harps at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman reported directly to the king.

⁷ They and their families were all trained in making music before the LORD, and each of them—288 in all—was an accomplished musician.

⁸ The musicians were appointed to their particular term of service by means of sacred lots, without regard to whether

they were young or old, teacher or student.

⁹ The first lot fell to Joseph of the Asaph clan and twelve of his sons and relatives. The second lot fell to Gedaliah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹⁰ The third lot fell to Zaccur and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹¹ The fourth lot fell to Zeri and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹² The fifth lot fell to Nethaniah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹³ The sixth lot fell to Bukkiah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹⁴ The seventh lot fell to Asarelah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹⁵ The eighth lot fell to Jeshaiiah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹⁶ The ninth lot fell to Mattaniah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹⁷ The tenth lot fell to Shimei and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹⁸ The eleventh lot fell to Uzziel and twelve of his sons and relatives.

¹⁹ The twelfth lot fell to Hashabiah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²⁰ The thirteenth lot fell to Shubael and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²¹ The fourteenth lot fell to Mattithiah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²² The fifteenth lot fell to Jerimoth and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²³ The sixteenth lot fell to Hananiah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²⁴ The seventeenth lot fell to Joshbekashah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²⁵ The eighteenth lot fell to Hanani and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²⁶ The nineteenth lot fell to Mallothi and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²⁷ The twentieth lot fell to Eliathah and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²⁸ The twenty–first lot fell to Hothir and twelve of his sons and relatives.

²⁹ The twenty–second lot fell to Geddalti and twelve of his sons and relatives.

³⁰ The twenty–third lot fell to Mahazioth and twelve of his sons and relatives.

³¹ The twenty–fourth lot fell to Romamti–ezer and twelve of his sons and relatives.

26 ¹ These are the divisions of the gatekeepers: From the Korahites, there was Meshelemiah son of Kore, of the family of Asaph.

² The sons of Meshelemiah were Zechariah (the oldest), Jediael (the second), Zebadiah (the third), Jathniel (the fourth),

³ Elam (the fifth), Jehohanan (the sixth), and Eliehoenai (the seventh).

⁴ The sons of Obed—edom, also gatekeepers, were Shemaiah (the oldest), Jehozabad (the second), Joah (the third), Sacar (the fourth), Nethanel (the fifth),

⁵ Ammiel (the sixth), Issachar (the seventh), and Peullethai (the eighth). God had richly blessed Obed—edom.

⁶ Obed—edom's son Shemaiah had sons with great ability who earned positions of great authority in the clan.

⁷ Their names were Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad. Their relatives, Elihu and Semakiah, were also very capable men.

⁸ All of these descendants of Obed—edom, including their sons and grandsons—sixty—two of them in all—were very capable men, well qualified for their work.

⁹ Meshelemiah's eighteen sons and relatives were also very capable men.

¹⁰ Hosah, of the Merari clan, appointed Shimri as the leader among his sons, though he was not the oldest.

¹¹ His other sons included Hilkiah (the second), Tebaliah (the third), and Zechariah (the fourth). Hosah's sons and relatives, who served as gatekeepers, numbered thirteen in all.

¹² These divisions of the gatekeepers were named for their family leaders, and like the other Levites, they served at the house of the LORD.

¹³ They were assigned by families for guard duty at the various gates, without regard to age or training, for it was all decided by means of sacred lots.

¹⁴ The responsibility for the east gate went to Meshelemiah and his group. The north gate was assigned to his son Zechariah, a man of unusual wisdom.

¹⁵ The south gate went to Obed—edom, and his sons were put in charge of the storehouses.

¹⁶ Shuppim and Hosah were assigned the west gate and the gateway leading up to the Temple. Guard duties were divided evenly.

¹⁷ Six Levites were assigned each day to the east gate, four to the north gate, four to the south gate, and two to each of the storehouses.

¹⁸ Six were assigned each day to the west gate, four to the gateway leading up to the Temple, and two to the courtyard.

¹⁹ These were the divisions of the gatekeepers from the clans of Korah and Merari.

²⁰ Other Levites, led by Ahijah, were in charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the storerooms.

²¹ From the family of Libni in the clan of Gershon, Jehiel was the leader.

²² The sons of Jehiel, Zetham and his brother Joel, were in charge of the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

²³ These are the leaders that descended from Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel:

²⁴ From the clan of Amram, Shebuel was a descendant of Gershom son of Moses. He was the chief officer of the treasuries.

²⁵ His relatives through Eliezer were Rehabiah, Jeshaiiah, Joram, Zicri, and Shelomoth.

²⁶ Shelomoth and his relatives were in charge of the treasuries that held all the things dedicated to the LORD by King David, the family leaders, and the generals and captains and other officers of the army.

²⁷ These men had dedicated some of the plunder they had gained in battle to maintain the house of the LORD.

²⁸ Shelomoth and his relatives also cared for the items dedicated to the LORD by Samuel the seer, Saul son of Kish, Abner son of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruah. All the other dedicated items were in their care, too.

²⁹ From the clan of Izhar came Kenaniah. He and his sons were appointed to serve as public administrators and judges throughout Israel.

³⁰ From the clan of Hebron came Hashabiah. He and his relatives—seventeen hundred capable men—were put in charge of the Israelite lands west of the Jordan River. They were responsible for all matters related to the things of the LORD and the service of the king in that area.

³¹ Also from the clan of Hebron came Jeriah, who was the leader of the Hebronites according to the genealogical records. (In the fortieth year of David's

reign, a search was made in the records, and capable men from the clan of Hebron were found at Jazer in the land of Gilead.)

³² There were twenty–seven hundred capable men among the relatives of Jeriah. King David sent them to the east side of the Jordan River and put them in charge of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half–tribe of Manasseh. They were responsible for all matters related to the things of God and the service of the king.

27 ¹ This is the list of Israelite generals and captains, and their officers, who served the king by supervising the army divisions that were on duty each month of the year. Each division served for one month and had twenty–four thousand troops.

² Jashobeam son of Zabdiel was commander of the first division, which

was on duty during the first month. There were twenty-four thousand troops in his division.

³ He was a descendant of Perez and was in charge of all the army officers for the first month.

⁴ Dodai, a descendant of Ahoah, was commander of the second division, which was on duty during the second month. There were twenty-four thousand troops in his division, and Mikloth was his chief officer.

⁵ Benaiah son of Jehoiada the priest was commander of the third division, which was on duty during the third month. There were twenty-four thousand troops in his division.

⁶ This was the Benaiah who commanded David's elite military group known as the Thirty. His son Ammizabad was his chief officer.

⁷ Asahel, the brother of Joab, was commander of the fourth division, which was on duty during the fourth month. There were twenty-four thousand troops in his division. Asahel was succeeded by his son Zebadiah.

⁸ Shammah the Izrahite was commander of the fifth division, which was on duty during the fifth month. There were twenty-four thousand troops in his division.

⁹ Ira son of Ikkesh from Tekoa was commander of the sixth division, which was on duty during the sixth month. There were twenty-four thousand troops in his division.

¹⁰ Helez, a descendant of Ephraim from Pelon, was commander of the seventh division, which was on duty during the seventh month. There were twenty-four thousand troops in his division.

¹¹ Sibbecai, a descendant of Zerah from Hushah, was commander of the eighth division, which was on duty during the eighth month. There were twenty–four thousand troops in his division.

¹² Abiezer from Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin was commander of the ninth division, which was on duty during the ninth month. There were twenty–four thousand troops in his division.

¹³ Maharai, a descendant of Zerah from Netophah, was commander of the tenth division, which was on duty during the tenth month. There were twenty–four thousand troops in his division.

¹⁴ Benaiah from Pirathon in Ephraim was commander of the eleventh division, which was on duty during the eleventh month. There were twenty–four thousand troops in his division.

¹⁵ Heled, a descendant of Othniel from Netophah, was commander of the twelfth division, which was on duty during the twelfth month. There were twenty–four thousand troops in his division.

¹⁶ The following were the tribes of Israel and their leaders: Reuben, Eliezer son of Zicri; Simeon, Shephatiah son of Maacah;

¹⁷ Levi, Hashabiah son of Kemuel; Aaron (the priests), Zadok;

¹⁸ Judah, Elihu (a brother of David); Issachar, Omri son of Michael;

¹⁹ Zebulun, Ishmaiah son of Obadiah; Naphtali, Jeremoth son of Azriel;

²⁰ Ephraim, Hoshea son of Azaziah; Manasseh (west), Joel son of Pedaiiah;

²¹ Manasseh (east), Iddo son of Zechariah; Benjamin, Jaasiel son of Abner;

²² Dan, Azarel son of Jeroham. These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel.

²³ When David took his census, he did not count those who were younger than twenty years of age, because the LORD had promised to make the Israelites as numerous as the stars in heaven.

²⁴ Joab began the census but never finished it because the anger of God broke out against Israel. The final total was never recorded in King David's official records.

²⁵ Azmaveth son of Adiel was in charge of the palace treasuries. Jonathan son of Uzziah was in charge of the regional treasuries throughout the towns, villages, and fortresses of Israel.

²⁶ Ezri son of Kelub was in charge of the field workers who farmed the king's lands.

²⁷ Shimei from Ramah was in charge of the king's vineyards. Zabdi from

Shepham was responsible for the grapes and the supplies of wine.

²⁸ Baal-hanan from Geder was in charge of the king's olive groves and sycamore-fig trees in the foothills of Judah. Joash was responsible for the supplies of olive oil.

²⁹ Shitrai from Sharon was in charge of the cattle on the Sharon Plain. Shaphat son of Adlai was responsible for the cattle in the valleys.

³⁰ Obil the Ishmaelite was in charge of the camels. Jehdeiah from Meronoth was in charge of the donkeys.

³¹ Jaziz the Hagrite was in charge of the king's sheep. All these officials were overseers of King David's property.

³² Jonathan, David's uncle, was a wise counselor to the king, a man of great insight, and a scribe. Jehiel the Hacmonite was responsible to teach the king's sons.

³³ Ahithophel was the royal adviser. Hushai the Arkite was the king's friend.

³⁴ Ahithophel was succeeded by Jehoiada son of Benaiah and by Abiathar. Joab was commander of the Israelite army.

28 ¹ David summoned all his officials to Jerusalem—the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the twelve army divisions, the other generals and captains, the overseers of the royal property and livestock, the palace officials, the mighty men, and all the other warriors in the kingdom.

² David rose and stood before them and addressed them as follows: "My brothers and my people! It was my desire to build a temple where the Ark of the LORD's covenant, God's footstool, could rest permanently. I made the necessary preparations for building it,

³ but God said to me, ‘You must not build a temple to honor my name, for you are a warrior and have shed much blood.’

⁴ "Yet the LORD, the God of Israel, has chosen me from among all my father’s family to be king over Israel forever. For he has chosen the tribe of Judah to rule, and from among the families of Judah, he chose my father’s family. And from among my father’s sons, the LORD was pleased to make me king over all Israel.

⁵ And from among my sons—for the LORD has given me many children—he chose Solomon to succeed me on the throne of his kingdom of Israel.

⁶ He said to me, ‘Your son Solomon will build my Temple and its courtyards, for I have chosen him as my son, and I will be his father.’

⁷ And if he continues to obey my commands and regulations as he does now, I will make his kingdom last forever.'

⁸ So now, with God as our witness, I give you this charge for all Israel, the LORD's assembly: Be careful to obey all the commands of the LORD your God, so that you may possess this good land and leave it to your children as a permanent inheritance.

⁹ "And Solomon, my son, get to know the God of your ancestors. Worship and serve him with your whole heart and with a willing mind. For the LORD sees every heart and understands and knows every plan and thought. If you seek him, you will find him. But if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

¹⁰ So take this seriously. The LORD has chosen you to build a Temple as his sanctuary. Be strong, and do the work."

¹¹ Then David gave Solomon the plans for the Temple and its surroundings, including the treasuries, the upstairs rooms, the inner rooms, and the inner sanctuary where the Ark's cover—the place of atonement—would be kept.

¹² David also gave Solomon all the plans he had in mind for the courtyards of the LORD's Temple, the outside rooms, the treasuries of God's Temple, and the rooms for the dedicated gifts.

¹³ The king also gave Solomon the instructions concerning the work of the various divisions of priests and Levites in the Temple of the LORD. And he gave specifications for the items in the LORD's Temple which were to be used for worship and sacrifice.

¹⁴ David gave instructions regarding how much gold and silver should be used to make the necessary items.

¹⁵ He told Solomon the amount of gold needed for the gold lampstands and lamps, and the amount of silver for the silver lampstands and lamps, depending on how each would be used.

¹⁶ He designated the amount of gold for the table on which the Bread of the Presence would be placed and the amount of silver for other tables.

¹⁷ David also designated the amount of gold for the solid gold meat hooks used to handle the sacrificial meat and for the basins, pitchers, and dishes, as well as the amount of silver for every dish.

¹⁸ Finally, he designated the amount of refined gold for the altar of incense and for the gold cherubim, whose wings were stretched out over the Ark of the LORD's covenant.

¹⁹ "Every part of this plan," David told Solomon, "was given to me in writing from the hand of the LORD."

²⁰ Then David continued, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don't be afraid or discouraged by the size of the task, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. He will see to it that all the work related to the Temple of the LORD is finished correctly.

²¹ The various divisions of priests and Levites will serve in the Temple of God. Others with skills of every kind will volunteer, and the leaders and the entire nation are at your command."

29 ¹ Then King David turned to the entire assembly and said, "My son Solomon, whom God has chosen to be the next king of Israel, is still young and inexperienced. The work ahead of him is enormous, for the Temple he will build is not just another building—it is for the LORD God himself!

² Using every resource at my command, I have gathered as much as I could for building the Temple of my God. Now there is enough gold, silver, bronze, iron, and wood, as well as great quantities of onyx, other precious stones, costly jewels, and all kinds of fine stone and marble.

³ And now because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple.

⁴ I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and over 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings

⁵ and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen. Now then, who will follow my example? Who is

willing to give offerings to the LORD today?"

⁶ Then the family leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the generals and captains of the army, and the king's administrative officers all gave willingly.

⁷ For the construction of the Temple of God, they gave almost 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, about 375 tons of silver, about 675 tons of bronze, and about 3,750 tons of iron.

⁸ They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the LORD under the care of Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon.

⁹ The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD, and King David was filled with joy.

¹⁰ Then David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly: "O

LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, may you be praised forever and ever!

¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O LORD, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things.

¹² Riches and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and it is at your discretion that people are made great and given strength.

¹³ "O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!

¹⁴ But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you have already given us!

¹⁵ We are here for only a moment, visitors and strangers in the land as our

ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a shadow, gone so soon without a trace.

¹⁶ "O LORD our God, even these materials that we have gathered to build a Temple to honor your holy name come from you! It all belongs to you!

¹⁷ I know, my God, that you examine our hearts and rejoice when you find integrity there. You know I have done all this with good motives, and I have watched your people offer their gifts willingly and joyously.

¹⁸ "O LORD, the God of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, make your people always want to obey you. See to it that their love for you never changes.

¹⁹ Give my son Solomon the wholehearted desire to obey all your commands, decrees, and principles, and to build this Temple, for which I have made all these preparations."

²⁰ Then David said to the whole assembly, "Give praise to the LORD your God!" And the entire assembly praised the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and they bowed low and knelt before the LORD and the king.

²¹ The next day they brought a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, and a thousand male lambs as burnt offerings to the LORD. They also brought drink offerings and many other sacrifices on behalf of Israel.

²² They feasted and drank in the LORD's presence with great joy that day. And again they crowned David's son Solomon as their new king. They anointed him before the LORD as their leader, and they anointed Zadok as their priest.

²³ So Solomon took the throne of the LORD in place of his father, David, and he prospered greatly, and all Israel obeyed him.

²⁴ All the royal officials, the army commanders, and the sons of King David pledged their loyalty to King Solomon.

²⁵ And the LORD exalted Solomon so the entire nation of Israel stood in awe of him, and he gave Solomon even greater wealth and honor than his father.

²⁶ So David son of Jesse reigned over all Israel.

²⁷ He ruled Israel for forty years in all, seven years from Hebron and thirty–three years from Jerusalem.

²⁸ He died at a ripe old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth, and honor. Then his son Solomon ruled in his place.

²⁹ All the events of King David's reign, from beginning to end, are written in The Record of Samuel the Seer, The Record of Nathan the Prophet, and The Record of Gad the Seer.

³⁰ These accounts include the mighty deeds of his reign and everything that

happened to him and to Israel and to all the surrounding kingdoms.

2 Chronicles

1 ¹ Solomon, the son of King David, now took firm control of the kingdom, for the LORD his God was with him and made him very powerful.

² He called together all Israel—the generals and captains of the army, the judges, and all the political and clan leaders.

³ Then Solomon led the entire assembly to the hill at Gibeon where God's Tabernacle was located. This was the Tabernacle that Moses, the LORD's servant, had constructed in the wilderness.

⁴ David had already moved the Ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the special tent he had prepared for it in Jerusalem.

⁵ But the bronze altar made by Bezalel son of Uri and grandson of Hur was still at Gibeon in front of the Tabernacle of the LORD. So Solomon and the people gathered in front of it to consult the LORD.

⁶ There in front of the Tabernacle, Solomon went up to the bronze altar in the LORD's presence and sacrificed a thousand burnt offerings on it.

⁷ That night God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"

⁸ Solomon replied to God, "You have been so faithful and kind to my father, David, and now you have made me king in his place.

⁹ Now, LORD God, please keep your promise to David my father, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth!

¹⁰ Give me wisdom and knowledge to rule them properly, for who is able to govern this great nation of yours?"

¹¹ God said to Solomon, "Because your greatest desire is to help your people, and you did not ask for personal wealth and honor or the death of your enemies or even a long life, but rather you asked for wisdom and knowledge to properly govern my people,

¹² I will certainly give you the wisdom and knowledge you requested. And I will also give you riches, wealth, and honor such as no other king has ever had before you or will ever have again!"

¹³ Then Solomon returned to Jerusalem from the Tabernacle at the hill of Gibeon, and he reigned over Israel.

¹⁴ Solomon built up a huge military force, which included fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses. He

stationed many of them in the chariot cities, and some near him in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ During Solomon's reign, silver and gold were as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. And valuable cedarwood was as common as the sycamore wood that grows in the foothills of Judah.

¹⁶ Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Cilicia; the king's traders acquired them from Cilicia at the standard price.

¹⁷ At that time, Egyptian chariots delivered to Jerusalem could be purchased for 600 pieces of silver, and horses could be bought for 150 pieces of silver. Many of these were then resold to the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

2¹ Solomon now decided that the time had come to build a Temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself.

² He enlisted a force of 70,000 common laborers, 80,000 stonecutters in the hill country, and 3,600 foremen.

³ Solomon also sent this message to King Hiram at Tyre: "Send me cedar logs like the ones that were supplied to my father, David, when he was building his palace.

⁴ I am about to build a Temple to honor the name of the LORD my God. It will be a place set apart to burn incense and sweet spices before him, to display the special sacrificial bread, and to sacrifice burnt offerings each morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, at new moon celebrations, and at the other appointed festivals of the LORD our God. He has commanded Israel to do these things forever.

⁵ "This will be a magnificent Temple because our God is an awesome God, greater than any other.

⁶ But who can really build him a worthy home? Not even the highest heavens can contain him! So who am I to consider building a Temple for him, except as a place to burn sacrifices to him?

⁷ "So send me a master craftsman who can work with gold, silver, bronze, and iron; someone who is expert at dyeing purple, scarlet, and blue cloth; and a skilled engraver who can work with the craftsmen of Judah and Jerusalem who were selected by my father, David.

⁸ Also send me cedar, cypress, and almug logs from Lebanon, for I know that your men are without equal at cutting timber. I will send my men to help them.

⁹ An immense amount of timber will be needed, for the Temple I am going to build will be very large and magnificent.

¹⁰ I will pay your men 100,000 bushels of crushed wheat, 100,000 bushels of

barley, 110,000 gallons of wine, and 110,000 gallons of olive oil."

¹¹ King Hiram sent this letter of reply to Solomon: "It is because the LORD loves his people that he has made you their king!

¹² Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who made the heavens and the earth! He has given David a wise son, gifted with skill and understanding, who will build a Temple for the LORD and a royal palace for himself.

¹³ "I am sending you a master craftsman named Hiram—abi. He is a brilliant man,

¹⁴ the son of a woman from Dan in Israel; his father is from Tyre. He is skillful at making things from gold, silver, bronze, and iron. He also knows all about stonework, carpentry, and weaving. He is an expert in dyeing purple, blue, and scarlet cloth and in working with linen. He is also an engraver and can follow any

design given to him. He will work with your craftsmen and those appointed by my lord David, your father.

¹⁵ "Send along the wheat, barley, olive oil, and wine that you mentioned.

¹⁶ We will cut whatever timber you need from the Lebanon mountains and will float the logs in rafts down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa. From there you can transport the logs up to Jerusalem."

¹⁷ Solomon took a census of all foreigners in the land of Israel, like the census his father had taken, and he counted 153,600.

¹⁸ He enlisted 70,000 of them as common laborers, 80,000 as stonecutters in the hill country, and 3,600 as foremen.

3 ¹ So Solomon began to build the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD

had appeared to Solomon's father, King David. The Temple was built on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the site that David had selected.

² The construction began in midspring, during the fourth year of Solomon's reign.

³ The foundation for the Temple of God was ninety feet long and thirty feet wide.

⁴ The foyer at the front of the Temple was thirty feet wide, running across the entire width of the Temple. The inner walls of the foyer and the ceiling were overlaid with pure gold. The roof of the foyer was thirty feet high.

⁵ The main room of the Temple was paneled with cypress wood, overlaid with pure gold, and decorated with carvings of palm trees and chains.

⁶ The walls of the Temple were decorated with beautiful jewels and with pure gold from the land of Parvaim.

⁷ All the walls, beams, doors, and thresholds throughout the Temple were overlaid with gold, and figures of cherubim were carved on the walls.

⁸ The Most Holy Place was thirty feet wide, corresponding to the width of the Temple, and it was also thirty feet deep. Its interior was overlaid with about twenty–three tons of pure gold.

⁹ They used gold nails that weighed about twenty ounces each. The walls of the upper rooms were also overlaid with pure gold.

¹⁰ Solomon made two figures shaped like cherubim and overlaid them with gold. These were placed in the Most Holy Place.

¹¹ The total wingspan of the two cherubim standing side by side was 30 feet. One wing of the first figure was 7 1/2 feet long, and it touched the Temple wall. The other wing, also 7 1/2 feet

long, touched one of the wings of the second figure.

¹² In the same way, the second figure had one wing 7 1/2 feet long that touched the opposite wall. The other wing, also 7 1/2 feet long, touched the wing of the first figure.

¹³ So the wingspan of both cherubim together was 30 feet. They both stood and faced out toward the main room of the Temple.

¹⁴ Across the entrance of the Most Holy Place, Solomon hung a curtain made of fine linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, with figures of cherubim embroidered on it.

¹⁵ For the front of the Temple, Solomon made two pillars that were 27 feet tall, each topped by a capital extending upward another 7 1/2 feet.

¹⁶ He made a network of interwoven chains and used them to decorate the

tops of the pillars. He also made one hundred decorative pomegranates and attached them to the chains.

¹⁷ Then he set up the two pillars at the entrance of the Temple, one to the south of the entrance and the other to the north. He named the one on the south Jakin, and the one on the north Boaz.

4 ¹ Solomon also made a bronze altar 30 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 15 feet high.

² Then he cast a large round tank, 15 feet across from rim to rim; it was called the Sea. It was 7 1/2 feet deep and about 45 feet in circumference.

³ The Sea was encircled just below its rim by two rows of figures that resembled oxen. There were about six oxen per foot all the way around, and they had been cast as part of the tank.

⁴ The Sea rested on a base of twelve bronze oxen, all facing outward. Three

faced north, three faced west, three faced south, and three faced east.

⁵ The walls of the Sea were about three inches thick, and its rim flared out like a cup and resembled a lily blossom. It could hold about 16,500 gallons of water.

⁶ He also made ten basins for water to wash the offerings, five to the south of the Sea and five to the north. The priests used the Sea itself, and not the basins, for their own washing.

⁷ Solomon then cast ten gold lampstands according to the specifications that had been given and put them in the Temple. Five were placed against the south wall, and five were placed against the north wall.

⁸ He also built ten tables and placed them in the Temple, five along the south wall and five along the north wall. Then he molded one hundred gold basins.

⁹ Solomon also built a courtyard for the priests and the large outer courtyard. He made doors for the courtyard entrances and overlaid them with bronze.

¹⁰ The Sea was placed near the southeast corner of the Temple.

¹¹ Hiram—abi also made the necessary pots, shovels, and basins. So at last Hiram—abi completed everything King Solomon had assigned him to make for the Temple of God:

¹² two pillars, two bowl—shaped capitals on top of the pillars, two networks of chains that decorated the capitals,

¹³ four hundred pomegranates that hung from the chains on the capitals (two rows of pomegranates for each of the chain networks that were hung around the capitals on top of the pillars),

¹⁴ the water carts holding the basins,

¹⁵ the Sea and the twelve oxen under it,

¹⁶ the pots, the shovels, the meat hooks, and all the related utensils. Hiram–abi made all these things out of burnished bronze for the Temple of the LORD, just as King Solomon had requested.

¹⁷ The king had them cast in clay molds in the Jordan Valley between Succoth and Zarethan.

¹⁸ Such great quantities of bronze were used that its weight could not be determined.

¹⁹ So Solomon made all the furnishings for the Temple of God: the gold altar; the tables for the Bread of the Presence;

²⁰ the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn in front of the Most Holy Place as prescribed;

²¹ the flower decorations, lamps, and tongs, all of pure gold;

²² the lamp snuffers, basins, dishes, and firepans, all of pure gold; the doors

for the entrances to the Most Holy Place and the main room of the Temple, overlaid with gold.

5¹ When Solomon had finished all the work related to building the Temple of the LORD, he brought in the gifts dedicated by his father, King David, including all the silver and gold and all the utensils. These were stored in the treasuries of the Temple of God.

² Solomon then summoned the leaders of all the tribes and families of Israel to assemble in Jerusalem. They were to bring the Ark of the LORD's covenant from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion, to its new place in the Temple.

³ They all assembled before the king at the annual Festival of Shelters in early autumn.

⁴ When all the leaders of Israel arrived, the Levites moved the Ark,

⁵ along with the special tent and all its sacred utensils. The Levitical priests carried them all up to the Temple.

⁶ King Solomon and the entire community of Israel sacrificed sheep and oxen before the Ark in such numbers that no one could keep count!

⁷ Then the priests carried the Ark of the LORD's covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple—the Most Holy Place—and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim.

⁸ The cherubim spread their wings out over the Ark, forming a canopy over the Ark and its carrying poles.

⁹ These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the front entrance of the Temple's main room—the Holy Place—but not from outside it. They are still there to this day.

¹⁰ Nothing was in the Ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed

there at Mount Sinai, when the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel after they left Egypt.

¹¹ Then the priests left the Holy Place. All the priests who were present had purified themselves, whether or not they were on duty that day.

¹² And the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and all their sons and brothers—were dressed in fine linen robes and stood at the east side of the altar playing cymbals, harps, and lyres. They were joined by 120 priests who were playing trumpets.

¹³ The trumpeters and singers performed together in unison to praise and give thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices and praised the LORD with these words: "He is so good! His faithful love

endures forever!" At that moment a cloud filled the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁴ The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the LORD filled the Temple of God.

6 ¹ Then Solomon prayed, "O LORD, you have said that you would live in thick darkness.

² But I have built a glorious Temple for you, where you can live forever!"

³ Then the king turned around to the entire community of Israel standing before him and gave this blessing:

⁴ "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has kept the promise he made to my father, David. For he told my father,

⁵ 'From the day I brought my people out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city among the tribes of Israel as the place where a temple should be built to honor

my name. Nor have I chosen a king to lead my people Israel.

⁶ But now I have chosen Jerusalem as that city, and David as that king.'"

⁷ Then Solomon said, "My father, David, wanted to build this Temple to honor the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁸ But the LORD told him, 'It is right for you to want to build the Temple to honor my name,

⁹ but you will not be the one to do it. One of your sons will build it instead.'

¹⁰ "And now the LORD has done what he promised, for I have become king in my father's place. I have built this Temple to honor the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹¹ There I have placed the Ark, and in the Ark is the covenant that the LORD made with the people of Israel."

¹² Then Solomon stood with his hands spread out before the altar of the LORD

in front of the entire community of Israel.

¹³ He had made a bronze platform 7 1/2 feet long, 7 1/2 feet wide, and 4 1/2 feet high and had placed it at the center of the Temple's outer courtyard. He stood on the platform before the entire assembly, and then he knelt down and lifted his hands toward heaven.

¹⁴ He prayed, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven and earth. You keep your promises and show unfailing love to all who obey you and are eager to do your will.

¹⁵ You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth, and today you have fulfilled it with your own hands.

¹⁶ And now, O LORD, God of Israel, carry out your further promise to your servant David, my father. For you said to him, 'If

your descendants guard their behavior and obey my law as you have done, they will always reign over Israel.'

¹⁷ Now, O LORD, God of Israel, fulfill this promise to your servant David.

¹⁸ "But will God really live on earth among people? Why, even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built!

¹⁹ Listen to my prayer and my request, O LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is making to you.

²⁰ May you watch over this Temple both day and night, this place where you have said you would put your name. May you always hear the prayers I make toward this place.

²¹ May you hear the humble and earnest requests from me and your people Israel when we pray toward this

place. Yes, hear us from heaven where you live, and when you hear, forgive.

²² "If someone wrongs another person and is required to take an oath of innocence in front of the altar at this Temple,

²³ then hear from heaven and judge between your servants—the accuser and the accused. Punish the guilty party, and acquit the one who is innocent.

²⁴ "If your people Israel are defeated by their enemies because they have sinned against you, and if they turn to you and call on your name and pray to you here in this Temple,

²⁵ then hear from heaven and forgive their sins and return them to this land you gave their ancestors.

²⁶ "If the skies are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this Temple and confess your name and

turn from their sins because you have punished them,

²⁷ then hear from heaven and forgive the sins of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them to do what is right, and send rain on your land that you have given to your people as their special possession.

²⁸ "If there is a famine in the land, or plagues, or crop disease, or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people's enemies are in the land besieging their towns—whatever the trouble is—

²⁹ and if your people offer a prayer concerning their troubles or sorrow, raising their hands toward this Temple,

³⁰ then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive. Give your people whatever they deserve, for you alone know the human heart.

³¹ Then they will fear you and walk in your ways as long as they live in the land you gave to our ancestors.

³² "And when foreigners hear of you and your mighty miracles, and they come from distant lands to worship your great name and to pray toward this Temple,

³³ then hear from heaven where you live, and grant what they ask of you. Then all the people of the earth will come to know and fear you, just as your own people Israel do. They, too, will know that this Temple I have built bears your name.

³⁴ "If your people go out at your command to fight their enemies, and if they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen and toward this Temple that I have built for your name,

³⁵ then hear their prayers from heaven and uphold their cause.

³⁶ "If they sin against you—and who has never sinned?—you may become angry with them and let their enemies conquer them and take them captive to a foreign land far or near.

³⁷ But in that land of exile, they may turn to you again in repentance and pray, 'We have sinned, done evil, and acted wickedly.'

³⁸ Then if they turn to you with their whole heart and soul and pray toward the land you gave to their ancestors, toward this city you have chosen, and toward this Temple I have built to honor your name,

³⁹ then hear their prayers from heaven where you live. Uphold their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you.

⁴⁰ "O my God, be attentive to all the prayers made to you in this place.

⁴¹ And now, O LORD God, arise and enter this resting place of yours, where your magnificent Ark has been placed. May your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and may your saints rejoice in your goodness.

⁴² O LORD God, do not reject your anointed one. Remember your unfailing love for your servant David."

7 ¹ When Solomon finished praying, fire flashed down from heaven and burned up the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and the glorious presence of the LORD filled the Temple.

² The priests could not even enter the Temple of the LORD because the glorious presence of the LORD filled it.

³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire coming down and the glorious presence of the LORD filling the Temple, they fell face down on the ground and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying,

"He is so good! His faithful love endures forever!"

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices to the LORD.

⁵ King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. And so the king and all the people dedicated the Temple of God.

⁶ The priests took their assigned positions, and so did the Levites who were singing, "His faithful love endures forever!" They accompanied the singing with music from the instruments King David had made for praising the LORD. On the other side of the Levites, the priests blew the trumpets, while all Israel stood.

⁷ Solomon then dedicated the central area of the courtyard in front of the LORD's Temple so they could present burnt offerings and the fat from peace offerings there. He did this because

the bronze altar he had built could not handle all the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sacrificial fat.

⁸ For the next seven days they celebrated the Festival of Shelters with huge crowds gathered from all the tribes of Israel. They came from as far away as Lebo–hamath in the north, to the brook of Egypt in the south.

⁹ On the eighth day they had a closing ceremony, for they had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the Festival of Shelters for seven days.

¹⁰ Then at the end of the celebration, Solomon sent the people home. They were all joyful and happy because the LORD had been so good to David and Solomon and to his people Israel.

¹¹ So Solomon finished building the Temple of the LORD, as well as the royal

palace. He completed everything he had planned to do.

¹² Then one night the LORD appeared to Solomon and said, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this Temple as the place for making sacrifices.

¹³ At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or I might command locusts to devour your crops, or I might send plagues among you.

¹⁴ Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land.

¹⁵ I will listen to every prayer made in this place,

¹⁶ for I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be my home forever. My eyes and my heart will always be here.

¹⁷ "As for you, if you follow me as your father, David, did and obey all my commands, laws, and regulations,

¹⁸ then I will not let anyone take away your throne. This is the same promise I gave your father, David, when I said, 'You will never fail to have a successor who rules over Israel.'

¹⁹ "But if you abandon me and disobey the laws and commands I have given you, and if you go and worship other gods,

²⁰ then I will uproot the people of Israel from this land of mine that I have given them. I will reject this Temple that I have set apart to honor my name. I will make it a spectacle of contempt among the nations.

²¹ And though this Temple is impressive now, it will become an appalling sight to all who pass by. They will ask, 'Why has

the LORD done such terrible things to his land and to his Temple?’

²² And the answer will be, ‘Because his people abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who brought them out of Egypt, and they worshiped other gods instead. That is why he brought all these disasters upon them.’”

8 ¹ It was now twenty years since Solomon had become king, and the great building projects of the LORD’s Temple and his own royal palace were completed.

² Solomon now turned his attention to rebuilding the towns that King Hiram had given him, and he settled Israelites in them.

³ It was at this time, too, that Solomon fought against the city of Hamath–zobah and conquered it.

⁴ He rebuilt Tadmor in the desert and built towns in the region of Hamath as supply centers.

⁵ He fortified the cities of Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, rebuilding their walls and installing barred gates.

⁶ He also rebuilt Baalath and other supply centers at this time and constructed cities where his chariots and horses could be kept. He built to his heart's content in Jerusalem and Lebanon and throughout the entire realm.

⁷ There were still some people living in the land who were not Israelites, including Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.

⁸ These were descendants of the nations that Israel had not completely destroyed. So Solomon conscripted

them for his labor force, and they serve in the labor force to this day.

⁹ But Solomon did not conscript any of the Israelites for forced labor. Instead, he assigned them to serve as fighting men, officers in his army, commanders of his chariots, and charioteers.

¹⁰ King Solomon also appointed 250 of them to supervise the various projects.

¹¹ Solomon moved his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, from the City of David to the new palace he had built for her. He said, "My wife must not live in King David's palace, for the Ark of the LORD has been there, and it is holy ground."

¹² Then Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar he had built in front of the foyer of the Temple.

¹³ The number of sacrifices varied from day to day according to the commands Moses had given. Extra sacrifices were offered on the Sabbaths, on new moon

festivals, and at the three annual festivals—the Passover celebration, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁴ In assigning the priests to their duties, Solomon followed the regulations of his father, David. He also assigned the Levites to lead the people in praise and to assist the priests in their daily duties. And he assigned the gatekeepers to their gates by their divisions, following the commands of David, the man of God.

¹⁵ Solomon did not deviate in any way from David's commands concerning the priests and Levites and the treasuries.

¹⁶ So Solomon made sure that all the work related to building the Temple of the LORD was carried out, from the day its foundation was laid to the day of its completion.

¹⁷ Later Solomon went to Ezion–geber and Elath, ports in the land of Edom, along the shore of the Red Sea.

¹⁸ Hiram sent him ships commanded by his own officers and manned by experienced crews of sailors. These ships sailed to the land of Ophir with Solomon’s men and brought back to Solomon almost seventeen tons of gold.

9 ¹ When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon’s reputation, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions. She arrived with a large group of attendants and a great caravan of camels loaded with spices, huge quantities of gold, and precious jewels.

² When she met with Solomon, they talked about everything she had on her mind. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for him to explain to her.

³ When the queen of Sheba realized how wise Solomon was, and when she saw the palace he had built,

⁴ she was breathless. She was also amazed at the food on his tables, the organization of his officials and their splendid clothing, the cup-bearers and their robes, and the burnt offerings Solomon made at the Temple of the LORD.

⁵ She exclaimed to the king, "Everything I heard in my country about your achievements and wisdom is true!

⁶ I didn't believe it until I arrived here and saw it with my own eyes. Truly I had not heard the half of it! Your wisdom is far greater than what I was told.

⁷ How happy these people must be! What a privilege for your officials to stand here day after day, listening to your wisdom!

⁸ The LORD your God is great indeed! He delights in you and has placed you on the throne to rule for him. Because God loves Israel so much and desires this kingdom to last forever, he has made you king so you can rule with justice and righteousness."

⁹ Then she gave the king a gift of nine thousand pounds of gold, and great quantities of spices and precious jewels. Never before had there been spices as fine as those the queen of Sheba gave to Solomon.

¹⁰ (When the crews of Hiram and Solomon brought gold from Ophir, they also brought rich cargoes of almug wood and precious jewels.

¹¹ The king used the almug wood to make steps for the Temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and to construct harps and lyres for the musicians. Never

before had there been such beautiful instruments in Judah.)

¹² King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba whatever she asked for—gifts of greater value than the gifts she had given him. Then she and all her attendants left and returned to their own land.

¹³ Each year Solomon received about 25 tons of gold.

¹⁴ This did not include the additional revenue he received from merchants and traders. All the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land also brought gold and silver to Solomon.

¹⁵ King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold, each containing over 15 pounds of gold.

¹⁶ He also made three hundred smaller shields of hammered gold, each containing about 7 1/2 pounds of gold. The king placed these shields in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁷ Then the king made a huge ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold.

¹⁸ The throne had six steps, and there was a footstool of gold attached to it. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with the figure of a lion standing on each side of the throne.

¹⁹ Solomon made twelve other lion figures, one standing on each end of each of the six steps. No other throne in all the world could be compared with it!

²⁰ All of King Solomon's drinking cups were solid gold, as were all the utensils in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. They were not made of silver because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's day!

²¹ The king had a fleet of trading ships manned by the sailors sent by Hiram. Once every three years the ships returned, loaded down with gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

²² So King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king in all the earth.

²³ Kings from every nation came to visit him and to hear the wisdom God had given him.

²⁴ Year after year, everyone who came to visit brought him gifts of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

²⁵ Solomon had four thousand stalls for his chariot horses and twelve thousand horses. He stationed many of them in the chariot cities, and some near him in Jerusalem.

²⁶ He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines and the border of Egypt.

²⁷ The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. And valuable cedarwood was as common as the sycamore wood that grows in the foothills of Judah.

²⁸ Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and many other countries.

²⁹ The rest of the events of Solomon's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Record of Nathan the Prophet and in The Prophecy of Ahijah from Shiloh, and also in The Visions of Iddo the Seer, concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat.

³⁰ Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years.

³¹ When he died, he was buried in the city of his father, David. Then his son Rehoboam became the next king.

10 ¹ Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king.

² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of Solomon's death, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon.

³ The leaders of Israel sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went together to speak with Rehoboam.

⁴ "Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects."

⁵ Rehoboam replied, "Come back in three days for my answer." So the people went away.

⁶ Then King Rehoboam went to discuss the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?"

⁷ The older counselors replied, "If you are good to the people and show them kindness and do your best to please them, they will always be your loyal subjects."

⁸ But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and who were now his advisers.

⁹ "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

¹⁰ The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist—if you think he was hard on you, just wait and see what I'll be like!'"

¹¹ Yes, my father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!"

¹² Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to hear Rehoboam's decision, just as the king had requested.

¹³ But Rehoboam spoke harshly to them, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors

¹⁴ and followed the counsel of his younger advisers. He told the people, "My father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!"

¹⁵ So the king paid no attention to the people's demands. This turn of events was the will of God, for it fulfilled the prophecy of the LORD spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat by the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.

¹⁶ When all Israel realized that the king had rejected their request, they shouted, "Down with David and his dynasty! We have no share in Jesse's son! Let's go home, Israel! Look out for your own house, O David!" So all Israel returned home.

¹⁷ But Rehoboam continued to rule over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

¹⁸ King Rehoboam sent Adoniram, who was in charge of the labor force, to restore order, but the Israelites stoned him to death. When this news reached King Rehoboam, he quickly jumped into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem.

¹⁹ The northern tribes of Israel have refused to be ruled by a descendant of David to this day.

11 ¹ When Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, he mobilized the armies of Judah and Benjamin—180,000 select troops—to fight against the army of Israel and to restore the kingdom to himself.

² But the LORD said to Shemaiah, the man of God,

³ "Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the Israelites in Judah and Benjamin:

⁴ 'This is what the LORD says: Do not fight against your relatives. Go back

home, for what has happened is my doing!" So they obeyed the message of the LORD and did not fight against Jeroboam.

⁵ Rehoboam remained in Jerusalem and fortified various cities for the defense of Judah.

⁶ He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa,

⁷ Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam,

⁸ Gath, Mareshah, Ziph,

⁹ Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah,

¹⁰ Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron. These became the fortified cities of Judah and Benjamin.

¹¹ Rehoboam strengthened their defenses and stationed commanders in them. In each of them, he stored supplies of food, olive oil, and wine.

¹² He also put shields and spears in these towns as a further safety measure. So only Judah and Benjamin remained under his control.

¹³ But all the priests and Levites living among the northern tribes of Israel sided with Rehoboam.

¹⁴ The Levites even abandoned their homes and property and moved to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons would not allow them to serve the LORD as priests.

¹⁵ Jeroboam appointed his own priests to serve at the pagan shrines, where they worshiped the goat and calf idols he had made.

¹⁶ From all over Israel, those who sincerely wanted to worship the LORD, the God of Israel, followed the Levites to Jerusalem, where they could offer sacrifices to the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

¹⁷ This strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they supported Rehoboam son of Solomon and earnestly sought to obey the LORD

as they had done during the reigns of David and Solomon.

¹⁸ Rehoboam married his cousin Mahalath, the daughter of David's son Jerimoth and of Abihail, the daughter of Eliab. (Eliab was one of David's brothers, a son of Jesse.)

¹⁹ Mahalath had three sons—Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham.

²⁰ Later Rehoboam married another cousin, Maacah, the daughter of Absalom. Maacah gave birth to Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith.

²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah more than any of his other wives and concubines. In all, he had eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and they gave birth to twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

²² Rehoboam made Maacah's son Abijah chief among the princes, making it clear that he would be the next king.

²³ Rehoboam also wisely gave responsibilities to his other sons and stationed them in the fortified cities throughout the land of Judah and Benjamin. He provided them with generous provisions and arranged for each of them to have several wives.

12 ¹ But when Rehoboam was firmly established and strong, he abandoned the law of the LORD, and all Israel followed him in this sin.

² Because they were unfaithful to the LORD, King Shishak of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam's reign.

³ He came with twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horsemen, and a countless army of foot soldiers, including Libyans, Sukkites, and Ethiopians.

⁴ Shishak conquered Judah's fortified cities and then advanced to attack Jerusalem.

⁵ The prophet Shemaiah then met with Rehoboam and Judah's leaders, who had all fled to Jerusalem because of Shishak. Shemaiah told them, "This is what the LORD says: You have abandoned me, so I am abandoning you to Shishak."

⁶ The king and the leaders of Israel humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is right in doing this to us!"

⁷ When the LORD saw their change of heart, he gave this message to Shemaiah: "Since the people have humbled themselves, I will not completely destroy them and will soon give them some relief. I will not use Shishak to pour out my anger on Jerusalem.

⁸ But they will become his subjects, so that they can learn how much better it is to serve me than to serve earthly rulers."

⁹ So King Shishak of Egypt came to Jerusalem and took away all the treasures of the Temple of the LORD and of the royal palace, including all of Solomon's gold shields.

¹⁰ King Rehoboam later replaced them with bronze shields and entrusted them to the care of the captain of his bodyguard.

¹¹ Whenever the king went to the Temple of the LORD, the guards would carry them along and then return them to the guardroom.

¹² Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the LORD's anger was turned aside, and he did not destroy him completely. And there was still goodness in the land of Judah.

¹³ King Rehoboam firmly established himself in Jerusalem and continued to rule. He was forty–one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen from among all the tribes of Israel as the place to honor his name. Rehoboam’s mother was Naamah, a woman from Ammon.

¹⁴ But he was an evil king, for he did not seek the LORD with all his heart.

¹⁵ The rest of the events of Rehoboam’s reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Record of Shemaiah the Prophet and in The Record of Iddo the Seer, which are part of the genealogical record. Rehoboam and Jeroboam were continually at war with each other.

¹⁶ When Rehoboam died, he was buried in the City of David. Then his son Abijah became the next king.

13 ¹ Abijah began to rule over Judah in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel.

² He reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother was Maacah, a daughter of Uriel from Gibeah. Then war broke out between Abijah and Jeroboam.

³ Judah, led by King Abijah, fielded 400,000 seasoned warriors, while Jeroboam mustered 800,000 courageous men from Israel.

⁴ When the army of Judah arrived in the hill country of Ephraim, Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim and shouted to Jeroboam and the Israelite army: "Listen to me!

⁵ Don't you realize that the LORD, the God of Israel, made an unbreakable covenant with David, giving him and his descendants the throne of Israel forever?

⁶ Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, who was a mere servant of David's son Solomon, became a traitor to his master.

⁷ Then a whole gang of scoundrels joined him, defying Solomon's son Rehoboam when he was young and inexperienced and could not stand up to them.

⁸ Do you really think you can stand against the kingdom of the LORD that is led by the descendants of David? Your army is vast indeed, but with you are those gold calves that Jeroboam made as your gods!

⁹ And you have chased away the priests of the LORD and the Levites and have appointed your own priests, just like the pagan nations. You let anyone become a priest these days! Whoever comes to be dedicated with a young bull and seven rams can become a priest of these so-called gods of yours!

¹⁰ "But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned him. Only the descendants of Aaron serve the LORD as priests, and the Levites alone may help them in their work.

¹¹ They present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD every morning and evening. They place the Bread of the Presence on the holy table, and they light the gold lampstand every evening. We are following the instructions of the LORD our God, but you have abandoned him.

¹² So you see, God is with us. He is our leader. His priests blow their trumpets and lead us into battle against you. O people of Israel, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed!"

¹³ Meanwhile, Jeroboam had secretly sent part of his army around behind the men of Judah to ambush them.

¹⁴ When Judah realized that they were being attacked from the front and the rear, they cried out to the LORD for help. Then the priests blew the trumpets,

¹⁵ and the men of Judah began to shout. At the sound of their battle cry, God defeated Jeroboam and the Israelite army and routed them before Abijah and the army of Judah.

¹⁶ The Israelite army fled from Judah, and God handed them over to Judah in defeat.

¹⁷ Abijah and his army inflicted heavy losses on them; there were 500,000 casualties among Israel's finest troops that day.

¹⁸ So Judah defeated Israel because they trusted in the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

¹⁹ Abijah and his army pursued Jeroboam's troops and captured some of his towns, including Bethel, Jeshanah,

and Ephron, along with their surrounding villages.

²⁰ So Jeroboam of Israel never regained his power during Abijah's lifetime, and finally the LORD struck him down and he died.

²¹ By contrast, Abijah of Judah grew more and more powerful. He married fourteen wives and had twenty–two sons and sixteen daughters.

²² The rest of the events of Abijah's reign, including his words and deeds, are recorded in The Commentary of Iddo the Prophet.

14 ¹ When Abijah died, he was buried in the City of David. Then his son Asa became the next king. There was peace in the land for ten years,

² for Asa did what was pleasing and good in the sight of the LORD his God.

³ He removed the pagan altars and the shrines. He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah poles.

⁴ He commanded the people of Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his law and his commands.

⁵ Asa also removed the pagan shrines, as well as the incense altars from every one of Judah's towns. So Asa's kingdom enjoyed a period of peace.

⁶ During those peaceful years, he was able to build up the fortified cities throughout Judah. No one tried to make war against him at this time, for the LORD was giving him rest from his enemies.

⁷ Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the LORD our God, and he has given us rest from

our enemies." So they went ahead with these projects and brought them to completion.

⁸ King Asa had an army of 300,000 warriors from the tribe of Judah, armed with large shields and spears. He also had an army of 280,000 warriors from the tribe of Benjamin, armed with small shields and bows. Both armies were composed of courageous fighting men.

⁹ Once an Ethiopian named Zerah attacked Judah with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots. They advanced to the city of Mareshah,

¹⁰ so Asa deployed his armies for battle in the valley north of Mareshah.

¹¹ Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God, "O LORD, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O LORD,

you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!"

¹² So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians in the presence of Asa and the army of Judah, and the enemy fled.

¹³ Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar, and so many Ethiopians fell that they were unable to rally. They were destroyed by the LORD and his army, and the army of Judah carried off vast quantities of plunder.

¹⁴ While they were at Gerar, they attacked all the towns in that area, and terror from the LORD came upon the people there. As a result, vast quantities of plunder were taken from these towns, too.

¹⁵ They also attacked the camps of herdsmen and captured many sheep and camels before finally returning to Jerusalem.

15 ¹ Then the Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded, ² and he went out to meet King Asa as he was returning from the battle. "Listen to me, Asa!" he shouted. "Listen, all you people of Judah and Benjamin! The LORD will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you seek him, you will find him. But if you abandon him, he will abandon you.

³ For a long time, Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach them, and without God's law.

⁴ But whenever you were in distress and turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him out, you found him.

⁵ During those dark times, it was not safe to travel. Problems troubled the nation on every hand.

⁶ Nation fought against nation, and city against city, for God was troubling you with every kind of problem.

⁷ And now, you men of Judah, be strong and courageous, for your work will be rewarded."

⁸ When Asa heard this message from Azariah the prophet, he took courage and removed all the idols in the land of Judah and Benjamin and in the towns he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, which stood in front of the foyer of the LORD's Temple.

⁹ Then Asa called together all the people of Judah and Benjamin, along with the people of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who had settled among them. Many had moved to Judah during Asa's reign when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

¹⁰ The people gathered at Jerusalem in late spring, during the fifteenth year of Asa's reign.

¹¹ On that day they sacrificed to the LORD some of the animals they had taken as plunder in the battle—seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep and goats.

¹² Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul.

¹³ They agreed that anyone who refused to seek the LORD, the God of Israel, would be put to death—whether young or old, man or woman.

¹⁴ They shouted out their oath of loyalty to the LORD with trumpets blaring and horns sounding.

¹⁵ All were happy about this covenant, for they had entered into it with all their hearts. Eagerly they sought after God, and they found him. And the LORD gave

them rest from their enemies on every side.

¹⁶ King Asa even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made an obscene Asherah pole. He cut down the pole, broke it up, and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

¹⁷ Although the pagan shrines were not completely removed from Israel, Asa remained fully committed to the LORD throughout his life.

¹⁸ He brought into the Temple of God the silver and gold and the utensils that he and his father had dedicated.

¹⁹ So there was no more war until the thirty–fifth year of Asa’s reign.

16 ¹ In the thirty–sixth year of Asa’s reign, King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from entering or leaving King Asa’s territory in Judah.

² Asa responded by taking the silver and gold from the treasuries of the LORD's Temple and from the royal palace. He sent it to King Ben-hadad of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus, along with this message:

³ "Let us renew the treaty that existed between your father and my father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel so that he will leave me alone."

⁴ Ben-hadad agreed to King Asa's request and sent his armies to attack Israel. They conquered the towns of Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all the store cities in Naphtali.

⁵ As soon as Baasha of Israel heard what was happening, he abandoned his project of fortifying Ramah.

⁶ Then King Asa called out all the men of Judah to carry away the building stones and timbers that Baasha had

been using to fortify Ramah. Asa used these materials to fortify the towns of Geba and Mizpah.

⁷ At that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa and told him, "Because you have put your trust in the king of Aram instead of in the LORD your God, you missed your chance to destroy the army of the king of Aram.

⁸ Don't you remember what happened to the Ethiopians and Libyans and their vast army, with all of their chariots and horsemen? At that time you relied on the LORD, and he handed them all over to you.

⁹ The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. What a fool you have been! From now on, you will be at war."

¹⁰ Asa became so angry with Hanani for saying this that he threw him into prison.

At that time, Asa also began to oppress some of his people.

¹¹ The rest of the events of Asa's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

¹² In the thirty–ninth year of his reign, Asa developed a serious foot disease. Even when the disease became life threatening, he did not seek the LORD's help but sought help only from his physicians.

¹³ So he died in the forty–first year of his reign.

¹⁴ He was buried in the tomb he had carved out for himself in the City of David. He was laid on a bed perfumed with sweet spices and ointments, and at his funeral the people built a huge fire in his honor.

17 ¹ Then Jehoshaphat, Asa's son, became the next king. He

strengthened Judah to stand against any attack from Israel.

² He stationed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and he assigned additional garrisons to the land of Judah and to the towns of Ephraim that his father, Asa, had conquered.

³ The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father's early years and did not worship the images of Baal.

⁴ He sought his father's God and obeyed his commands instead of following the practices of the kingdom of Israel.

⁵ So the LORD established Jehoshaphat's control over the kingdom of Judah. All the people of Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so he became very wealthy and highly esteemed.

⁶ He was committed to the ways of the LORD. He knocked down the pagan

shrines and destroyed the Asherah poles.

⁷ In the third year of his reign, Jehoshaphat sent out his officials to teach in all the towns of Judah. These officials included Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah.

⁸ He sent Levites along with them, including Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah. He also sent out the priests, Elishama and Jehoram.

⁹ They took copies of the Book of the Law of the LORD and traveled around through all the towns of Judah, teaching the people.

¹⁰ Then the fear of the LORD fell over all the surrounding kingdoms so that none of them declared war on Jehoshaphat.

¹¹ Some of the Philistines brought him gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs

brought seventy–seven hundred rams and seventy–seven hundred male goats.

¹² So Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful and built fortresses and store cities throughout Judah.

¹³ He stored numerous supplies in Judah’s towns and stationed an army of seasoned troops at Jerusalem.

¹⁴ His army was enrolled according to ancestral clans. From Judah, there were 300,000 troops organized in units of one thousand, under the command of Adnah.

¹⁵ Next in command was Jehohanan, who commanded 280,000 troops.

¹⁶ Next was Amasiah son of Zicri, who volunteered for the LORD’s service, with 200,000 troops under his command.

¹⁷ From Benjamin, there were 200,000 troops equipped with bows and shields. They were under the command of Eliada, a veteran soldier.

¹⁸ Next in command was Jehozabad, who commanded 180,000 armed men.

¹⁹ These were the troops stationed in Jerusalem to serve the king, besides those Jehoshaphat stationed in the fortified cities throughout Judah.

18 ¹ Now Jehoshaphat enjoyed great riches and high esteem, and he arranged for his son to marry the daughter of King Ahab of Israel.

² A few years later, he went to Samaria to visit Ahab, who prepared a great banquet for him and his officials. They butchered great numbers of sheep and oxen for the feast. Then Ahab enticed Jehoshaphat to join forces with him to attack Ramoth-gilead.

³ "Will you join me in fighting against Ramoth-gilead?" Ahab asked. And Jehoshaphat replied, "Why, of course! You and I are brothers, and my troops

are yours to command. We will certainly join you in battle."

⁴ Then Jehoshaphat added, "But first let's find out what the LORD says."

⁵ So King Ahab summoned his prophets, four hundred of them, and asked them, "Should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?" They all replied, "Go ahead, for God will give you a great victory!"

⁶ But Jehoshaphat asked, "Isn't there a prophet of the LORD around, too? I would like to ask him the same question."

⁷ King Ahab replied, "There is still one prophet of the LORD, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me! His name is Micaiah son of Imlah." "You shouldn't talk like that," Jehoshaphat said. "Let's hear what he has to say."

⁸ So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Quick! Go and get Micaiah son of Imlah."

⁹ King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, dressed in their royal robes, were sitting on thrones at the threshing floor near the gate of Samaria. All of Ahab's prophets were prophesying there in front of them.

¹⁰ One of them, Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, made some iron horns and proclaimed, "This is what the LORD says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans to death!"

¹¹ All the other prophets agreed. "Yes," they said, "go up to Ramoth-gilead and be victorious. The LORD will give you a glorious victory!"

¹² Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah said to him, "Look, all the prophets are promising victory

for the king. Be sure that you agree with them and promise success."

¹³ But Micaiah replied, "As surely as the LORD lives, I will say only what my God tells me to say."

¹⁴ When Micaiah arrived before the king, Ahab asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?" And Micaiah replied, "Go right ahead! It will be a glorious victory!"

¹⁵ But the king replied sharply, "How many times must I demand that you speak only the truth when you speak for the LORD?"

¹⁶ So Micaiah told him, "In a vision I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd. And the LORD said, 'Their master has been killed. Send them home in peace.'"

¹⁷ "Didn't I tell you?" the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat. "He does it every

time. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me."

¹⁸ Then Micaiah continued, "Listen to what the LORD says! I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven on his right and on his left.

¹⁹ And the LORD said, 'Who can entice King Ahab of Israel to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so that he can be killed there?' There were many suggestions,

²⁰ until finally a spirit approached the LORD and said, 'I can do it!' "'How will you do this?' the LORD asked.

²¹ "And the spirit replied, 'I will go out and inspire all Ahab's prophets to speak lies.' "'You will succeed,' said the LORD. 'Go ahead and do it.'

²² "So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of your prophets. For the LORD has determined disaster for you."

²³ Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah walked up to Micaiah and slapped him across the face. "When did the Spirit of the LORD leave me to speak to you?" he demanded.

²⁴ And Micaiah replied, "You will find out soon enough, when you find yourself hiding in some secret room!"

²⁵ King Ahab of Israel then ordered, "Arrest Micaiah and take him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to my son Joash.

²⁶ Give them this order from the king: 'Put this man in prison, and feed him nothing but bread and water until I return safely from the battle!'"

²⁷ But Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me!" Then he added to those standing around, "Take note of what I have said."

²⁸ So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah led their armies against Ramoth-gilead.

²⁹ Now King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "As we go into battle, I will disguise myself so no one will recognize me, but you wear your royal robes." So Ahab disguised himself, and they went into battle.

³⁰ Now the king of Aram had issued these orders to his charioteers: "Attack only the king of Israel!"

³¹ So when the Aramean charioteers saw Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, they went after him. "There is the king of Israel!" they shouted. But Jehoshaphat cried out to the LORD to save him, and God helped him by turning the attack away from him.

³² As soon as the charioteers realized he was not the king of Israel, they stopped chasing him.

³³ An Aramean soldier, however, randomly shot an arrow at the Israelite troops, and the arrow hit the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. "Get me out of here!" Ahab groaned to the driver of his chariot. "I have been badly wounded!"

³⁴ The battle raged all that day, and Ahab propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. Then, just as the sun was setting, he died.

19 ¹ When King Jehoshaphat of Judah arrived safely home to Jerusalem,

² Jehu son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him. "Why should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?" he asked the king. "What you have done has brought the LORD's anger against you.

³ There is some good in you, however, for you have removed the Asherah poles

throughout the land, and you have committed yourself to seeking God."

⁴ So Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, but he went out among the people, traveling from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim, encouraging the people to return to the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

⁵ He appointed judges throughout the nation in all the fortified cities,

⁶ and he gave them these instructions: "Always think carefully before pronouncing judgment. Remember that you do not judge to please people but to please the LORD. He will be with you when you render the verdict in each case that comes before you.

⁷ Fear the LORD and judge with care, for the LORD our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of bribes."

⁸ Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests and clan leaders in Israel to serve as judges in Jerusalem for cases concerning both the law of the LORD and civil disputes.

⁹ These were his instructions to them: "You must always act in the fear of the LORD, with integrity and with undivided hearts.

¹⁰ Whenever a case comes to you from fellow citizens in an outlying town, whether a murder case or some other violation of God's instructions, commands, laws, or regulations, you must warn them not to sin against the LORD, so that his anger will not come against you and them. Do this and you will not be guilty.

¹¹ "Amariah the high priest will have final say in all cases concerning the LORD. Zebadiah son of Ishmael, a leader from the tribe of Judah, will have final

say in all civil cases. The Levites will assist you in making sure that justice is served. Take courage as you fulfill your duties, and may the LORD be with those who do what is right."

20¹ After this, the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites declared war on Jehoshaphat.

² Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar." (This was another name for En-gedi.)

³ Jehoshaphat was alarmed by this news and sought the LORD for guidance. He also gave orders that everyone throughout Judah should observe a fast.

⁴ So people from all the towns of Judah came to Jerusalem to seek the LORD.

⁵ Jehoshaphat stood before the people of Judah and Jerusalem in front of the new courtyard at the Temple of the LORD.

⁶ He prayed, "O LORD, God of our ancestors, you alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you!

⁷ O our God, did you not drive out those who lived in this land when your people arrived? And did you not give this land forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham?

⁸ Your people settled here and built this Temple for you.

⁹ They said, 'Whenever we are faced with any calamity such as war, disease, or famine, we can come to stand in your presence before this Temple where your name is honored. We can cry out to you

to save us, and you will hear us and rescue us.'

¹⁰ "And now see what the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir are doing. You would not let our ancestors invade those nations when Israel left Egypt, so they went around them and did not destroy them.

¹¹ Now see how they reward us! For they have come to throw us out of your land, which you gave us as an inheritance.

¹² O our God, won't you stop them? We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us. We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help."

¹³ As all the men of Judah stood before the LORD with their little ones, wives, and children,

¹⁴ the Spirit of the LORD came upon one of the men standing there. His name

was Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite who was a descendant of Asaph.

¹⁵ He said, "Listen, King Jehoshaphat! Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's.

¹⁶ Tomorrow, march out against them. You will find them coming up through the ascent of Ziz at the end of the valley that opens into the wilderness of Jeruel.

¹⁷ But you will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the LORD's victory. He is with you, O people of Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out there tomorrow, for the LORD is with you!"

¹⁸ Then King Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground. And all the

people of Judah and Jerusalem did the same, worshiping the LORD.

¹⁹ Then the Levites from the clans of Kohath and Korah stood to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud shout.

²⁰ Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and said, "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be able to stand firm. Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed."

²¹ After consulting the leaders of the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the LORD and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang: "Give thanks to the LORD; his faithful love endures forever!"

²² At the moment they began to sing and give praise, the LORD caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves.

²³ The armies of Moab and Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. After they had finished off the army of Seir, they turned on each other.

²⁴ So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, there were dead bodies lying on the ground for as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped.

²⁵ King Jehoshaphat and his men went out to gather the plunder. They found vast amounts of equipment, clothing, and other valuables—more than they could carry. There was so much plunder that it took them three days just to collect it all!

²⁶ On the fourth day they gathered in the Valley of Blessing, which got its name that day because the people praised and thanked the LORD there. It is still called the Valley of Blessing today.

²⁷ Then they returned to Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat leading them, full of joy that the LORD had given them victory over their enemies.

²⁸ They marched into Jerusalem to the music of harps, lyres, and trumpets and proceeded to the Temple of the LORD.

²⁹ When the surrounding kingdoms heard that the LORD himself had fought against the enemies of Israel, the fear of God came over them.

³⁰ So Jehoshaphat's kingdom was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

³¹ So Jehoshaphat ruled over the land of Judah. He was thirty–five years old when he became king, and he reigned in

Jerusalem twenty–five years. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi.

³² Jehoshaphat was a good king, following the ways of his father, Asa. He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight.

³³ During his reign, however, he failed to remove all the pagan shrines, and the people never fully committed themselves to following the God of their ancestors.

³⁴ The rest of the events of Jehoshaphat's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Record of Jehu Son of Hanani, which is included in The Book of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵ But near the end of his life, King Jehoshaphat of Judah made an alliance with King Ahaziah of Israel, who was a very wicked man.

³⁶ Together they built a fleet of trading ships at the port of Ezion–geber.

³⁷ Then Eliezer son of Dodavahu from Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat. He said, "Because you have allied yourself with King Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy your work." So the ships met with disaster and never put out to sea.

21 ¹ When Jehoshaphat died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jehoram became the next king.

² Jehoram's brothers—the other sons of Jehoshaphat—were Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariahu, Michael, and Shephatiah.

³ Their father had given each of them valuable gifts of silver, gold, and costly items, and also the ownership of some of Judah's fortified cities. However, Jehoram became king because he was the oldest.

⁴ But when Jehoram had become solidly established as king, he killed all his brothers and some of the other leaders of Israel.

⁵ Jehoram was thirty–two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years.

⁶ But Jehoram followed the example of the kings of Israel and was as wicked as King Ahab, for he had married one of Ahab’s daughters. So Jehoram did what was evil in the LORD’s sight.

⁷ But the LORD was not willing to destroy David’s dynasty, for he had made a covenant with David and promised that his descendants would continue to rule forever.

⁸ During Jehoram’s reign, the Edomites revolted against Judah and crowned their own king.

⁹ So Jehoram went to attack Edom with his full army and all his chariots.

The Edomites surrounded him and his charioteers, but he escaped at night under cover of darkness.

¹⁰ Edom has been independent from Judah to this day. The town of Libnah revolted about that same time, because Jehoram had abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors.

¹¹ He had built pagan shrines in the hill country of Judah and had led the people of Jerusalem and Judah to give themselves to pagan gods.

¹² Then Elijah the prophet wrote Jehoram this letter: "This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: You have not followed the good example of your father, Jehoshaphat, or your grandfather King Asa of Judah.

¹³ Instead, you have been as evil as the kings of Israel. You have led the people of Jerusalem and Judah to worship idols, just as King Ahab did in Israel. And you

have even killed your own brothers, men who were better than you.

¹⁴ So now the LORD is about to strike you, your people, your children, your wives, and all that is yours with a heavy blow.

¹⁵ You yourself will be stricken with a severe intestinal disease until it causes your bowels to come out."

¹⁶ Then the LORD stirred up the Philistines and the Arabs, who lived near the Ethiopians, to attack Jehoram.

¹⁷ They marched against Judah, broke down its defenses, and carried away everything of value in the royal palace, including his sons and his wives. Only his youngest son, Ahaziah, was spared.

¹⁸ It was after this that the LORD struck Jehoram with the severe intestinal disease.

¹⁹ In the course of time, at the end of two years, the disease caused his bowels

to come out, and he died in agony. His people did not build a great fire to honor him at his funeral as they had done for his ancestors.

²⁰ Jehoram was thirty–two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. No one was sorry when he died. He was buried in the City of David, but not in the royal cemetery.

22 ¹ Then the people of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, Jehoram’s youngest son, their next king. The marauding bands of Arabs had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram reigned as king of Judah.

² Ahaziah was twenty–two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel.

³ Ahaziah also followed the evil example of King Ahab's family, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong.

⁴ He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as Ahab had done. After the death of his father, members of Ahab's family became his advisers, and they led him to ruin.

⁵ Following their evil advice, Ahaziah made an alliance with King Joram, the son of King Ahab of Israel. They went out to fight King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, and the Arameans wounded Joram in the battle.

⁶ Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from his wounds, and King Ahaziah of Judah went to Jezreel to visit him.

⁷ But this turned out to be a fatal mistake, for God had decided to punish Ahaziah. It was during this visit that Ahaziah went out with Joram to meet

Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had appointed to end the dynasty of Ahab.

⁸ While Jehu was executing judgment against the family of Ahab, he happened to meet some of Judah's officials and Ahaziah's relatives who were attending Ahaziah. So Jehu killed them all.

⁹ Then Jehu's men searched for Ahaziah, and they found him hiding in the city of Samaria. They brought him to Jehu, who killed him. Ahaziah was given a decent burial because the people said, "He was the grandson of Jehoshaphat—a man who sought the LORD with all his heart." None of the surviving members of Ahaziah's family was capable of ruling the kingdom.

¹⁰ When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah of Judah, learned that her son was dead, she set out to destroy the rest of Judah's royal family.

¹¹ But Ahaziah's sister Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Ahaziah's infant son, Joash, and stole him away from among the rest of the king's children, who were about to be killed. She put Joash and his nurse in a bedroom. In this way, Jehosheba, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, hid the child so that Athaliah could not murder him.

¹² Joash remained hidden in the Temple of God for six years while Athaliah ruled over the land.

23 ¹ In the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada the priest decided to act. He got up his courage and made a pact with five army commanders: Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zicri.

² These men traveled secretly throughout Judah and summoned the

Levites and clan leaders in Judah's towns to come to Jerusalem.

³ They all gathered at the Temple of God, where they made a covenant with Joash, the young king. Jehoiada said to them, "The time has come for the king's son to reign! The LORD has promised that a descendant of David will be our king.

⁴ This is what you must do. When the priests and Levites come on duty on the Sabbath, a third of them will serve as gatekeepers.

⁵ Another third will go over to the royal palace, and the final third will be at the Foundation Gate. Everyone else should stay in the courtyards of the LORD's Temple.

⁶ Remember, only the priests and Levites on duty may enter the Temple of the LORD, for they are set apart as holy.

The rest of the people must obey the LORD's instructions and stay outside.

⁷ You Levites, form a bodyguard for the king and keep your weapons in hand. Any unauthorized person who enters the Temple must be killed. Stay right beside the king at all times."

⁸ So the Levites and the people did everything just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. The commanders took charge of the men reporting for duty that Sabbath, as well as those who were going off duty. Jehoiada the priest did not let anyone go home after their shift ended.

⁹ Then Jehoiada supplied the commanders with the spears and shields that had once belonged to King David and were stored in the Temple of God.

¹⁰ He stationed the guards around the king, with their weapons ready. They formed a line from the south side of the

Temple around to the north side and all around the altar.

¹¹ Then Jehoiada and his sons brought out Joash, the king's son, and placed the crown on his head. They presented Joash with a copy of God's laws and proclaimed him king. Then they anointed him, and everyone shouted, "Long live the king!"

¹² When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and the shouts of praise to the king, she hurried to the LORD's Temple to see what was happening.

¹³ And she saw the newly crowned king standing in his place of authority by the pillar at the Temple entrance. The officers and trumpeters were surrounding him, and people from all over the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Singers with musical instruments were leading the people in a great celebration. When Athaliah saw

all this, she tore her clothes in despair and shouted, "Treason! Treason!"

¹⁴ Then Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders who were in charge of the troops, "Take her out of the Temple, and kill anyone who tries to rescue her. Do not kill her here in the Temple of the LORD."

¹⁵ So they seized her and led her out to the gate where horses enter the palace grounds, and they killed her there.

¹⁶ Then Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and the king and the people that they would be the LORD's people.

¹⁷ And all the people went over to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They demolished the altars and smashed the idols, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

¹⁸ Jehoiada now put the Levitical priests in charge of the Temple of the LORD,

following all the instructions given by David. He also commanded them to present burnt offerings to the LORD, as prescribed by the law of Moses, and to sing and rejoice as David had instructed.

¹⁹ He stationed gatekeepers at the gates of the LORD's Temple to keep those who were ceremonially unclean from entering.

²⁰ Then the commanders, nobles, rulers, and all the people escorted the king from the Temple of the LORD. They went through the Upper Gate and into the palace, and they seated the king on the royal throne.

²¹ So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was peaceful because Athaliah had been killed.

24 ¹ Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother was Zibiah, from Beersheba.

² Joash did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight throughout the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest.

³ Jehoiada chose two wives for Joash, and he had sons and daughters.

⁴ Some time later, Joash decided to repair and restore the Temple of the LORD.

⁵ He summoned the priests and Levites and gave them these instructions: "Go at once to all the towns of Judah and collect the required annual offerings, so that we can repair the Temple of your God. Do not delay!" But the Levites did not act right away.

⁶ So the king called for Jehoiada the high priest and asked him, "Why haven't you demanded that the Levites go out and collect the Temple taxes from the towns of Judah and from Jerusalem? Moses, the servant of the LORD, levied this tax on the community of Israel in

order to maintain the Tabernacle of the Covenant."

⁷ Over the years, the followers of wicked Athaliah had broken into the Temple of God, and they had used all the dedicated things from the Temple of the LORD to worship the images of Baal.

⁸ So now Joash gave instructions for a chest to be made and set outside the gate leading to the Temple of the LORD.

⁹ Then a proclamation was sent throughout Judah and Jerusalem, telling the people to bring to the LORD the tax that Moses, the servant of God, had required of the Israelites in the wilderness.

¹⁰ This pleased all the leaders and the people, and they gladly brought their money and filled the chest with it.

¹¹ Whenever the chest became full, the Levites carried it to the king's officials. Then the court secretary and an officer

of the high priest counted the money and took the chest back to the Temple again. This went on day after day, and a large amount of money was collected.

¹² The king and Jehoiada gave the money to the construction supervisors, who hired masons and carpenters to restore the Temple of the LORD. They also hired metalworkers, who made articles of iron and bronze for the LORD's Temple.

¹³ So the men in charge of the renovation worked hard, and they made steady progress. They restored the Temple of God according to its original design and strengthened it.

¹⁴ When all the repairs were finished, they brought the remaining money to the king and Jehoiada. It was used to make utensils for the Temple of the LORD—utensils for worship services and for burnt offerings, including ladles and

other vessels made of gold and silver. And the burnt offerings were sacrificed continually in the Temple of the LORD during the lifetime of Jehoiada the priest.

¹⁵ Jehoiada lived to a very old age, finally dying at 130.

¹⁶ He was buried among the kings in the City of David, because he had done so much good in Israel for God and his Temple.

¹⁷ But after Jehoiada's death, the leaders of Judah came and bowed before King Joash and persuaded the king to listen to their advice.

¹⁸ They decided to abandon the Temple of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and they worshiped Asherah poles and idols instead! Then the anger of God burned against Judah and Jerusalem because of their sin.

¹⁹ The LORD sent prophets to bring them back to him, but the people would not listen.

²⁰ Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, "This is what God says: Why do you disobey the LORD's commands so that you cannot prosper? You have abandoned the LORD, and now he has abandoned you!"

²¹ Then the leaders plotted to kill Zechariah, and by order of King Joash himself, they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the LORD's Temple.

²² That was how King Joash repaid Jehoiada for his love and loyalty—by killing his son. Zechariah's last words as he died were, "May the LORD see what they are doing and hold them accountable!"

²³ At the beginning of the year, the Aramean army marched against Joash.

They invaded Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the leaders of the nation. Then they sent all the plunder back to their king in Damascus.

²⁴ Although the Arameans attacked with only a small army, the LORD helped them conquer the much larger army of Judah. The people of Judah had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, so judgment was executed against Joash.

²⁵ The Arameans withdrew, leaving Joash severely wounded. But his own officials decided to kill him for murdering the son of Jehoiada the priest. They assassinated him as he lay in bed. Then he was buried in the City of David, but not in the royal cemetery.

²⁶ The assassins were Jozabad, the son of an Ammonite woman named Shimeath, and Jehozabad, the son of a Moabite woman named Shomer.

²⁷ The complete story about the sons of Joash, the prophecies about him, and the record of his restoration of the Temple of God are written in The Commentary on the Book of the Kings. When Joash died, his son Amaziah became the next king.

25 ¹ Amaziah was twenty–five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty–nine years. His mother was Jehoaddin, from Jerusalem.

² Amaziah did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, but not wholeheartedly.

³ When Amaziah was well established as king, he executed the men who had assassinated his father.

⁴ However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the LORD written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "Parents must not be put to death for the sins of their

children, nor the children for the sins of their parents. Those worthy of death must be executed for their own crimes."

⁵ Another thing Amaziah did was to organize the army, assigning leaders to each clan from Judah and Benjamin. Then he took a census and found that he had an army of 300,000 men twenty years old and older, all trained in the use of spear and shield.

⁶ He also paid about 7,500 pounds of silver to hire 100,000 experienced fighting men from Israel.

⁷ But a man of God came to the king and said, "O king, do not hire troops from Israel, for the LORD is not with Israel. He will not help those people of Ephraim!

⁸ If you let them go with your troops into battle, you will be defeated no matter how well you fight. God will

overthrow you, for he has the power to help or to frustrate."

⁹ Amaziah asked the man of God, "But what should I do about the silver I paid to hire the army of Israel?" The man of God replied, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this!"

¹⁰ So Amaziah discharged the hired troops and sent them back to Ephraim. This made them angry with Judah, and they returned home in a great rage.

¹¹ Then Amaziah summoned his courage and led his army to the Valley of Salt, where they killed ten thousand Edomite troops from Seir.

¹² They captured another ten thousand and took them to the top of a cliff and threw them off, dashing them to pieces on the rocks below.

¹³ Meanwhile, the hired troops that Amaziah had sent home raided several of the towns of Judah between Samaria

and Beth-horon, killing three thousand people and carrying off great quantities of plunder.

¹⁴ When King Amaziah returned from defeating the Edomites, he brought with him idols taken from the people of Seir. He set them up as his own gods, bowed down in front of them, and presented sacrifices to them!

¹⁵ This made the LORD very angry, and he sent a prophet to ask, "Why have you worshiped gods who could not even save their own people from you?"

¹⁶ But the king interrupted him and said, "Since when have I asked your advice? Be quiet now before I have you killed!" So the prophet left with this warning: "I know that God has determined to destroy you because you have done this and have not accepted my counsel."

¹⁷ After consulting with his advisers, King Amaziah of Judah sent this challenge to Israel's king Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz and grandson of Jehu: "Come and meet me in battle!"

¹⁸ But King Jehoash of Israel replied to King Amaziah of Judah with this story: "Out in the Lebanon mountains, a thistle sent a message to a mighty cedar tree: 'Give your daughter in marriage to my son.' But just then a wild animal came by and stepped on the thistle, crushing it!"

¹⁹ You may be very proud of your conquest of Edom, but my advice is to stay home. Why stir up trouble that will bring disaster on you and the people of Judah?"

²⁰ But Amaziah would not listen, for God was arranging to destroy him for worshiping the gods of Edom.

²¹ So King Jehoash of Israel mobilized his army against King Amaziah of Judah.

The two armies drew up their battle lines at Beth–shemesh in Judah.

²² Judah was routed by the army of Israel, and its army scattered and fled for home.

²³ King Jehoash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah at Beth–shemesh and brought him back to Jerusalem. Then Jehoash ordered his army to demolish six hundred feet of Jerusalem’s wall, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate.

²⁴ He carried off all the gold and silver and all the utensils from the Temple of God that had been in the care of Obed–edom. He also seized the treasures of the royal palace, along with hostages, and then returned to Samaria.

²⁵ King Amaziah of Judah lived on for fifteen years after the death of King Jehoash of Israel.

²⁶ The rest of the events of Amaziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

²⁷ After Amaziah turned away from the LORD, there was a conspiracy against his life in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But his enemies sent assassins after him, and they killed him there.

²⁸ They brought him back to Jerusalem on a horse, and he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David.

26 ¹ The people of Judah then crowned Amaziah's sixteen-year-old son, Uzziah, as their next king.

² After his father's death, Uzziah rebuilt the town of Elath and restored it to Judah.

³ Uzziah was sixteen when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem

fifty–two years. His mother was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem.

⁴ He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, just as his father, Amaziah, had done.

⁵ Uzziah sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. And as long as the king sought the LORD, God gave him success.

⁶ He declared war on the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. Then he built new towns in the Ashdod area and in other parts of Philistia.

⁷ God helped him not only with his wars against the Philistines, but also in his battles with the Arabs of Gur and in his wars with the Meunites.

⁸ The Meunites paid annual tribute to him, and his fame spread even to Egypt, for he had become very powerful.

⁹ Uzziah built fortified towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the angle in the wall.

¹⁰ He also constructed forts in the wilderness and dug many water cisterns, because he kept great herds of livestock in the foothills of Judah and on the plains. He was also a man who loved the soil. He had many workers who cared for his farms and vineyards, both on the hillsides and in the fertile valleys.

¹¹ Uzziah had an army of well-trained warriors, ready to march into battle, unit by unit. This great army of fighting men had been mustered and organized by Jeiel, the secretary of the army, and his assistant, Maaseiah. They were under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's officials.

¹² Twenty-six hundred clan leaders commanded these regiments of seasoned warriors.

¹³ The army consisted of 307,500 men, all elite troops. They were prepared to assist the king against any enemy.

¹⁴ Uzziah provided the entire army with shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and sling stones.

¹⁵ And he produced machines mounted on the walls of Jerusalem, designed by brilliant men to shoot arrows and hurl stones from the towers and the corners of the wall. His fame spread far and wide, for the LORD helped him wonderfully until he became very powerful.

¹⁶ But when he had become powerful, he also became proud, which led to his downfall. He sinned against the LORD his God by entering the sanctuary of the LORD's Temple and personally burning incense on the altar.

¹⁷ Azariah the high priest went in after him with eighty other priests of the LORD, all brave men.

¹⁸ They confronted King Uzziah and said, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. That is the work of the priests alone, the sons of Aaron who are set apart for this work. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have sinned. The LORD God will not honor you for this!"

¹⁹ Uzziah was furious and refused to set down the incense burner he was holding. But as he was standing there with the priests before the incense altar in the LORD's Temple, leprosy suddenly broke out on his forehead.

²⁰ When Azariah and the other priests saw the leprosy, they rushed him out. And the king himself was eager to get out because the LORD had struck him.

²¹ So King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in isolation, excluded from the Temple of the LORD. His son Jotham was put in charge of

the royal palace, and he governed the people of the land.

²² The rest of the events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

²³ So Uzziah died, and since he had leprosy, he was buried nearby in a burial field belonging to the kings. Then his son Jotham became the next king.

27 ¹ Jotham was twenty–five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

² He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, just as his father, Uzziah, had done. But unlike him, Jotham did not enter the Temple of the LORD. Nevertheless, the people continued in their corrupt ways.

³ Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate to the LORD's Temple and also did extensive rebuilding on the wall at the hill of Ophel.

⁴ He built towns in the hill country of Judah and constructed fortresses and towers in the wooded areas.

⁵ Jotham waged war against the Ammonites and conquered them. For the next three years, he received from them an annual tribute of 7,500 pounds of silver, 50,000 bushels of wheat, and 50,000 bushels of barley.

⁶ King Jotham became powerful because he was careful to live in obedience to the LORD his God.

⁷ The rest of the events of Jotham's reign, including his wars and other activities, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

⁸ He was twenty–five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years.

⁹ When he died, he was buried in the City of David, and his son Ahaz became the next king.

28 ¹ Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. He did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the LORD, as his ancestor David had done.

² Instead, he followed the example of the kings of Israel and cast images for the worship of Baal.

³ He offered sacrifices in the valley of the son of Hinnom, even sacrificing his own sons in the fire. He imitated the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the LORD had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

⁴ He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the pagan shrines and on the hills and under every green tree.

⁵ That is why the LORD his God allowed the king of Aram to defeat Ahaz and to exile large numbers of his people to Damascus. The armies of Israel also defeated Ahaz and inflicted many casualties on his army.

⁶ In a single day Pekah son of Remaliah, Israel's king, killed 120,000 of Judah's troops because they had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

⁷ Then Zicri, a warrior from Ephraim, killed Maaseiah, the king's son; Azrikam, the king's palace commander; and Elkanah, the king's second-in-command.

⁸ The armies of Israel captured 200,000 women and children from Judah and took tremendous amounts of plunder, which they took back to Samaria.

⁹ But a prophet of the LORD named Oded was there in Samaria when the army of Israel returned home. He went out to meet them and said, "The LORD, the God of your ancestors, was angry with Judah and let you defeat them. But you have gone too far, killing them without mercy, and all heaven is disturbed.

¹⁰ And now you are planning to make slaves of these people from Judah and Jerusalem. What about your own sins against the LORD your God?

¹¹ Listen to me and return these captives you have taken, for they are your own relatives. Watch out, because now the LORD's fierce anger has been turned against you!"

¹² Then some of the leaders of Israel—Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berekiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai—

agreed with this and confronted the men returning from battle.

¹³ "You must not bring the prisoners here!" they declared. "We cannot afford to add to our sins and guilt. Our guilt is already great, and the LORD's fierce anger is already turned against Israel."

¹⁴ So the warriors released the prisoners and handed over the plunder in the sight of all the leaders and people.

¹⁵ Then the four men mentioned by name came forward and distributed clothes from the plunder to the prisoners who were naked. They provided clothing and sandals to wear, gave them enough food and drink, and dressed their wounds with olive oil. They put those who were weak on donkeys and took all the prisoners back to their own land—to Jericho, the city of palms. Then they returned to Samaria.

¹⁶ About that time King Ahaz of Judah asked the king of Assyria for help against his enemies.

¹⁷ The armies of Edom had again invaded Judah and taken captives.

¹⁸ And the Philistines had raided towns located in the foothills of Judah and in the Negev. They had already captured Beth–shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages, and the Philistines had occupied these towns.

¹⁹ The LORD was humbling Judah because of King Ahaz of Judah, for he had encouraged his people to sin and had been utterly unfaithful to the LORD.

²⁰ So when King Tiglath–pileser of Assyria arrived, he oppressed King Ahaz instead of helping him.

²¹ Ahaz took valuable items from the LORD's Temple, the royal palace, and from the homes of his officials and gave

them to the king of Assyria as tribute. But even this did not help him.

²² And when trouble came to King Ahaz, he became even more unfaithful to the LORD.

²³ He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus who had defeated him, for he said, "These gods helped the kings of Aram, so they will help me, too, if I sacrifice to them." But instead, they led to his ruin and the ruin of all Israel.

²⁴ The king took the utensils from the Temple of God and broke them into pieces. He shut the doors of the LORD's Temple so that no one could worship there and then set up altars to pagan gods in every corner of Jerusalem.

²⁵ He made pagan shrines in all the towns of Judah for offering sacrifices to other gods. In this way, he aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of his ancestors.

²⁶ The rest of the events of Ahaz's reign and all his dealings, from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

²⁷ When King Ahaz died, he was buried in Jerusalem but not in the royal cemetery. Then his son Hezekiah became the next king.

29 ¹ Hezekiah was twenty–five years old when he became the king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty–nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

² He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, just as his ancestor David had done.

³ In the very first month of the first year of his reign, Hezekiah reopened the doors of the Temple of the LORD and repaired them.

⁴ He summoned the priests and Levites to meet him at the courtyard east of the Temple.

⁵ He said to them, "Listen to me, you Levites! Purify yourselves, and purify the Temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove all the defiled things from the sanctuary.

⁶ Our ancestors were unfaithful and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God. They abandoned the LORD and his Temple; they turned their backs on him.

⁷ They also shut the doors to the Temple's foyer, and they snuffed out the lamps. They stopped burning incense and presenting burnt offerings at the sanctuary of the God of Israel.

⁸ That is why the LORD's anger has fallen upon Judah and Jerusalem. He has made us an object of dread, horror, and ridicule, as you can so plainly see.

⁹ Our fathers have been killed in battle, and our sons and daughters and wives are in captivity.

¹⁰ But now I will make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us.

¹¹ My dear Levites, do not neglect your duties any longer! The LORD has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him, and to lead the people in worship and make offerings to him."

¹² Then these Levites got right to work: From the clan of Kohath: Mahath son of Amasai and Joel son of Azariah. From the clan of Merari: Kish son of Abdi and Azariah son of Jehallelel. From the clan of Gershon: Joah son of Zimmah and Eden son of Joah.

¹³ From the family of Elizaphan: Shimri and Jeiel. From the family of Asaph: Zechariah and Mattaniah.

¹⁴ From the family of Heman: Jehiel and Shimei. From the family of Jeduthun: Shemaiah and Uzziel.

¹⁵ These men called together their fellow Levites, and they purified themselves. Then they began to purify the Temple of the LORD, just as the king had commanded. They were careful to follow all the LORD's instructions in their work.

¹⁶ The priests went into the sanctuary of the Temple of the LORD to cleanse it, and they took out to the Temple courtyard all the defiled things they found. From there the Levites carted it all out to the Kidron Valley.

¹⁷ The work began on a day in early spring, and in eight days they had reached the foyer of the LORD's Temple. Then they purified the Temple of the LORD itself, which took another eight

days. So the entire task was completed in sixteen days.

¹⁸ Then the Levites went to King Hezekiah and gave him this report: "We have purified the Temple of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table of the Bread of the Presence with all its utensils.

¹⁹ We have also recovered all the utensils taken by King Ahaz when he was unfaithful and closed the Temple. They are now in front of the altar of the LORD, purified and ready for use."

²⁰ Early the next morning King Hezekiah gathered the city officials and went to the Temple of the LORD.

²¹ They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats as a sin offering for the kingdom, for the Temple, and for Judah. The king commanded the priests, who were

descendants of Aaron, to sacrifice the animals on the altar of the LORD.

²² So they killed the bulls, and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. Next they killed the rams and sprinkled their blood on the altar. And finally, they did the same with the lambs.

²³ The male goats for the sin offering were then brought before the king and the assembly of people, who laid their hands on them.

²⁴ The priests then killed the goats as a sin offering and sprinkled their blood on the altar to make atonement for the sins of all Israel. The king had specifically commanded that this burnt offering and sin offering should be made for all Israel.

²⁵ King Hezekiah then stationed the Levites at the Temple of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres. He obeyed all the commands that the LORD had given

to King David through Gad, the king's seer, and the prophet Nathan.

²⁶ The Levites then took their positions around the Temple with the instruments of David, and the priests took their positions with the trumpets.

²⁷ Then Hezekiah ordered that the burnt offering be placed on the altar. As the burnt offering was presented, songs of praise to the LORD were begun, accompanied by the trumpets and other instruments of David, king of Israel.

²⁸ The entire assembly worshiped the LORD as the singers sang and the trumpets blew, until all the burnt offerings were finished.

²⁹ Then the king and everyone with him bowed down in worship.

³⁰ King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to praise the LORD with the psalms of David and Asaph the

seer. So they offered joyous praise and bowed down in worship.

³¹ Then Hezekiah declared, "The dedication ceremony has come to an end. Now bring your sacrifices and thanksgiving offerings to the Temple of the LORD." So the people brought their sacrifices and thanksgiving offerings, and those whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings, too.

³² The people brought to the LORD seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs for burnt offerings.

³³ They also brought six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep as sacrifices.

³⁴ But there were too few priests to prepare all the burnt offerings, so their relatives the Levites helped them until the work was finished and until more priests had been purified. For the Levites had been more conscientious about purifying themselves than the priests.

³⁵ There was an abundance of burnt offerings, along with the usual drink offerings, and a great deal of fat from the many peace offerings. So the Temple of the LORD was restored to service.

³⁶ And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced greatly because of what God had done for the people, for everything had been accomplished so quickly.

30 ¹ King Hezekiah now sent word to all Israel and Judah, and he wrote letters of invitation to Ephraim and Manasseh. He asked everyone to come to the Temple of the LORD at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of the LORD, the God of Israel.

² The king, his officials, and all the community of Jerusalem decided to celebrate Passover a month later than usual.

³ They were unable to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough

priests could be purified by then, and the people had not yet assembled at Jerusalem.

⁴ This plan for keeping the Passover seemed right to the king and all the people.

⁵ So they sent a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba in the south to Dan in the north, inviting everyone to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover of the LORD, the God of Israel. The people had not been celebrating it in great numbers as prescribed in the law.

⁶ At the king's command, messengers were sent throughout Israel and Judah. They carried letters which said: "O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he will return to the few of us who have survived the conquest of the Assyrian kings.

⁷ Do not be like your ancestors and relatives who abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and became an object of derision, as you yourselves can see.

⁸ Do not be stubborn, as they were, but submit yourselves to the LORD. Come to his Temple which he has set apart as holy forever. Worship the LORD your God so that his fierce anger will turn away from you.

⁹ For if you return to the LORD, your relatives and your children will be treated mercifully by their captors, and they will be able to return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful. If you return to him, he will not continue to turn his face from you."

¹⁰ The messengers went from town to town throughout Ephraim and Manasseh and as far as the territory of Zebulun.

But most of the people just laughed at the messengers and made fun of them.

¹¹ However, some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem.

¹² At the same time, God's hand was on the people in the land of Judah, giving them a strong desire to unite in obeying the orders of the king and his officials, who were following the word of the LORD.

¹³ And so a huge crowd assembled at Jerusalem in midspring to celebrate Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

¹⁴ They set to work and removed the pagan altars from Jerusalem. They took away all the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley.

¹⁵ On the appointed day in midspring, one month later than usual, the people slaughtered their Passover lambs. Then

the priests and Levites became ashamed, so they purified themselves and brought burnt offerings to the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁶ They took their places at the Temple according to the regulations found in the law of Moses, the man of God. The Levites brought the sacrificial blood to the priests, who then sprinkled it on the altar.

¹⁷ Since many of the people there had not purified themselves, the Levites had to slaughter their Passover lambs for them, to set them apart for the LORD.

¹⁸ Most of those who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun had not purified themselves. But King Hezekiah prayed for them, and they were allowed to eat the Passover meal anyway, even though this was contrary to God's laws. For Hezekiah

said, "May the LORD, who is good, pardon those

¹⁹ who decide to follow the LORD, the God of their ancestors, even though they are not properly cleansed for the ceremony."

²⁰ And the LORD listened to Hezekiah's prayer and healed the people.

²¹ So the people of Israel who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy. Each day the Levites and priests sang to the LORD, accompanied by loud instruments.

²² Hezekiah encouraged the Levites for the skill they displayed as they served the LORD. So for seven days the celebration continued. Peace offerings were sacrificed, and the people confessed their sins to the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

²³ The entire assembly then decided to continue the festival another seven days, so they celebrated joyfully for another week.

²⁴ King Hezekiah gave the people one thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep for offerings, and the officials donated one thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep. Meanwhile, many more priests purified themselves.

²⁵ The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, including the priests, the Levites, all who came from the land of Israel, the foreigners who came to the festival, and all those who lived in Judah.

²⁶ There was great joy in the city, for Jerusalem had not seen a celebration like this one since the days of Solomon, King David's son.

²⁷ Then the Levitical priests stood and blessed the people, and God heard them from his holy dwelling in heaven.

31 ¹ Now when the festival ended, the Israelites who attended went to all the towns of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, and they smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and removed the pagan shrines and altars. After this, the Israelites returned to their own towns and homes.

² Hezekiah then organized the priests and Levites into divisions to offer the burnt offerings and peace offerings, and to worship and give thanks and praise to the LORD at the gates of the Temple.

³ The king also made a personal contribution of animals for the daily morning and evening burnt offerings, as well as for the weekly Sabbath festivals and monthly new moon festivals, and for the other annual festivals as required in the law of the LORD.

⁴ In addition, he required the people in Jerusalem to bring the prescribed portion of their income to the priests and Levites, so they could devote themselves fully to the law of the LORD.

⁵ The people responded immediately and generously with the first of their crops and grain, new wine, olive oil, honey, and all the produce of their fields. They brought a tithe of all they owned.

⁶ The people who had moved to Judah from Israel, and the people of Judah themselves, brought in the tithes of their cattle and sheep and a tithe of the things that had been dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them up in great heaps.

⁷ The first of these tithes was brought in late spring, and the heaps continued to grow until early autumn.

⁸ When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw these huge piles, they thanked the LORD and his people Israel!

⁹ "Where did all this come from?" Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites.

¹⁰ And Azariah the high priest, from the family of Zadok, replied, "Since the people began bringing their gifts to the LORD's Temple, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, for the LORD has blessed his people."

¹¹ Hezekiah decided to have storerooms prepared in the Temple of the LORD, and this was done.

¹² Then all the gifts and tithes were faithfully brought to the Temple. Conaniah the Levite was put in charge, assisted by his brother Shimei.

¹³ The supervisors under them were Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath, and Benaiah. These

appointments were made by King Hezekiah and Azariah, the chief official in the Temple of God.

¹⁴ Kore son of Imnah the Levite, who was the gatekeeper at the East Gate, was put in charge of distributing the freewill offerings of God, the gifts, and the things that had been dedicated to the LORD.

¹⁵ His faithful assistants were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah. They distributed the gifts among the families of priests in their towns, by their divisions, dividing the gifts fairly among young and old alike.

¹⁶ They also distributed the gifts to all males three years old or older, regardless of their place in the genealogical records, who came daily to the LORD's Temple to perform their official duties, by their divisions.

¹⁷ And they distributed gifts to the priests who were listed in the

genealogical records by families, and to the Levites twenty years old or older who were listed according to their jobs and their divisions.

¹⁸ Food allotments were also given to all the families listed in the genealogical records, including the little babies, the wives, and the sons and daughters. For they had all been faithful in purifying themselves.

¹⁹ As for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who were living in the open villages around the towns, men were appointed to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to all the Levites listed in the genealogical records.

²⁰ In this way, King Hezekiah handled the distribution throughout all Judah, doing what was pleasing and good in the sight of the LORD his God.

²¹ In all that he did in the service of the Temple of God and in his efforts to follow

the law and the commands, Hezekiah sought his God wholeheartedly. As a result, he was very successful.

32 ¹ After Hezekiah had faithfully carried out this work, King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, giving orders for his army to break through their walls.

² When Hezekiah realized that Sennacherib also intended to attack Jerusalem,

³ he consulted with his officials and military advisers, and they decided to stop the flow of the springs outside the city.

⁴ They organized a huge work crew to stop the flow of the springs, cutting off the brook that ran through the fields. For they said, "Why should the kings of Assyria come here and find plenty of water?"

⁵ Then Hezekiah further strengthened his defenses by repairing the wall wherever it was broken down and by adding to the fortifications and constructing a second wall outside the first. He also reinforced the Millo in the City of David and manufactured large numbers of weapons and shields.

⁶ He appointed military officers over the people and asked them to assemble before him in the square at the city gate. Then Hezekiah encouraged them with this address:

⁷ "Be strong and courageous! Don't be afraid of the king of Assyria or his mighty army, for there is a power far greater on our side!

⁸ He may have a great army, but they are just men. We have the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles for us!" These words greatly encouraged the people.

⁹ Then King Sennacherib of Assyria, while still besieging the town of Lachish, sent officials to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah and all the people in the city:

¹⁰ "This is what King Sennacherib of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you think you can survive my siege of Jerusalem?

¹¹ Hezekiah has said, 'The LORD our God will rescue us from the king of Assyria.' Surely Hezekiah is misleading you, sentencing you to death by famine and thirst!

¹² Surely you must realize that Hezekiah is the very person who destroyed all the LORD's shrines and altars. He commanded Judah and Jerusalem to worship at only the one altar at the Temple and to make sacrifices on it alone.

¹³ "Surely you must realize what I and the other kings of Assyria before me have done to all the people of the earth! Were any of the gods of those nations able to rescue their people from my power?"

¹⁴ Name just one time when any god, anywhere, was able to rescue his people from me! What makes you think your God can do any better?

¹⁵ Don't let Hezekiah fool you! Don't let him deceive you like this! I say it again—no god of any nation has ever yet been able to rescue his people from me or my ancestors. How much less will your God rescue you from my power!"

¹⁶ And Sennacherib's officials further mocked the LORD God and his servant Hezekiah, heaping insult upon insult.

¹⁷ The king also sent letters scorning the LORD, the God of Israel. He wrote, "Just as the gods of all the other nations failed

to rescue their people from my power, so the God of Hezekiah will also fail."

¹⁸ The Assyrian officials who brought the letters shouted this in the Hebrew language to the people gathered on the walls of the city, trying to terrify them so it would be easier to capture the city.

¹⁹ These officials talked about the God of Jerusalem as though he were one of the pagan gods, made by human hands.

²⁰ Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to God in heaven.

²¹ And the LORD sent an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army with all its commanders and officers. So Sennacherib returned home in disgrace to his own land. And when he entered the temple of his god, some of his own sons killed him there with a sword.

²² That is how the LORD rescued Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem

from King Sennacherib of Assyria and from all the others who threatened them. So there was peace at last throughout the land.

²³ From then on King Hezekiah became highly respected among the surrounding nations, and many gifts for the LORD arrived at Jerusalem, with valuable presents for King Hezekiah, too.

²⁴ About that time, Hezekiah became deathly ill. He prayed to the LORD, who healed him and gave him a miraculous sign.

²⁵ But Hezekiah did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him, and he became proud. So the LORD's anger came against him and against Judah and Jerusalem.

²⁶ Then Hezekiah repented of his pride, and the people of Jerusalem humbled themselves. So the LORD's anger did not

come against them during Hezekiah's lifetime.

²⁷ Hezekiah was very wealthy and held in high esteem. He had to build special treasury buildings for his silver, gold, precious stones, and spices, and for his shields and other valuable items.

²⁸ He also constructed many storehouses for his grain, new wine, and olive oil; and he made many stalls for his cattle and folds for his flocks of sheep and goats.

²⁹ He built many towns and acquired vast flocks and herds, for God had given him great wealth.

³⁰ He blocked up the upper spring of Gihon and brought the water down through a tunnel to the west side of the City of David. And so he succeeded in everything he did.

³¹ However, when ambassadors arrived from Babylon to ask about the

remarkable events that had taken place in the land, God withdrew from Hezekiah in order to test him and to see what was really in his heart.

³² The rest of the events of Hezekiah's reign and his acts of devotion are recorded in The Vision of the Prophet Isaiah Son of Amoz, which is included in The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

³³ When Hezekiah died, he was buried in the upper area of the royal cemetery, and all Judah and Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then his son Manasseh became the next king.

33 ¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty–five years.

² He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, imitating the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the LORD

had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

³ He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father Hezekiah had destroyed. He constructed altars for the images of Baal and set up Asherah poles. He also bowed before all the stars of heaven and worshiped them.

⁴ He even built pagan altars in the Temple of the LORD, the place where the LORD had said his name should be honored forever.

⁵ He put these altars for the stars of heaven in both courtyards of the LORD's Temple.

⁶ Manasseh even sacrificed his own sons in the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. He practiced sorcery, divination, and witchcraft, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the LORD's sight, arousing his anger.

⁷ Manasseh even took a carved idol he had made and set it up in God's Temple, the very place where God had told David and his son Solomon: "My name will be honored here forever in this Temple and in Jerusalem—the city I have chosen from among all the other tribes of Israel.

⁸ If the Israelites will obey my commands—all the instructions, laws, and regulations given through Moses—I will not send them into exile from this land that I gave their ancestors."

⁹ But Manasseh led the people of Judah and Jerusalem to do even more evil than the pagan nations whom the LORD had destroyed when the Israelites entered the land.

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they ignored all his warnings.

¹¹ So the LORD sent the Assyrian armies, and they took Manasseh prisoner. They

put a ring through his nose, bound him in bronze chains, and led him away to Babylon.

¹² But while in deep distress, Manasseh sought the LORD his God and cried out humbly to the God of his ancestors.

¹³ And when he prayed, the LORD listened to him and was moved by his request for help. So the LORD let Manasseh return to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Manasseh had finally realized that the LORD alone is God!

¹⁴ It was after this that Manasseh rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, from west of the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley to the Fish Gate, and continuing around the hill of Ophel, where it was built very high. And he stationed his military officers in all of the fortified cities of Judah.

¹⁵ Manasseh also removed the foreign gods from the hills and the idol from

the LORD's Temple. He tore down all the altars he had built on the hill where the Temple stood and all the altars that were in Jerusalem, and he dumped them outside the city.

¹⁶ Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings and thanksgiving offerings on it. He also encouraged the people of Judah to worship the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁷ However, the people still sacrificed at the pagan shrines, but only to the LORD their God.

¹⁸ The rest of the events of Manasseh's reign, his prayer to God, and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁹ Manasseh's prayer, the account of the way God answered him, and an account of all his sins and unfaithfulness are recorded in The Record of the Seers.

It includes a list of the locations where he built pagan shrines and set up Asherah poles and idols before he repented.

²⁰ When Manasseh died, he was buried at his palace. Then his son Amon became the next king.

²¹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years.

²² He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as his father Manasseh had done. He worshiped and sacrificed to all the idols his father had made.

²³ But unlike his father, he did not humble himself before the LORD. Instead, Amon sinned even more.

²⁴ At last Amon's own officials plotted against him and assassinated him in his palace.

²⁵ But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King

Amon, and they made his son Josiah the next king.

34 ¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty–one years.

² He did what was pleasing in the LORD’s sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right.

³ During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David. Then in the twelfth year, he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem, destroying all the pagan shrines, the Asherah poles, and the carved idols and cast images.

⁴ He saw to it that the altars for the images of Baal and their incense altars were torn down. He also made sure that the Asherah poles, the carved idols, and the cast images were smashed and

scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.

⁵ Then he burned the bones of the pagan priests on their own altars, and so he purified Judah and Jerusalem.

⁶ He did the same thing in the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even as far as Naphtali.

⁷ He destroyed the pagan altars and the Asherah poles, and he crushed the idols into dust. He cut down the incense altars throughout the land of Israel and then returned to Jerusalem.

⁸ In the eighteenth year of his reign, after he had purified the land and the Temple, Josiah appointed Shaphan son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of Jerusalem, and Joah son of Joahaz, the royal historian, to repair the Temple of the LORD his God.

⁹ They gave Hilkiah the high priest the money that had been collected by the

Levites who served as gatekeepers at the Temple of God. The gifts were brought by people from Manasseh, Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, as well as from all Judah, Benjamin, and the people of Jerusalem.

¹⁰ He entrusted the money to the men assigned to supervise the restoration of the LORD's Temple. Then they paid the workers who did the repairs and renovation.

¹¹ Thus, they hired carpenters and masons and purchased cut stone for the walls and timber for the rafters and beams. They restored what earlier kings of Judah had allowed to fall into ruin.

¹² The workers served faithfully under the leadership of Jahath and Obadiah, Levites of the Merarite clan, and Zechariah and Meshullam, Levites of the Kohathite clan. Other Levites, all of whom were skilled musicians,

¹³ were put in charge of the laborers of the various trades. Still others assisted as secretaries, officials, and gatekeepers.

¹⁴ As Hilkiyah the high priest was recording the money collected at the LORD's Temple, he found the Book of the Law of the LORD as it had been given through Moses.

¹⁵ Hilkiyah said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the LORD's Temple!" Then Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan.

¹⁶ Shaphan took the scroll to the king and reported, "Your officials are doing everything they were assigned to do.

¹⁷ The money that was collected at the Temple of the LORD has been given to the supervisors and workmen."

¹⁸ Shaphan also said to the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a scroll." So Shaphan read it to the king.

¹⁹ When the king heard what was written in the law, he tore his clothes in despair.

²⁰ Then he gave these orders to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the court secretary, and Asaiah the king's personal adviser:

²¹ "Go to the Temple and speak to the LORD for me and for all the remnant of Israel and Judah. Ask him about the words written in this scroll that has been found. The LORD's anger has been poured out against us because our ancestors have not obeyed the word of the LORD. We have not been doing what this scroll says we must do."

²² So Hilkiah and the other men went to the newer Mishneh section of Jerusalem to consult with the prophet Huldah. She was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, the keeper of the Temple wardrobe.

²³ She said to them, "The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go and tell the man who sent you,

²⁴ 'This is what the LORD says: I will certainly destroy this city and its people. All the curses written in the scroll you have read will come true.

²⁵ For the people of Judah have abandoned me and worshiped pagan gods, and I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger will be poured out against this place, and nothing will be able to stop it.'

²⁶ "But go to the king of Judah who sent you to seek the LORD and tell him: 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the message you have just heard:

²⁷ You were sorry and humbled yourself before God when you heard what I said against this city and its people. You humbled yourself and tore your

clothing in despair and wept before me in repentance. So I have indeed heard you, says the LORD.

²⁸ I will not send the promised disaster against this city and its people until after you have died and been buried in peace. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this place.'" So they took her message back to the king.

²⁹ Then the king summoned all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem.

³⁰ And the king went up to the Temple of the LORD with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites—all the people from the greatest to the least. There the king read to them the entire Book of the Covenant that had been found in the LORD's Temple.

³¹ The king took his place of authority beside the pillar and renewed the covenant in the LORD's presence. He pledged to obey the LORD by keeping

all his commands, regulations, and laws with all his heart and soul. He promised to obey all the terms of the covenant that were written in the scroll.

³² And he required everyone in Jerusalem and the people of Benjamin to make a similar pledge. As the people of Jerusalem did this, they renewed their covenant with God, the God of their ancestors.

³³ So Josiah removed all detestable idols from the entire land of Israel and required everyone to worship the LORD their God. And throughout the rest of his lifetime, they did not turn away from the LORD, the God of their ancestors.

35 ¹ Then Josiah announced that the Passover of the LORD would be celebrated in Jerusalem on the appointed day in early spring. The Passover lambs were slaughtered at twilight of that day.

² Josiah also assigned the priests to their duties and encouraged them in their work at the Temple of the LORD.

³ He issued this order to the Levites, who had been set apart to serve the LORD and were teachers in Israel: "Since the Ark is now in Solomon's Temple and you do not need to carry it back and forth on your shoulders, spend your time serving the LORD your God and his people Israel.

⁴ Report for duty according to the family divisions of your ancestors, following the written instructions of King David of Israel and the instructions of his son Solomon.

⁵ Then stand in your appointed holy places and help the families assigned to you as they bring their offerings to the Temple.

⁶ Slaughter the Passover lambs, purify yourselves, and prepare to help those

who come. Follow all the instructions that the LORD gave through Moses."

⁷ Then Josiah contributed from his personal property thirty thousand lambs and young goats for the people's Passover offerings, and three thousand bulls.

⁸ The king's officials also made willing contributions to the people, priests, and Levites. Hilkiyah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the administrators of God's Temple, gave the priests twenty-six hundred lambs and young goats and three hundred bulls as Passover offerings.

⁹ The Levite leaders—Conaniah and his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad—gave five thousand lambs and young goats and five hundred bulls to the Levites for their Passover offerings.

¹⁰ When everything was ready for the Passover celebration, the priests and the

Levites took their places, organized by their divisions, according to the king's orders.

¹¹ The Levites then slaughtered the Passover lambs and presented the blood to the priests, who sprinkled the blood on the altar while the Levites prepared the animals.

¹² They divided the burnt offerings among the people by their family groups, so they could offer them to the LORD according to the instructions recorded in the Book of Moses. They did the same with the bulls.

¹³ Then they roasted the Passover lambs as prescribed; and they boiled the holy offerings in pots, kettles, and pans, and brought them out quickly so the people could eat them.

¹⁴ Afterward the Levites prepared a meal for themselves and for the priests, because the priests had been busy from

morning till night offering the burnt offerings and the fat portions. The Levites took responsibility for all these preparations.

¹⁵ The musicians, descendants of Asaph, were in their assigned places, following the orders given by David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, the king's seer. The gatekeepers guarded the gates and did not need to leave their posts of duty, for their meals were brought to them by their fellow Levites.

¹⁶ The entire ceremony for the LORD's Passover was completed that day. All the burnt offerings were sacrificed on the altar of the LORD, as King Josiah had ordered.

¹⁷ All the Israelites present in Jerusalem celebrated Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days.

¹⁸ Never since the time of the prophet Samuel had there been such a Passover.

None of the kings of Israel had ever kept a Passover as Josiah did, involving all the priests and Levites, all the people of Jerusalem, and people from all over Judah and Israel.

¹⁹ This Passover celebration took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.

²⁰ After Josiah had finished restoring the Temple, King Neco of Egypt led his army up from Egypt to do battle at Carchemish on the Euphrates River, and Josiah and his army marched out to fight him.

²¹ But King Neco sent ambassadors to Josiah with this message: "What do you want with me, king of Judah? I have no quarrel with you today! I only want to fight the nation with which I am at war. And God has told me to hurry! Do not interfere with God, who is with me, or he will destroy you."

²² But Josiah refused to listen to Neco, to whom God had indeed spoken, and he would not turn back. Instead, he led his army into battle on the plain of Megiddo. He laid aside his royal robes so the enemy would not recognize him.

²³ But the enemy archers hit King Josiah with their arrows and wounded him. He cried out to his men, "Take me from the battle, for I am badly wounded!"

²⁴ So they lifted Josiah out of his chariot and placed him in another chariot. Then they brought him back to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried there in the royal cemetery. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him.

²⁵ The prophet Jeremiah composed funeral songs for Josiah, and to this day choirs still sing these sad songs about his death. These songs of sorrow have become a tradition and are recorded in The Book of Laments.

²⁶ The rest of the events of Josiah's reign and his acts of devotion done according to the written law of the LORD, ²⁷ from beginning to end, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

36 ¹ Then the people of the land took Josiah's son Jehoahaz and made him the next king in Jerusalem.

² Jehoahaz was twenty–three years old when he became king, but he reigned only three months.

³ Then he was deposed by Neco, the king of Egypt, who demanded a tribute from Judah of 7,500 pounds of silver and 75 pounds of gold.

⁴ The king of Egypt appointed Eliakim, the brother of Jehoahaz, as the next king of Judah and Jerusalem, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Then Neco took Jehoahaz to Egypt as a prisoner.

⁵ Jehoiakim was twenty–five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. But he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and captured it, and he bound Jehoiakim in chains and led him away to Babylon.

⁷ Nebuchadnezzar also took some of the treasures from the Temple of the LORD, and he placed them in his palace in Babylon.

⁸ The rest of the events of Jehoiakim's reign, including all the evil things he did and everything found against him, are recorded in The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. Then his son Jehoiachin became the next king.

⁹ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, but he reigned in Jerusalem only three months and ten

days. Jehoiachin did what was evil in the LORD's sight.

¹⁰ In the spring of the following year, Jehoiachin was summoned to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Many treasures from the Temple of the LORD were taken to Babylon at that time. And Nebuchadnezzar appointed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, to be the next king in Judah and Jerusalem.

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years.

¹² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and he refused to humble himself in the presence of the prophet Jeremiah, who spoke for the LORD.

¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath of loyalty in God's name. Zedekiah was a hard and stubborn man,

refusing to turn to the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁴ All the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful. They followed the pagan practices of the surrounding nations, desecrating the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ The LORD, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent his prophets to warn them, for he had compassion on his people and his Temple.

¹⁶ But the people mocked these messengers of God and despised their words. They scoffed at the prophets until the LORD's anger could no longer be restrained and there was no remedy.

¹⁷ So the LORD brought the king of Babylon against them. The Babylonians killed Judah's young men, even chasing after them into the Temple. They had no pity on the people, killing both young

and old, men and women, healthy and sick. God handed them all over to Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁸ The king also took home to Babylon all the utensils, large and small, used in the Temple of God, and the treasures from both the LORD's Temple and the royal palace. He also took with him all the royal princes.

¹⁹ Then his army set fire to the Temple of God, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, burned all the palaces, and completely destroyed everything of value.

²⁰ The few who survived were taken away to Babylon, and they became servants to the king and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

²¹ So the message of the LORD spoken through Jeremiah was fulfilled. The land finally enjoyed its Sabbath rest, lying

desolate for seventy years, just as the prophet had said.

²² In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the LORD fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy by stirring the heart of Cyrus to put this proclamation into writing and to send it throughout his kingdom:

²³ "This is what King Cyrus of Persia says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem in the land of Judah. All of you who are the LORD's people may return to Israel for this task. May the LORD your God be with you!"

Ezra

1 ¹ In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the LORD fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy by stirring the heart of Cyrus to put this proclamation into writing and to send it throughout his kingdom:

² "This is what King Cyrus of Persia says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. He has appointed me to build him a Temple at Jerusalem in the land of Judah.

³ All of you who are his people may return to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, who lives in Jerusalem. And may your God be with you!

⁴ Those who live in any place where Jewish survivors are found should contribute toward their expenses by

supplying them with silver and gold, supplies for the journey, and livestock, as well as a freewill offering for the Temple of God in Jerusalem."

⁵ Then God stirred the hearts of the priests and Levites and the leaders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple of the LORD.

⁶ And all their neighbors assisted by giving them vessels of silver and gold, supplies for the journey, and livestock. They gave them many choice gifts in addition to all the freewill offerings.

⁷ King Cyrus himself brought out the valuable items which King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the LORD's Temple in Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his own gods.

⁸ Cyrus directed Mithredath, the treasurer of Persia, to count these items

and present them to Sheshbazzar, the leader of the exiles returning to Judah.

⁹ These were the items Cyrus donated: gold trays, 30; silver trays, 1,000; silver censers, 29;

¹⁰ gold bowls, 30; silver bowls, 410; other items, 1,000.

¹¹ In all, 5,400 gold and silver items were turned over to Sheshbazzar to take back to Jerusalem when the exiles returned there from Babylon.

2 ¹ Here is the list of the Jewish exiles of the provinces who returned from their captivity to Jerusalem and to the other towns of Judah. They had been deported to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.

² Their leaders were Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. This is the number

of the men of Israel who returned from exile:

³ The family of Parosh, 2,172.

⁴ The family of Shephatiah, 372.

⁵ The family of Arah, 775.

⁶ The family of Pahath–moab (descendants of Jeshua and Joab), 2,812.

⁷ The family of Elam, 1,254.

⁸ The family of Zattu, 945.

⁹ The family of Zaccai, 760.

¹⁰ The family of Bani, 642.

¹¹ The family of Bebai, 623.

¹² The family of Azgad, 1,222.

¹³ The family of Adonikam, 666.

¹⁴ The family of Bigvai, 2,056.

¹⁵ The family of Adin, 454.

¹⁶ The family of Ater (descendants of Hezekiah), 98.

¹⁷ The family of Bezai, 323.

¹⁸ The family of Jorah, 112.

¹⁹ The family of Hashum, 223.

²⁰ The family of Gibbar, 95.

²¹ The people of Bethlehem, 123.

²² The people of Netophah, 56.

²³ The people of Anathoth, 128.

²⁴ The people of Beth–azmaveth, 42.

²⁵ The peoples of Kiriath–jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, 743.

²⁶ The peoples of Ramah and Geba, 621.

²⁷ The people of Micmash, 122.

²⁸ The peoples of Bethel and Ai, 223.

²⁹ The citizens of Nebo, 52.

³⁰ The citizens of Magbish, 156.

³¹ The citizens of Elam, 1,254.

³² The citizens of Harim, 320.

³³ The citizens of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 725.

³⁴ The citizens of Jericho, 345.

³⁵ The citizens of Senaah, 3,630.

³⁶ These are the priests who returned from exile: The family of Jedaiah (through the line of Jeshua), 973.

³⁷ The family of Immer, 1,052.

³⁸ The family of Pashhur, 1,247.

³⁹ The family of Harim, 1,017.

⁴⁰ These are the Levites who returned from exile: The families of Jeshua and Kadmiel (descendants of Hodaviah), 74.

⁴¹ The singers of the family of Asaph, 128.

⁴² The gatekeepers of the families of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai, 139.

⁴³ The descendants of the following Temple servants returned from exile: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

⁴⁴ Keros, Siaha, Padon,

⁴⁵ Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub,

⁴⁶ Hagab, Shalmal, Hanan,

⁴⁷ Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah,

⁴⁸ Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam,

⁴⁹ Uzza, Paseah, Besai,

⁵⁰ Asnah, Meunim, Nephusim,

⁵¹ Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

⁵² Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

⁵³ Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

⁵⁴ Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁵⁵ The descendants of these servants of King Solomon returned from exile: Sotai, Sophereth, Peruda,

⁵⁶ Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel,

⁵⁷ Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth—hazzebaim, and Ami.

⁵⁸ In all, the Temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants numbered 392.

⁵⁹ Another group returned to Jerusalem at this time from the towns of Tel—melah, Tel—harsha, Kerub, Addan, and Immer. However, they could not prove that they or their families were descendants of Israel.

⁶⁰ This group consisted of the families of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda—a total of 652 people.

⁶¹ Three families of priests—Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai—also returned to

Jerusalem. (This Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of Barzillai of Gilead, and he had taken her family name.)

⁶² But they had lost their genealogical records, so they were not allowed to serve as priests.

⁶³ The governor would not even let them eat the priests' share of food from the sacrifices until there was a priest who could consult the LORD about the matter by means of sacred lots.

⁶⁴ So a total of 42,360 people returned to Judah,

⁶⁵ in addition to 7,337 servants and 200 singers, both men and women.

⁶⁶ They took with them 736 horses, 245 mules,

⁶⁷ 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁶⁸ When they arrived at the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the family leaders gave generously toward

the rebuilding of God's Temple on its original site,

⁶⁹ and each leader gave as much as he could. The total of their gifts came to 61,000 gold coins, 6,250 pounds of silver, and 100 robes for the priests.

⁷⁰ So the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, the Temple servants, and some of the common people settled in villages near Jerusalem. The rest of the people returned to the other towns of Judah from which they had come.

3 ¹ Now in early autumn, when the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled together as one person in Jerusalem.

² Then Jeshua son of Jehozadak with his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his family began to rebuild the altar of the God of Israel so they could sacrifice burnt offerings on it, as

instructed in the law of Moses, the man of God.

³ Even though the people were afraid of the local residents, they rebuilt the altar at its old site. Then they immediately began to sacrifice burnt offerings on the altar to the LORD. They did this each morning and evening.

⁴ They celebrated the Festival of Shelters as prescribed in the law of Moses, sacrificing the burnt offerings specified for each day of the festival.

⁵ They also offered the regular burnt offerings and the offerings required for the new moon celebrations and the other annual festivals to the LORD. Freewill offerings were also sacrificed to the LORD by the people.

⁶ Fifteen days before the Festival of Shelters began, the priests had begun to sacrifice burnt offerings to the LORD.

This was also before they had started to lay the foundation of the LORD's Temple.

⁷ Then they hired masons and carpenters and bought cedar logs from the people of Tyre and Sidon, paying them with food, wine, and olive oil. The logs were brought down from the Lebanon mountains and floated along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa, for King Cyrus had given permission for this.

⁸ The construction of the Temple of God began in midspring, during the second year after they arrived in Jerusalem. The work force was made up of everyone who had returned from exile, including Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jehozadak and his fellow priests, and all the Levites. The Levites who were twenty years old or older were put in charge of rebuilding the LORD's Temple.

⁹ The workers at the Temple of God were supervised by Jeshua with his sons and relatives, and Kadmiel and his sons, all descendants of Hodaviah. They were helped in this task by the Levites of the family of Henadad.

¹⁰ When the builders completed the foundation of the LORD's Temple, the priests put on their robes and took their places to blow their trumpets. And the Levites, descendants of Asaph, clashed their cymbals to praise the LORD, just as King David had prescribed.

¹¹ With praise and thanks, they sang this song to the LORD: "He is so good! His faithful love for Israel endures forever!" Then all the people gave a great shout, praising the LORD because the foundation of the LORD's Temple had been laid.

¹² Many of the older priests, Levites, and other leaders remembered the first

Temple, and they wept aloud when they saw the new Temple's foundation. The others, however, were shouting for joy.

¹³ The joyful shouting and weeping mingled together in a loud commotion that could be heard far in the distance.

4 ¹ The enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were rebuilding a Temple to the LORD, the God of Israel.

² So they approached Zerubbabel and the other leaders and said, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God just as you do. We have sacrificed to him ever since King Esarhaddon of Assyria brought us here."

³ But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other leaders of Israel replied, "You may have no part in this work, for we have nothing in common. We alone will build the Temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, just as King Cyrus of Persia commanded us."

⁴ Then the local residents tried to discourage and frighten the people of Judah to keep them from their work.

⁵ They bribed agents to work against them and to frustrate their aims. This went on during the entire reign of King Cyrus of Persia and lasted until King Darius of Persia took the throne.

⁶ Years later when Xerxes began his reign, the enemies of Judah wrote him a letter of accusation against the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

⁷ And even later, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, the enemies of Judah, led by Bishlam, Mithredath, and Tabeel, sent a letter to Artaxerxes in the Aramaic language, and it was translated for the king.

⁸ Rehum the governor and Shimshai the court secretary wrote the letter, telling King Artaxerxes about the situation in Jerusalem.

⁹ They greeted the king for all their colleagues—the judges and local leaders, the people of Tarpel, the Persians, the Babylonians, and the people of Erech and Susa (that is, Elam).

¹⁰ They also sent greetings from the rest of the people whom the great and noble Ashurbanipal had deported and relocated in Samaria and throughout the neighboring lands of the province west of the Euphrates River.

¹¹ This is a copy of the letter they sent him: "To Artaxerxes, from your loyal subjects in the province west of the Euphrates River.

¹² "Please be informed that the Jews who came here to Jerusalem from Babylon are rebuilding this rebellious and evil city. They have already laid the foundation for its walls and will soon complete them.

¹³ But we wish you to know that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, it will be much to your disadvantage, for the Jews will then refuse to pay their tribute, customs, and tolls to you.

¹⁴ "Since we are loyal to you as your subjects and we do not want to see you dishonored in this way, we have sent you this information.

¹⁵ We suggest that you search your ancestors' records, where you will discover what a rebellious city this has been in the past. In fact, it was destroyed because of its long history of sedition against the kings and countries who attempted to control it.

¹⁶ We declare that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the province west of the Euphrates River will be lost to you."

¹⁷ Then Artaxerxes made this reply: "To Rehum the governor, Shimshai the court

secretary, and their colleagues living in Samaria and throughout the province west of the Euphrates River.

¹⁸ "Greetings. The letter you sent has been translated and read to me.

¹⁹ I have ordered a search to be made of the records and have indeed found that Jerusalem has in times past been a hotbed of insurrection against many kings. In fact, rebellion and sedition are normal there!

²⁰ Powerful kings have ruled over Jerusalem and the entire province west of the Euphrates River and have received vast tribute, customs, and tolls.

²¹ Therefore, issue orders to have these people stop their work. That city must not be rebuilt except at my express command.

²² Do not delay, for we must not permit the situation to get out of control."

²³ When this letter from King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum, Shimshai, and their colleagues, they hurried to Jerusalem and forced the Jews to stop building.

²⁴ The work on the Temple of God in Jerusalem had stopped, and it remained at a standstill until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia.

5 ¹ At that time the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied in the name of the God of Israel to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem.

² Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jehozadak responded by beginning the task of rebuilding the Temple of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them and helped them.

³ But Tattenai, governor of the province west of the Euphrates, and Shetharbozenai and their colleagues soon

arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Who gave you permission to rebuild this Temple and restore this structure?"

⁴ They also asked for a list of the names of all the people who were working on the Temple.

⁵ But because their God was watching over them, the leaders of the Jews were not prevented from building until a report was sent to Darius and he returned his decision.

⁶ This is the letter that Tattenai the governor, Shethar-bozenai, and the other officials of the province west of the Euphrates River sent to King Darius:

⁷ "Greetings to King Darius.

⁸ We wish to inform you that we went to the construction site of the Temple of the great God in the province of Judah. It is being rebuilt with specially prepared stones, and timber is being laid in its

walls. The work is going forward with great energy and success.

⁹ We asked the leaders, 'Who gave you permission to rebuild this Temple and restore this structure?'

¹⁰ And we demanded their names so that we could tell you who the leaders were.

¹¹ "This was their answer: 'We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the Temple that was built here many years ago by a great king of Israel.'

¹² But because our ancestors angered the God of heaven, he abandoned them to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who destroyed this Temple and exiled the people to Babylonia.

¹³ However, King Cyrus of Babylon, during the first year of his reign, issued a decree that the Temple of God should be rebuilt.

¹⁴ King Cyrus returned the gold and silver utensils that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple of God in Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of Babylon. These items were taken from that temple and delivered into the safekeeping of a man named Sheshbazzar, whom King Cyrus appointed as governor of Judah.

¹⁵ The king instructed him to return the utensils to their place in Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple of God there as it had been before.

¹⁶ So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the Temple of God in Jerusalem. The people have been working on it ever since, though it is not yet completed.'

¹⁷ "So now, if it pleases the king, we request that you search in the royal archives of Babylon to discover whether King Cyrus ever issued a decree to

rebuild God's Temple in Jerusalem. And then let the king send us his decision in this matter."

6¹ So King Darius issued orders that a search be made in the Babylonian archives, where treasures were stored.

² But it was at the fortress at Ecbatana in the province of Media that a scroll was found. This is what it said:

³ "Memorandum: "In the first year of King Cyrus's reign, a decree was sent out concerning the Temple of God at Jerusalem. It must be rebuilt on the site where Jews used to offer their sacrifices, retaining the original foundations. Its height will be ninety feet, and its width will be ninety feet.

⁴ Every three layers of specially prepared stones will be topped by a layer of timber. All expenses will be paid by the royal treasury.

⁵ And the gold and silver utensils, which were taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple of God in Jerusalem, will be taken back to Jerusalem and put into God's Temple as they were before."

⁶ So King Darius sent this message: "To Tattenai, governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, to Shetharbozenai, and to your colleagues and other officials west of the Euphrates: "Stay away from there!

⁷ Do not disturb the construction of the Temple of God. Let it be rebuilt on its former site, and do not hinder the governor of Judah and the leaders of the Jews in their work.

⁸ Moreover I hereby decree that you are to help these leaders of the Jews as they rebuild this Temple of God. You must pay the full construction costs without delay from my taxes collected in

your province so that the work will not be discontinued.

⁹ Give the priests in Jerusalem whatever is needed in the way of young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings presented to the God of heaven. And without fail, provide them with the wheat, salt, wine, and olive oil that they need each day.

¹⁰ Then they will be able to offer acceptable sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for me and my sons.

¹¹ "Those who violate this decree in any way will have a beam pulled from their house. Then they will be tied to it and flogged, and their house will be reduced to a pile of rubble.

¹² May the God who has chosen the city of Jerusalem as the place to honor his name destroy any king or nation that violates this command and destroys this Temple. I, Darius, have issued

this decree. Let it be obeyed with all diligence."

¹³ Tattenai, governor of the province west of the Euphrates River, and Shethar–bozenai and their colleagues complied at once with the command of King Darius.

¹⁴ So the Jewish leaders continued their work, and they were greatly encouraged by the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. The Temple was finally finished, as had been commanded by the God of Israel and decreed by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, the kings of Persia.

¹⁵ The Temple was completed on March 12, during the sixth year of King Darius's reign.

¹⁶ The Temple of God was then dedicated with great joy by the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the

rest of the people who had returned from exile.

¹⁷ During the dedication ceremony for the Temple of God, one hundred young bulls, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs were sacrificed. And twelve male goats were presented as a sin offering for the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹⁸ Then the priests and Levites were divided into their various divisions to serve at the Temple of God in Jerusalem, following all the instructions recorded in the Book of Moses.

¹⁹ On April 21 the returned exiles celebrated Passover.

²⁰ The priests and Levites had purified themselves and were ceremonially clean. So they slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the returned exiles, for the other priests, and for themselves.

²¹ The Passover meal was eaten by the people of Israel who had returned from

exile and by the others in the land who had turned from their immoral customs to worship the LORD, the God of Israel.

²² They ate the Passover meal and celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. There was great joy throughout the land because the LORD had changed the attitude of the king of Assyria toward them, so that he helped them to rebuild the Temple of God, the God of Israel.

7 ¹ Many years later, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, there was a man named Ezra. He was the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, ² son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, ³ son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, ⁴ son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki,

⁵ son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the high priest.

⁶ This Ezra was a scribe, well versed in the law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given to the people of Israel. He came up to Jerusalem from Babylon, and the king gave him everything he asked for, because the gracious hand of the LORD his God was on him.

⁷ Some of the people of Israel, as well as some of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, and Temple servants, traveled up to Jerusalem with him in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes' reign.

⁸ Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in August of that year.

⁹ He had left Babylon on April 8 and came to Jerusalem on August 4, for the gracious hand of his God was on him.

¹⁰ This was because Ezra had determined to study and obey the law

of the LORD and to teach those laws and regulations to the people of Israel.

¹¹ King Artaxerxes had given a copy of the following letter to Ezra, the priest and scribe who studied and taught the commands and laws of the LORD to Israel:

¹² "Greetings from Artaxerxes, the king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the teacher of the law of the God of heaven.

¹³ "I decree that any of the people of Israel in my kingdom, including the priests and Levites, may volunteer to return to Jerusalem with you.

¹⁴ I and my Council of Seven hereby instruct you to conduct an inquiry into the situation in Judah and Jerusalem, based on your God's law, which is in your hand.

¹⁵ We also commission you to take with you some silver and gold, which we are

freely presenting as an offering to the God of Israel who lives in Jerusalem.

¹⁶ "Moreover you are to take any silver and gold which you may obtain from the province of Babylon, as well as the freewill offerings of the people and the priests that are presented for the Temple of their God in Jerusalem.

¹⁷ These donations are to be used specifically for the purchase of bulls, rams, lambs, and the appropriate grain offerings and drink offerings, all of which will be offered on the altar of the Temple of your God in Jerusalem.

¹⁸ Any money that is left over may be used in whatever way you and your colleagues feel is the will of your God.

¹⁹ But as for the utensils we are entrusting to you for the service of the Temple of your God, deliver them in full to the God of Jerusalem.

²⁰ If you run short of money for anything necessary for your God's Temple or for any similar needs, you may requisition funds from the royal treasury.

²¹ "I, Artaxerxes the king, hereby send this decree to all the treasurers in the province west of the Euphrates River: 'You are to give Ezra whatever he requests of you, for he is a priest and teacher of the law of the God of heaven.

²² You are to give him up to 7,500 pounds of silver, 500 bushels of wheat, 550 gallons of wine, 550 gallons of olive oil, and an unlimited supply of salt.

²³ Be careful to provide whatever the God of heaven demands for his Temple, for why should we risk bringing God's anger against the realm of the king and his sons?

²⁴ I also decree that no priest, Levite, singer, gatekeeper, Temple servant, or

other worker in this Temple of God will be required to pay taxes of any kind.'

²⁵ "And you, Ezra, are to use the wisdom God has given you to appoint magistrates and judges who know your God's laws to govern all the people in the province west of the Euphrates River. If the people are not familiar with those laws, you must teach them.

²⁶ Anyone who refuses to obey the law of your God and the law of the king will be punished immediately by death, banishment, confiscation of goods, or imprisonment."

²⁷ Praise the LORD, the God of our ancestors, who made the king want to beautify the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem!

²⁸ And praise him for demonstrating such unfailing love to me by honoring me before the king, his council, and all his mighty princes! I felt encouraged

because the gracious hand of the LORD my God was on me. And I gathered some of the leaders of Israel to return with me to Jerusalem.

8 ¹ Here is a list of the family leaders and the genealogies of those who came with me from Babylon during the reign of King Artaxerxes:

² From the family of Phinehas: Gershom. From the family of Ithamar: Daniel.

³ From the family of David: Hattush son of Shecaniah. From the family of Parosh: Zechariah and 150 other men.

⁴ From the family of Pahath—moab: Eliehoenai son of Zerariah and 200 other men.

⁵ From the family of Zattu: Shecaniah son of Jahaziel and 300 other men.

⁶ From the family of Adin: Ebed son of Jonathan and 50 other men.

⁷ From the family of Elam: Jeshaiiah son of Athaliah and 70 other men.

⁸ From the family of Shephatiah: Zebadiah son of Michael and 80 other men.

⁹ From the family of Joab: Obadiah son of Jehiel and 218 other men.

¹⁰ From the family of Bani: Shelomith son of Josiphiah and 160 other men.

¹¹ From the family of Bebai: Zechariah son of Bebai and 28 other men.

¹² From the family of Azgad: Johanan son of Hakkatan and 110 other men.

¹³ From the family of Adonikam, who came later: Eliphelet, Jeuel, Shemaiah, and 60 other men.

¹⁴ From the family of Bigvai: Uthai, Zaccur, and 70 other men.

¹⁵ I assembled the exiles at the Ahava Canal, and we camped there for three days while I went over the lists of the people and the priests who had

arrived. I found that not one Levite had volunteered to come along.

¹⁶ So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders of the people. I also sent for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were very wise men.

¹⁷ I sent them to Iddo, the leader of the Levites at Casiphia, to ask him and his relatives and the Temple servants to send us ministers for the Temple of God at Jerusalem.

¹⁸ Since the gracious hand of our God was on us, they sent us a man named Sherebiah, along with eighteen of his sons and brothers. He was a very astute man and a descendant of Mahli, who was a descendant of Levi son of Israel.

¹⁹ They also sent Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiiah from the descendants

of Merari, and twenty of his sons and brothers,

²⁰ and 220 Temple servants. The Temple servants were assistants to the Levites—a group of Temple workers first instituted by King David. They were all listed by name.

²¹ And there by the Ahava Canal, I gave orders for all of us to fast and humble ourselves before our God. We prayed that he would give us a safe journey and protect us, our children, and our goods as we traveled.

²² For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king, "Our God protects all those who worship him, but his fierce anger rages against those who abandon him."

²³ So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer.

²⁴ I appointed twelve leaders of the priests—Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten other priests—

²⁵ to be in charge of transporting the silver, the gold, the gold bowls, and the other items that the king, his council, his leaders, and the people of Israel had presented for the Temple of God.

²⁶ I weighed the treasure as I gave it to them and found the totals to be as follows: 24 tons of silver, 7,500 pounds of silver utensils, 7,500 pounds of gold,

²⁷ 20 gold bowls, equal in value to 1,000 gold coins, 2 fine articles of polished bronze, as precious as gold.

²⁸ And I said to these priests, "You and these treasures have been set apart as holy to the LORD. This silver and gold is a

freewill offering to the LORD, the God of our ancestors.

²⁹ Guard these treasures well until you present them, without an ounce lost, to the leading priests, the Levites, and the leaders of Israel at the storerooms of the LORD's Temple in Jerusalem."

³⁰ So the priests and the Levites accepted the task of transporting these treasures to the Temple of our God in Jerusalem.

³¹ We broke camp at the Ahava Canal on April 19 and started off to Jerusalem. And the gracious hand of our God protected us and saved us from enemies and bandits along the way.

³² So at last we arrived safely in Jerusalem, where we rested for three days.

³³ On the fourth day after our arrival, the silver, gold, and other valuables were weighed at the Temple of our God and

entrusted to Meremoth son of Uriah the priest and to Eleazar son of Phinehas, along with Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui—both of whom were Levites.

³⁴ Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the total weight was officially recorded.

³⁵ Then the exiles who had returned from captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel. They presented twelve oxen for the people of Israel, as well as ninety–six rams and seventy–seven lambs. They also offered twelve goats as a sin offering. All this was given as a burnt offering to the LORD.

³⁶ The king’s decrees were delivered to his lieutenants and the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, who then cooperated by supporting the people and the Temple of God.

9¹ But then the Jewish leaders came to me and said, "Many of the people of Israel, and even some of the priests and Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the other peoples living in the land. They have taken up the detestable practices of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites.

² For the men of Israel have married women from these people and have taken them as wives for their sons. So the holy race has become polluted by these mixed marriages. To make matters worse, the officials and leaders are some of the worst offenders."

³ When I heard this, I tore my clothing, pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat down utterly shocked.

⁴ Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel came and sat with

me because of this unfaithfulness of his people. And I sat there utterly appalled until the time of the evening sacrifice.

⁵ At the time of the sacrifice, I stood up from where I had sat in mourning with my clothes torn. I fell to my knees, lifted my hands to the LORD my God.

⁶ I prayed, "O my God, I am utterly ashamed; I blush to lift up my face to you. For our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached to the heavens.

⁷ Our whole history has been one of great sin. That is why we and our kings and our priests have been at the mercy of the pagan kings of the land. We have been killed, captured, robbed, and disgraced, just as we are today.

⁸ "But now we have been given a brief moment of grace, for the LORD our God has allowed a few of us to survive as a remnant. He has given us security in this

holy place. Our God has brightened our eyes and granted us some relief from our slavery.

⁹ For we were slaves, but in his unfailing love our God did not abandon us in our slavery. Instead, he caused the kings of Persia to treat us favorably. He revived us so that we were able to rebuild the Temple of our God and repair its ruins. He has given us a protective wall in Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰ "And now, O our God, what can we say after all of this? For once again we have ignored your commands!

¹¹ Your servants the prophets warned us that the land we would possess was totally defiled by the detestable practices of the people living there. From one end to the other, the land is filled with corruption.

¹² You told us not to let our daughters marry their sons, and not to let our sons

marry their daughters, and not to help those nations in any way. You promised that if we avoided these things, we would become a prosperous nation. You promised that we would enjoy the good produce of the land and leave this prosperity to our children as an inheritance forever.

¹³ "Now we are being punished because of our wickedness and our great guilt. But we have actually been punished far less than we deserve, for you, our God, have allowed some of us to survive as a remnant.

¹⁴ But now we are again breaking your commands and intermarrying with people who do these detestable things. Surely your anger will destroy us until even this little remnant no longer survives.

¹⁵ O LORD, God of Israel, you are just. We stand before you in our guilt as

nothing but an escaped remnant, though in such a condition none of us can stand in your presence."

10¹ While Ezra prayed and made this confession, weeping and throwing himself to the ground in front of the Temple of God, a large crowd of people from Israel—men, women, and children—gathered and wept bitterly with him.

² Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, a descendant of Elam, said to Ezra, "We confess that we have been unfaithful to our God, for we have married these pagan women of the land. But there is hope for Israel in spite of this.

³ Let us now make a covenant with our God to divorce our pagan wives and to send them away with their children. We will follow the advice given by you and by the others who respect the

commands of our God. We will obey the law of God.

⁴ Take courage, for it is your duty to tell us how to proceed in setting things straight, and we will cooperate fully."

⁵ So Ezra stood up and demanded that the leaders of the priests and the Levites and all the people of Israel swear that they would do as Shecaniah had said. And they all swore a solemn oath.

⁶ Then Ezra left the front of the Temple of God and went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib. He spent the night there, but he did not eat any food or drink. He was still in mourning because of the unfaithfulness of the returned exiles.

⁷ Then a proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the returned exiles should come to Jerusalem.

⁸ Those who failed to come within three days would, if the leaders and elders so decided, forfeit all their property and be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.

⁹ Within three days, all the people of Judah and Benjamin had gathered in Jerusalem. This took place on December 19, and all the people were sitting in the square before the Temple of God. They were trembling both because of the seriousness of the matter and because it was raining.

¹⁰ Then Ezra the priest stood and said to them: "You have sinned, for you have married pagan women. Now we are even more deeply under condemnation than we were before.

¹¹ Confess your sin to the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and do what he demands. Separate yourselves from the people of the land and from these pagan women."

¹² Then the whole assembly raised their voices and answered, "Yes, you are right; we must do as you say!"

¹³ Then they added, "This isn't something that can be done in a day or two, for many of us are involved in this extremely sinful affair. This is the rainy season, so we cannot stay out here much longer.

¹⁴ Let our leaders act on behalf of us all. Everyone who has a pagan wife will come at the scheduled time with the leaders and judges of his city, so that the fierce anger of our God may be turned away from us concerning this affair."

¹⁵ Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah opposed this course of action, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supported them.

¹⁶ So this was the plan that they followed. Ezra selected leaders to represent their families, designating

each of the representatives by name. On December 29, the leaders sat down to investigate the matter.

¹⁷ By March 27 of the next year they had finished dealing with all the men who had married pagan wives.

¹⁸ These are the priests who had married pagan wives: From the family of Jeshua son of Jehozadak and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah.

¹⁹ They vowed to divorce their wives, and they each acknowledged their guilt by offering a ram as a guilt offering.

²⁰ From the family of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah.

²¹ From the family of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uziah.

²² From the family of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

²³ These are the Levites who were guilty: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (also called Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

²⁴ This is the singer who was guilty: Eliashib. These are the gatekeepers who were guilty: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

²⁵ These are the other people of Israel who were guilty: From the family of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malkijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Hashabiah, and Benaiah.

²⁶ From the family of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah.

²⁷ From the family of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza.

²⁸ From the family of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

²⁹ From the family of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth.

³⁰ From the family of Pahath—moab: Adna, Kelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh.

³¹ From the family of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malkijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,
³² Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.

³³ From the family of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

³⁴ From the family of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel,

³⁵ Benaiah, Bedeiah, Keluhi,

³⁶ Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

³⁷ Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.

³⁸ From the family of Binnui: Shimei,

³⁹ Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,

⁴⁰ Macnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,

⁴¹ Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,

⁴² Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

⁴³ From the family of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah.

⁴⁴ Each of these men had a pagan wife, and some even had children by these wives.

Nehemiah

1 ¹ These are the memoirs of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In late autumn of the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa.

² Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had survived the captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

³ They said to me, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been burned."

⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.

⁵ Then I said, "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands,

⁶ listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned!

⁷ We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, laws, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

⁸ "Please remember what you told your servant Moses: 'If you sin, I will scatter you among the nations.

⁹ But if you return to me and obey my commands, even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to

the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.'

¹⁰ "We are your servants, the people you rescued by your great power and might.

¹¹ O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success now as I go to ask the king for a great favor. Put it into his heart to be kind to me." In those days I was the king's cup-bearer.

2 ¹ Early the following spring, during the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was serving the king his wine. I had never appeared sad in his presence before this time.

² So the king asked me, "Why are you so sad? You aren't sick, are you? You look like a man with deep troubles." Then I was badly frightened,

³ but I replied, "Long live the king! Why shouldn't I be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and the gates have been burned down."

⁴ The king asked, "Well, how can I help you?" With a prayer to the God of heaven,

⁵ I replied, "If it please Your Majesty and if you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."

⁶ The king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked, "How long will you be gone? When will you return?" So the king agreed, and I set a date for my departure.

⁷ I also said to the king, "If it please Your Majesty, give me letters to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, instructing them to let me travel safely through their territories on my way to Judah."

⁸ And please send a letter to Asaph, the manager of the king's forest, instructing him to give me timber. I will need it to make beams for the gates of the Temple fortress, for the city walls, and for a house for myself." And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me.

⁹ When I came to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, I delivered the king's letters to them. The king, I should add, had sent along army officers and horsemen to protect me.

¹⁰ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of my arrival, they were very angry that someone had come who was interested in helping Israel.

¹¹ Three days after my arrival at Jerusalem,

¹² I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told

anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us, except the donkey that I myself was riding.

¹³ I went out through the Valley Gate, past the Jackal's Well, and over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and burned gates.

¹⁴ Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble.

¹⁵ So I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate.

¹⁶ The city officials did not know I had been out there or what I was doing, for I had not yet said anything to anyone about my plans. I had not yet spoken to the religious and political leaders, the officials, or anyone else in the administration.

¹⁷ But now I said to them, "You know full well the tragedy of our city. It lies in ruins, and its gates are burned. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and rid ourselves of this disgrace!"

¹⁸ Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, "Good! Let's rebuild the wall!" So they began the good work.

¹⁹ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. "What are you doing, rebelling against the king like this?" they asked.

²⁰ But I replied, "The God of heaven will help us succeed. We his servants will start rebuilding this wall. But you have no stake or claim in Jerusalem."

3 ¹ Then Eliashib the high priest and the other priests started to rebuild

at the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors, building the wall as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and the Tower of Hananel.

² People from the city of Jericho worked next to them, and beyond them was Zaccur son of Imri.

³ The Fish Gate was built by the sons of Hassenaah. They did the whole thing—laid the beams, hung the doors, and put the bolts and bars in place.

⁴ Meremoth son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz repaired the next section of wall. Beside him were Meshullam son of Berekiah and grandson of Meshezabel, and then Zadok son of Baana.

⁵ Next were the people from Tekoa, though their leaders refused to help.

⁶ The Old City Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid the beams, set

up the doors, and installed the bolts and bars.

⁷ Next to them were Melatiah from Gibeon, Jadon from Meronoth, and people from Gibeon and Mizpah, the headquarters of the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River.

⁸ Next was Uzziel son of Harhaiah, a goldsmith by trade, who also worked on the wall. Beyond him was Hananiah, a manufacturer of perfumes. They left out a section of Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

⁹ Rephaiah son of Hur, the leader of half the district of Jerusalem, was next to them on the wall.

¹⁰ Next Jedaiah son of Harumaph repaired the wall beside his own house, and next to him was Hattush son of Hashabneiah.

¹¹ Then came Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath–moab, who

repaired the Tower of the Ovens, in addition to another section of the wall.

¹² Shallum son of Hallohesh and his daughters repaired the next section. He was the leader of the other half of the district of Jerusalem.

¹³ The people from Zanoah, led by Hanun, rebuilt the Valley Gate, hung its doors, and installed the bolts and bars. They also repaired the fifteen hundred feet of wall to the Dung Gate.

¹⁴ The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, the leader of the Beth–hakerem district. After rebuilding it, he hung the doors and installed the bolts and bars.

¹⁵ Shallum son of Col–hozeh, the leader of the Mizpah district, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it, roofed it, hung its doors, and installed its bolts and bars. Then he repaired the wall of the pool of Siloam near the king’s garden,

and he rebuilt the wall as far as the stairs that descend from the City of David.

¹⁶ Next to him was Nehemiah son of Azbuk, the leader of half the district of Beth-zur. He rebuilt the wall to a place opposite the royal cemetery as far as the water reservoir and the House of the Warriors.

¹⁷ Next was a group of Levites working under the supervision of Rehum son of Bani. Then came Hashabiah, the leader of half the district of Keilah, who supervised the building of the wall on behalf of his own district.

¹⁸ Next down the line were his countrymen led by Binnui son of Henadad, the leader of the other half of the district of Keilah.

¹⁹ Next to them, Ezer son of Jeshua, the leader of Mizpah, repaired another section of wall opposite the armory by the buttress.

²⁰ Next to him was Baruch son of Zabbai, who repaired an additional section from the buttress to the door of the home of Eliashib the high priest.

²¹ Meremoth son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz rebuilt another section of the wall extending from a point opposite the door of Eliashib's house to the side of the house.

²² Then came the priests from the surrounding region.

²³ After them, Benjamin, Hasshub, and Azariah son of Maaseiah and grandson of Ananiah repaired the sections next to their own houses.

²⁴ Next was Binnui son of Henadad, who rebuilt another section of the wall from Azariah's house to the buttress and the corner.

²⁵ Palal son of Uzai carried on the work from a point opposite the buttress and the corner to the upper tower that

projects from the king's house beside the court of the guard. Next to him were Pedaiah son of Parosh

²⁶ and the Temple servants living on the hill of Ophel, who repaired the wall as far as the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower.

²⁷ Then came the people of Tekoa, who repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower and over to the wall of Ophel.

²⁸ The priests repaired the wall up the hill from the Horse Gate, each one doing the section immediately opposite his own house.

²⁹ Next Zadok son of Immer also rebuilt the wall next to his own house, and beyond him was Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the gatekeeper of the East Gate.

³⁰ Next Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired

another section, while Meshullam son of Berekiah rebuilt the wall next to his own house.

³¹ Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the wall as far as the housing for the Temple servants and merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate. Then he continued as far as the upper room at the corner.

³² The other goldsmiths and merchants repaired the wall from that corner to the Sheep Gate.

4 ¹ Sanballat was very angry when he learned that we were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage and mocked the Jews,

² saying in front of his friends and the Samarian army officers, "What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they are doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a day if they offer enough sacrifices? Look at those charred stones

they are pulling out of the rubbish and using again!"

³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, "That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!"

⁴ Then I prayed, "Hear us, O our God, for we are being mocked. May their scoffing fall back on their own heads, and may they themselves become captives in a foreign land!"

⁵ Do not ignore their guilt. Do not blot out their sins, for they have provoked you to anger here in the presence of the builders."

⁶ At last the wall was completed to half its original height around the entire city, for the people had worked very hard.

⁷ But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead

and that the gaps in the wall were being repaired, they became furious.

⁸ They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and to bring about confusion there.

⁹ But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.

¹⁰ Then the people of Judah began to complain that the workers were becoming tired. There was so much rubble to be moved that we could never get it done by ourselves.

¹¹ Meanwhile, our enemies were saying, "Before they know what's happening, we will swoop down on them and kill them and end their work."

¹² The Jews who lived near the enemy came and told us again and again, "They will come from all directions and attack us!"

¹³ So I placed armed guards behind the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I stationed the people to stand guard by families, armed with swords, spears, and bows.

¹⁴ Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the leaders and the people and said to them, "Don't be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your friends, your families, and your homes!"

¹⁵ When our enemies heard that we knew of their plans and that God had frustrated them, we all returned to our work on the wall.

¹⁶ But from then on, only half my men worked while the other half stood guard with spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. The officers stationed themselves behind the people of Judah

¹⁷ who were building the wall. The common laborers carried on their work with one hand supporting their load and one hand holding a weapon.

¹⁸ All the builders had a sword belted to their side. The trumpeter stayed with me to sound the alarm.

¹⁹ Then I explained to the nobles and officials and all the people, "The work is very spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall.

²⁰ When you hear the blast of the trumpet, rush to wherever it is sounding. Then our God will fight for us!"

²¹ We worked early and late, from sunrise to sunset. And half the men were always on guard.

²² I also told everyone living outside the walls to move into Jerusalem. That way they and their servants could go

on guard duty at night as well as work during the day.

²³ During this time, none of us—not I, nor my relatives, nor my servants, nor the guards who were with me—ever took off our clothes. We carried our weapons with us at all times, even when we went for water.

5 ¹ About this time some of the men and their wives raised a cry of protest against their fellow Jews.

² They were saying, "We have such large families. We need more money just so we can buy the food we need to survive."

³ Others said, "We have mortgaged our fields, vineyards, and homes to get food during the famine."

⁴ And others said, "We have already borrowed to the limit on our fields and vineyards to pay our taxes."

⁵ We belong to the same family, and our children are just like theirs. Yet we must sell our children into slavery just to get enough money to live. We have already sold some of our daughters, and we are helpless to do anything about it, for our fields and vineyards are already mortgaged to others."

⁶ When I heard their complaints, I was very angry.

⁷ After thinking about the situation, I spoke out against these nobles and officials. I told them, "You are oppressing your own relatives by charging them interest when they borrow money!" Then I called a public meeting to deal with the problem.

⁸ At the meeting I said to them, "The rest of us are doing all we can to redeem our Jewish relatives who have had to sell themselves to pagan foreigners, but you are selling them back into slavery again.

How often must we redeem them?" And they had nothing to say in their defense.

⁹ Then I pressed further, "What you are doing is not right! Should you not walk in the fear of our God in order to avoid being mocked by enemy nations?"

¹⁰ I myself, as well as my brothers and my workers, have been lending the people money and grain, but now let us stop this business of loans.

¹¹ You must restore their fields, vineyards, olive groves, and homes to them this very day. Repay the interest you charged on their money, grain, wine, and olive oil."

¹² Then they replied, "We will give back everything and demand nothing more from the people. We will do as you say." Then I called the priests and made the nobles and officials formally vow to do what they had promised.

¹³ I shook out the fold of my robe and said, "If you fail to keep your promise, may God shake you from your homes and from your property!" The whole assembly responded, "Amen," and they praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

¹⁴ I would like to mention that for the entire twelve years that I was governor of Judah—from the twentieth until the thirty-second year of the reign of King Artaxerxes—neither I nor my officials drew on our official food allowance.

¹⁵ This was quite a contrast to the former governors who had laid heavy burdens on the people, demanding a daily ration of food and wine, besides a pound of silver. Even their assistants took advantage of the people. But because of my fear of God, I did not act that way.

¹⁶ I devoted myself to working on the wall and refused to acquire any land.

And I required all my officials to spend time working on the wall.

¹⁷ I asked for nothing, even though I regularly fed 150 Jewish officials at my table, besides all the visitors from other lands!

¹⁸ The provisions required at my expense for each day were one ox, six fat sheep, and a large number of domestic fowl. And every ten days we needed a large supply of all kinds of wine. Yet I refused to claim the governor's food allowance because the people were already having a difficult time.

¹⁹ Remember, O my God, all that I have done for these people, and bless me for it.

6 ¹ When Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies found out that I had finished rebuilding the wall and that no gaps

remained—though we had not yet hung the doors in the gates—

² Sanballat and Geshem sent me a message asking me to meet them at one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But I realized they were plotting to harm me,

³ so I replied by sending this message to them: "I am doing a great work! I cannot stop to come and meet with you."

⁴ Four times they sent the same message, and each time I gave the same reply.

⁵ The fifth time, Sanballat's servant came with an open letter in his hand,

⁶ and this is what it said: "Geshem tells me that everywhere he goes he hears that you and the Jews are planning to rebel and that is why you are building the wall. According to his reports, you plan to be their king.

⁷ He also reports that you have appointed prophets to prophesy about

you in Jerusalem, saying, 'Look! There is a king in Judah!' "You can be very sure that this report will get back to the king, so I suggest that you come and talk it over with me."

⁸ My reply was, "You know you are lying. There is no truth in any part of your story."

⁹ They were just trying to intimidate us, imagining that they could break our resolve and stop the work. So I prayed for strength to continue the work.

¹⁰ Later I went to visit Shemaiah son of Delaiah and grandson of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home. He said, "Let us meet together inside the Temple of God and bolt the doors shut. Your enemies are coming to kill you tonight."

¹¹ But I replied, "Should someone in my position run away from danger? Should someone in my position enter

the Temple to save his life? No, I won't do it!"

¹² I realized that God had not spoken to him, but that he had uttered this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

¹³ They were hoping to intimidate me and make me sin by following his suggestion. Then they would be able to accuse and discredit me.

¹⁴ Remember, O my God, all the evil things that Tobiah and Sanballat have done. And remember Noadiah the prophet and all the prophets like her who have tried to intimidate me.

¹⁵ So on October 2 the wall was finally finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun.

¹⁶ When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They

realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

¹⁷ During those fifty–two days, many letters went back and forth between Tobiah and the officials of Judah.

¹⁸ For many in Judah had sworn allegiance to him because his father–in–law was Shecaniah son of Arah and because his son Jehohanan was married to the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah.

¹⁹ They kept telling me what a wonderful man Tobiah was, and then they told him everything I said. And Tobiah sent many threatening letters to intimidate me.

7 ¹ After the wall was finished and I had hung the doors in the gates, the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites were appointed.

² I gave the responsibility of governing Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, along

with Hananiah, the commander of the fortress, for he was a faithful man who feared God more than most.

³ I said to them, "Do not leave the gates open during the hottest part of the day. And while the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut and bar the doors. Appoint the residents of Jerusalem to act as guards, everyone on a regular watch. Some will serve at their regular posts and some in front of their own homes."

⁴ At that time the city was large and spacious, but the population was small. And only a few houses were scattered throughout the city.

⁵ So my God gave me the idea to call together all the leaders of the city, along with the ordinary citizens, for registration. I had found the genealogical record of those who had first returned to Judah. This is what was written there:

⁶ "Here is the list of the Jewish exiles of the provinces who returned from their captivity to Jerusalem and to the other towns of Judah. They had been deported to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.

⁷ Their leaders were Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. This is the number of men of Israel who returned from exile:

⁸ The family of Parosh, 2,172.

⁹ The family of Shephatiah, 372.

¹⁰ The family of Arah, 652.

¹¹ The family of Pahath–moab (descendants of Jeshua and Joab), 2,818.

¹² The family of Elam, 1,254.

¹³ The family of Zattu, 845.

¹⁴ The family of Zaccai, 760.

¹⁵ The family of Bani, 648.

¹⁶ The family of Bebai, 628.

¹⁷ The family of Azgad, 2,322.

- 18 The family of Adonikam, 667.
- 19 The family of Bigvai, 2,067.
- 20 The family of Adin, 655.
- 21 The family of Ater (descendants of Hezekiah), 98.
- 22 The family of Hashum, 328.
- 23 The family of Bezai, 324.
- 24 The family of Jorah, 112.
- 25 The family of Gibbar, 95.
- 26 The peoples of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188.
- 27 The people of Anathoth, 128.
- 28 The people of Beth–azmaveth, 42.
- 29 The peoples of Kiriath–jearim, Kephirah, and Beeroth, 743.
- 30 The peoples of Ramah and Geba, 621.
- 31 The people of Micmash, 122.
- 32 The peoples of Bethel and Ai, 123.
- 33 The people of Nebo, 52.
- 34 The citizens of Elam, 1,254.
- 35 The citizens of Harim, 320.

³⁶ The citizens of Jericho, 345.

³⁷ The citizens of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, 721.

³⁸ The citizens of Senaah, 3,930.

³⁹ "These are the priests who returned from exile: The family of Jedaiah (through the line of Jeshua), 973.

⁴⁰ The family of Immer, 1,052.

⁴¹ The family of Pashhur, 1,247.

⁴² The family of Harim, 1,017.

⁴³ "These are the Levites who returned from exile: The families of Jeshua and Kadmiel (descendants of Hodaviah), 74.

⁴⁴ The singers of the family of Asaph, 148.

⁴⁵ The gatekeepers of the families of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai, 138.

⁴⁶ "The descendants of the following Temple servants returned from exile: Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,

⁴⁷ Keros, Siaha, Padon,

⁴⁸ Lebanah, Hagabah, Shalmal,

⁴⁹ Hanan, Giddel, Gahar,

⁵⁰ Reaiah, Rezin, Nekoda,

⁵¹ Gazzam, Uzza, Paseah,

⁵² Besai, Meunim, Nephusim,

⁵³ Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

⁵⁴ Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

⁵⁵ Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

⁵⁶ Neziah, and Hatipha.

⁵⁷ "The descendants of these servants of King Solomon returned from exile: Sotai, Sophereth, Peruda,

⁵⁸ Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel,

⁵⁹ Shephatiah, Hattil, Pokereth—hazzebaim, and Ami.

⁶⁰ "In all, the Temple servants and the descendants of Solomon's servants numbered 392.

⁶¹ "Another group returned to Jerusalem at this time from the towns of Tel—melah, Tel—harsha, Kerub, Addan, and Immer. However, they could not

prove that they or their families were descendants of Israel.

⁶² This group included the families of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda—a total of 642 people.

⁶³ "Three families of priests—Hobaiah, Hakkoz, and Barzillai—also returned to Jerusalem. (This Barzillai had married a woman who was a descendant of Barzillai of Gilead, and he had taken her family name.)

⁶⁴ But they had lost their genealogical records, so they were not allowed to serve as priests.

⁶⁵ The governor would not even let them eat the priests' share of food from the sacrifices until there was a priest who could consult the LORD about the matter by means of sacred lots.

⁶⁶ "So a total of 42,360 people returned to Judah,

⁶⁷ in addition to 7,337 servants and 245 singers, both men and women.

⁶⁸ They took with them 736 horses, 245 mules,

⁶⁹ 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys.

⁷⁰ "Some of the family leaders gave gifts for the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 gold coins, 50 gold basins, and 530 robes for the priests.

⁷¹ The other leaders gave to the treasury a total of 20,000 gold coins and some 2,750 pounds of silver for the work.

⁷² The rest of the people gave 20,000 gold coins, about 2,500 pounds of silver, and 67 robes for the priests.

⁷³ "So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Temple servants, along with some of the people—that is to say, all Israel—settled in their own towns." Now in midautumn,

when the Israelites had settled in their towns,

8¹ all the people assembled together as one person at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey.

² So on October 8 Ezra the priest brought the scroll of the law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand.

³ He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people paid close attention to the Book of the Law.

⁴ Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform that had been made for the occasion. To his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah,

Hilkiah, and Maaseiah. To his left stood Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

⁵ Ezra stood on the platform in full view of all the people. When they saw him open the book, they all rose to their feet.

⁶ Then Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people chanted, "Amen! Amen!" as they lifted their hands toward heaven. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

⁷ Now the Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah—instructed the people who were standing there.

⁸ They read from the Book of the Law of God and clearly explained the meaning of what was being read, helping the people understand each passage.

⁹ Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, "Don't weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the LORD your God." All the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the law.

¹⁰ And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a feast of choice foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!"

¹¹ And the Levites, too, quieted the people, telling them, "Hush! Don't weep! For this is a sacred day."

¹² So the people went away to eat and drink at a festive meal, to share gifts of food, and to celebrate with great joy

because they had heard God's words and understood them.

¹³ On October 9 the family leaders and the priests and Levites met with Ezra to go over the law in greater detail.

¹⁴ As they studied the law, they discovered that the LORD had commanded through Moses that the Israelites should live in shelters during the festival to be held that month.

¹⁵ He had said that a proclamation should be made throughout their towns and especially in Jerusalem, telling the people to go to the hills to get branches from olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and fig trees. They were to use these branches to make shelters in which they would live during the festival, as it was prescribed in the law.

¹⁶ So the people went out and cut branches and used them to build shelters on the roofs of their houses, in their

courtyards, in the courtyards of God's Temple, or in the squares just inside the Water Gate and the Ephraim Gate.

¹⁷ So everyone who had returned from captivity lived in these shelters for the seven days of the festival, and everyone was filled with great joy! The Israelites had not celebrated this way since the days of Joshua son of Nun.

¹⁸ Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God on each of the seven days of the festival. Then on October 15 they held a solemn assembly, as the law of Moses required.

9¹ On October 31 the people returned for another observance. This time they fasted and dressed in sackcloth and sprinkled dust on their heads.

² Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners as they confessed their own sins and the sins of their ancestors.

³ The Book of the Law of the LORD their God was read aloud to them for about three hours. Then for three more hours they took turns confessing their sins and worshiping the LORD their God.

⁴ Some of the Levites were standing on the stairs, crying out to the LORD their God. Their names were Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Kenani.

⁵ Then the leaders of the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah—called out to the people: "Stand up and praise the LORD your God, for he lives from everlasting to everlasting!" Then they continued, "Praise his glorious name! It is far greater than we can think or say.

⁶ You alone are the LORD. You made the skies and the heavens and all the stars. You made the earth and the seas and

everything in them. You preserve and give life to everything, and all the angels of heaven worship you.

⁷ "You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him from Ur of the Chaldeans and renamed him Abraham.

⁸ When he had proved himself faithful, you made a covenant with him to give him and his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites. And you have done what you promised, for you are always true to your word.

⁹ "You saw the sufferings and sorrows of our ancestors in Egypt, and you heard their cries from beside the Red Sea.

¹⁰ You displayed miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, his servants, and all his people, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians were treating them. You have a glorious reputation that has never been forgotten.

¹¹ You divided the sea for your people so they could walk through on dry land! And then you hurled their enemies into the depths of the sea. They sank like stones beneath the mighty waters.

¹² You led our ancestors by a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night so that they could find their way.

¹³ "You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and instructions that were just, and laws and commands that were true.

¹⁴ You instructed them concerning the laws of your holy Sabbath. And you commanded them, through Moses your servant, to obey all your commands, laws, and instructions.

¹⁵ "You gave them bread from heaven when they were hungry and water from the rock when they were thirsty. You commanded them to go and take

possession of the land you had sworn to give them.

¹⁶ But our ancestors were a proud and stubborn lot, and they refused to obey your commands.

¹⁷ "They refused to listen and did not remember the miracles you had done for them. Instead, they rebelled and appointed a leader to take them back to their slavery in Egypt! But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and full of unfailing love and mercy. You did not abandon them,

¹⁸ even though they made an idol shaped like a calf and said, 'This is your god who brought you out of Egypt!' They sinned and committed terrible blasphemies.

¹⁹ But in your great mercy you did not abandon them to die in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud still led them forward

by day, and the pillar of fire showed them the way through the night.

²⁰ You sent your good Spirit to instruct them, and you did not stop giving them bread from heaven or water for their thirst.

²¹ For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness. They lacked nothing in all that time. Their clothes did not wear out, and their feet did not swell!

²² "Then you helped our ancestors conquer great kingdoms and many nations, and you placed your people in every corner of the land. They completely took over the land of King Sihon of Heshbon and the land of King Og of Bashan.

²³ You made their descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and brought them into the land you had promised to their ancestors.

²⁴ They went in and took possession of the land. You subdued whole nations before them. Even the kings and the Canaanites, who inhabited the land, were powerless! Your people could deal with them as they pleased.

²⁵ Our ancestors captured fortified cities and fertile land. They took over houses full of good things, with cisterns already dug and vineyards and olive groves and orchards in abundance. So they ate until they were full and grew fat and enjoyed themselves in all your blessings.

²⁶ "But despite all this, they were disobedient and rebelled against you. They threw away your law, they killed the prophets who encouraged them to return to you, and they committed terrible blasphemies.

²⁷ So you handed them over to their enemies. But in their time of trouble

they cried to you, and you heard them from heaven. In great mercy, you sent them deliverers who rescued them from their enemies.

²⁸ "But when all was going well, your people turned to sin again, and once more you let their enemies conquer them. Yet whenever your people cried to you again for help, you listened once more from heaven. In your wonderful mercy, you rescued them repeatedly!

²⁹ You warned them to return to your law, but they became proud and obstinate and disobeyed your commands. They did not follow your regulations, by which people will find life if only they obey. They stubbornly turned their backs on you and refused to listen.

³⁰ In your love, you were patient with them for many years. You sent your Spirit, who, through the prophets,

warned them about their sins. But still they wouldn't listen! So once again you allowed the pagan inhabitants of the land to conquer them.

³¹ But in your great mercy, you did not destroy them completely or abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God you are!

³² "And now, our God, the great and mighty and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of unfailing love, do not let all the hardships we have suffered be as nothing to you. Great trouble has come upon us and upon our kings and princes and priests and prophets and ancestors from the days when the kings of Assyria first triumphed over us until now.

³³ Every time you punished us you were being just. We have sinned greatly, and you gave us only what we deserved.

³⁴ Our kings, princes, priests, and ancestors did not obey your law or

listen to your commands and solemn warnings.

³⁵ Even while they had their own kingdom, they did not serve you even though you showered your goodness on them. You gave them a large, fertile land, but they refused to turn from their wickedness.

³⁶ "So now today we are slaves here in the land of plenty that you gave to our ancestors! We are slaves among all this abundance!

³⁷ The lush produce of this land piles up in the hands of the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They have power over us and our cattle. We serve them at their pleasure, and we are in great misery.

³⁸ "Yet in spite of all this, we are making a solemn promise and putting it in writing. On this sealed document are the

names of our princes and Levites and priests."

10¹ The document was ratified and sealed with the following names: Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah. The priests who signed were Zedekiah,

² Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

³ Pashhur, Amariah, Malkijah,

⁴ Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,

⁵ Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

⁶ Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

⁷ Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

⁸ Maaziah, Bilgai, and Shemaiah. These were the priests.

⁹ The Levites who signed were Jeshua son of Azaniah, Binnui from the family of Henadad, Kadmiel,

¹⁰ and their fellow Levites: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

¹¹ Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

¹² Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

¹³ Hodiah, Bani, and Beninu.

¹⁴ The 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 The rest of the people—the priests,
Levites, gatekeepers, singers, Temple
servants, and all who had separated
themselves from the pagan people of
the land in order to serve God, and who
were old enough to understand—

²⁹ now all heartily bound themselves with an oath. They vowed to accept the curse of God if they failed to obey the law of God as issued by his servant Moses. They solemnly promised to carefully follow all the commands, laws, and regulations of the LORD their Lord.

³⁰ "We promise not to let our daughters marry the pagan people of the land, nor to let our sons marry their daughters.

³¹ We further promise that if the people of the land should bring any merchandise or grain to be sold on the Sabbath or on any other holy day, we will refuse to buy it. And we promise not to do any work every seventh year and to cancel the debts owed to us by other Jews.

³² "In addition, we promise to obey the command to pay the annual Temple tax of an eighth of an ounce of silver, so that

there will be enough money to care for the Temple of our God.

³³ This will provide for the Bread of the Presence; for the regular grain offerings and burnt offerings; for the offerings on the Sabbaths, the new moon celebrations, and the annual festivals; for the holy offerings; and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel. It will also provide for the other items necessary for the work of the Temple of our God.

³⁴ "We have cast sacred lots to determine when—at regular times each year—the families of the priests, Levites, and the common people should bring wood to God's Temple to be burned on the altar of the LORD our God, as required in the law.

³⁵ "We promise always to bring the first part of every harvest to the LORD's

Temple—whether it be a crop from the soil or from our fruit trees.

³⁶ We agree to give to God our oldest sons and the firstborn of all our herds and flocks, just as the law requires. We will present them to the priests who minister in the Temple of our God.

³⁷ We will store the produce in the storerooms of the Temple of our God. We will bring the best of our flour and other grain offerings, the best of our fruit, and the best of our new wine and olive oil. And we promise to bring to the Levites a tenth of everything our land produces, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our rural towns.

³⁸ A priest—a descendant of Aaron—will be with the Levites as they receive these tithes. And a tenth of all that is collected as tithes will be delivered by the Levites to the Temple of our God and placed in the storerooms.

³⁹ The people and the Levites must bring these offerings of grain, new wine, and olive oil to the Temple and place them in the sacred containers near the ministering priests, the gatekeepers, and the singers. "So we promise together not to neglect the Temple of our God."

11 ¹ Now the leaders of the people were living in Jerusalem, the holy city, at this time. A tenth of the people from the other towns of Judah and Benjamin were chosen by sacred lots to live there, too, while the rest stayed where they were.

² And the people commended everyone who volunteered to resettle in Jerusalem.

³ Here is a list of the names of the provincial officials who came to Jerusalem. Most of the people, priests, Levites, Temple servants, and descendants of Solomon's servants

continued to live in their own homes in the various towns of Judah,

⁴ but some of the people from Judah and Benjamin resettled in Jerusalem.

From the tribe of Judah: Athaiah son of Uzziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, of the family of Perez;

⁵ and Maaseiah son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, of the family of Shelah.

⁶ There were also 468 descendants of Perez who lived in Jerusalem—all outstanding men.

⁷ From the tribe of Benjamin: Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiiah;

⁸ and after him there were Gabbai and Sallai, and a total of 928 relatives.

⁹ Their chief officer was Joel son of Zicri, who was assisted by Judah son of Hassenuah, second-in-command over the city.

¹⁰ From the priests: Jedaiah son of Joiarib; Jakin;

¹¹ and Seraiah son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the supervisor of the Temple of God;

¹² together with 822 of their associates, who worked at the Temple. Also, there was Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malkijah;

¹³ and 242 of his associates, who were heads of their families. There were also Amashsai son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer;

¹⁴ and 128 of his outstanding associates. Their chief officer was Zabdiel son of Haggedolim.

¹⁵ From the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni;

¹⁶ Shabbethai and Jozabad, who were in charge of the work outside the Temple of God;

¹⁷ Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zabdi, a descendant of Asaph, who opened the thanksgiving services with prayer; Bakbukiah, who was Mattaniah's assistant; and Abda son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun.

¹⁸ In all, there were 284 Levites in the holy city.

¹⁹ From the gatekeepers: Akkub, Talmon, and 172 of their associates, who guarded the gates.

²⁰ The other priests, Levites, and the rest of the Israelites lived wherever their family inheritance was located in any of the towns of Judah.

²¹ However, the Temple servants, whose leaders were Ziha and Gishpa, all lived on the hill of Ophel.

²² The chief officer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, a descendant of Asaph, whose family served as singers at God's Temple.

²³ They were under royal orders, which determined their daily activities.

²⁴ Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, a descendant of Zerah son of Judah, was the king's agent in all matters of public administration.

²⁵ Some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba with its villages, Dibon with its villages, and Jekabzeel with its villages.

²⁶ They also lived in Jeshua, Moladah, Beth-pelet,

²⁷ Hazar-shual, Beersheba with its villages,

²⁸ Ziklag, and Meconah with its villages.

²⁹ They were also in En-rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth,

³⁰ Zanoah, and Adullam with their villages. They were also in Lachish and its nearby fields and Azekah with its surrounding villages. So the people of Judah were living all the way from Beersheba to the valley of Hinnom.

³¹ Some of the people of Benjamin lived at Geba, Micmash, Aija, and Bethel with its surrounding villages.

³² They were also in Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,

³³ Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,

³⁴ Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,

³⁵ Lod, Ono, and the Valley of Craftsmen.

³⁶ Some of the Levites who lived in Judah were sent to live with the tribe of Benjamin.

12 ¹ Here is the list of the priests and Levites who had returned with Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the high priest: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, ² Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, ³ Shecaniah, Harim, Meremoth, ⁴ Iddo, Ginnethon, Abijah, ⁵ Miniamin, Moadiah, Bilgah, ⁶ Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, ⁷ Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah.

These were the leaders of the priests and their associates in the days of Jeshua.

⁸ The Levites who had returned with them were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his associates was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving.

⁹ Their associates, Bakbukiah and Unni, stood opposite them during the service.

¹⁰ Jeshua the high priest was the father of Joiakim. Joiakim was the father of

Eliashib. Eliashib was the father of Joiada.

¹¹ Joiada was the father of Johanan. Johanan was the father of Jaddua.

¹² Now when Joiakim was high priest, the family leaders of the priests were as follows: Meraiah was leader of the family of Seraiah. Hananiah was leader of the family of Jeremiah.

¹³ Meshullam was leader of the family of Ezra. Jehohanan was leader of the family of Amariah.

¹⁴ Jonathan was leader of the family of Malluch. Joseph was leader of the family of Shecaniah.

¹⁵ Adna was leader of the family of Harim. Helkai was leader of the family of Meremoth.

¹⁶ Zechariah was leader of the family of Iddo. Meshullam was leader of the family of Ginnethon.

¹⁷ Zicri was leader of the family of Abijah. There was also a leader of the family of Miniamin. Piltai was leader of the family of Moadiah.

¹⁸ Shammua was leader of the family of Bilgah. Jehonathan was leader of the family of Shemaiah.

¹⁹ Mattenai was leader of the family of Joiarib. Uzzi was leader of the family of Jedaiah.

²⁰ Kallai was leader of the family of Sallu. Eber was leader of the family of Amok.

²¹ Hashabiah was leader of the family of Hilkiah. Nethanel was leader of the family of Jedaiah.

²² During the reign of Darius II of Persia, a list was compiled of the family leaders of the Levites and the priests in the days of the following high priests: Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua.

²³ The heads of the Levite families were recorded in The Book of History down to the days of Johanan, the grandson of Eliashib.

²⁴ These were the family leaders of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, and other associates, who stood opposite them during the ceremonies of praise and thanksgiving, one section responding to the other, just as commanded by David, the man of God.

²⁵ This included Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, and Obadiah. Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were the gatekeepers in charge of the storerooms at the gates.

²⁶ These all served in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua, son of Jehozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra the priest and scribe.

²⁷ During the dedication of the new wall of Jerusalem, the Levites throughout the

land were asked to come to Jerusalem to assist in the ceremonies. They were to take part in the joyous occasion with their songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, lyres, and harps.

²⁸ The singers were brought together from Jerusalem and its surrounding villages and from the villages of the Netophathites.

²⁹ They also came from Beth-gilgal and the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built their own villages around Jerusalem.

³⁰ The priests and Levites first dedicated themselves, then the people, the gates, and the wall.

³¹ I led the leaders of Judah to the top of the wall and organized two large choirs to give thanks. One of the choirs proceeded southward along the top of the wall to the Dung Gate.

³² Hoshaiiah and half the leaders of Judah followed them,
³³ along with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,
³⁴ Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah,
³⁵ and some priests who played trumpets. Then came Zechariah son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, a descendant of Asaph.

³⁶ And finally came Zechariah's colleagues Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani. They used the musical instruments prescribed by David, the man of God. Ezra the scribe led this procession.

³⁷ At the Fountain Gate they went straight up the steps on the ascent of the city wall toward the City of David. They passed the house of David and

then proceeded to the Water Gate on the east.

³⁸ The second choir went northward around the other way to meet them. I followed them, with the other half of the people, along the top of the wall past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall,

³⁹ then past the Ephraim Gate to the Old City Gate, past the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel, and went on to the Tower of the Hundred. Then we continued on to the Sheep Gate and stopped at the Guard Gate.

⁴⁰ The two choirs that were giving thanks then proceeded to the Temple of God, where they took their places. So did I, together with the group of leaders who were with me.

⁴¹ We went together with the trumpet-playing priests—Eliakim, Maaseiah,

Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah—

⁴² and the singers—Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malkijah, Elam, and Ezer. They played and sang loudly and clearly under the direction of Jezrahiah the choir director.

⁴³ Many sacrifices were offered on that joyous day, for God had given the people cause for great joy. The women and children also participated in the celebration, and the joy of the people of Jerusalem could be heard far away.

⁴⁴ On that day men were appointed to be in charge of the storerooms for the gifts, the first part of the harvest, and the tithes. They were responsible to collect these from the fields as required by the law for the priests and Levites, for all the people of Judah valued the priests and Levites and their work.

⁴⁵ They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as required by the laws of David and his son Solomon, and so did the singers and the gatekeepers.

⁴⁶ The custom of having choir directors to lead the choirs in hymns of praise and thanks to God began long ago in the days of David and Asaph.

⁴⁷ So now, in the days of Zerubbabel and of Nehemiah, the people brought a daily supply of food for the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Levites. The Levites, in turn, gave a portion of what they received to the priests, the descendants of Aaron.

13 ¹ On that same day, as the Book of Moses was being read, the people found a statement which said that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever be permitted to enter the assembly of God.

² For they had not been friendly to the Israelites when they left Egypt. Instead, they hired Balaam to curse them, though our God turned the curse into a blessing.

³ When this law was read, all those of mixed ancestry were immediately expelled from the assembly.

⁴ Before this had happened, Eliashib the priest, who had been appointed as supervisor of the storerooms of the Temple of our God and who was also a relative of Tobiah,

⁵ had converted a large storage room and placed it at Tobiah's disposal. The room had previously been used for storing the grain offerings, frankincense, Temple utensils, and tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the special portion set aside for the priests. Moses had decreed that these offerings belonged to the Levites, the singers, and the gatekeepers.

⁶ I was not in Jerusalem at that time, for I had returned to the king in the thirty–second year of the reign of King Artaxerxes of Babylon, though I later received his permission to return.

⁷ When I arrived back in Jerusalem and learned the extent of this evil deed of Eliashib—that he had provided Tobiah with a room in the courtyards of the Temple of God—

⁸ I became very upset and threw all of Tobiah’s belongings from the room.

⁹ Then I demanded that the rooms be purified, and I brought back the utensils for God’s Temple, the grain offerings, and the frankincense.

¹⁰ I also discovered that the Levites had not been given what was due them, so they and the singers who were to conduct the worship services had all returned to work their fields.

¹¹ I immediately confronted the leaders and demanded, "Why has the Temple of God been neglected?" Then I called all the Levites back again and restored them to their proper duties.

¹² And once more all the people of Judah began bringing their tithes of grain, new wine, and olive oil to the Temple storerooms.

¹³ I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah, one of the Levites, in charge of the storerooms. And I appointed Hanan son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah as their assistant. These men had an excellent reputation, and it was their job to make honest distributions to their fellow Levites.

¹⁴ Remember this good deed, O my God, and do not forget all that I have faithfully done for the Temple of my God.

¹⁵ One Sabbath day I saw some men of Judah treading their winepresses. They were also bringing in bundles of grain and loading them on their donkeys. And on that day they were bringing their wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of produce to Jerusalem to sell. So I rebuked them for selling their produce on the Sabbath.

¹⁶ There were also some men from Tyre bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise. They were selling it on the Sabbath to the people of Judah—and in Jerusalem at that!

¹⁷ So I confronted the leaders of Judah, "Why are you profaning the Sabbath in this evil way?"

¹⁸ Wasn't it enough that your ancestors did this sort of thing, so that our God brought the present troubles upon us and our city? Now you are bringing even more wrath upon the people of Israel by

permitting the Sabbath to be desecrated in this way!"

¹⁹ So I commanded that from then on the gates of the city should be shut as darkness fell every Friday evening, not to be opened until the Sabbath ended. I also sent some of my own servants to guard the gates so that no merchandise could be brought in on the Sabbath day.

²⁰ The merchants and tradesmen with a variety of wares camped outside Jerusalem once or twice.

²¹ But I spoke sharply to them and said, "What are you doing out here, camping around the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you!" And that was the last time they came on the Sabbath.

²² Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and to guard the gates in order to preserve the holiness of the Sabbath. Remember this good deed also, O my God! Have compassion on

me according to your great and unfailing love.

²³ About the same time I realized that some of the men of Judah had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

²⁴ Even worse, half their children spoke in the language of Ashdod or some other people and could not speak the language of Judah at all.

²⁵ So I confronted them and called down curses on them. I beat some of them and pulled out their hair. I made them swear before God that they would not let their children intermarry with the pagan people of the land.

²⁶ "Wasn't this exactly what led King Solomon of Israel into sin?" I demanded. "There was no king from any nation who could compare to him, and God loved him and made him king over all

Israel. But even he was led into sin by his foreign wives.

²⁷ How could you even think of committing this sinful deed and acting unfaithfully toward God by marrying foreign women?"

²⁸ One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest had married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, so I banished him from my presence.

²⁹ Remember them, O my God, for they have defiled the priesthood and the promises and vows of the priests and Levites.

³⁰ So I purged out everything foreign and assigned tasks to the priests and Levites, making certain that each knew his work.

³¹ I also made sure that the supply of wood for the altar was brought at the proper times and that the first part of

the harvest was collected for the priests.
Remember this in my favor, O my God.

Esther

1 ¹ This happened in the days of King Xerxes, who reigned over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia.

² At that time he ruled his empire from his throne at the fortress of Susa.

³ In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his princes and officials. He invited all the military officers of Media and Persia, as well as the noblemen and provincial officials.

⁴ The celebration lasted six months—a tremendous display of the opulent wealth and glory of his empire.

⁵ When it was all over, the king gave a special banquet for all the palace servants and officials—from the greatest to the least. It lasted for seven days and

was held at Susa in the courtyard of the palace garden.

⁶ The courtyard was decorated with beautifully woven white and blue linen hangings, fastened by purple ribbons to silver rings embedded in marble pillars. Gold and silver couches stood on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other costly stones.

⁷ Drinks were served in gold goblets of many designs, and there was an abundance of royal wine, just as the king had commanded.

⁸ The only restriction on the drinking was that no one should be compelled to take more than he wanted. But those who wished could have as much as they pleased, for the king had instructed his staff to let everyone decide this matter for himself.

⁹ Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women of the palace at the same time.

¹⁰ On the seventh day of the feast, when King Xerxes was half drunk with wine, he told Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who attended him,

¹¹ to bring Queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head. He wanted all the men to gaze on her beauty, for she was a very beautiful woman.

¹² But when they conveyed the king's order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come. This made the king furious, and he burned with anger.

¹³ He immediately consulted with his advisers, who knew all the Persian laws and customs, for he always asked their advice.

¹⁴ The names of these men were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan—seven

high officials of Persia and Media. They were his closest associates and held the highest positions in the empire.

¹⁵ "What must be done to Queen Vashti?" the king demanded. "What penalty does the law provide for a queen who refuses to obey the king's orders, properly sent through his eunuchs?"

¹⁶ Memucan answered the king and his princes, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also every official and citizen throughout your empire.

¹⁷ Women everywhere will begin to despise their husbands when they learn that Queen Vashti has refused to appear before the king.

¹⁸ Before this day is out, the wife of every one of us, your officials throughout the empire, will hear what the queen did and will start talking to their husbands the same way. There will be no end to

the contempt and anger throughout your realm.

¹⁹ So if it please the king, we suggest that you issue a written decree, a law of the Persians and Medes that cannot be revoked. It should order that Queen Vashti be forever banished from your presence and that you choose another queen more worthy than she.

²⁰ When this decree is published throughout your vast empire, husbands everywhere, whatever their rank, will receive proper respect from their wives!"

²¹ The king and his princes thought this made good sense, so he followed Memucan's counsel.

²² He sent letters to all parts of the empire, to each province in its own script and language, proclaiming that every man should be the ruler of his home.

2¹ But after Xerxes' anger had cooled, he began thinking about Vashti and what she had done and the decree he had made.

² So his attendants suggested, "Let us search the empire to find beautiful young virgins for the king.

³ Let the king appoint agents in each province to bring these beautiful young women into the royal harem at Susa. Hegai, the eunuch in charge, will see that they are all given beauty treatments.

⁴ After that, the young woman who pleases you most will be made queen instead of Vashti." This advice was very appealing to the king, so he put the plan into effect immediately.

⁵ Now at the fortress of Susa there was a certain Jew named Mordecai son of Jair. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and was a descendant of Kish and Shimei.

⁶ His family had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, along with King Jehoiachin of Judah and many others.

⁷ This man had a beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother had died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter.

⁸ As a result of the king's decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to the king's harem at the fortress of Susa and placed in Hegai's care.

⁹ Hegai was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king's palace, and he

moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.

¹⁰ Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, for Mordecai had told her not to.

¹¹ Every day Mordecai would take a walk near the courtyard of the harem to ask about Esther and to find out what was happening to her.

¹² Before each young woman was taken to the king's bed, she was given the prescribed twelve months of beauty treatments—six months with oil of myrrh, followed by six months with special perfumes and ointments.

¹³ When the time came for her to go in to the king, she was given her choice of whatever clothing or jewelry she wanted to enhance her beauty.

¹⁴ That evening she was taken to the king's private rooms, and the next morning she was brought to the second

harem, where the king's wives lived. There she would be under the care of Shaashgaz, another of the king's eunuchs. She would live there for the rest of her life, never going to the king again unless he had especially enjoyed her and requested her by name.

¹⁵ When it was Esther's turn to go to the king, she accepted the advice of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. She asked for nothing except what he suggested, and she was admired by everyone who saw her.

¹⁶ When Esther was taken to King Xerxes at the royal palace in early winter of the seventh year of his reign,

¹⁷ the king loved her more than any of the other young women. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti.

¹⁸ To celebrate the occasion, he gave a banquet in Esther's honor for all his princes and servants, giving generous gifts to everyone and declaring a public festival for the provinces.

¹⁹ Even after all the young women had been transferred to the second harem and Mordecai had become a palace official,

²⁰ Esther continued to keep her nationality and family background a secret. She was still following Mordecai's orders, just as she did when she was living in his home.

²¹ One day as Mordecai was on duty at the palace, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthana and Teresh—who were guards at the door of the king's private quarters—became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him.

²² But Mordecai heard about the plot and passed the information on to Queen

Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report.

²³ When an investigation was made and Mordecai's story was found to be true, the two men were hanged on a gallows. This was all duly recorded in The Book of the History of King Xerxes' Reign.

3 ¹ Some time later, King Xerxes promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite to prime minister, making him the most powerful official in the empire next to the king himself.

² All the king's officials would bow down before Haman to show him respect whenever he passed by, for so the king had commanded. But Mordecai refused to bow down or show him respect.

³ Then the palace officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?"

⁴ They spoke to him day after day, but still he refused to comply with the order. So they spoke to Haman about this to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct, since Mordecai had told them he was a Jew.

⁵ When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage.

⁶ So he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Since he had learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes.

⁷ So in the month of April, during the twelfth year of King Xerxes' reign, lots were cast (the lots were called purim) to determine the best day and month to take action. And the day selected was March 7, nearly a year later.

⁸ Then Haman approached King Xerxes and said, "There is a certain race

of people scattered through all the provinces of your empire. Their laws are different from those of any other nation, and they refuse to obey even the laws of the king. So it is not in the king's interest to let them live.

⁹ If it please Your Majesty, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will give 375 tons of silver to the government administrators so they can put it into the royal treasury."

¹⁰ The king agreed, confirming his decision by removing his signet ring from his finger and giving it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite—the enemy of the Jews.

¹¹ "Keep the money," the king told Haman, "but go ahead and do as you like with these people."

¹² On April 17 Haman called in the king's secretaries and dictated letters to the princes, the governors of the respective

provinces, and the local officials of each province in their own scripts and languages. These letters were signed in the name of King Xerxes, sealed with his ring,

¹³ and sent by messengers into all the provinces of the empire. The letters decreed that all Jews—young and old, including women and children—must be killed, slaughtered, and annihilated on a single day. This was scheduled to happen nearly a year later on March 7. The property of the Jews would be given to those who killed them.

¹⁴ A copy of this decree was to be issued in every province and made known to all the people, so that they would be ready to do their duty on the appointed day.

¹⁵ At the king's command, the decree went out by the swiftest messengers, and it was proclaimed in the fortress of Susa. Then the king and Haman sat

down to drink, but the city of Susa fell into confusion.

4¹ When Mordecai learned what had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail.

² He stood outside the gate of the palace, for no one was allowed to enter while wearing clothes of mourning.

³ And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in sackcloth and ashes.

⁴ When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the sackcloth, but he refused it.

⁵ Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been

appointed as her attendant. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was troubling him and why he was in mourning.

⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square in front of the palace gate.

⁷ Mordecai told him the whole story and told him how much money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews.

⁸ Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews, and he asked Hathach to show it to Esther. He also asked Hathach to explain it to her and to urge her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people.

⁹ So Hathach returned to Esther with Mordecai's message.

¹⁰ Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai:

¹¹ "The whole world knows that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him in more than a month."

¹² So Hathach gave Esther's message to Mordecai.

¹³ Mordecai sent back this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that you will escape there in the palace when all other Jews are killed.

¹⁴ If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. What's more, who can say but that you have been elevated to the palace for just such a time as this?"

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai:

¹⁶ "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I am willing to die."

¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and did as Esther told him.

5 ¹ Three days later, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance.

² When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her, holding out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched its tip.

³ Then the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your

request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

⁴ And Esther replied, "If it please Your Majesty, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet I have prepared for the king."

⁵ The king turned to his attendants and said, "Tell Haman to come quickly to a banquet, as Esther has requested." So the king and Haman went to Esther's banquet.

⁶ And while they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "Now tell me what you really want. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

⁷ Esther replied, "This is my request and deepest wish.

⁸ If Your Majesty is pleased with me and wants to grant my request, please come with Haman tomorrow to the banquet

I will prepare for you. Then tomorrow I will explain what this is all about."

⁹ What a happy man Haman was as he left the banquet! But when he saw Mordecai sitting at the gate, not standing up or trembling nervously before him, he was furious.

¹⁰ However, he restrained himself and went on home. Then he gathered together his friends and Zeresh, his wife,

¹¹ and boasted to them about his great wealth and his many children. He bragged about the honors the king had given him and how he had been promoted over all the other officials and leaders.

¹² Then Haman added, "And that's not all! Queen Esther invited only me and the king himself to the banquet she prepared for us. And she has invited me to dine with her and the king again tomorrow!"

¹³ Then he added, "But all this is meaningless as long as I see Mordecai the Jew just sitting there at the palace gate."

¹⁴ So Haman's wife, Zeresh, and all his friends suggested, "Set up a gallows that stands seventy–five feet tall, and in the morning ask the king to hang Mordecai on it. When this is done, you can go on your merry way to the banquet with the king." This pleased Haman immensely, and he ordered the gallows set up.

6 ¹ That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the historical records of his kingdom so they could be read to him.

² In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate the king.

³ "What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked. His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done."

⁴ "Who is that in the outer court?" the king inquired. Now, as it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai from the gallows he had prepared.

⁵ So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out there." "Bring him in," the king ordered.

⁶ So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?" Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?"

⁷ So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone,

⁸ he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as the king's

own horse with a royal emblem on its head.

⁹ Instruct one of the king's most noble princes to dress the man in the king's robe and to lead him through the city square on the king's own horse. Have the prince shout as they go, 'This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!'"

¹⁰ "Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Hurry and get the robe and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Do not fail to carry out everything you have suggested."

¹¹ So Haman took the robe and put it on Mordecai, placed him on the king's own horse, and led him through the city square, shouting, "This is what happens to those the king wishes to honor!"

¹² Afterward Mordecai returned to the palace gate, but Haman hurried home dejected and completely humiliated.

¹³ When Haman told his wife, Zeresh, and all his friends what had happened, they said, "Since Mordecai—this man who has humiliated you—is a Jew, you will never succeed in your plans against him. It will be fatal to continue to oppose him."

¹⁴ While they were still talking, the king's eunuchs arrived to take Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared.

7 ¹ So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet.

² And while they were drinking wine that day, the king again asked her, "Tell me what you want, Queen Esther. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

³ And so Queen Esther replied, "If Your Majesty is pleased with me and wants

to grant my request, my petition is that my life and the lives of my people will be spared.

⁴ For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had only been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would have been a matter too trivial to warrant disturbing the king."

⁵ "Who would do such a thing?" King Xerxes demanded. "Who would dare touch you?"

⁶ Esther replied, "This wicked Haman is our enemy." Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen.

⁷ Then the king jumped to his feet in a rage and went out into the palace garden. But Haman stayed behind to plead for his life with Queen Esther, for he knew that he was doomed.

⁸ In despair he fell on the couch where Queen Esther was reclining, just as the

king returned from the palace garden. "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes?" the king roared. And as soon as the king spoke, his attendants covered Haman's face, signaling his doom.

⁹ Then Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said, "Haman has set up a gallows that stands seventy–five feet tall in his own courtyard. He intended to use it to hang Mordecai, the man who saved the king from assassination." "Then hang Haman on it!" the king ordered.

¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had set up for Mordecai, and the king's anger was pacified.

8 ¹ On that same day King Xerxes gave the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king how they were related.

² The king took off his signet ring—
—which he had taken back from
Haman—and gave it to Mordecai. And
Esther appointed Mordecai to be in
charge of Haman's property.

³ Now once more Esther came before
the king, falling down at his feet and
begging him with tears to stop Haman's
evil plot against the Jews.

⁴ Again the king held out the gold
scepter to Esther. So she rose and stood
before him

⁵ and said, "If Your Majesty is pleased
with me and if he thinks it is right, send
out a decree reversing Haman's orders
to destroy the Jews throughout all the
provinces of the king.

⁶ For how can I endure to see my
people and my family slaughtered and
destroyed?"

⁷ Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther
and Mordecai the Jew, "I have given

Esther the estate of Haman, and he has been hanged on the gallows because he tried to destroy the Jews.

⁸ Now go ahead and send a message to the Jews in the king's name, telling them whatever you want, and seal it with the king's signet ring. But remember that whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can never be revoked."

⁹ So on June 25 the king's secretaries were summoned. As Mordecai dictated, they wrote a decree to the Jews and to the princes, governors, and local officials of all the 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. The decree was written in the scripts and languages of all the peoples of the empire, including the Jews.

¹⁰ Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes and sealed the message with the king's signet ring. He sent the letters

by swift messengers, who rode horses especially bred for the king's service.

¹¹ The king's decree gave the Jews in every city authority to unite to defend their lives. They were allowed to kill, slaughter, and annihilate anyone of any nationality or province who might attack them or their children and wives, and to take the property of their enemies.

¹² The day chosen for this event throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes was March 7 of the next year.

¹³ A copy of this decree was to be recognized as law in every province and proclaimed to all the people. That way the Jews would be ready on that day to take revenge on their enemies.

¹⁴ So urged on by the king's command, the messengers rode out swiftly on horses bred for the king's service. The same decree was also issued at the fortress of Susa.

¹⁵ Then Mordecai put on the royal robe of blue and white and the great crown of gold, and he wore an outer cloak of fine linen and purple. And the people of Susa celebrated the new decree.

¹⁶ The Jews were filled with joy and gladness and were honored everywhere.

¹⁷ In every city and province, wherever the king's decree arrived, the Jews rejoiced and had a great celebration and declared a public festival and holiday. And many of the people of the land became Jews themselves, for they feared what the Jews might do to them.

9 ¹ So on March 7 the two decrees of the king were put into effect. On that day, the enemies of the Jews had hoped to destroy them, but quite the opposite happened.

² The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the king's provinces to defend themselves against anyone who

might try to harm them. But no one could make a stand against them, for everyone was afraid of them.

³ And all the commanders of the provinces, the princes, the governors, and the royal officials helped the Jews for fear of Mordecai.

⁴ For Mordecai had been promoted in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces as he became more and more powerful.

⁵ But the Jews went ahead on the appointed day and struck down their enemies with the sword. They killed and annihilated their enemies and did as they pleased with those who hated them.

⁶ They killed five hundred people in the fortress of Susa.

⁷ They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,

⁸ Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,

⁹ Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha—

¹⁰ the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not take any plunder.

¹¹ That evening, when the king was informed of the number of people killed in the fortress of Susa,

¹² he called for Queen Esther and said, "The Jews have killed five hundred people in the fortress of Susa alone and also Haman's ten sons. If they have done that here, what has happened in the rest of the provinces? But now, what more do you want? It will be granted to you; tell me and I will do it."

¹³ And Esther said, "If it please Your Majesty, give the Jews in Susa permission to do again tomorrow as they have done today, and have the bodies of Haman's ten sons hung from the gallows."

¹⁴ So the king agreed, and the decree was announced in Susa. They also hung the bodies of Haman's ten sons from the gallows.

¹⁵ Then the Jews at Susa gathered together on March 8 and killed three hundred more people, though again they took no plunder.

¹⁶ Meanwhile, the other Jews throughout the king's provinces had gathered together to defend their lives. They gained relief from all their enemies, killing seventy-five thousand of those who hated them. But they did not take any plunder.

¹⁷ Throughout the provinces this was done on March 7. Then on the following day they rested, celebrating their victory with a day of feasting and gladness.

¹⁸ But the Jews at Susa continued killing their enemies on the second day also,

and then rested on the third day, making that their day of feasting and gladness.

¹⁹ So to this day, rural Jews living in unwalled villages celebrate an annual festival and holiday in late winter, when they rejoice and send gifts to each other.

²⁰ Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to the Jews near and far, throughout all the king's provinces,

²¹ encouraging them to celebrate an annual festival on these two days.

²² He told them to celebrate these days with feasting and gladness and by giving gifts to each other and to the poor. This would commemorate a time when the Jews gained relief from their enemies, when their sorrow was turned into gladness and their mourning into joy.

²³ So the Jews adopted Mordecai's suggestion and began this annual custom.

²⁴ Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, had plotted to crush and destroy them on the day and month determined by casting lots (the lots were called purim).

²⁵ But when Esther came before the king, he issued a decree causing Haman's evil plot to backfire, and Haman and his sons were hanged on the gallows.

²⁶ (That is why this celebration is called Purim, because it is the ancient word for casting lots.) So because of Mordecai's letter and because of what they had experienced,

²⁷ the Jews throughout the realm agreed to inaugurate this tradition and to pass it on to their descendants and to all who became Jews. They declared they would never fail to celebrate these two prescribed days at the appointed time each year.

²⁸ These days would be remembered and kept from generation to generation and celebrated by every family throughout the provinces and cities of the empire. These days would never cease to be celebrated among the Jews, nor would the memory of what happened ever die out among their descendants.

²⁹ Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote another letter putting the queen's full authority behind Mordecai's letter to establish the Festival of Purim.

³⁰ In addition, letters wishing peace and security were sent to the Jews throughout the 127 provinces of the empire of Xerxes.

³¹ These letters established the Festival of Purim—an annual celebration of these days at the appointed time, decreed by both Mordecai the Jew and

Queen Esther. (The people decided to observe this festival, just as they had decided for themselves and their descendants to establish the times of fasting and mourning.)

³² So the command of Esther confirmed the practices of Purim, and it was all written down in the records.

10 ¹ King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout his empire, even to the distant coastlands.

² His great achievements and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Media and Persia.

³ Mordecai the Jew became the prime minister, with authority next to that of King Xerxes himself. He was very great among the Jews, who held him in high esteem, because he worked for the good

of his people and was a friend at the royal court for all of them.

Job

1 ¹ There was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless, a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil.

² He had seven sons and three daughters.

³ He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred teams of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys, and he employed many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area.

⁴ Every year when Job's sons had birthdays, they invited their brothers and sisters to join them for a celebration. On these occasions they would get together to eat and drink.

⁵ When these celebrations ended—and sometimes they lasted several days—Job would purify his children. He would get up early in the morning and offer a burnt offering for each of them. For Job said to himself, "Perhaps my children have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular practice.

⁶ One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan the Accuser came with them.

⁷ "Where have you come from?" the LORD asked Satan. And Satan answered the LORD, "I have been going back and forth across the earth, watching everything that's going on."

⁸ Then the LORD asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and will have nothing to do with evil."

⁹ Satan replied to the LORD, "Yes, Job fears God, but not without good reason!

¹⁰ You have always protected him and his home and his property from harm. You have made him prosperous in everything he does. Look how rich he is!

¹¹ But take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!"

¹² "All right, you may test him," the LORD said to Satan. "Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically." So Satan left the LORD's presence.

¹³ One day when Job's sons and daughters were dining at the oldest brother's house,

¹⁴ a messenger arrived at Job's home with this news: "Your oxen were plowing, with the donkeys feeding beside them,

¹⁵ when the Sabeans raided us. They stole all the animals and killed all the

farmhands. I am the only one who escaped to tell you."

¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived with this news: "The fire of God has fallen from heaven and burned up your sheep and all the shepherds. I am the only one who escaped to tell you."

¹⁷ While he was still speaking, a third messenger arrived with this news: "Three bands of Chaldean raiders have stolen your camels and killed your servants. I am the only one who escaped to tell you."

¹⁸ While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived with this news: "Your sons and daughters were feasting in their oldest brother's home."

¹⁹ Suddenly, a powerful wind swept in from the desert and hit the house on all sides. The house collapsed, and all your

children are dead. I am the only one who escaped to tell you."

²⁰ Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground before God.

²¹ He said, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be stripped of everything when I die. The LORD gave me everything I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!"

²² In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God.

2¹ One day the angels came again to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan the Accuser came with them.

² "Where have you come from?" the LORD asked Satan. And Satan answered the LORD, "I have been going back and forth across the earth, watching everything that's going on."

³ Then the LORD asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and will have nothing to do with evil. And he has maintained his integrity, even though you persuaded me to harm him without cause."

⁴ Satan replied to the LORD, "Skin for skin—he blesses you only because you bless him. A man will give up everything he has to save his life.

⁵ But take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face!"

⁶ "All right, do with him as you please," the LORD said to Satan. "But spare his life."

⁷ So Satan left the LORD's presence, and he struck Job with a terrible case of boils from head to foot.

⁸ Then Job scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes.

⁹ His wife said to him, "Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die."

¹⁰ But Job replied, "You talk like a godless woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?" So in all this, Job said nothing wrong.

¹¹ Three of Job's friends were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. When they heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him.

¹² When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to demonstrate their grief.

¹³ Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. And no one said a word, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.

3 ¹ At last Job spoke, and he cursed the day of his birth.

² He said:

³ "Cursed be the day of my birth, and cursed be the night when I was conceived.

⁴ Let that day be turned to darkness. Let it be lost even to God on high, and let it be shrouded in darkness.

⁵ Yes, let the darkness and utter gloom claim it for its own. Let a black cloud overshadow it, and let the darkness terrify it.

⁶ Let that night be blotted off the calendar, never again to be counted among the days of the year, never again to appear among the months.

⁷ Let that night be barren. Let it have no joy.

⁸ Let those who are experts at cursing—those who are ready to rouse the sea monster—curse that day.

⁹ Let its morning stars remain dark. Let it hope for light, but in vain; may it never see the morning light.

¹⁰ Curse it for its failure to shut my mother's womb, for letting me be born to all this trouble.

¹¹ "Why didn't I die at birth as I came from the womb?

¹² Why did my mother let me live? Why did she nurse me at her breasts?

¹³ For if I had died at birth, I would be at peace now, asleep and at rest.

¹⁴ I would rest with the world's kings and prime ministers, famous for their great construction projects.

¹⁵ I would rest with wealthy princes whose palaces were filled with gold and silver.

¹⁶ Why was I not buried like a stillborn child, like a baby who never lives to see the light?

¹⁷ For in death the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

¹⁸ Even prisoners are at ease in death, with no guards to curse them.

¹⁹ Rich and poor are there alike, and the slave is free from his master.

²⁰ "Oh, why should light be given to the weary, and life to those in misery?"

²¹ They long for death, and it won't come. They search for death more eagerly than for hidden treasure.

²² It is a blessed relief when they finally die, when they find the grave.

²³ Why is life given to those with no future, those destined by God to live in distress?

²⁴ I cannot eat for sighing; my groans pour out like water.

²⁵ What I always feared has happened to me. What I dreaded has come to be.

²⁶ I have no peace, no quietness. I have no rest; instead, only trouble comes."

4 ¹ Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied to Job:

² "Will you be patient and let me say a word? For who could keep from speaking out?"

³ "In the past you have encouraged many a troubled soul to trust in God; you have supported those who were weak.

⁴ Your words have strengthened the fallen; you steadied those who wavered.

⁵ But now when trouble strikes, you faint and are broken.

⁶ Does your reverence for God give you no confidence? Shouldn't you believe that God will care for those who are upright?"

⁷ "Stop and think! Does the innocent person perish? When has the upright person been destroyed?

⁸ My experience shows that those who plant trouble and cultivate evil will harvest the same.

⁹ They perish by a breath from God. They vanish in a blast of his anger.

¹⁰ Though they are fierce young lions, they will all be broken and destroyed.

¹¹ The fierce lion will starve, and the cubs of the lioness will be scattered.

¹² "This truth was given me in secret, as though whispered in my ear.

¹³ It came in a vision at night as others slept.

¹⁴ Fear gripped me; I trembled and shook with terror.

¹⁵ A spirit swept past my face. Its wind sent shivers up my spine.

¹⁶ It stopped, but I couldn't see its shape. There was a form before my eyes, and a hushed voice said,

¹⁷ 'Can a mortal be just and upright before God? Can a person be pure before the Creator?'

¹⁸ "If God cannot trust his own angels and has charged some of them with folly,

¹⁹ how much less will he trust those made of clay! Their foundation is dust, and they are crushed as easily as moths.

²⁰ They are alive in the morning, but by evening they are dead, gone forever without a trace.

²¹ Their tent collapses; they die in ignorance.

5 ¹ "You may cry for help, but no one listens. You may turn to the angels, but they give you no help.

² Surely resentment destroys the fool, and jealousy kills the simple.

³ From my experience, I know that fools who turn from God may be successful for the moment, but then comes sudden disaster.

⁴ Their children are abandoned far from help, with no one to defend them.

⁵ Their harvests are stolen, and their wealth satisfies the thirst of many others, not themselves!

⁶ But evil does not spring from the soil, and trouble does not sprout from the earth.

⁷ People are born for trouble as predictably as sparks fly upward from a fire.

⁸ "My advice to you is this: Go to God and present your case to him.

⁹ For he does great works too marvelous to understand. He performs miracles without number.

¹⁰ He gives rain for the earth. He sends water for the fields.

¹¹ He gives prosperity to the poor and humble, and he takes sufferers to safety.

¹² He frustrates the plans of the crafty, so their efforts will not succeed.

¹³ He catches those who think they are wise in their own cleverness, so that their cunning schemes are thwarted.

¹⁴ They grope in the daylight as though they were blind; they see no better in the daytime than at night.

¹⁵ He rescues the poor from the cutting words of the strong. He saves them from the clutches of the powerful.

¹⁶ And so at last the poor have hope, and the fangs of the wicked are broken.

¹⁷ "But consider the joy of those corrected by God! Do not despise the chastening of the Almighty when you sin.

¹⁸ For though he wounds, he also bandages. He strikes, but his hands also heal.

¹⁹ He will rescue you again and again so that no evil can touch you.

²⁰ He will save you from death in time of famine, from the power of the sword in time of war.

²¹ You will be safe from slander and will have no fear of destruction when it comes.

²² You will laugh at destruction and famine; wild animals will not terrify you.

²³ You will be at peace with the stones of the field, and its wild animals will be at peace with you.

²⁴ You will know that your home is kept safe. When you visit your pastures, nothing will be missing.

²⁵ Your children will be many; your descendants will be as plentiful as grass!

²⁶ You will live to a good old age. You will not be harvested until the proper time!

²⁷ "We have found from experience that all this is true. Listen to my counsel, and apply it to yourself."

6 ¹ Then Job spoke again:
² "If my sadness could be weighed and my troubles be put on the scales,
³ they would be heavier than all the sands of the sea. That is why I spoke so rashly.

⁴ For the Almighty has struck me down with his arrows. He has sent his poisoned arrows deep within my spirit. All God's terrors are arrayed against me.

⁵ Don't I have a right to complain? Wild donkeys bray when they find no green grass, and oxen low when they have no food.

⁶ People complain when there is no salt in their food. And how tasteless is the uncooked white of an egg!

⁷ My appetite disappears when I look at it; I gag at the thought of eating it!

⁸ "Oh, that I might have my request,
that God would grant my hope.

⁹ I wish he would crush me. I wish he
would reach out his hand and kill me.

¹⁰ At least I can take comfort in this:
Despite the pain, I have not denied the
words of the Holy One.

¹¹ But I do not have the strength
to endure. I do not have a goal that
encourages me to carry on.

¹² Do I have strength as hard as stone?
Is my body made of bronze?

¹³ No, I am utterly helpless, without any
chance of success.

¹⁴ "One should be kind to a fainting
friend, but you have accused me without
the slightest fear of the Almighty.

¹⁵ My brother, you have proved as
unreliable as a seasonal brook that
overflows its banks in the spring

¹⁶ when it is swollen with ice and
melting snow.

¹⁷ But when the hot weather arrives, the water disappears. The brook vanishes in the heat.

¹⁸ The caravans turn aside to be refreshed, but there is nothing there to drink, and so they perish in the desert.

¹⁹ With high hopes, the caravans from Tema and from Sheba stop for water,

²⁰ but finding none, their hopes are dashed.

²¹ You, too, have proved to be of no help. You have seen my calamity, and you are afraid.

²² But why? Have I ever asked you for a gift? Have I begged you to use any of your wealth on my behalf?

²³ Have I ever asked you to rescue me from my enemies? Have I asked you to save me from ruthless people?

²⁴ "All I want is a reasonable answer—then I will keep quiet. Tell me, what have I done wrong?"

²⁵ Honest words are painful, but what do your criticisms amount to?

²⁶ Do you think your words are convincing when you disregard my cry of desperation?

²⁷ You would even send an orphan into slavery or sell a friend.

²⁸ Look at me! Would I lie to your face?

²⁹ Stop assuming my guilt, for I am righteous. Don't be so unjust.

³⁰ Do you think I am lying? Don't I know the difference between right and wrong?

7¹ "Is this not the struggle of all humanity? A person's life is long and hard, like that of a hired hand,

² like a worker who longs for the day to end, like a servant waiting to be paid.

³ I, too, have been assigned months of futility, long and weary nights of misery.

⁴ When I go to bed, I think, 'When will it be morning?' But the night drags on, and I toss till dawn.

⁵ My skin is filled with worms and scabs.
My flesh breaks open, full of pus.

⁶ "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle flying back and forth. They end without hope.

⁷ O God, remember that my life is but a breath, and I will never again experience pleasure.

⁸ You see me now, but not for long. Your eyes will be on me, but I will be dead.

⁹ Just as a cloud dissipates and vanishes, those who die will not come back.

¹⁰ They are gone forever from their home—never to be seen again.

¹¹ "I cannot keep from speaking. I must express my anguish. I must complain in my bitterness.

¹² Am I a sea monster that you place a guard on me?

¹³ If I think, 'My bed will comfort me, and I will try to forget my misery with sleep,'

¹⁴ you shatter me with dreams. You terrify me with visions.

¹⁵ I would rather die of strangulation than go on and on like this.

¹⁶ I hate my life. I do not want to go on living. Oh, leave me alone for these few remaining days.

¹⁷ "What are mere mortals, that you should make so much of us?

¹⁸ For you examine us every morning and test us every moment.

¹⁹ Why won't you leave me alone—even for a moment?

²⁰ Have I sinned? What have I done to you, O watcher of all humanity? Why have you made me your target? Am I a burden to you?

²¹ Why not just pardon my sin and take away my guilt? For soon I will lie down in the dust and die. When you look for me, I will be gone."

8 ¹ Then Bildad the Shuhite replied to Job:

² "How long will you go on like this? Your words are a blustering wind.

³ Does God twist justice? Does the Almighty twist what is right?

⁴ Your children obviously sinned against him, so their punishment was well deserved.

⁵ But if you pray to God and seek the favor of the Almighty,

⁶ if you are pure and live with complete integrity, he will rise up and restore your happy home.

⁷ And though you started with little, you will end with much.

⁸ "Just ask the former generation. Pay attention to the experience of our ancestors.

⁹ For we were born but yesterday and know so little. Our days on earth are as transient as a shadow.

¹⁰ But those who came before us will teach you. They will teach you from the wisdom of former generations.

¹¹ "Can papyrus reeds grow where there is no marsh? Can bulrushes flourish where there is no water?

¹² While they are still flowering, not ready to be cut, they begin to wither.

¹³ Such is the fate of all who forget God. The hope of the godless comes to nothing.

¹⁴ Everything they count on will collapse. They are leaning on a spiderweb.

¹⁵ They cling to their home for security, but it won't last. They try to hold it fast, but it will not endure.

¹⁶ The godless seem so strong, like a lush plant growing in the sunshine, its branches spreading across the garden.

¹⁷ Its roots grow down through a pile of rocks to hold it firm.

¹⁸ But when it is uprooted, it isn't even missed!

¹⁹ That is the end of its life, and others spring up from the earth to replace it.

²⁰ "But look! God will not reject a person of integrity, nor will he make evildoers prosper.

²¹ He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.

²² Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, and the tent of the wicked will be destroyed."

9¹ Then Job spoke again:

² "Yes, I know this is all true in principle. But how can a person be declared innocent in the eyes of God?

³ If someone wanted to take God to court, would it be possible to answer him even once in a thousand times?

⁴ For God is so wise and so mighty. Who has ever challenged him successfully?

⁵ "Without warning, he moves the mountains, overturning them in his anger.

⁶ He shakes the earth from its place, and its foundations tremble.

⁷ If he commands it, the sun won't rise and the stars won't shine.

⁸ He alone has spread out the heavens and marches on the waves of the sea.

⁹ He made all the stars—the Bear, Orion, the Pleiades, and the constellations of the southern sky.

¹⁰ His great works are too marvelous to understand. He performs miracles without number.

¹¹ "Yet when he comes near, I cannot see him. When he moves on, I do not see him go.

¹² If he sends death to snatch someone away, who can stop him? Who dares to ask him, 'What are you doing?'

¹³ And God does not restrain his anger. The mightiest forces against him are crushed beneath his feet.

¹⁴ "And who am I, that I should try to answer God or even reason with him?

¹⁵ Even if I were innocent, I would have no defense. I could only plead for mercy.

¹⁶ And even if I summoned him and he responded, he would never listen to me.

¹⁷ For he attacks me without reason, and he multiplies my wounds without cause.

¹⁸ He will not let me catch my breath, but fills me instead with bitter sorrows.

¹⁹ As for strength, he has it. As for justice, who can challenge him?

²⁰ Though I am innocent, my own mouth would pronounce me guilty. Though I am blameless, it would prove me wicked.

²¹ "I am innocent, but it makes no difference to me—I despise my life.

²² Innocent or wicked, it is all the same to him. That is why I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'

²³ He laughs when a plague suddenly kills the innocent.

²⁴ The whole earth is in the hands of the wicked, and God blinds the eyes of the judges and lets them be unfair. If not he, then who?

²⁵ "My life passes more swiftly than a runner. It flees away, filled with tragedy.

²⁶ It disappears like a swift boat, like an eagle that swoops down on its prey.

²⁷ If I decided to forget my complaints, if I decided to end my sadness and be cheerful,

²⁸ I would dread all the pain he would send. For I know you will not hold me innocent, O God.

²⁹ Whatever happens, I will be found guilty. So what's the use of trying?

³⁰ Even if I were to wash myself with soap and cleanse my hands with lye to make them absolutely clean,

³¹ you would plunge me into a muddy ditch, and I would be so filthy my own clothing would hate me.

³² "God is not a mortal like me, so I cannot argue with him or take him to trial.

³³ If only there were a mediator who could bring us together, but there is none.

³⁴ The mediator could make God stop beating me, and I would no longer live in terror of his punishment.

³⁵ Then I could speak to him without fear, but I cannot do that in my own strength.

10¹ "I am disgusted with my life. Let me complain freely. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

² I will say to God, ‘Don’t simply condemn me—tell me the charge you are bringing against me.

³ What do you gain by oppressing me? Why do you reject me, the work of your own hands, while sending joy and prosperity to the wicked?

⁴ Are your eyes only those of a human? Do you see things as people see them?

⁵ Is your lifetime merely human? Is your life so short

⁶ that you are in a hurry to probe for my guilt, to search for my sin?

⁷ Although you know I am not guilty, no one can rescue me from your power.

⁸ “You formed me with your hands; you made me, and yet you completely destroy me.

⁹ Remember that I am made of dust—will you turn me back to dust so soon?

¹⁰ You guided my conception and formed me in the womb.

¹¹ You clothed me with skin and flesh, and you knit my bones and sinews together.

¹² You gave me life and showed me your unfailing love. My life was preserved by your care.

¹³ "Yet your real motive—I know this was your intent—

¹⁴ was to watch me, and if I sinned, you would not forgive my iniquity.

¹⁵ If I am guilty, too bad for me. And even if I'm innocent, I am filled with shame and misery so that I can't hold my head high.

¹⁶ And if I hold my head high, you hunt me like a lion and display your awesome power against me.

¹⁷ Again and again you witness against me. You pour out an ever-increasing

volume of anger upon me and bring fresh armies against me.

¹⁸ "Why, then, did you bring me out of my mother's womb? Why didn't you let me die at birth?

¹⁹ Then I would have been spared this miserable existence. I would have gone directly from the womb to the grave.

²⁰ I have only a little time left, so leave me alone—that I may have a little moment of comfort

²¹ before I leave for the land of darkness and utter gloom, never to return.

²² It is a land as dark as midnight, a land of utter gloom where confusion reigns and the light is as dark as midnight."

11 ¹ Then Zophar the Naamathite replied to Job:

² "Shouldn't someone answer this torrent of words? Is a person proved innocent just by talking a lot?

³ Should I remain silent while you babble on? When you mock God, shouldn't someone make you ashamed?

⁴ You claim, 'My teaching is pure,' and 'I am clean in the sight of God.'

⁵ If only God would speak; if only he would tell you what he thinks!

⁶ If only he would tell you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom is not a simple matter. Listen! God is doubtless punishing you far less than you deserve!

⁷ "Can you solve the mysteries of God? Can you discover everything there is to know about the Almighty?"

⁸ Such knowledge is higher than the heavens—but who are you? It is deeper than the underworld—what can you know in comparison to him?

⁹ It is broader than the earth and wider than the sea.

¹⁰ If God comes along and puts a person in prison, or if he calls the court to order, who is going to stop him?

¹¹ For he knows those who are false, and he takes note of all their sins.

¹² An empty-headed person won't become wise any more than a wild donkey can bear human offspring!

¹³ "If only you would prepare your heart and lift up your hands to him in prayer!

¹⁴ Get rid of your sins and leave all iniquity behind you.

¹⁵ Then your face will brighten in innocence. You will be strong and free of fear.

¹⁶ You will forget your misery. It will all be gone like water under the bridge.

¹⁷ Your life will be brighter than the noonday. Any darkness will be as bright as morning.

¹⁸ You will have courage because you will have hope. You will be protected and will rest in safety.

¹⁹ You will lie down unafraid, and many will look to you for help.

²⁰ But the wicked will lose hope. They have no escape. Their hope becomes despair."

12 ¹ Then Job spoke again:

² "You really know everything, don't you? And when you die, wisdom will die with you!

³ Well, I know a few things myself—and you're no better than I am. Who doesn't know these things you've been saying?

⁴ Yet my friends laugh at me. I am a man who calls on God and receives an answer. I am a just and blameless man, yet they laugh at me.

⁵ People who are at ease mock those in trouble. They give a push to people who are stumbling.

⁶ But even robbers are left in peace, and those who provoke God—and God has them in his power—live in safety!

⁷ "Ask the animals, and they will teach you. Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you.

⁸ Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish of the sea speak to you.

⁹ They all know that the LORD has done this.

¹⁰ For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of all humanity.

¹¹ Just as the mouth tastes good food, so the ear tests the words it hears.

¹² Wisdom belongs to the aged, and understanding to those who have lived many years.

¹³ "But true wisdom and power are with God; counsel and understanding are his.

¹⁴ What he destroys cannot be rebuilt. When he closes in on someone, there is no escape.

¹⁵ If he holds back the rain, the earth becomes a desert. If he releases the waters, they flood the earth.

¹⁶ "Yes, strength and wisdom are with him; deceivers and deceived are both in his power.

¹⁷ He leads counselors away stripped of good judgment; he drives judges to madness.

¹⁸ He removes the royal robe of kings. With ropes around their waist, they are led away.

¹⁹ He leads priests away stripped of status; he overthrows the mighty.

²⁰ He silences the trusted adviser, and he removes the insight of the elders.

²¹ He pours disgrace upon princes and confiscates weapons from the strong.

²² "He floods the darkness with light; he brings light to the deepest gloom.

²³ He raises up nations, and he destroys them. He makes nations expand, and he abandons them.

²⁴ He takes away the understanding of kings, and he leaves them wandering in a wasteland without a path.

²⁵ They grope in the darkness without a light. He makes them stagger like drunkards.

13 ¹ "Look, I have seen many instances such as you describe. I understand what you are saying.

² I know as much as you do. You are no better than I am.

³ Oh, how I long to speak directly to the Almighty. I want to argue my case with God himself.

⁴ For you are smearing me with lies. As doctors, you are worthless quacks.

⁵ Please be quiet! That's the smartest thing you could do.

⁶ Listen to my charge; pay attention to my arguments.

⁷ "Are you defending God by means of lies and dishonest arguments?"

⁸ You should be impartial witnesses, but will you slant your testimony in his favor? Will you argue God's case for him?

⁹ Be careful that he doesn't find out what you are doing! Or do you think you can fool him as easily as you fool people?

¹⁰ No, you will be in serious trouble with him if even in your hearts you slant your testimony in his favor.

¹¹ Doesn't his majesty strike terror into your heart? Does not your fear of him seize you?

¹² Your statements have about as much value as ashes. Your defense is as fragile as a clay pot.

¹³ "Be silent now and leave me alone. Let me speak—and I will face the consequences.

¹⁴ Yes, I will take my life in my hands and say what I really think.

¹⁵ God might kill me, but I cannot wait. I am going to argue my case with him.

¹⁶ But this is what will save me: that I am not godless. If I were, I would be thrown from his presence.

¹⁷ "Listen closely to what I am about to say. Hear me out.

¹⁸ I have prepared my case; I will be proved innocent.

¹⁹ Who can argue with me over this? If you could prove me wrong, I would remain silent until I die.

²⁰ "O God, there are two things I beg of you, and I will be able to face you.

²¹ Remove your hand from me, and don't terrify me with your awesome presence.

²² Now summon me, and I will answer!
Or let me speak to you, and you reply.

²³ Tell me, what have I done wrong?
Show me my rebellion and my sin.

²⁴ Why do you turn away from me?
Why do you consider me your enemy?

²⁵ Would you terrify a leaf that is blown
by the wind? Would you chase a dry
stalk of grass?

²⁶ "You write bitter accusations against
me and bring up all the sins of my youth.

²⁷ You put my feet in stocks. You watch
all my paths. You trace all my footprints.

²⁸ I waste away like rotting wood, like a
moth-eaten coat.

14 ¹ "How frail is humanity! How
short is life, and how full of
trouble!

² Like a flower, we blossom for a
moment and then wither. Like the
shadow of a passing cloud, we quickly
disappear.

³ Must you keep an eye on such a frail creature and demand an accounting from me?

⁴ Who can create purity in one born impure? No one!

⁵ You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer.

⁶ So give us a little rest, won't you? Turn away your angry stare. We are like hired hands, so let us finish the task you have given us.

⁷ "If a tree is cut down, there is hope that it will sprout again and grow new branches.

⁸ Though its roots have grown old in the earth and its stump decays,

⁹ at the scent of water it may bud and sprout again like a new seedling.

¹⁰ "But when people die, they lose all strength. They breathe their last, and then where are they?

¹¹ As water evaporates from a lake and as a river disappears in drought,

¹² people lie down and do not rise again. Until the heavens are no more, they will not wake up nor be roused from their sleep.

¹³ "I wish you would hide me with the dead and forget me there until your anger has passed. But mark your calendar to think of me again!

¹⁴ If mortals die, can they live again? This thought would give me hope, and through my struggle I would eagerly wait for release.

¹⁵ You would call and I would answer, and you would yearn for me, your handiwork.

¹⁶ For then you would count my steps, instead of watching for my sins.

¹⁷ My sins would be sealed in a pouch,
and you would cover over my iniquity.

¹⁸ "But as mountains fall and crumble
and as rocks fall from a cliff,

¹⁹ as water wears away the stones and
floods wash away the soil, so you destroy
people's hope.

²⁰ You always overpower them, and
then they pass from the scene. You
disfigure them in death and send them
away.

²¹ They never know if their sons grow
up in honor or sink to insignificance.

²² They are absorbed in their own pain
and grief."

15 ¹ Then Eliphaz the Temanite
replied:

² "You are supposed to be a wise man,
and yet you give us all this foolish talk.
You are nothing but a windbag.

³ It isn't right to speak so foolishly.
What good do such words do?

⁴ Have you no fear of God, no reverence for him?

⁵ Your sins are telling your mouth what to say. Your words are based on clever deception.

⁶ But why should I condemn you? Your own mouth does!

⁷ "Were you the first person ever born? Were you born before the hills were made?

⁸ Were you listening at God's secret council? Do you have a monopoly on wisdom?

⁹ What do you know that we don't? What do you understand that we don't?

¹⁰ On our side are aged, gray-haired men much older than your father!

¹¹ "Is God's comfort too little for you? Is his gentle word not enough?

¹² What has captured your reason? What has weakened your vision,

¹³ that you turn against God and say all these evil things?

¹⁴ Can a mortal be pure? Can a human be just?

¹⁵ Why, God doesn't even trust the angels! Even the heavens cannot be absolutely pure in his sight.

¹⁶ How much less pure is a corrupt and sinful person with a thirst for wickedness!

¹⁷ "If you will listen, I will answer you from my own experience.

¹⁸ And it is confirmed by the experience of wise men who have heard the same thing from their fathers,

¹⁹ those to whom the land was given long before any foreigners arrived.

²⁰ "Wicked people are in pain throughout their lives.

²¹ They are surrounded by terrors, and even on good days they fear the attack of the destroyer.

²² They dare not go out into the darkness for fear they will be murdered.

²³ They wander abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?' They know their ruin is certain.

²⁴ That dark day terrifies them. They live in distress and anguish, like a king preparing for an attack.

²⁵ For they have clenched their fists against God, defying the Almighty.

²⁶ Holding their strong shields, they defiantly charge against him.

²⁷ "These wicked people are fat and rich,

²⁸ but their cities will be ruined. They will live in abandoned houses that are ready to tumble down.

²⁹ They will not continue to be rich. Their wealth will not endure, and their possessions will no longer spread across the horizon.

³⁰ "They will not escape the darkness. The flame will burn them up, and the breath of God will destroy everything they have.

³¹ Let them no longer trust in empty riches. They are only fooling themselves, for emptiness will be their only reward.

³² They will be cut down in the prime of life, and all they counted on will disappear.

³³ They will be like a vine whose grapes are harvested before they are ripe, like an olive tree that sheds its blossoms so the fruit cannot form.

³⁴ For the godless are barren. Their homes, enriched through bribery, will be consumed by fire.

³⁵ They conceive trouble and evil, and their hearts give birth only to deceit."

16 ¹ Then Job spoke again:
² "I have heard all this before. What miserable comforters you are!

³ Won't you ever stop your flow of foolish words? What have I said that makes you speak so endlessly?

⁴ I could say the same things if you were in my place. I could spout off my criticisms against you and shake my head at you.

⁵ But that's not what I would do. I would speak in a way that helps you. I would try to take away your grief.

⁶ But as it is, my grief remains no matter how I defend myself. And it does not help if I refuse to speak.

⁷ "O God, you have ground me down and devastated my family.

⁸ You have reduced me to skin and bones—as proof, they say, of my sins.

⁹ God hates me and tears angrily at my flesh. He gnashes his teeth at me and pierces me with his eyes.

¹⁰ People jeer and laugh at me. They slap my cheek in contempt. A mob gathers against me.

¹¹ God has handed me over to sinners. He has tossed me into the hands of the wicked.

¹² "I was living quietly until he broke me apart. He took me by the neck and dashed me to pieces. Then he set me up as his target.

¹³ His archers surrounded me, and his arrows pierced me without mercy. The ground is wet with my blood.

¹⁴ Again and again he smashed me, charging at me like a warrior.

¹⁵ Here I sit in sackcloth. I have surrendered, and I sit in the dust.

¹⁶ My eyes are red with weeping; darkness covers my eyes.

¹⁷ Yet I am innocent, and my prayer is pure.

¹⁸ "O earth, do not conceal my blood.
Let it cry out on my behalf.

¹⁹ Even now my witness is in heaven.
My advocate is there on high.

²⁰ My friends scorn me, but I pour out
my tears to God.

²¹ Oh, that someone would mediate
between God and me, as a person
mediates between friends.

²² For soon I must go down that road
from which I will never return.

17 ¹ "My spirit is crushed, and I am
near death. The grave is ready to
receive me.

² I am surrounded by mockers. I watch
how bitterly they taunt me.

³ "You must defend my innocence, O
God, since no one else will stand up for
me.

⁴ You have closed their minds to
understanding, but do not let them
triumph.

⁵ They denounce their companions for their own advantage, so let their children faint with hunger.

⁶ "God has made a mockery of me among the people; they spit in my face.

⁷ My eyes are dim with weeping, and I am but a shadow of my former self.

⁸ The upright are astonished when they see me. The innocent are aroused against the ungodly.

⁹ The righteous will move onward and forward, and those with pure hearts will become stronger and stronger.

¹⁰ "As for all of you, come back and try again! But I will not find a wise man among you.

¹¹ My days are over. My hopes have disappeared. My heart's desires are broken.

¹² They say that night is day and day is night; how they pervert the truth!

¹³ I might go to the grave and make my bed in darkness.

¹⁴ And I might call the grave my father, and the worm my mother and my sister.

¹⁵ But where then is my hope? Can anyone find it?

¹⁶ No, my hope will go down with me to the grave. We will rest together in the dust!"

18 ¹ Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:
² "How long before you stop talking? Speak sense if you want us to answer!

³ Do you think we are cattle? Do you think we have no intelligence?

⁴ You may tear your hair out in anger, but will that cause the earth to be abandoned? Will it make rocks fall from a cliff?

⁵ "The truth remains that the light of the wicked will be snuffed out. The sparks of their fire will not glow.

⁶ The light in their tent will grow dark.
The lamp hanging above them will be quenched.

⁷ The confident stride of the wicked will be shortened. Their own schemes will be their downfall.

⁸ "The wicked walk into a net. They fall into a pit that's been dug in the path.

⁹ A trap grabs them by the heel. A noose tightens around them.

¹⁰ A snare lies hidden in the ground. A rope lies coiled on their path.

¹¹ "Terrors surround the wicked and trouble them at every step.

¹² Their vigor is depleted by hunger, and calamity waits for them to stumble.

¹³ Disease eats their skin; death devours their limbs.

¹⁴ They are torn from the security of their tent, and they are brought down to the king of terrors.

¹⁵ The home of the wicked will disappear beneath a fiery barrage of burning sulfur.

¹⁶ Their roots will dry up, and their branches will wither.

¹⁷ All memory of their existence will perish from the earth. No one will remember them.

¹⁸ They will be thrust from light into darkness, driven from the world.

¹⁹ They will have neither children nor grandchildren, nor any survivor in their home country.

²⁰ People in the west are appalled at their fate; people in the east are horrified.

²¹ They will say, 'This was the home of a wicked person, the place of one who rejected God.'

19 ¹ Then Job spoke again:
² "How long will you torture me?
How long will you try to break me with
your words?

³ Ten times now you have meant to
insult me. You should be ashamed of
dealing with me so harshly.

⁴ And even if I have sinned, that is my
concern, not yours.

⁵ You are trying to overcome me, using
my humiliation as evidence of my sin,

⁶ but it is God who has wronged me. I
cannot defend myself, for I am like a city
under siege.

⁷ "I cry out for help, but no one hears
me. I protest, but there is no justice.

⁸ God has blocked my way and plunged
my path into darkness.

⁹ He has stripped me of my honor and
removed the crown from my head.

¹⁰ He has demolished me on every side, and I am finished. He has destroyed my hope.

¹¹ His fury burns against me; he counts me as an enemy.

¹² His troops advance. They build up roads to attack me. They camp all around my tent.

¹³ "My relatives stay far away, and my friends have turned against me.

¹⁴ My neighbors and my close friends are all gone.

¹⁵ The members of my household have forgotten me. The servant girls consider me a stranger. I am like a foreigner to them.

¹⁶ I call my servant, but he doesn't come; I even plead with him!

¹⁷ My breath is repulsive to my wife. I am loathsome to my own family.

¹⁸ Even young children despise me.
When I stand to speak, they turn their
backs on me.

¹⁹ My close friends abhor me. Those I
loved have turned against me.

²⁰ I have been reduced to skin and
bones and have escaped death by the
skin of my teeth.

²¹ "Have mercy on me, my friends, have
mercy, for the hand of God has struck
me.

²² Why must you persecute me as God
does? Why aren't you satisfied with my
anguish?

²³ "Oh, that my words could be written.
Oh, that they could be inscribed on a
monument,

²⁴ carved with an iron chisel and filled
with lead, engraved forever in the rock.

²⁵ "But as for me, I know that my
Redeemer lives, and that he will stand
upon the earth at last.

²⁶ And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God!

²⁷ I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!

²⁸ "How dare you go on persecuting me, saying, 'It's his own fault'?"

²⁹ I warn you, you yourselves are in danger of punishment for your attitude. Then you will know that there is judgment."

20 ¹ Then Zophar the Naamathite replied:

² "I must reply because I am greatly disturbed.

³ I have had to endure your insults, but now my spirit prompts me to reply.

⁴ "Don't you realize that ever since people were first placed on the earth,

⁵ the triumph of the wicked has been short-lived and the joy of the godless has been only temporary?"

⁶ Though the godless man's pride reaches to the heavens and though his head touches the clouds,

⁷ yet he will perish forever, thrown away like his own dung. Those who knew him will ask, 'Where is he?'

⁸ He will fade like a dream and not be found. He will vanish like a vision in the night.

⁹ Neither his friends nor his family will ever see him again.

¹⁰ His children will beg from the poor, for he must give back his ill-gotten wealth.

¹¹ He was just a young man, but his bones will lie in the dust.

¹² "He enjoyed the taste of his wickedness, letting it melt under his tongue.

¹³ He savored it, holding it long in his mouth.

¹⁴ But suddenly, the food he has eaten turns sour within him, a poisonous venom in his stomach.

¹⁵ He will vomit the wealth he swallowed. God won't let him keep it down.

¹⁶ He will suck the poison of snakes. The viper will kill him.

¹⁷ He will never again enjoy abundant streams of olive oil or rivers of milk and honey.

¹⁸ His labors will not be rewarded. His wealth will bring him no joy.

¹⁹ For he oppressed the poor and left them destitute. He foreclosed on their homes.

²⁰ He was always greedy but never satisfied. Of all the things he dreamed about, nothing remains.

²¹ Nothing is left after he finishes gorging himself; therefore, his prosperity will not endure.

²² "In the midst of plenty, he will run into trouble, and disasters will destroy him.

²³ May God give him a bellyful of trouble. May God rain down his anger upon him.

²⁴ He will try to escape, but God's arrow will pierce him.

²⁵ The arrow is pulled from his body, and the arrowhead glistens with blood. The terrors of death are upon him.

²⁶ "His treasures will be lost in deepest darkness. A wildfire will devour his goods, consuming all he has left.

²⁷ The heavens will reveal his guilt, and the earth will give testimony against him.

²⁸ A flood will sweep away his house. God's anger will descend on him in torrents.

²⁹ This is the fate that awaits the wicked. It is the inheritance decreed by God."

21 ¹ Then Job spoke again:
² "Listen closely to what I am saying. You can console me by listening to me.

³ Bear with me, and let me speak. After I have spoken, you may mock me.

⁴ "My complaint is with God, not with people. No wonder I'm so impatient.

⁵ Look at me and be stunned. Put your hand over your mouth in shock.

⁶ When I think about what I am saying, I shudder. My body trembles.

⁷ "The truth is that the wicked live to a good old age. They grow old and wealthy.

⁸ They live to see their children grow to maturity, and they enjoy their grandchildren.

⁹ Their homes are safe from every fear, and God does not punish them.

¹⁰ Their bulls never fail to breed. Their cows bear calves without miscarriage.

¹¹ Their children skip about like lambs in a flock of sheep.

¹² They sing with tambourine and harp. They make merry to the sound of the flute.

¹³ They spend their days in prosperity; then they go down to the grave in peace.

¹⁴ All this, even though they say to God, 'Go away. We want no part of you and your ways.

¹⁵ Who is the Almighty, and why should we obey him? What good will it do us if we pray?'

¹⁶ But their prosperity is not of their own doing, so I will have nothing to do with that kind of thinking.

¹⁷ "Yet the wicked get away with it time and time again. They rarely have trouble,

and God skips them when he distributes sorrows in his anger.

¹⁸ Are they driven before the wind like straw? Are they carried away by the storm? Not at all!

¹⁹ "'Well,' you say, 'at least God will punish their children!' But I say that God should punish the ones who sin, not their children! Let them feel their own penalty.

²⁰ Let their own eyes see their destruction. Let them drink deeply of the anger of the Almighty.

²¹ For when they are dead, they will not care what happens to their family.

²² "But who can teach a lesson to God, the supreme Judge?

²³ One person dies in prosperity and security,

²⁴ the very picture of good health.

²⁵ Another person dies in bitter poverty, never having tasted the good life.

²⁶ Both alike are buried in the same dust, both eaten by the same worms.

²⁷ "Look, I know your thoughts. I know the schemes you plot against me.

²⁸ You will tell me of rich and wicked people who came to disaster because of their sins.

²⁹ But I tell you to ask those who have been around, and they can tell you the truth.

³⁰ Evil people are spared in times of calamity and are allowed to escape.

³¹ No one rebukes them openly. No one repays them for what they have done.

³² When they are carried to the grave, an honor guard keeps watch at their tomb.

³³ A great funeral procession goes to the cemetery. Many pay their respects as the body is laid to rest and the earth gives sweet repose.

³⁴ "How can you comfort me? All your explanations are wrong!"

22 ¹ Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

² "Can a person's actions be of benefit to God? Can even a wise person be helpful to him?"

³ Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous? Would it be any gain to him if you were perfect?

⁴ Is it because of your reverence for him that he accuses and judges you?

⁵ Not at all! It is because of your wickedness! Your guilt has no limit!

⁶ "For example, you must have lent money to your friend and then kept the clothing he gave you as a pledge. Yes, you stripped him to the bone.

⁷ You must have refused water for the thirsty and food for the hungry.

⁸ After all, you think the land belongs to the powerful and that those who are privileged have a right to it!

⁹ You must have sent widows away without helping them and crushed the strength of orphans.

¹⁰ That is why you are surrounded by traps and sudden fears.

¹¹ That is why you cannot see in the darkness, and waves of water cover you.

¹² "God is so great—higher than the heavens, higher than the farthest stars.

¹³ But you reply, 'That's why God can't see what I am doing! How can he judge through the thick darkness?

¹⁴ For thick clouds swirl about him, and he cannot see us. He is way up there, walking on the vault of heaven.'

¹⁵ "Will you continue on the old paths where evil people have walked?

¹⁶ They were snatched away in the prime of life, and the foundations of their lives were washed away forever.

¹⁷ For they said to God, 'Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do for us?'

¹⁸ But they forgot that he had filled their homes with good things, so I will have nothing to do with that kind of thinking.

¹⁹ "Now the righteous will be happy to see the wicked destroyed, and the innocent will laugh them to scorn.

²⁰ They will say, 'Surely our enemies have been destroyed. The last of them have been consumed in the fire.'

²¹ "Stop quarreling with God! If you agree with him, you will have peace at last, and things will go well for you.

²² Listen to his instructions, and store them in your heart.

²³ If you return to the Almighty and clean up your life, you will be restored.

²⁴ Give up your lust for money, and throw your precious gold into the river.

²⁵ Then the Almighty himself will be your treasure. He will be your precious silver!

²⁶ "Then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and look up to God.

²⁷ You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows to him.

²⁸ Whatever you decide to do will be accomplished, and light will shine on the road ahead of you.

²⁹ If someone is brought low and you say, 'Help him up,' God will save the downcast.

³⁰ Then even sinners will be rescued by your pure hands."

23 ¹ Then Job spoke again:

² "My complaint today is still a bitter one, and I try hard not to groan aloud.

³ If only I knew where to find God, I would go to his throne and talk with him there.

⁴ I would lay out my case and present my arguments.

⁵ Then I would listen to his reply and understand what he says to me.

⁶ Would he merely argue with me in his greatness? No, he would give me a fair hearing.

⁷ Fair and honest people can reason with him, so I would be acquitted by my Judge.

⁸ "I go east, but he is not there. I go west, but I cannot find him.

⁹ I do not see him in the north, for he is hidden. I turn to the south, but I cannot find him.

¹⁰ But he knows where I am going. And when he has tested me like gold in a fire, he will pronounce me innocent.

¹¹ "For I have stayed in God's paths; I have followed his ways and not turned aside.

¹² I have not departed from his commands but have treasured his word in my heart.

¹³ Nevertheless, his mind concerning me remains unchanged, and who can turn him from his purposes? Whatever he wants to do, he does.

¹⁴ So he will do for me all he has planned. He controls my destiny.

¹⁵ No wonder I am so terrified in his presence. When I think of it, terror grips me.

¹⁶ God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me.

¹⁷ Darkness is all around me; thick, impenetrable darkness is everywhere.

24 ¹ "Why doesn't the Almighty open the court and bring judgment? Why must the godly wait for him in vain?"

² Evil people steal land by moving the boundary markers. They steal flocks of sheep,

³ and they even take donkeys from the poor and fatherless. A poor widow must surrender her valuable ox as collateral for a loan.

⁴ The poor are kicked aside; the needy must hide together for safety.

⁵ Like the wild donkeys in the desert, the poor must spend all their time just getting enough to keep body and soul together. They go into the desert to search for food for their children.

⁶ They harvest a field they do not own, and they glean in the vineyards of the wicked.

⁷ All night they lie naked in the cold, without clothing or covering.

⁸ They are soaked by mountain showers, and they huddle against the rocks for want of a home.

⁹ "The wicked snatch a widow's child from her breast; they take the baby as a pledge for a loan.

¹⁰ The poor must go about naked, without any clothing. They are forced to carry food while they themselves are starving.

¹¹ They press out olive oil without being allowed to taste it, and they tread in the winepress as they suffer from thirst.

¹² The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the wounded cry for help, yet God does not respond to their moaning.

¹³ "Wicked people rebel against the light. They refuse to acknowledge its ways. They will not stay in its paths.

¹⁴ The murderer rises in the early dawn to kill the poor and needy; at night he is a thief.

¹⁵ The adulterer waits for the twilight, for he says, 'No one will see me then.' He masks his face so no one will know him.

¹⁶ They break into houses at night and sleep in the daytime. They are not acquainted with the light.

¹⁷ The black night is their morning. They ally themselves with the terrors of the darkness.

¹⁸ "But they disappear from the earth as quickly as foam is swept down a river. Everything they own is cursed, so that no one enters their vineyard.

¹⁹ Death consumes sinners just as drought and heat consume snow.

²⁰ Even the sinner's own mother will forget him. Worms will find him sweet to eat. No one will remember him. Wicked people are broken like a tree in the storm.

²¹ For they have taken advantage of the childless who have no protecting sons. They refuse to help the needy widows.

²² "God, in his power, drags away the rich. They may rise high, but they have no assurance in life.

²³ They may be allowed to live in security, but God is always watching them.

²⁴ And though they are great now, in a moment they will be gone like all others, withered like heads of grain.

²⁵ "Can anyone claim otherwise? Who can prove me wrong?"

25 ¹ Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:
² "God is powerful and dreadful. He enforces peace in the heavens.

³ Who is able to count his heavenly army? Does his light not shine on all the earth?

⁴ How can a mere mortal stand before God and claim to be righteous? Who in all the earth is pure?

⁵ God is so glorious that even the moon and stars scarcely shine compared to him.

⁶ How much less are mere people, who are but worms in his sight?"

26 ¹ Then Job spoke again:

² "How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved a person who has no strength!

³ How you have enlightened my stupidity! What wise things you have said!

⁴ Where have you gotten all these wise sayings? Whose spirit speaks through you?

⁵ "The dead tremble in their place beneath the waters.

⁶ The underworld is naked in God's presence. There is no cover for the place of destruction.

⁷ God stretches the northern sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.

⁸ He wraps the rain in his thick clouds, and the clouds do not burst with the weight.

⁹ He shrouds his throne with his clouds.

¹⁰ He created the horizon when he separated the waters; he set the boundaries for day and night.

¹¹ The foundations of heaven tremble at his rebuke.

¹² By his power the sea grew calm. By his skill he crushed the great sea monster.

¹³ His Spirit made the heavens beautiful, and his power pierced the gliding serpent.

¹⁴ "These are some of the minor things he does, merely a whisper of his power. Who can understand the thunder of his power?"

27 ¹ Job continued speaking:
² "I make this vow by the living God, who has taken away my rights, by the Almighty who has embittered my soul.

³ As long as I live, while I have breath from God,

⁴ my lips will speak no evil, and my tongue will speak no lies.

⁵ I will never concede that you are right; until I die, I will defend my innocence.

⁶ I will maintain my innocence without wavering. My conscience is clear for as long as I live.

⁷ "May my enemy be punished like the wicked, my adversary like evil men.

⁸ For what hope do the godless have when God cuts them off and takes away their life?

⁹ Will God listen to their cry when trouble comes upon them?

¹⁰ Can they take delight in the Almighty?
Can they call to God at any time?

¹¹ "I will teach you about God's power. I will not conceal anything that concerns the Almighty.

¹² But I don't need to, for you yourselves have seen all this; yet you are saying all these useless things to me.

¹³ "This is what the wicked will receive from God; this is their inheritance from the Almighty.

¹⁴ If they have a multitude of children, their children will die in war or starve to death.

¹⁵ Those who survive will be brought down to the grave by a plague, with no one to mourn them, not even their wives.

¹⁶ "Evil people may have all the money in the world, and they may store away mounds of clothing.

¹⁷ But the righteous will wear that clothing, and the innocent will divide all that money.

¹⁸ The houses built by the wicked are as fragile as a spiderweb, as flimsy as a shelter made of branches.

¹⁹ "The wicked go to bed rich but wake up to find that all their wealth is gone.

²⁰ Terror overwhelms them, and they are blown away in the storms of the night.

²¹ The east wind carries them away, and they are gone. It sweeps them away.

²² It whirls down on them without mercy. They struggle to flee from its power.

²³ But everyone jeers at them and mocks them.

28 ¹ "People know how to mine silver and refine gold.

² They know how to dig iron from the earth and smelt copper from stone.

³ They know how to put light into darkness and explore the farthest, darkest regions of the earth as they search for ore.

⁴ They sink a mine shaft into the earth far from where anyone lives. They descend on ropes, swinging back and forth.

⁵ Bread comes from the earth, but below the surface the earth is melted as by fire.

⁶ "People know how to find sapphires and gold dust—

⁷ treasures that no bird of prey can see, no falcon's eye observe—

⁸ for they are deep within the mines. No wild animal has ever walked upon those treasures; no lion has set his paw there.

⁹ People know how to tear apart flinty rocks and overturn the roots of mountains.

¹⁰ They cut tunnels in the rocks and uncover precious stones.

¹¹ They dam up the trickling streams and bring to light the hidden treasures.

¹² "But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding?

¹³ No one knows where to find it, for it is not found among the living.

¹⁴ 'It is not here,' says the ocean. 'Nor is it here,' says the sea.

¹⁵ "It cannot be bought for gold or silver.

¹⁶ Its value is greater than all the gold of Ophir, greater than precious onyx stone or sapphires.

¹⁷ Wisdom is far more valuable than gold and crystal. It cannot be purchased with jewels mounted in fine gold.

¹⁸ Coral and valuable rock crystal are worthless in trying to get it. The price of wisdom is far above pearls.

¹⁹ Topaz from Ethiopia cannot be exchanged for it. Its value is greater than the purest gold.

²⁰ "But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding?

²¹ For it is hidden from the eyes of all humanity. Even the sharp-eyed birds in the sky cannot discover it.

²² But Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of where wisdom can be found.'

²³ "God surely knows where it can be found,

²⁴ for he looks throughout the whole earth, under all the heavens.

²⁵ He made the winds blow and determined how much rain should fall.

²⁶ He made the laws of the rain and prepared a path for the lightning.

²⁷ Then, when he had done all this, he saw wisdom and measured it.

He established it and examined it thoroughly.

²⁸ And this is what he says to all humanity: ‘The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding.’”

29 ¹ Job continued speaking:
² “I long for the years gone by when God took care of me,

³ when he lighted the way before me and I walked safely through the darkness.

⁴ In my early years, the friendship of God was felt in my home.

⁵ The Almighty was still with me, and my children were around me.

⁶ In those days my cows produced milk in abundance, and my olive groves poured out streams of olive oil.

⁷ “Those were the days when I went to the city gate and took my place among the honored leaders.

⁸ The young stepped aside when they saw me, and even the aged rose in respect at my coming.

⁹ The princes stood in silence and put their hands over their mouths.

¹⁰ The highest officials of the city stood quietly, holding their tongues in respect.

¹¹ "All who heard of me praised me. All who saw me spoke well of me.

¹² For I helped the poor in their need and the orphans who had no one to help them.

¹³ I helped those who had lost hope, and they blessed me. And I caused the widows' hearts to sing for joy.

¹⁴ All I did was just and honest. Righteousness covered me like a robe, and I wore justice like a turban.

¹⁵ I served as eyes for the blind and feet for the lame.

¹⁶ I was a father to the poor and made sure that even strangers received a fair trial.

¹⁷ I broke the jaws of godless oppressors and made them release their victims.

¹⁸ "I thought, 'Surely I will die surrounded by my family after a long, good life.

¹⁹ For I am like a tree whose roots reach the water, whose branches are refreshed with the dew.

²⁰ New honors are constantly bestowed on me, and my strength is continually renewed.'

²¹ "Everyone listened to me and valued my advice. They were silent as they waited for me to speak.

²² And after I spoke, they had nothing to add, for my counsel satisfied them.

²³ They longed for me to speak as they longed for rain. They waited eagerly,

for my words were as refreshing as the spring rain.

²⁴ When they were discouraged, I smiled at them. My look of approval was precious to them.

²⁵ I told them what they should do and presided over them as their chief. I lived as a king among his troops and as one who comforts those who mourn.

30 ¹ "But now I am mocked by those who are younger than I, by young men whose fathers are not worthy to run with my sheepdogs.

² A lot of good they are to me—those worn-out wretches!

³ They are gaunt with hunger and flee to the deserts and the wastelands, desolate and gloomy.

⁴ They eat coarse leaves, and they burn the roots of shrubs for heat.

⁵ They are driven from civilization, and people shout after them as if they were thieves.

⁶ So now they live in frightening ravines and in caves and among the rocks.

⁷ They sound like animals as they howl among the bushes; they huddle together for shelter beneath the nettles.

⁸ They are nameless fools, outcasts of civilization.

⁹ "And now their sons mock me with their vulgar song! They taunt me!

¹⁰ They despise me and won't come near me, except to spit in my face.

¹¹ For God has cut the cords of my tent. He has humbled me, so they have thrown off all restraint.

¹² These outcasts oppose me to my face. They send me sprawling; they lay traps in my path.

¹³ They block my road and do everything they can to hasten my calamity, knowing full well that I have no one to help me.

¹⁴ They come at me from all directions. They rush upon me when I am down.

¹⁵ I live in terror now. They hold me in contempt, and my prosperity has vanished as a cloud before a strong wind.

¹⁶ "And now my heart is broken. Depression haunts my days.

¹⁷ My weary nights are filled with pain as though something were relentlessly gnawing at my bones.

¹⁸ With a strong hand, God grabs my garment. He grips me by the collar of my tunic.

¹⁹ He has thrown me into the mud. I have become as dust and ashes.

²⁰ "I cry to you, O God, but you don't answer me. I stand before you, and you don't bother to look.

²¹ You have become cruel toward me.
You persecute me with your great power.

²² You throw me into the whirlwind and
destroy me in the storm.

²³ And I know that you are sending me
to my death—the destination of all who
live.

²⁴ "Surely no one would turn against
the needy when they cry for help.

²⁵ Did I not weep for those in trouble?
Was I not deeply grieved for the needy?

²⁶ So I looked for good, but evil came
instead. I waited for the light, but
darkness fell.

²⁷ My heart is troubled and restless.
Days of affliction have come upon me.

²⁸ I walk in gloom, without sunlight. I
stand in the public square and cry for
help.

²⁹ But instead, I am considered a
brother to jackals and a companion to
ostriches.

³⁰ My skin has turned dark, and my bones burn with fever.

³¹ My harp plays sad music, and my flute accompanies those who weep.

31 ¹ "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust upon a young woman.

² What has God above chosen for us? What is our inheritance from the Almighty on high?

³ It is calamity for the wicked, misfortune for those who do evil.

⁴ He sees everything I do and every step I take.

⁵ "Have I lied to anyone or deceived anyone?

⁶ Let God judge me on the scales of justice, for he knows my integrity.

⁷ If I have strayed from his pathway, or if my heart has lusted for what my eyes have seen, or if I am guilty of any other sin,

⁸ then let someone else harvest the crops I have planted, and let all that I have planted be uprooted.

⁹ "If my heart has been seduced by a woman, or if I have lusted for my neighbor's wife,

¹⁰ then may my wife belong to another man; may other men sleep with her.

¹¹ For lust is a shameful sin, a crime that should be punished.

¹² It is a devastating fire that destroys to hell. It would wipe out everything I own.

¹³ "If I have been unfair to my male or female servants, if I have refused to hear their complaints,

¹⁴ how could I face God? What could I say when he questioned me about it?

¹⁵ For God created both me and my servants. He created us both.

¹⁶ "Have I refused to help the poor, or crushed the hopes of widows who looked to me for help?

¹⁷ Have I been stingy with my food and refused to share it with hungry orphans?

¹⁸ No, from childhood I have cared for orphans, and all my life I have cared for widows.

¹⁹ Whenever I saw someone who was homeless and without clothes,

²⁰ did they not praise me for providing wool clothing to keep them warm?

²¹ If my arm has abused an orphan because I thought I could get away with it,

²² then let my shoulder be wrenched out of place! Let my arm be torn from its socket!

²³ That would be better than facing the judgment sent by God. For if the majesty of God opposes me, what hope is there?

²⁴ "Have I put my trust in money or felt secure because of my gold?

²⁵ Does my happiness depend on my wealth and all that I own?

²⁶ Have I looked at the sun shining in the skies, or the moon walking down its silver pathway,

²⁷ and been secretly enticed in my heart to worship them?

²⁸ If so, I should be punished by the judges, for it would mean I had denied the God of heaven.

²⁹ "Have I ever rejoiced when my enemies came to ruin or become excited when harm came their way?

³⁰ No, I have never cursed anyone or asked for revenge.

³¹ My servants have never let others go hungry.

³² I have never turned away a stranger but have opened my doors to everyone.

³³ Have I tried to hide my sins as people normally do, hiding my guilt in a closet?

³⁴ Have I feared the crowd and its contempt, so that I refused to

acknowledge my sin and would not go outside?

³⁵ "If only I had someone who would listen to me and try to see my side! Look, I will sign my name to my defense. Let the Almighty show me that I am wrong. Let my accuser write out the charges against me.

³⁶ I would face the accusation proudly. I would treasure it like a crown.

³⁷ For I would tell him exactly what I have done. I would come before him like a prince.

³⁸ "If my land accuses me and all its furrows weep together,

³⁹ or if I have stolen its crops or murdered its owners,

⁴⁰ then let thistles grow on that land instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley." Job's words are ended.

32 ¹ Job's three friends refused to reply further to him because he kept insisting on his innocence.

² Then Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the clan of Ram, became angry. He was angry because Job refused to admit that he had sinned and that God was right in punishing him.

³ He was also angry with Job's three friends because they had condemned God by their inability to answer Job's arguments.

⁴ Elihu had waited for the others to speak because they were older than he.

⁵ But when he saw that they had no further reply, he spoke out angrily.

⁶ Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said, "I am young and you are old, so I held back and did not dare to tell you what I think.

⁷ I thought, 'Those who are older should speak, for wisdom comes with age.'

⁸ Surely it is God's Spirit within people, the breath of the Almighty within them, that makes them intelligent.

⁹ But sometimes the elders are not wise. Sometimes the aged do not understand justice.

¹⁰ So listen to me and let me express my opinion.

¹¹ "I have waited all this time, listening very carefully to your arguments, listening to you grope for words.

¹² I have listened, but not one of you has refuted Job or answered his arguments.

¹³ And don't tell me, 'He is too wise for us. Only God can convince him.'

¹⁴ If Job had been arguing with me, I would not answer with that kind of logic!

¹⁵ You sit there baffled, with no further response.

¹⁶ Should I continue to wait, now that you are silent? Must I also remain silent?

¹⁷ No, I will say my piece. I will speak my mind. I surely will.

¹⁸ For I am pent up and full of words, and the spirit within me urges me on.

¹⁹ I am like a wine cask without a vent. My words are ready to burst out!

²⁰ I must speak to find relief, so let me give my answers.

²¹ I won't play favorites or try to flatter anyone.

²² And if I tried, my Creator would soon do away with me.

33 ¹ "Listen, Job, to what I have to say.

² Now that I have begun to speak, let me continue.

³ I speak with all sincerity; I speak the truth.

⁴ For the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

⁵ Answer me, if you can; make your case and take your stand.

⁶ "Look, you and I are the same before God. I, too, was formed from clay.

⁷ So you don't need to be afraid of me. I am not some great person to make you nervous and afraid.

⁸ "You have said it in my hearing. I have heard your very words.

⁹ You said, 'I am pure; I am innocent; I have not sinned.

¹⁰ God is picking a quarrel with me, and he considers me to be his enemy.

¹¹ He puts my feet in the stocks and watches every move I make.'

¹² "In this you are not right, and I will show you why. As you yourself have said, 'God is greater than any person.'

¹³ So why are you bringing a charge against him? You say, 'He does not respond to people's complaints.'

¹⁴ But God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it.

¹⁵ He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in bed.

¹⁶ He whispers in their ear and terrifies them with his warning.

¹⁷ He causes them to change their minds; he keeps them from pride.

¹⁸ He keeps them from the grave, from crossing over the river of death.

¹⁹ Or God disciplines people with sickness and pain, with ceaseless aching in their bones.

²⁰ They lose their appetite and do not care for even the most delicious food.

²¹ They waste away to skin and bones.

²² They are at death's door; the angels of death wait for them.

²³ "But if a special messenger from heaven is there to intercede for a person, to declare that he is upright,

²⁴ God will be gracious and say, 'Set him free. Do not make him die, for I have found a ransom for his life.'

²⁵ Then his body will become as healthy as a child's, firm and youthful again.

²⁶ When he prays to God, he will be accepted. And God will receive him with joy and restore him to good standing.

²⁷ He will declare to his friends, 'I sinned, but it was not worth it.'

²⁸ God rescued me from the grave, and now my life is filled with light.'

²⁹ "Yes, God often does these things for people.

³⁰ He rescues them from the grave so they may live in the light of the living.

³¹ Mark this well, Job. Listen to me, and let me say more.

³² But if you have anything to say, go ahead. I want to hear it, for I am anxious to see you justified.

³³ But if not, then listen to me. Keep silent and I will teach you wisdom!"

34 ¹ Then Elihu said:
² "Listen to me, you wise men. Pay attention, you who have knowledge.

³ 'Just as the mouth tastes good food, the ear tests the words it hears.'

⁴ So let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good.

⁵ For Job has said, 'I am innocent, but God has taken away my rights.

⁶ I am innocent, but they call me a liar. My suffering is incurable, even though I have not sinned.'

⁷ "Has there ever been a man as arrogant as Job, with his thirst for irreverent talk?

⁸ He seeks the companionship of evil people. He spends his time with wicked men.

⁹ He has even said, 'Why waste time trying to please God?'

¹⁰ "Listen to me, you who have understanding. Everyone knows that God doesn't sin! The Almighty can do no wrong.

¹¹ He repays people according to their deeds. He treats people according to their ways.

¹² There is no truer statement than this: God will not do wrong. The Almighty cannot twist justice.

¹³ Who put the world in his care? Who has set the whole world in place?

¹⁴ If God were to take back his spirit and withdraw his breath,

¹⁵ all life would cease, and humanity would turn again to dust.

¹⁶ "Listen now and try to understand.

¹⁷ Could God govern if he hated justice? Are you going to condemn the almighty Judge?

¹⁸ For he says to kings and nobles, 'You are wicked and unjust.'

¹⁹ He doesn't care how great a person may be, and he doesn't pay any more attention to the rich than to the poor. He made them all.

²⁰ In a moment they die. At midnight they all pass away; the mighty are removed without human hand.

²¹ "For God carefully watches the way people live; he sees everything they do.

²² No darkness is thick enough to hide the wicked from his eyes.

²³ For it is not up to mortals to decide when to come before God in judgment.

²⁴ He brings the mighty to ruin without asking anyone, and he sets up others in their places.

²⁵ He watches what they do, and in the night he overturns them, destroying them.

²⁶ He openly strikes them down for their wickedness.

²⁷ For they turned aside from following him. They have no respect for any of his ways.

²⁸ So they cause the poor to cry out, catching God's attention. Yes, he hears the cries of the needy.

²⁹ When he is quiet, who can make trouble? But when he hides his face, who can find him?

³⁰ He prevents the godless from ruling so they cannot be a snare to the people.

³¹ "Why don't people say to God, 'I have sinned, but I will sin no more'?

³² Or 'I don't know what evil I have done; tell me, and I will stop at once'?

³³ "Must God tailor his justice to your demands? But you have rejected him! The choice is yours, not mine. Go ahead, share your wisdom with us.

³⁴ After all, bright people will tell me, and wise people will hear me say,

³⁵ 'Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight.'

³⁶ Job, you deserve the maximum penalty for the wicked way you have talked.

³⁷ For now you have added rebellion and blasphemy against God to your other sins."

35 ¹ Then Elihu said:
² "Do you think it is right for you to claim, 'I am righteous before God'?

³ Yet you also ask, 'What's the use of living a righteous life? How will it benefit me?'

⁴ "I will answer you and all your friends, too.

⁵ Look up into the sky and see the clouds high above you.

⁶ If you sin, what do you accomplish against him? Even if you sin again and again, what effect will it have on him?

⁷ If you are good, is this some great gift to him? What could you possibly give him?

⁸ No, your sins affect only people like yourself, and your good deeds affect only other people.

⁹ "The oppressed cry out beneath the wrongs that are done to them. They groan beneath the power of the mighty.

¹⁰ Yet they don't ask, 'Where is God my Creator, the one who gives songs in the night?

¹¹ Where is the one who makes us wiser than the animals and birds?'

¹² "And if they do cry out and God does not answer, it is because of their pride.

¹³ But it is wrong to say God doesn't listen, to say the Almighty isn't concerned.

¹⁴ And it is even more false to say he doesn't see what is going on. He will bring about justice if you will only wait.

¹⁵ But do you cry out against him because he does not respond in anger?

¹⁶ Job, you have protested in vain. You have spoken like a fool."

36 ¹ Elihu continued speaking:

² "Let me go on, and I will show you the truth of what I am saying. For I have not finished defending God!

³ I will give you many illustrations of the righteousness of my Creator.

⁴ I am telling you the honest truth, for I am a man of well-rounded knowledge.

⁵ "God is mighty, yet he does not despise anyone! He is mighty in both power and understanding.

⁶ He does not let the wicked live but gives justice to the afflicted.

⁷ His eyes never leave the innocent, but he establishes and exalts them with kings forever.

⁸ If troubles come upon them and they are enslaved and afflicted,

⁹ he takes the trouble to show them the reason. He shows them their sins, for they have behaved proudly.

¹⁰ He gets their attention and says they must turn away from evil.

¹¹ "If they listen and obey God, then they will be blessed with prosperity throughout their lives. All their years will be pleasant.

¹² But if they refuse to listen to him, they will perish in battle and die from lack of understanding.

¹³ For the godless are full of resentment. Even when he punishes them, they refuse to cry out to him for help.

¹⁴ They die young after wasting their lives in immoral living.

¹⁵ But by means of their suffering, he rescues those who suffer. For he gets their attention through adversity.

¹⁶ "God has led you away from danger, giving you freedom. You have prospered in a wide and pleasant valley.

¹⁷ But you are too obsessed with judgment on the godless. Don't worry, justice will be upheld.

¹⁸ But watch out, or you may be seduced with wealth. Don't let yourself be bribed into sin.

¹⁹ Could all your wealth and mighty efforts keep you from distress?

²⁰ Do not long for the cover of night, for that is when people will be destroyed.

²¹ Be on guard! Turn back from evil, for it was to prevent you from getting into a life of evil that God sent this suffering.

²² "Look, God is all-powerful. Who is a teacher like him?

²³ No one can tell him what to do. No one can say to him, 'You have done wrong.'

²⁴ Instead, glorify his mighty works, singing songs of praise.

²⁵ Everyone has seen these things, but only from a distance.

²⁶ "Look, God is exalted beyond what we can understand. His years are without number.

²⁷ He draws up the water vapor and then distills it into rain.

²⁸ The rain pours down from the clouds, and everyone benefits from it.

²⁹ Can anyone really understand the spreading of the clouds and the thunder that rolls forth from heaven?

³⁰ See how he spreads the lightning around him and how it lights up the depths of the sea.

³¹ By his mighty acts he governs the people, giving them food in abundance.

³² He fills his hands with lightning bolts. He hurls each at its target.

³³ The thunder announces his presence; the storm announces his indignant anger.

37 ¹ "My heart pounds as I think of this. It leaps within me.

² Listen carefully to the thunder of God's voice as it rolls from his mouth.

³ It rolls across the heavens, and his lightning flashes out in every direction.

⁴ Then comes the roaring of the thunder—the tremendous voice of his majesty. He does not restrain the thunder when he speaks.

⁵ God's voice is glorious in the thunder. We cannot comprehend the greatness of his power.

⁶ "He directs the snow to fall on the earth and tells the rain to pour down.

⁷ Everyone stops working at such a time so they can recognize his power.

⁸ The wild animals hide in the rocks or in their dens.

⁹ The stormy wind comes from its chamber, and the driving winds bring the cold.

¹⁰ God's breath sends the ice, freezing wide expanses of water.

¹¹ He loads the clouds with moisture, and they flash with his lightning.

¹² The clouds turn around and around under his direction. They do whatever he commands throughout the earth.

¹³ He causes things to happen on earth, either as a punishment or as a sign of his unfailing love.

¹⁴ "Listen, Job; stop and consider the wonderful miracles of God!

¹⁵ Do you know how God controls the storm and causes the lightning to flash forth from his clouds?

¹⁶ Do you understand how he balances the clouds with wonderful perfection and skill?

¹⁷ When you are sweltering in your clothes and the south wind dies down and everything is still,

¹⁸ he makes the skies reflect the heat like a giant mirror. Can you do that?

¹⁹ "You think you know so much, so teach the rest of us what to say to God. We are too ignorant to make our own arguments.

²⁰ Should God be told that I want to speak? Can we speak when we are confused?

²¹ We cannot look at the sun, for it shines brightly in the sky when the wind clears away the clouds.

²² Golden splendor comes from the mountain of God. He is clothed in dazzling splendor.

²³ We cannot imagine the power of the Almighty, yet he is so just and merciful that he does not oppress us.

²⁴ No wonder people everywhere fear him. People who are truly wise show him reverence."

38 ¹ Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind:

² "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?

³ Brace yourself, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much.

⁵ Do you know how its dimensions were determined and who did the surveying?

⁶ What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone

⁷ as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

⁸ "Who defined the boundaries of the sea as it burst from the womb,

⁹ and as I clothed it with clouds and thick darkness?

¹⁰ For I locked it behind barred gates, limiting its shores.

¹¹ I said, 'Thus far and no farther will you come. Here your proud waves must stop!'

¹² "Have you ever commanded the morning to appear and caused the dawn to rise in the east?

¹³ Have you ever told the daylight to spread to the ends of the earth, to bring an end to the night's wickedness?

¹⁴ For the features of the earth take shape as the light approaches, and the dawn is robed in red.

¹⁵ The light disturbs the haunts of the wicked, and it stops the arm that is raised in violence.

¹⁶ "Have you explored the springs from which the seas come? Have you walked about and explored their depths?

17 Do you know where the gates of death are located? Have you seen the gates of utter gloom?

18 Do you realize the extent of the earth? Tell me about it if you know!

19 "Where does the light come from, and where does the darkness go?

20 Can you take it to its home? Do you know how to get there?

21 But of course you know all this! For you were born before it was all created, and you are so very experienced!

22 "Have you visited the treasuries of the snow? Have you seen where the hail is made and stored?

23 I have reserved it for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war.

24 Where is the path to the origin of light? Where is the home of the east wind?

²⁵ "Who created a channel for the torrents of rain? Who laid out the path for the lightning?

²⁶ Who makes the rain fall on barren land, in a desert where no one lives?

²⁷ Who sends the rain that satisfies the parched ground and makes the tender grass spring up?

²⁸ "Does the rain have a father? Where does dew come from?

²⁹ Who is the mother of the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens?

³⁰ For the water turns to ice as hard as rock, and the surface of the water freezes.

³¹ "Can you hold back the movements of the stars? Are you able to restrain the Pleiades or Orion?

³² Can you ensure the proper sequence of the seasons or guide the constellation of the Bear with her cubs across the heavens?

³³ Do you know the laws of the universe and how God rules the earth?

³⁴ "Can you shout to the clouds and make it rain?

³⁵ Can you make lightning appear and cause it to strike as you direct it?

³⁶ Who gives intuition and instinct?

³⁷ Who is wise enough to count all the clouds? Who can tilt the water jars of heaven,

³⁸ turning the dry dust to clumps of mud?

³⁹ "Can you stalk prey for a lioness and satisfy the young lions' appetites

⁴⁰ as they lie in their dens or crouch in the thicket?

⁴¹ Who provides food for the ravens when their young cry out to God as they wander about in hunger?

39¹ "Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Have you watched as the wild deer are born?

² Do you know how many months they carry their young? Are you aware of the time of their delivery?

³ They crouch down to give birth to their young and deliver their offspring.

⁴ Their young grow up in the open fields, then leave their parents and never return.

⁵ "Who makes the wild donkey wild?

⁶ I have placed it in the wilderness; its home is the wasteland.

⁷ It hates the noise of the city, and it has no driver to shout at it.

⁸ The mountains are its pastureland, where it searches for every blade of grass.

⁹ "Will the wild ox consent to being tamed? Will it stay in your stall?

¹⁰ Can you hitch a wild ox to a plow? Will it plow a field for you?

¹¹ Since it is so strong, can you trust it?
Can you go away and trust the ox to do
your work?

¹² Can you rely on it to return, bringing
your grain to the threshing floor?

¹³ "The ostrich flaps her wings grandly,
but they are no match for the feathers of
the stork.

¹⁴ She lays her eggs on top of the earth,
letting them be warmed in the dust.

¹⁵ She doesn't worry that a foot might
crush them or that wild animals might
destroy them.

¹⁶ She is harsh toward her young,
as if they were not her own. She is
unconcerned though they die,

¹⁷ for God has deprived her of wisdom.
He has given her no understanding.

¹⁸ But whenever she jumps up to run,
she passes the swiftest horse with its
rider.

¹⁹ "Have you given the horse its strength or clothed its neck with a flowing mane?

²⁰ Did you give it the ability to leap forward like a locust? Its majestic snorting is something to hear!

²¹ It paws the earth and rejoices in its strength. When it charges to war,

²² it is unafraid. It does not run from the sword.

²³ The arrows rattle against it, and the spear and javelin flash.

²⁴ Fiercely it paws the ground and rushes forward into battle when the trumpet blows.

²⁵ It snorts at the sound of the bugle. It senses the battle even at a distance. It quivers at the noise of battle and the shout of the captain's commands.

²⁶ "Are you the one who makes the hawk soar and spread its wings to the south?"

²⁷ Is it at your command that the eagle rises to the heights to make its nest?

²⁸ It lives on the cliffs, making its home on a distant, rocky crag.

²⁹ From there it hunts its prey, keeping watch with piercing eyes.

³⁰ Its nestlings gulp down blood, for it feeds on the carcass of the slaughtered."

40 ¹ Then the LORD said to Job,
² "Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God's critic, but do you have the answers?"

³ Then Job replied to the LORD,

⁴ "I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will put my hand over my mouth in silence.

⁵ I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say."

⁶ Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind:

⁷ "Brace yourself, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.

⁸ Are you going to discredit my justice and condemn me so you can say you are right?

⁹ Are you as strong as God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?

¹⁰ All right then, put on your robes of state, your majesty and splendor.

¹¹ Give vent to your anger. Let it overflow against the proud.

¹² Humiliate the proud with a glance; walk on the wicked where they stand.

¹³ Bury them in the dust. Imprison them in the world of the dead.

¹⁴ Then even I would praise you, for your own strength would save you.

¹⁵ "Take a look at the mighty hippopotamus. I made it, just as I made you. It eats grass like an ox.

¹⁶ See its powerful loins and the muscles of its belly.

¹⁷ Its tail is as straight as a cedar. The sinews of its thighs are tightly knit together.

¹⁸ Its bones are tubes of bronze. Its limbs are bars of iron.

¹⁹ It is a prime example of God's amazing handiwork. Only its Creator can threaten it.

²⁰ The mountains offer it their best food, where all the wild animals play.

²¹ It lies down under the lotus plants, hidden by the reeds.

²² The lotus plants give it shade among the willows beside the stream.

²³ It is not disturbed by raging rivers, not even when the swelling Jordan rushes down upon it.

²⁴ No one can catch it off guard or put a ring in its nose and lead it away.

41 ¹ "Can you catch a crocodile with a hook or put a noose around its jaw?

² Can you tie it with a rope through the nose or pierce its jaw with a spike?

³ Will it beg you for mercy or implore you for pity?

⁴ Will it agree to work for you? Can you make it be your slave for life?

⁵ Can you make it a pet like a bird, or give it to your little girls to play with?

⁶ Will merchants try to buy it? Will they sell it in their shops?

⁷ Will its hide be hurt by darts, or its head by a harpoon?

⁸ If you lay a hand on it, you will never forget the battle that follows, and you will never try it again!

⁹ "No, it is useless to try to capture it. The hunter who attempts it will be thrown down.

¹⁰ And since no one dares to disturb the crocodile, who would dare to stand up to me?

¹¹ Who will confront me and remain safe? Everything under heaven is mine.

¹² "I want to emphasize the tremendous strength in the crocodile's limbs and throughout its enormous frame.

¹³ Who can strip off its hide, and who can penetrate its double layer of armor?

¹⁴ Who could pry open its jaws? For its teeth are terrible!

¹⁵ The overlapping scales on its back make a shield.

¹⁶ They are close together so no air can get between them.

¹⁷ They lock together so nothing can penetrate them.

¹⁸ "When it sneezes, it flashes light! Its eyes are like the red of dawn.

¹⁹ Fire and sparks leap from its mouth.

²⁰ Smoke streams from its nostrils like steam from a boiling pot on a fire of dry rushes.

²¹ Yes, its breath would kindle coals, for flames shoot from its mouth.

²² "The tremendous strength in its neck strikes terror wherever it goes.

²³ Its flesh is hard and firm, not soft and fat.

²⁴ Its heart is as hard as rock, as hard as a millstone.

²⁵ When it rises, the mighty are afraid, gripped by terror.

²⁶ No sword can stop it, nor spear nor dart nor pointed shaft.

²⁷ To the crocodile, iron is nothing but straw, and bronze is rotten wood.

²⁸ Arrows cannot make it flee. Stones shot from a sling are as ineffective as straw.

²⁹ Clubs do no good, and it laughs at the swish of the javelins.

³⁰ Its belly is covered with scales as sharp as glass. They tear up the ground as it drags through the mud.

³¹ "The crocodile makes the water boil with its commotion. It churns the depths.

³² The water glistens in its wake. One would think the sea had turned white.

³³ There is nothing else so fearless anywhere on earth.

³⁴ Of all the creatures, it is the proudest. It is the king of beasts."

42 ¹ Then Job replied to the LORD:
² "I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you.

³ You ask, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I. And I was talking about things I did not understand, things far too wonderful for me.

⁴ "You said, 'Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.'

⁵ "I had heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes.

⁶ I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

⁷ After the LORD had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "I am angry with you and with your two friends, for you have not been right in what you said about me, as my servant Job was.

⁸ Now take seven young bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer on your behalf. I will not treat you as you deserve, for you have not been right in what you said about me, as my servant Job was."

⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite did as the LORD commanded them, and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

¹⁰ When Job prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes. In fact, the LORD gave him twice as much as before!

¹¹ Then all his brothers, sisters, and former friends came and feasted with him in his home. And they consoled him and comforted him because of all the trials the LORD had brought against him. And each of them brought him a gift of money and a gold ring.

¹² So the LORD blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning. For now he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand teams of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.

¹³ He also gave Job seven more sons and three more daughters.

¹⁴ He named his first daughter Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch.

¹⁵ In all the land there were no other women as lovely as the daughters of Job. And their father put them into his will along with their brothers.

¹⁶ Job lived 140 years after that, living to see four generations of his children and grandchildren.

¹⁷ Then he died, an old man who had lived a long, good life.

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