

New Living Translation

Old Testament
(Psalms – Malachi)

Psalms

1 ¹ Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with scoffers.

² But they delight in doing everything the LORD wants; day and night they think about his law.

³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season without fail. Their leaves never wither, and in all they do, they prosper.

⁴ But this is not true of the wicked. They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.

⁵ They will be condemned at the time of judgment. Sinners will have no place among the godly.

⁶ For the LORD watches over the path of the godly, but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

2 ¹ Why do the nations rage? Why do the people waste their time with futile plans?

² The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the LORD and against his anointed one.

³ "Let us break their chains," they cry, "and free ourselves from this slavery."

⁴ But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.

⁵ Then in anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury.

⁶ For the LORD declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, my holy city."

⁷ The king proclaims the LORD's decree: "The LORD said to me, 'You are my son. Today I have become your Father.

⁸ Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession.

⁹ You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.’”

¹⁰ Now then, you kings, act wisely! Be warned, you rulers of the earth!

¹¹ Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Submit to God’s royal son, or he will become angry, and you will be destroyed in the midst of your pursuits—for his anger can flare up in an instant. But what joy for all who find protection in him!

3¹ “A psalm of David, regarding the time David fled from his son Absalom.” O LORD, I have so many enemies; so many are against me.

² So many are saying, “God will never rescue him!” Interlude

³ But you, O LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts my head high.

⁴ I cried out to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy mountain.

Interlude

⁵ I lay down and slept. I woke up in safety, for the LORD was watching over me.

⁶ I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies who surround me on every side.

⁷ Arise, O LORD! Rescue me, my God! Slap all my enemies in the face! Shatter the teeth of the wicked!

⁸ Victory comes from you, O LORD. May your blessings rest on your people.

Interlude

4¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.” Answer me when I call, O God who declares me innocent.

Take away my distress. Have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

² How long will you people ruin my reputation? How long will you make these groundless accusations? How long will you pursue lies? Interlude

³ You can be sure of this: The LORD has set apart the godly for himself. The LORD will answer when I call to him.

⁴ Don't sin by letting anger gain control over you. Think about it overnight and remain silent. Interlude

⁵ Offer proper sacrifices, and trust in the LORD.

⁶ Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let the smile of your face shine on us, LORD.

⁷ You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and wine.

⁸ I will lie down in peace and sleep, for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe.

5¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by the flute.” O LORD, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning.

² Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I will never pray to anyone but you.

³ Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.

⁴ O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the slightest sin.

⁵ Therefore, the proud will not be allowed to stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil.

⁶ You will destroy those who tell lies. The LORD detests murderers and deceivers.

⁷ Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house; with deepest awe I will worship at your Temple.

⁸ Lead me in the right path, O LORD, or my enemies will conquer me. Tell me clearly what to do, and show me which way to turn.

⁹ My enemies cannot speak one truthful word. Their deepest desire is to destroy others. Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their speech is filled with flattery.

¹⁰ O God, declare them guilty. Let them be caught in their own traps. Drive them away because of their many sins, for they rebel against you.

¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Protect them, so all who love your name may be filled with joy.

¹² For you bless the godly, O LORD, surrounding them with your shield of love.

6 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an

eight–stringed instrument.” O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your rage.

² Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak. Heal me, LORD, for my body is in agony.

³ I am sick at heart. How long, O LORD, until you restore me?

⁴ Return, O LORD, and rescue me. Save me because of your unfailing love.

⁵ For in death, who remembers you? Who can praise you from the grave?

⁶ I am worn out from sobbing. Every night tears drench my bed; my pillow is wet from weeping.

⁷ My vision is blurred by grief; my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies.

⁸ Go away, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my crying.

⁹ The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD will answer my prayer.

¹⁰ May all my enemies be disgraced and terrified. May they suddenly turn back in shame.

7 ¹ “A psalm of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush of the tribe of Benjamin.” I come to you for protection, O LORD my God. Save me from my persecutors—rescue me!

² If you don’t, they will maul me like a lion, tearing me to pieces with no one to rescue me.

³ O LORD my God, if I have done wrong or am guilty of injustice,

⁴ if I have betrayed a friend or plundered my enemy without cause,

⁵ then let my enemies capture me. Let them trample me into the ground. Let my honor be left in the dust. Interlude

⁶ Arise, O LORD, in anger! Stand up against the fury of my enemies! Wake up, my God, and bring justice!

⁷ Gather the nations before you. Sit on your throne high above them.

⁸ The LORD passes judgment on the nations. Declare me righteous, O LORD, for I am innocent, O Most High!

⁹ End the wickedness of the ungodly, but help all those who obey you. For you look deep within the mind and heart, O righteous God.

¹⁰ God is my shield, saving those whose hearts are true and right.

¹¹ God is a judge who is perfectly fair. He is angry with the wicked every day.

¹² If a person does not repent, God will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow.

¹³ He will prepare his deadly weapons and ignite his flaming arrows.

¹⁴ The wicked conceive evil; they are pregnant with trouble and give birth to lies.

¹⁵ They dig a pit to trap others and then fall into it themselves.

¹⁶ They make trouble, but it backfires on them. They plan violence for others, but it falls on their own heads.

¹⁷ I will thank the LORD because he is just; I will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

8 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.” O LORD, our Lord, the majesty of your name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens.

² You have taught children and nursing infants to give you praise. They silence your enemies who were seeking revenge.

³ When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you have set in place—

⁴ what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us?

⁵ For you made us only a little lower than God, and you crowned us with glory and honor.

⁶ You put us in charge of everything you made, giving us authority over all things—

⁷ the sheep and the cattle and all the wild animals,

⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents.

⁹ O LORD, our Lord, the majesty of your name fills the earth!

9¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune “Death of the Son.”” I will thank you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.

² I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.

³ My enemies turn away in retreat; they are overthrown and destroyed before you.

⁴ For you have judged in my favor; from your throne, you have judged with fairness.

⁵ You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked; you have wiped out their names forever.

⁶ My enemies have met their doom; their cities are perpetual ruins. Even the memory of their uprooted cities is lost.

⁷ But the LORD reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne.

⁸ He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness.

⁹ The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

¹⁰ Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, have never abandoned anyone who searches for you.

¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD who reigns in Jerusalem. Tell the world about his unforgettable deeds.

¹² For he who avenges murder cares for the helpless. He does not ignore those who cry to him for help.

¹³ LORD, have mercy on me. See how I suffer at the hands of those who hate me. Snatch me back from the jaws of death.

¹⁴ Save me, so I can praise you publicly at Jerusalem's gates, so I can rejoice that you have rescued me.

¹⁵ The nations have fallen into the pit they dug for others. They have been caught in their own trap.

¹⁶ The LORD is known for his justice.
The wicked have trapped themselves in
their own snares. Quiet Interlude

¹⁷ The wicked will go down to the grave.
This is the fate of all the nations who
ignore God.

¹⁸ For the needy will not be forgotten
forever; the hopes of the poor will not
always be crushed.

¹⁹ Arise, O LORD! Do not let mere
mortals defy you! Let the nations be
judged in your presence!

²⁰ Make them tremble in fear, O LORD.
Let them know they are merely human.
Interlude

10 ¹ O LORD, why do you stand so far
away? Why do you hide when I
need you the most?

² Proud and wicked people viciously
oppress the poor. Let them be caught in
the evil they plan for others.

³ For they brag about their evil desires; they praise the greedy and curse the LORD.

⁴ These wicked people are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead.

⁵ Yet they succeed in everything they do. They do not see your punishment awaiting them. They pour scorn on all their enemies.

⁶ They say to themselves, "Nothing bad will ever happen to us! We will be free of trouble forever!"

⁷ Their mouths are full of cursing, lies, and threats. Trouble and evil are on the tips of their tongues.

⁸ They lurk in dark alleys, murdering the innocent who pass by. They are always searching for some helpless victim.

⁹ Like lions they crouch silently, waiting to pounce on the helpless. Like hunters

they capture their victims and drag them away in nets.

¹⁰ The helpless are overwhelmed and collapse; they fall beneath the strength of the wicked.

¹¹ The wicked say to themselves, "God isn't watching! He will never notice!"

¹² Arise, O LORD! Punish the wicked, O God! Do not forget the helpless!

¹³ Why do the wicked get away with cursing God? How can they think, "God will never call us to account"?

¹⁴ But you do see the trouble and grief they cause. You take note of it and punish them. The helpless put their trust in you. You are the defender of orphans.

¹⁵ Break the arms of these wicked, evil people! Go after them until the last one is destroyed!

¹⁶ The LORD is king forever and ever! Let those who worship other gods be swept from the land.

¹⁷ LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them.

¹⁸ You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them.

11 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” I trust in the LORD for protection. So why do you say to me, “Fly to the mountains for safety!

² The wicked are stringing their bows and setting their arrows in the bowstrings. They shoot from the shadows at those who do right.

³ The foundations of law and order have collapsed. What can the righteous do?”

⁴ But the LORD is in his holy Temple; the LORD still rules from heaven. He watches everything closely, examining everyone on earth.

⁵ The LORD examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates everyone who loves violence.

⁶ He rains down blazing coals on the wicked, punishing them with burning sulfur and scorching winds.

⁷ For the LORD is righteous, and he loves justice. Those who do what is right will see his face.

12 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an eight–stringed instrument.”

Help, O LORD, for the godly are fast disappearing! The faithful have vanished from the earth!

² Neighbors lie to each other, speaking with flattering lips and insincere hearts.

³ May the LORD bring their flattery to an end and silence their proud tongues.

⁴ They say, “We will lie to our hearts’ content. Our lips are our own—who can stop us?”

⁵ The LORD replies, "I have seen violence done to the helpless, and I have heard the groans of the poor. Now I will rise up to rescue them, as they have longed for me to do."

⁶ The LORD's promises are pure, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times over.

⁷ Therefore, LORD, we know you will protect the oppressed, preserving them forever from this lying generation,

⁸ even though the wicked strut about, and evil is praised throughout the land.

13 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of David." O LORD, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way?

² How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

³ Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!
Restore the light to my eyes, or I will die.

⁴ Don't let my enemies gloat, saying,
"We have defeated him!" Don't let them
rejoice at my downfall.

⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love. I will
rejoice because you have rescued me.

⁶ I will sing to the LORD because he has
been so good to me.

14 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm
of David." Only fools say in their
hearts, "There is no God." They are
corrupt, and their actions are evil; no
one does good!

² The LORD looks down from heaven
on the entire human race; he looks
to see if there is even one with real
understanding, one who seeks for God.

³ But no, all have turned away from
God; all have become corrupt. No one
does good, not even one!

⁴ Will those who do evil never learn? They eat up my people like bread; they wouldn't think of praying to the LORD.

⁵ Terror will grip them, for God is with those who obey him.

⁶ The wicked frustrate the plans of the oppressed, but the LORD will protect his people.

⁷ Oh, that salvation would come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel! For when the LORD restores his people, Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel will rejoice.

15 ¹ “A psalm of David.” Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill?

² Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts.

³ Those who refuse to slander others or harm their neighbors or speak evil of their friends.

⁴ Those who despise persistent sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the LORD and keep their promises even when it hurts.

⁵ Those who do not charge interest on the money they lend, and who refuse to accept bribes to testify against the innocent. Such people will stand firm forever.

16 ¹ “A psalm of David.” Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge.

² I said to the LORD, “You are my Master! All the good things I have are from you.”

³ The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!

⁴ Those who chase after other gods will be filled with sorrow. I will not take part in their sacrifices or even speak the names of their gods.

⁵ LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine.

⁶ The land you have given me is a pleasant land. What a wonderful inheritance!

⁷ I will bless the LORD who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me.

⁸ I know the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

⁹ No wonder my heart is filled with joy, and my mouth shouts his praises! My body rests in safety.

¹⁰ For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your godly one to rot in the grave.

¹¹ You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

17 ¹ “A prayer of David.” O LORD, hear my plea for justice. Listen

to my cry for help. Pay attention to my prayer, for it comes from an honest heart.

² Declare me innocent, for you know those who do right.

³ You have tested my thoughts and examined my heart in the night. You have scrutinized me and found nothing amiss, for I am determined not to sin in what I say.

⁴ I have followed your commands, which have kept me from going along with cruel and evil people.

⁵ My steps have stayed on your path; I have not wavered from following you.

⁶ I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray.

⁷ Show me your unfailing love in wonderful ways. You save with your strength those who seek refuge from their enemies.

⁸ Guard me as the apple of your eye.
Hide me in the shadow of your wings.

⁹ Protect me from wicked people who attack me, from murderous enemies who surround me.

¹⁰ They are without pity. Listen to their boasting.

¹¹ They track me down, surround me, and throw me to the ground.

¹² They are like hungry lions, eager to tear me apart—like young lions in hiding, waiting for their chance.

¹³ Arise, O LORD! Stand against them and bring them to their knees! Rescue me from the wicked with your sword!

¹⁴ Save me by your mighty hand, O LORD, from those whose only concern is earthly gain. May they have their punishment in full. May their children inherit more of the same, and may the judgment continue to their children's children.

¹⁵ But because I have done what is right, I will see you. When I awake, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see you face to face.

18 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, the servant of the LORD. He sang this song to the LORD on the day the LORD rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul.” I love you, LORD; you are my strength.

² The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the strength of my salvation, and my stronghold.

³ I will call on the LORD, who is worthy of praise, for he saves me from my enemies.

⁴ The ropes of death surrounded me; the floods of destruction swept over me.

⁵ The grave wrapped its ropes around me; death itself stared me in the face.

⁶ But in my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry reached his ears.

⁷ Then the earth quaked and trembled; the foundations of the mountains shook; they quaked because of his anger.

⁸ Smoke poured from his nostrils; fierce flames leaped from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him.

⁹ He opened the heavens and came down; dark storm clouds were beneath his feet.

¹⁰ Mounted on a mighty angel, he flew, soaring on the wings of the wind.

¹¹ He shrouded himself in darkness, veiling his approach with dense rain clouds.

¹² The brilliance of his presence broke through the clouds, raining down hail and burning coals.

¹³ The LORD thundered from heaven;
the Most High gave a mighty shout.

¹⁴ He shot his arrows and scattered his
enemies; his lightning flashed, and they
were greatly confused.

¹⁵ Then at your command, O LORD, at
the blast of your breath, the bottom
of the sea could be seen, and the
foundations of the earth were laid bare.

¹⁶ He reached down from heaven and
rescued me; he drew me out of deep
waters.

¹⁷ He delivered me from my powerful
enemies, from those who hated me and
were too strong for me.

¹⁸ They attacked me at a moment when
I was weakest, but the LORD upheld me.

¹⁹ He led me to a place of safety; he
rescued me because he delights in me.

²⁰ The LORD rewarded me for doing
right; he compensated me because of
my innocence.

²¹ For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not turned from my God to follow evil.

²² For all his laws are constantly before me; I have never abandoned his principles.

²³ I am blameless before God; I have kept myself from sin.

²⁴ The LORD rewarded me for doing right, because of the innocence of my hands in his sight.

²⁵ To the faithful you show yourself faithful; to those with integrity you show integrity.

²⁶ To the pure you show yourself pure, but to the wicked you show yourself hostile.

²⁷ You rescue those who are humble, but you humiliate the proud.

²⁸ LORD, you have brought light to my life; my God, you light up my darkness.

²⁹ In your strength I can crush an army;
with my God I can scale any wall.

³⁰ 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.

³¹ For who is God except the LORD?
Who but our God is a solid rock?

³² God arms me with strength; he has
made my way safe.

³³ He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
leading me safely along the mountain
heights.

³⁴ He prepares me for battle; he
strengthens me to draw a bow of bronze.

³⁵ You have given me the shield of your
salvation. Your right hand supports me;
your gentleness has made me great.

³⁶ You have made a wide path for my
feet to keep them from slipping.

³⁷ I chased my enemies and caught them; I did not stop until they were conquered.

³⁸ I struck them down so they could not get up; they fell beneath my feet.

³⁹ You have armed me with strength for the battle; you have subdued my enemies under my feet.

⁴⁰ You made them turn and run; I have destroyed all who hated me.

⁴¹ They called for help, but no one came to rescue them. They cried to the LORD, but he refused to answer them.

⁴² I ground them as fine as dust carried by the wind. I swept them into the gutter like dirt.

⁴³ You gave me victory over my accusers. You appointed me as the ruler over nations; people I don't even know now serve me.

⁴⁴ As soon as they hear of me, they submit; foreigners cringe before me.

⁴⁵ They all lose their courage and come trembling from their strongholds.

⁴⁶ The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock! May the God of my salvation be exalted!

⁴⁷ He is the God who pays back those who harm me; he subdues the nations under me

⁴⁸ and rescues me from my enemies. You hold me safe beyond the reach of my enemies; you save me from violent opponents.

⁴⁹ For this, O LORD, I will praise you among the nations; I will sing joyfully to your name.

⁵⁰ You give great victories to your king; you show unfailing love to your anointed, to David and all his descendants forever.

19¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship.

² Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.

³ They speak without a sound or a
word; their voice is silent in the skies;

⁴ yet their message has gone out to
all the earth, and their words to all the
world. The sun lives in the heavens
where God placed it.

⁵ It bursts forth like a radiant
bridegroom after his wedding. It rejoices
like a great athlete eager to run the race.

⁶ The sun rises at one end of the
heavens and follows its course to the
other end. Nothing can hide from its
heat.

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul. The decrees of the
LORD are trustworthy, making wise the
simple.

⁸ The commandments of the LORD
are right, bringing joy to the heart. The

commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight to life.

⁹ Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is fair.

¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.

¹¹ They are a warning to those who hear them; there is great reward for those who obey them.

¹² How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults.

¹³ Keep me from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin.

¹⁴ May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

20¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” In times of trouble, may the LORD respond to your cry. May the God of Israel keep you safe from all harm.

² May he send you help from his sanctuary and strengthen you from Jerusalem.

³ May he remember all your gifts and look favorably on your burnt offerings.
Interlude

⁴ May he grant your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans.

⁵ May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory, flying banners to honor our God. May the LORD answer all your prayers.

⁶ Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed king. He will answer him from his holy heaven and rescue him by his great power.

⁷ Some nations boast of their armies and weapons, but we boast in the LORD our God.

⁸ Those nations will fall down and collapse, but we will rise up and stand firm.

⁹ Give victory to our king, O LORD! Respond to our cry for help.

21 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” How the king rejoices in your strength, O LORD! He shouts with joy because of your victory.

² For you have given him his heart’s desire; you have held back nothing that he requested. Interlude

³ You welcomed him back with success and prosperity. You placed a crown of finest gold on his head.

⁴ He asked you to preserve his life, and you have granted his request. The days of his life stretch on forever.

⁵ Your victory brings him great honor, and you have clothed him with splendor and majesty.

⁶ You have endowed him with eternal blessings. You have given him the joy of being in your presence.

⁷ For the king trusts in the LORD. The unfailing love of the Most High will keep him from stumbling.

⁸ You will capture all your enemies. Your strong right hand will seize all those who hate you.

⁹ You will destroy them as in a flaming furnace when you appear. The LORD will consume them in his anger; fire will devour them.

¹⁰ You will wipe their children from the face of the earth; they will never have descendants.

¹¹ Although they plot against you, their evil schemes will never succeed.

¹² For they will turn and run when they see your arrows aimed at them.

¹³ We praise you, LORD, for all your glorious power. With music and singing we celebrate your mighty acts.

22 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune “Doe of the Dawn.”” My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me? Why do you remain so distant? Why do you ignore my cries for help?

² Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer. Every night you hear my voice, but I find no relief.

³ Yet you are holy. The praises of Israel surround your throne.

⁴ Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them.

⁵ You heard their cries for help and saved them. They put their trust in you and were never disappointed.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man. I am scorned and despised by all!

⁷ Everyone who sees me mocks me. They sneer and shake their heads, saying,

⁸ "Is this the one who relies on the LORD? Then let the LORD save him! If the LORD loves him so much, let the LORD rescue him!"

⁹ Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb and led me to trust you when I was a nursing infant.

¹⁰ I was thrust upon you at my birth. You have been my God from the moment I was born.

¹¹ Do not stay so far from me, for trouble is near, and no one else can help me.

¹² My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls; fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!

¹³ Like roaring lions attacking their prey, they come at me with open mouths.

¹⁴ My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, melting within me.

¹⁵ My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.

¹⁶ My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet.

¹⁷ I can count every bone in my body. My enemies stare at me and gloat.

¹⁸ They divide my clothes among themselves and throw dice for my garments.

¹⁹ O LORD, do not stay away! You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

²⁰ Rescue me from a violent death; spare my precious life from these dogs.

²¹ Snatch me from the lions' jaws, and from the horns of these wild oxen.

²² Then I will declare the wonder of your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among all your people.

²³ Praise the LORD, all you who fear him! Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob! Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

²⁴ For he has not ignored the suffering of the needy. He has not turned and walked away. He has listened to their cries for help.

²⁵ I will praise you among all the people; I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you.

²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the LORD will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

²⁷ The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him. People from every nation will bow down before him.

²⁸ For the LORD is king! He rules all the nations.

²⁹ Let the rich of the earth feast and worship. Let all mortals—those born to die—bow down in his presence.

³⁰ Future generations will also serve him. Our children will hear about the wonders of the Lord.

³¹ His righteous acts will be told to those yet unborn. They will hear about everything he has done.

23 ¹ “A psalm of David.” The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need.

² He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.

³ He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

⁴ Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for

you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You welcome me as a guest, anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

⁶ Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

24 ¹ “A psalm of David.” The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.

² For he laid the earth’s foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths.

³ Who may climb the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴ Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies.

⁵ They will receive the LORD's blessing and have right standing with God their savior.

⁶ They alone may enter God's presence and worship the God of Israel. Interlude

⁷ Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter.

⁸ Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, invincible in battle.

⁹ Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter.

¹⁰ Who is the King of glory? The LORD Almighty—he is the King of glory.

Interlude

25 ¹ "A psalm of David." To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

² I trust in you, my God! Do not let me be disgraced, or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat.

³ No one who trusts in you will ever be disgraced, but disgrace comes to those who try to deceive others.

⁴ Show me the path where I should walk, O LORD; point out the right road for me to follow.

⁵ Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you.

⁶ Remember, O LORD, your unfailing love and compassion, which you have shown from long ages past.

⁷ Forgive the rebellious sins of my youth; look instead through the eyes of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O LORD.

⁸ The LORD is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray.

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right, teaching them his way.

¹⁰ The LORD leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all those who keep his covenant and obey his decrees.

¹¹ For the honor of your name, O LORD, forgive my many, many sins.

¹² Who are those who fear the LORD? He will show them the path they should choose.

¹³ They will live in prosperity, and their children will inherit the Promised Land.

¹⁴ Friendship with the LORD is reserved for those who fear him. With them he shares the secrets of his covenant.

¹⁵ My eyes are always looking to the LORD for help, for he alone can rescue me from the traps of my enemies.

¹⁶ Turn to me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and in deep distress.

¹⁷ My problems go from bad to worse. Oh, save me from them all!

¹⁸ Feel my pain and see my trouble. Forgive all my sins.

¹⁹ See how many enemies I have, and how viciously they hate me!

²⁰ Protect me! Rescue my life from them! Do not let me be disgraced, for I trust in you.

²¹ May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you.

²² O God, ransom Israel from all its troubles.

26 ¹ “A psalm of David.” Declare me innocent, O LORD, for I have acted with integrity; I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

² Put me on trial, LORD, and cross-examine me. Test my motives and affections.

³ For I am constantly aware of your unfailing love, and I have lived according to your truth.

⁴ I do not spend time with liars or go along with hypocrites.

⁵ I hate the gatherings of those who do evil, and I refuse to join in with the wicked.

⁶ I wash my hands to declare my innocence. I come to your altar, O LORD,
⁷ singing a song of thanksgiving and telling of all your miracles.

⁸ I love your sanctuary, LORD, the place where your glory shines.

⁹ Don't let me suffer the fate of sinners. Don't condemn me along with murderers.

¹⁰ Their hands are dirty with wicked schemes, and they constantly take bribes.

¹¹ But I am not like that; I do what is right. So in your mercy, save me.

¹² I have taken a stand, and I will publicly praise the LORD.

27 ¹ "A psalm of David." The LORD is my light and my salvation—so why should I be afraid? The LORD

protects me from danger—so why should I tremble?

² When evil people come to destroy me, when my enemies and foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.

³ Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will know no fear. Even if they attack me, I remain confident.

⁴ The one thing I ask of the LORD—the thing I seek most—is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, delighting in the LORD's perfections and meditating in his Temple.

⁵ For he will conceal me there when troubles come; he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock.

⁶ Then I will hold my head high, above my enemies who surround me. At his Tabernacle I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy, singing and praising the LORD with music.

⁷ Listen to my pleading, O LORD. Be merciful and answer me!

⁸ My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me." And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming."

⁹ Do not hide yourself from me. Do not reject your servant in anger. You have always been my helper. Don't leave me now; don't abandon me, O God of my salvation!

¹⁰ Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close.

¹¹ Teach me how to live, O LORD. Lead me along the path of honesty, for my enemies are waiting for me to fall.

¹² Do not let me fall into their hands. For they accuse me of things I've never done and breathe out violence against me.

¹³ Yet I am confident that I will see the LORD's goodness while I am here in the land of the living.

¹⁴ Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.

28 ¹ "A psalm of David." O LORD, you are my rock of safety. Please help me; don't refuse to answer me. For if you are silent, I might as well give up and die.

² Listen to my prayer for mercy as I cry out to you for help, as I lift my hands toward your holy sanctuary.

³ Don't drag me away with the wicked—
—with those who do evil—those who speak friendly words to their neighbors while planning evil in their hearts.

⁴ Give them the punishment they so richly deserve! Measure it out in proportion to their wickedness. Pay them back for all their evil deeds! Give

them a taste of what they have done to others.

⁵ They care nothing for what the LORD has done or for what his hands have made. So he will tear them down like old buildings, and they will never be rebuilt!

⁶ Praise the LORD! For he has heard my cry for mercy.

⁷ The LORD is my strength, my shield from every danger. I trust in him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

⁸ The LORD protects his people and gives victory to his anointed king.

⁹ Save your people! Bless Israel, your special possession! Lead them like a shepherd, and carry them forever in your arms.

29 ¹ “A psalm of David.” Give honor to the LORD, you angels; give

honor to the LORD for his glory and strength.

² Give honor to the LORD for the glory of his name. Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

³ The voice of the LORD echoes above the sea. The God of glory thunders. The LORD thunders over the mighty sea.

⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

⁵ The voice of the LORD splits the mighty cedars; the LORD shatters the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶ He makes Lebanon's mountains skip like a calf and Mount Hermon to leap like a young bull.

⁷ The voice of the LORD strikes with lightning bolts.

⁸ The voice of the LORD makes the desert quake; the LORD shakes the desert of Kadesh.

⁹ The voice of the LORD twists mighty oaks and strips the forests bare. In his Temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"

¹⁰ The LORD rules over the floodwaters. The LORD reigns as king forever.

¹¹ The LORD gives his people strength. The LORD blesses them with peace.

30 ¹ "A psalm of David, sung at the dedication of the Temple." I will praise you, LORD, for you have rescued me. You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.

² O LORD my God, I cried out to you for help, and you restored my health.

³ You brought me up from the grave, O LORD. You kept me from falling into the pit of death.

⁴ Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones! Praise his holy name.

⁵ His anger lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may

go on all night, but joy comes with the morning.

⁶ When I was prosperous I said,
"Nothing can stop me now!"

⁷ Your favor, O LORD, made me as secure as a mountain. Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered.

⁸ I cried out to you, O LORD. I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,

⁹ "What will you gain if I die, if I sink down into the grave? Can my dust praise you from the grave? Can it tell the world of your faithfulness?"

¹⁰ Hear me, LORD, and have mercy on me. Help me, O LORD."

¹¹ You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,

¹² that I might sing praises to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever!

31 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” O LORD, I have come to you for protection; don’t let me be put to shame. Rescue me, for you always do what is right.

² Bend down and listen to me; rescue me quickly. Be for me a great rock of safety, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.

³ You are my rock and my fortress. For the honor of your name, lead me out of this peril.

⁴ Pull me from the trap my enemies set for me, for I find protection in you alone.

⁵ I entrust my spirit into your hand. Rescue me, LORD, for you are a faithful God.

⁶ I hate those who worship worthless idols. I trust in the LORD.

⁷ I am overcome with joy because of your unfailing love, for you have seen my

troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul.

⁸ You have not handed me over to my enemy but have set me in a safe place.

⁹ Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am in distress. My sight is blurred because of my tears. My body and soul are withering away.

¹⁰ I am dying from grief; my years are shortened by sadness. Misery has drained my strength; I am wasting away from within.

¹¹ I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbors—even my friends are afraid to come near me. When they see me on the street, they turn the other way.

¹² I have been ignored as if I were dead, as if I were a broken pot.

¹³ I have heard the many rumors about me, and I am surrounded by terror. My

enemies conspire against me, plotting to take my life.

¹⁴ But I am trusting you, O LORD, saying, "You are my God!"

¹⁵ My future is in your hands. Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly.

¹⁶ Let your favor shine on your servant. In your unfailing love, save me.

¹⁷ Don't let me be disgraced, O LORD, for I call out to you for help. Let the wicked be disgraced; let them lie silent in the grave.

¹⁸ May their lying lips be silenced—those proud and arrogant lips that accuse the godly.

¹⁹ Your goodness is so great! You have stored up great blessings for those who honor you. You have done so much for those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world.

²⁰ You hide them in the shelter of your presence, safe from those who conspire against them. You shelter them in your presence, far from accusing tongues.

²¹ Praise the LORD, for he has shown me his unfailing love. He kept me safe when my city was under attack.

²² In sudden fear I had cried out, "I have been cut off from the LORD!" But you heard my cry for mercy and answered my call for help.

²³ Love the LORD, all you faithful ones! For the LORD protects those who are loyal to him, but he harshly punishes all who are arrogant.

²⁴ So be strong and take courage, all you who put your hope in the LORD!

32 ¹ "A psalm of David." Oh, what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!

² Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!

³ When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long.

⁴ Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Interlude

⁵ Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. Interlude

⁶ Therefore, let all the godly confess their rebellion to you while there is time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment.

⁷ For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory. Interlude

⁸ The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.

⁹ Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control."

¹⁰ Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD.

¹¹ So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!

33 ¹ Let the godly sing with joy to the LORD, for it is fitting to praise him.

² Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre; make music for him on the ten–stringed harp.

³ Sing new songs of praise to him; play skillfully on the harp and sing with joy.

⁴ For the word of the LORD holds true, and everything he does is worthy of our trust.

⁵ He loves whatever is just and good, and his unfailing love fills the earth.

⁶ The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.

⁷ He gave the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs.

⁸ Let everyone in the world fear the LORD, and let everyone stand in awe of him.

⁹ For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command.

¹⁰ The LORD shatters the plans of the nations and thwarts all their schemes.

¹¹ But the LORD's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.

¹² What joy for the nation whose God is the LORD, whose people he has chosen for his own.

¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven and sees the whole human race.

¹⁴ From his throne he observes all who live on the earth.

¹⁵ He made their hearts, so he understands everything they do.

¹⁶ The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior.

¹⁷ Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you.

¹⁸ But the LORD watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love.

¹⁹ He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine.

²⁰ We depend on the LORD alone to save us. Only he can help us, protecting us like a shield.

²¹ In him our hearts rejoice, for we are trusting in his holy name.

²² Let your unfailing love surround us, LORD, for our hope is in you alone.

34 ¹ “A psalm of David, regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech, who sent him away.” I will praise the LORD at all times. I will constantly speak his praises.

² I will boast only in the LORD; let all who are discouraged take heart.

³ Come, let us tell of the LORD’s greatness; let us exalt his name together.

⁴ I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me, freeing me from all my fears.

⁵ Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.

⁶ I cried out to the LORD in my suffering, and he heard me. He set me free from all my fears.

⁷ For the angel of the LORD guards all who fear him, and he rescues them.

⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in him!

⁹ Let the LORD's people show him reverence, for those who honor him will have all they need.

¹⁰ Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will never lack any good thing.

¹¹ Come, my children, and listen to me, and I will teach you to fear the LORD.

¹² Do any of you want to live a life that is long and good?

¹³ Then watch your tongue! Keep your lips from telling lies!

¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good. Work hard at living in peace with others.

¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right; his ears are open to their cries for help.

¹⁶ But the LORD turns his face against those who do evil; he will erase their memory from the earth.

¹⁷ The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles.

¹⁸ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit.

¹⁹ The righteous face many troubles, but the LORD rescues them from each and every one.

²⁰ For the LORD protects them from harm—not one of their bones will be broken!

²¹ Calamity will surely overtake the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be punished.

²² But the LORD will redeem those who serve him. Everyone who trusts in him will be freely pardoned.

35 ¹ “A psalm of David.” O LORD, oppose those who oppose me. Declare war on those who are attacking me.

² Put on your armor, and take up your shield. Prepare for battle, and come to my aid.

³ Lift up your spear and javelin and block the way of my enemies. Let me hear you say, “I am your salvation!”

⁴ Humiliate and disgrace those trying to kill me; turn them back in confusion.

⁵ Blow them away like chaff in the wind—a wind sent by the angel of the LORD.

⁶ Make their path dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

⁷ Although I did them no wrong, they laid a trap for me. Although I did them no wrong, they dug a pit for me.

⁸ So let sudden ruin overtake them! Let them be caught in the snare they set for me! Let them fall to destruction in the pit they dug for me.

⁹ Then I will rejoice in the LORD. I will be glad because he rescues me.

¹⁰ I will praise him from the bottom of my heart: "LORD, who can compare with you? Who else rescues the weak and helpless from the strong? Who else protects the poor and needy from those who want to rob them?"

¹¹ Malicious witnesses testify against me. They accuse me of things I don't even know about.

¹² They repay me with evil for the good I do. I am sick with despair.

¹³ Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them. I even fasted and prayed for them, but my prayers returned unanswered.

¹⁴ I was sad, as though they were my friends or family, as if I were grieving for my own mother.

¹⁵ But they are glad now that I am in trouble; they gleefully join together against me. I am attacked by people I don't even know; they hurl slander at me continually.

¹⁶ They mock me with the worst kind of profanity, and they snarl at me.

¹⁷ How long, O Lord, will you look on and do nothing? Rescue me from their fierce attacks. Protect my life from these lions!

¹⁸ Then I will thank you in front of the entire congregation. I will praise you before all the people.

¹⁹ Don't let my treacherous enemies rejoice over my defeat. Don't let those

who hate me without cause gloat over my sorrow.

²⁰ They don't talk of peace; they plot against innocent people who are minding their own business.

²¹ They shout that they have seen me doing wrong. "Aha," they say. "Aha! With our own eyes we saw him do it!"

²² O LORD, you know all about this. Do not stay silent. Don't abandon me now, O Lord.

²³ Wake up! Rise to my defense! Take up my case, my God and my Lord.

²⁴ Declare me "not guilty," O LORD my God, for you give justice. Don't let my enemies laugh about me in my troubles.

²⁵ Don't let them say, "Look! We have what we wanted! Now we will eat him alive!"

²⁶ May those who rejoice at my troubles be humiliated and disgraced. May those

who triumph over me be covered with shame and dishonor.

²⁷ But give great joy to those who have stood with me in my defense. Let them continually say, "Great is the LORD, who enjoys helping his servant."

²⁸ Then I will tell everyone of your justice and goodness, and I will praise you all day long.

36 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of David, the servant of the LORD." Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God to restrain them.

² In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are.

³ Everything they say is crooked and deceitful. They refuse to act wisely or do what is good.

⁴ They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots. Their course of action is

never good. They make no attempt to turn from evil.

⁵ Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

⁶ Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths. You care for people and animals alike, O LORD.

⁷ How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your rivers of delight.

⁹ For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see.

¹⁰ Pour out your unfailing love on those who love you; give justice to those with honest hearts.

¹¹ Don't let the proud trample me; don't let the wicked push me around.

¹² Look! They have fallen! They have been thrown down, never to rise again.

37 ¹ “A psalm of David.” Don’t worry about the wicked. Don’t envy those who do wrong.

² For like grass, they soon fade away. Like springtime flowers, they soon wither.

³ Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

⁴ Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.

⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you.

⁶ He will make your innocence as clear as the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

⁷ Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don’t worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

⁸ Stop your anger! Turn from your rage!
Do not envy others—it only leads to
harm.

⁹ For the wicked will be destroyed, but
those who trust in the LORD will possess
the land.

¹⁰ In a little while, the wicked will
disappear. Though you look for them,
they will be gone.

¹¹ Those who are gentle and lowly
will possess the land; they will live in
prosperous security.

¹² The wicked plot against the godly;
they snarl at them in defiance.

¹³ But the Lord just laughs, for he sees
their day of judgment coming.

¹⁴ The wicked draw their swords and
string their bows to kill the poor and the
oppressed, to slaughter those who do
right.

¹⁵ But they will be stabbed through the heart with their own swords, and their bows will be broken.

¹⁶ It is better to be godly and have little than to be evil and possess much.

¹⁷ For the strength of the wicked will be shattered, but the LORD takes care of the godly.

¹⁸ Day by day the LORD takes care of the innocent, and they will receive a reward that lasts forever.

¹⁹ They will survive through hard times; even in famine they will have more than enough.

²⁰ But the wicked will perish. The LORD's enemies are like flowers in a field—they will disappear like smoke.

²¹ The wicked borrow and never repay, but the godly are generous givers.

²² Those blessed by the LORD will inherit the land, but those cursed by him will die.

²³ The steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in every detail of their lives.

²⁴ Though they stumble, they will not fall, for the LORD holds them by the hand.

²⁵ Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly forsaken, nor seen their children begging for bread.

²⁶ The godly always give generous loans to others, and their children are a blessing.

²⁷ Turn from evil and do good, and you will live in the land forever.

²⁸ For the LORD loves justice, and he will never abandon the godly. He will keep them safe forever, but the children of the wicked will perish.

²⁹ The godly will inherit the land and will live there forever.

³⁰ The godly offer good counsel; they know what is right from wrong.

³¹ They fill their hearts with God's law, so they will never slip from his path.

³² Those who are evil spy on the godly, waiting for an excuse to kill them.

³³ But the LORD will not let the wicked succeed or let the godly be condemned when they are brought before the judge.

³⁴ Don't be impatient for the LORD to act! Travel steadily along his path. He will honor you, giving you the land. You will see the wicked destroyed.

³⁵ I myself have seen it happen—proud and evil people thriving like mighty trees.

³⁶ But when I looked again, they were gone! Though I searched for them, I could not find them!

³⁷ Look at those who are honest and good, for a wonderful future lies before those who love peace.

³⁸ But the wicked will be destroyed; they have no future.

³⁹ The LORD saves the godly; he is their fortress in times of trouble.

⁴⁰ The LORD helps them, rescuing them from the wicked. He saves them, and they find shelter in him.

38 ¹ “A psalm of David, to bring us to the LORD’s remembrance.” O LORD, don’t rebuke me in your anger! Don’t discipline me in your rage!

² Your arrows have struck deep, and your blows are crushing me.

³ Because of your anger, my whole body is sick; my health is broken because of my sins.

⁴ My guilt overwhelms me—it is a burden too heavy to bear.

⁵ My wounds fester and stink because of my foolish sins.

⁶ I am bent over and racked with pain. My days are filled with grief.

⁷ A raging fever burns within me, and my health is broken.

⁸ I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart.

⁹ You know what I long for, Lord; you hear my every sigh.

¹⁰ My heart beats wildly, my strength fails, and I am going blind.

¹¹ My loved ones and friends stay away, fearing my disease. Even my own family stands at a distance.

¹² Meanwhile, my enemies lay traps for me; they make plans to ruin me. They think up treacherous deeds all day long.

¹³ But I am deaf to all their threats. I am silent before them as one who cannot speak.

¹⁴ I choose to hear nothing, and I make no reply.

¹⁵ For I am waiting for you, O LORD. You must answer for me, O Lord my God.

¹⁶ I prayed, "Don't let my enemies gloat over me or rejoice at my downfall."

¹⁷ I am on the verge of collapse, facing constant pain.

¹⁸ But I confess my sins; I am deeply sorry for what I have done.

¹⁹ My enemies are many; they hate me though I have done nothing against them.

²⁰ They repay me evil for good and oppose me because I stand for the right.

²¹ Do not abandon me, LORD. Do not stand at a distance, my God.

²² Come quickly to help me, O Lord my savior.

39 ¹ "For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of David." I said to myself, "I will watch what I do and not sin in what I say. I will curb my tongue when the ungodly are around me."

² But as I stood there in silence—not even speaking of good things—the

turmoil within me grew to the bursting point.

³ My thoughts grew hot within me and began to burn, igniting a fire of words:

⁴ "LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life is fleeing away.

⁵ My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to you; human existence is but a breath." Interlude

⁶ We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth for someone else to spend.

⁷ And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.

⁸ Rescue me from my rebellion, for even fools mock me when I rebel.

⁹ I am silent before you; I won't say a word. For my punishment is from you.

¹⁰ Please, don't punish me anymore! I am exhausted by the blows from your hand.

¹¹ When you discipline people for their sins, their lives can be crushed like the life of a moth. Human existence is as frail as breath. Interlude

¹² Hear my prayer, O LORD! Listen to my cries for help! Don't ignore my tears. For I am your guest—a traveler passing through, as my ancestors were before me.

¹³ Spare me so I can smile again before I am gone and exist no more.

40 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry.

² He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.

³ He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be astounded. They will put their trust in the LORD.

⁴ Oh, the joys of those who trust the LORD, who have no confidence in the proud, or in those who worship idols.

⁵ O LORD my God, you have done many miracles for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them.

⁶ You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings. Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand—you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings.

⁷ Then I said, "Look, I have come. And this has been written about me in your scroll:

⁸ I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your law is written on my heart."

⁹ I have told all your people about your justice. I have not been afraid to speak out, as you, O LORD, well know.

¹⁰ I have not kept this good news hidden in my heart; I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power. I have told everyone in the great assembly of your unfailing love and faithfulness.

¹¹ LORD, don't hold back your tender mercies from me. My only hope is in your unfailing love and faithfulness.

¹² For troubles surround me—too many to count! They pile up so high I can't see my way out. They are more numerous than the hairs on my head. I have lost all my courage.

¹³ Please, LORD, rescue me! Come quickly, LORD, and help me.

¹⁴ May those who try to destroy me be humiliated and put to shame. May those who take delight in my trouble be turned back in disgrace.

¹⁵ Let them be horrified by their shame, for they said, "Aha! We've got him now!"

¹⁶ But may all who search for you be filled with joy and gladness. May those who love your salvation repeatedly shout, "The LORD is great!"

¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord is thinking about me right now. You are my helper and my savior. Do not delay, O my God.

41 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of David." Oh, the joys of those who are kind to the poor. The LORD rescues them in times of trouble.

² The LORD protects them and keeps them alive. He gives them prosperity and rescues them from their enemies.

³ The LORD nurses them when they are sick and eases their pain and discomfort.

⁴ "O LORD," I prayed, "have mercy on me. Heal me, for I have sinned against you."

⁵ But my enemies say nothing but evil about me. "How soon will he die and be forgotten?" they ask.

⁶ They visit me as if they are my friends, but all the while they gather gossip, and when they leave, they spread it everywhere.

⁷ All who hate me whisper about me, imagining the worst for me.

⁸ "Whatever he has, it is fatal," they say. "He will never get out of that bed!"

⁹ Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely, the one who shared my food, has turned against me.

¹⁰ LORD, have mercy on me. Make me well again, so I can pay them back!

¹¹ I know that you are pleased with me, for you have not let my enemy triumph over me.

¹² You have preserved my life because I am innocent; you have brought me into your presence forever.

¹³ Bless the LORD, the God of Israel, who lives forever from eternal ages past. Amen and amen!

42 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.” As the deer pants for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.

² I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and stand before him?

³ Day and night, I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, “Where is this God of yours?”

⁴ My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks—it was the sound of a great celebration!

⁵ Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and

⁶ my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember your kindness—from Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar.

⁷ I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me.

⁸ Through each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life.

⁹ "O God my rock," I cry, "Why have you forsaken me? Why must I wander in darkness, oppressed by my enemies?"

¹⁰ Their taunts pierce me like a fatal wound. They scoff, "Where is this God of yours?"

¹¹ Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!

43 ¹ O God, take up my cause!
Defend me against these ungodly

people. Rescue me from these unjust liars.

² For you are God, my only safe haven. Why have you tossed me aside? Why must I wander around in darkness, oppressed by my enemies?

³ Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me. Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live.

⁴ There I will go to the altar of God, to God—the source of all my joy. I will praise you with my harp, O God, my God!

⁵ Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!

44 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.”
O God, we have heard it with our own ears—our ancestors have told us of all you did in other days, in days long ago:

² You drove out the pagan nations and gave all the land to our ancestors; you crushed their enemies, setting our ancestors free.

³ They did not conquer the land with their swords; it was not their own strength that gave them victory. It was by your mighty power that they succeeded; it was because you favored them and smiled on them.

⁴ You are my King and my God. You command victories for your people.

⁵ Only by your power can we push back our enemies; only in your name can we trample our foes.

⁶ I do not trust my bow; I do not count on my sword to save me.

⁷ It is you who gives us victory over our enemies; it is you who humbles those who hate us.

⁸ O God, we give glory to you all day long and constantly praise your name.

Interlude

⁹ But now you have tossed us aside in dishonor. You no longer lead our armies to battle.

¹⁰ You make us retreat from our enemies and allow them to plunder our land.

¹¹ You have treated us like sheep waiting to be slaughtered; you have scattered us among the nations.

¹² You sold us—your precious people—for a pittance. You valued us at nothing at all.

¹³ You have caused all our neighbors to mock us. We are an object of scorn and derision to the nations around us.

¹⁴ You have made us the butt of their jokes; we are scorned by the whole world.

¹⁵ We can't escape the constant humiliation; shame is written across our faces.

¹⁶ All we hear are the taunts of our mockers. All we see are our vengeful enemies.

¹⁷ All this has happened despite our loyalty to you. We have not violated your covenant.

¹⁸ Our hearts have not deserted you. We have not strayed from your path.

¹⁹ Yet you have crushed us in the desert. You have covered us with darkness and death.

²⁰ If we had turned away from worshiping our God or spread our hands in prayer to foreign gods,

²¹ God would surely have known it, for he knows the secrets of every heart.

²² For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.

²³ Wake up, O Lord! Why do you sleep?
Get up! Do not reject us forever.

²⁴ Why do you look the other way?
Why do you ignore our suffering and
oppression?

²⁵ We collapse in the dust, lying face
down in the dirt.

²⁶ Rise up! Come and help us! Save us
because of your unfailing love.

45 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm
of the descendants of Korah, to
be sung to the tune “Lilies.” A love song.”
My heart overflows with a beautiful
thought! I will recite a lovely poem to
the king, for my tongue is like the pen of
a skillful poet.

² You are the most handsome of all.
Gracious words stream from your lips.
God himself has blessed you forever.

³ Put on your sword, O mighty warrior!
You are so glorious, so majestic!

⁴ In your majesty, ride out to victory, defending truth, humility, and justice. Go forth to perform awe–inspiring deeds!

⁵ Your arrows are sharp, piercing your enemies' hearts. The nations fall before you, lying down beneath your feet.

⁶ Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. Your royal power is expressed in justice.

⁷ You love what is right and hate what is wrong. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.

⁸ Your robes are perfumed with myrrh, aloes, and cassia. In palaces decorated with ivory, you are entertained by the music of harps.

⁹ Kings' daughters are among your concubines. At your right side stands the queen, wearing jewelry of finest gold from Ophir!

¹⁰ Listen to me, O royal daughter; take to heart what I say. Forget your people and your homeland far away.

¹¹ For your royal husband delights in your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.

¹² The princes of Tyre will shower you with gifts. People of great wealth will entreat your favor.

¹³ The bride, a princess, waits within her chamber, dressed in a gown woven with gold.

¹⁴ In her beautiful robes, she is led to the king, accompanied by her bridesmaids.

¹⁵ What a joyful, enthusiastic procession as they enter the king's palace!

¹⁶ Your sons will become kings like their father. You will make them rulers over many lands.

¹⁷ I will bring honor to your name in every generation. Therefore, the nations will praise you forever and ever.

46 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah, to be sung by soprano voices. A song.” God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

² So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.

³ Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!
Interlude

⁴ A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High.

⁵ God himself lives in that city; it cannot be destroyed. God will protect it at the break of day.

⁶ The nations are in an uproar, and kingdoms crumble! God thunders, and the earth melts!

⁷ The LORD Almighty is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude

⁸ Come, see the glorious works of the LORD: See how he brings destruction upon the world

⁹ and causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear in two; he burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰ "Be silent, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world."

¹¹ The LORD Almighty is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress. Interlude

47 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah."

Come, everyone, and clap your hands for joy! Shout to God with joyful praise!

² For the LORD Most High is awesome. He is the great King of all the earth.

³ He subdues the nations before us, putting our enemies beneath our feet.

⁴ He chose the Promised Land as our inheritance, the proud possession of Jacob's descendants, whom he loves.

Interlude

⁵ God has ascended with a mighty shout. The LORD has ascended with trumpets blaring.

⁶ Sing praise to God, sing praises; sing praise to our King, sing praises!

⁷ For God is the King over all the earth. Praise him with a psalm!

⁸ God reigns above the nations, sitting on his holy throne.

⁹ The rulers of the world have gathered together. They join us in praising the God of Abraham. For all the kings of the earth belong to God. He is highly honored everywhere.

48 ¹ "A psalm of the descendants of Korah. A song." How great is the

LORD, and how much we should praise him in the city of our God, which is on his holy mountain!

² It is magnificent in elevation—the whole earth rejoices to see it! Mount Zion, the holy mountain, is the city of the great King!

³ God himself is in Jerusalem's towers. He reveals himself as her defender.

⁴ The kings of the earth joined forces and advanced against the city.

⁵ But when they saw it, they were stunned; they were terrified and ran away.

⁶ They were gripped with terror, like a woman writhing in the pain of childbirth

⁷ or like the mighty ships of Tarshish being shattered by a powerful east wind.

⁸ We had heard of the city's glory, but now we have seen it ourselves—the city of the LORD Almighty. It is the city of

our God; he will make it safe forever.

Interlude

⁹ O God, we meditate on your unfailing love as we worship in your Temple.

¹⁰ As your name deserves, O God, you will be praised to the ends of the earth. Your strong right hand is filled with victory.

¹¹ Let the people on Mount Zion rejoice. Let the towns of Judah be glad, for your judgments are just.

¹² Go, inspect the city of Jerusalem. Walk around and count the many towers.

¹³ Take note of the fortified walls, and tour all the citadels, that you may describe them to future generations.

¹⁴ For that is what God is like. He is our God forever and ever, and he will be our guide until we die.

49 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.”

Listen to this, all you people! Pay attention, everyone in the world!

² High and low, rich and poor—listen!

³ For my words are wise, and my thoughts are filled with insight.

⁴ I listen carefully to many proverbs and solve riddles with inspiration from a harp.

⁵ There is no need to fear when times of trouble come, when enemies are surrounding me.

⁶ They trust in their wealth and boast of great riches.

⁷ Yet they cannot redeem themselves from death by paying a ransom to God.

⁸ Redemption does not come so easily, for no one can ever pay enough

⁹ to live forever and never see the grave.

¹⁰ Those who are wise must finally die, just like the foolish and senseless, leaving all their wealth behind.

¹¹ The grave is their eternal home, where they will stay forever. They may name their estates after themselves, but they leave their wealth to others.

¹² They will not last long despite their riches—they will die like the animals.

¹³ This is the fate of fools, though they will be remembered as being so wise.

Interlude

¹⁴ Like sheep, they are led to the grave, where death will be their shepherd. In the morning the godly will rule over them. Their bodies will rot in the grave, far from their grand estates.

¹⁵ But as for me, God will redeem my life. He will snatch me from the power of death. Interlude

¹⁶ So don't be dismayed when the wicked grow rich, and their homes become ever more splendid.

¹⁷ For when they die, they carry nothing with them. Their wealth will not follow them into the grave.

¹⁸ In this life they consider themselves fortunate, and the world loudly applauds their success.

¹⁹ But they will die like all others before them and never again see the light of day.

²⁰ People who boast of their wealth don't understand that they will die like the animals.

50 ¹ “A psalm of Asaph.” The mighty God, the LORD, has spoken; he has summoned all humanity from east to west!

² From Mount Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines in glorious radiance.

³ Our God approaches with the noise of thunder. Fire devours everything in his way, and a great storm rages around him.

⁴ Heaven and earth will be his witnesses as he judges his people:

⁵ "Bring my faithful people to me—those who made a covenant with me by giving sacrifices."

⁶ Then let the heavens proclaim his justice, for God himself will be the judge.
Interlude

⁷ "O my people, listen as I speak. Here are my charges against you, O Israel: I am God, your God!

⁸ I have no complaint about your sacrifices or the burnt offerings you constantly bring to my altar.

⁹ But I want no more bulls from your barns; I want no more goats from your pens.

¹⁰ For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.

¹¹ Every bird of the mountains and all the animals of the field belong to me.

¹² If I were hungry, I would not mention it to you, for all the world is mine and everything in it.

¹³ I don't need the bulls you sacrifice; I don't need the blood of goats.

¹⁴ What I want instead is your true thanks to God; I want you to fulfill your vows to the Most High.

¹⁵ Trust me in your times of trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory."

¹⁶ But God says to the wicked: "Recite my laws no longer, and don't pretend that you obey me.

¹⁷ For you refuse my discipline and treat my laws like trash.

¹⁸ When you see a thief, you help him, and you spend your time with adulterers.

¹⁹ Your mouths are filled with wickedness, and your tongues are full of lies.

²⁰ You sit around and slander a brother—your own mother’s son.

²¹ While you did all this, I remained silent, and you thought I didn’t care. But now I will rebuke you, listing all my charges against you.

²² Repent, all of you who ignore me, or I will tear you apart, and no one will help you.

²³ But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me. If you keep to my path, I will reveal to you the salvation of God."

51 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba." Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.

² Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

³ For I recognize my shameful deeds—they haunt me day and night.

⁴ Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.

⁵ For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

⁶ But you desire honesty from the heart, so you can teach me to be wise in my inmost being.

⁷ Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice.

⁹ Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

¹³ Then I will teach your ways to sinners, and they will return to you.

¹⁴ Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.

¹⁵ Unseal my lips, O Lord, that I may praise you.

¹⁶ You would not be pleased with sacrifices, or I would bring them. If I brought you a burnt offering, you would not accept it.

¹⁷ The sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God, you will not despise.

¹⁸ Look with favor on Zion and help her; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Then you will be pleased with worthy sacrifices and with our whole burnt offerings; and bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.

52 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Doeg the Edomite told Saul that Ahimelech had given refuge to David.” You call yourself a hero, do you? Why boast about this crime of yours, you who have disgraced God’s people?

² All day long you plot destruction. Your tongue cuts like a sharp razor; you’re an expert at telling lies.

³ You love evil more than good and lies more than truth. Interlude

⁴ You love to say things that harm others, you liar!

⁵ But God will strike you down once and for all. He will pull you from your home and drag you from the land of the living. Interlude

⁶ The righteous will see it and be amazed. They will laugh and say,

⁷ "Look what happens to mighty warriors who do not trust in God. They trust their wealth instead and grow more and more bold in their wickedness."

⁸ But I am like an olive tree, thriving in the house of God. I trust in God's unfailing love forever and ever.

⁹ I will praise you forever, O God, for what you have done. I will wait for your mercies in the presence of your people.

53 ¹ "For the choir director: A meditation of David." Only fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their actions are evil; no one does good!

² God looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if there is even one with real understanding, one who seeks for God.

³ But no, all have turned away from God; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not even one!

⁴ Will those who do evil never learn? They eat up my people like bread; they wouldn't think of praying to God.

⁵ But then terror will grip them, terror like they have never known before. God will scatter the bones of your enemies. You will put them to shame, for God has rejected them.

⁶ Oh, that salvation would come from Mount Zion to rescue Israel! For when God restores his people, Jacob will shout with joy, and Israel will rejoice.

54¹ “For the choir director: A meditation of David, regarding the time the Ziphites came and said to Saul, “We know where David is hiding.” To be accompanied by stringed instruments.” Come with great power,

O God, and rescue me! Defend me with your might.

² O God, listen to my prayer. Pay attention to my plea.

³ For strangers are attacking me; violent men are trying to kill me. They care nothing for God. Interlude

⁴ But God is my helper. The Lord is the one who keeps me alive!

⁵ May my enemies' plans for evil be turned against them. Do as you promised and put an end to them.

⁶ I will sacrifice a voluntary offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it is good.

⁷ For you will rescue me from my troubles and help me to triumph over my enemies.

55 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.” Listen to my

prayer, O God. Do not ignore my cry for help!

² Please listen and answer me, for I am overwhelmed by my troubles.

³ My enemies shout at me, making loud and wicked threats. They bring trouble on me, hunting me down in their anger.

⁴ My heart is in anguish. The terror of death overpowers me.

⁵ Fear and trembling overwhelm me. I can't stop shaking.

⁶ Oh, how I wish I had wings like a dove; then I would fly away and rest!

⁷ I would fly far away to the quiet of the wilderness. Interlude

⁸ How quickly I would escape—far away from this wild storm of hatred.

⁹ Destroy them, Lord, and confuse their speech, for I see violence and strife in the city.

¹⁰ Its walls are patrolled day and night against invaders, but the real danger is wickedness within the city.

¹¹ Murder and robbery are everywhere there; threats and cheating are rampant in the streets.

¹² It is not an enemy who taunts me—I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me—I could have hidden from them.

¹³ Instead, it is you—my equal, my companion and close friend.

¹⁴ What good fellowship we enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God.

¹⁵ Let death seize my enemies by surprise; let the grave swallow them alive, for evil makes its home within them.

¹⁶ But I will call on God, and the LORD will rescue me.

¹⁷ Morning, noon, and night I plead aloud in my distress, and the LORD hears my voice.

¹⁸ He rescues me and keeps me safe from the battle waged against me, even though many still oppose me.

¹⁹ God, who is king forever, will hear me and will humble them. Interlude For my enemies refuse to change their ways; they do not fear God.

²⁰ As for this friend of mine, he betrayed me; he broke his promises.

²¹ His words are as smooth as cream, but in his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers!

²² Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.

²³ But you, O God, will send the wicked down to the pit of destruction.

Murderers and liars will die young, but I am trusting you to save me.

56 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time the Philistines seized him in Gath. To be sung to the tune “Dove on Distant Oaks.””

O God, have mercy on me. The enemy troops press in on me. My foes attack me all day long.

² My slanderers hound me constantly, and many are boldly attacking me.

³ But when I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

⁴ O God, I praise your word. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?

⁵ They are always twisting what I say; they spend their days plotting ways to harm me.

⁶ They come together to spy on me—watching my every step, eager to kill me.

⁷ Don't let them get away with their wickedness; in your anger, O God, throw them to the ground.

⁸ You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.

⁹ On the very day I call to you for help, my enemies will retreat. This I know: God is on my side.

¹⁰ O God, I praise your word. Yes, LORD, I praise your word.

¹¹ I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?

¹² I will fulfill my vows to you, O God, and offer a sacrifice of thanks for your help.

¹³ For you have rescued me from death; you have kept my feet from slipping. So now I can walk in your presence, O God, in your life-giving light.

57¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time he fled from Saul and went into the cave. To be sung to the tune “Do Not Destroy!””
Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until this violent storm is past.

² I cry out to God Most High, to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.

³ He will send help from heaven to save me, rescuing me from those who are out to get me. Interlude My God will send forth his unfailing love and faithfulness.

⁴ I am surrounded by fierce lions who greedily devour human prey—whose teeth pierce like spears and arrows, and whose tongues cut like swords.

⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens! May your glory shine over all the earth.

⁶ My enemies have set a trap for me. I am weary from distress. They have dug a deep pit in my path, but they themselves have fallen into it. Interlude

⁷ My heart is confident in you, O God; no wonder I can sing your praises!

⁸ Wake up, my soul! Wake up, O harp and lyre! I will waken the dawn with my song.

⁹ I will thank you, Lord, in front of all the people. I will sing your praises among the nations.

¹⁰ For your unfailing love is as high as the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens. May your glory shine over all the earth.

58 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune “Do Not Destroy!”” Justice—do you

rulers know the meaning of the word?
Do you judge the people fairly?

² No, all your dealings are crooked; you hand out violence instead of justice.

³ These wicked people are born sinners; even from birth they have lied and gone their own way.

⁴ They spit poison like deadly snakes; they are like cobras that refuse to listen,

⁵ ignoring the tunes of the snake charmers, no matter how skillfully they play.

⁶ Break off their fangs, O God! Smash the jaws of these lions, O LORD!

⁷ May they disappear like water into thirsty ground. Make their weapons useless in their hands.

⁸ May they be like snails that dissolve into slime, like a stillborn child who will never see the sun.

⁹ God will sweep them away, both young and old, faster than a pot heats on an open flame.

¹⁰ The godly will rejoice when they see injustice avenged. They will wash their feet in the blood of the wicked.

¹¹ Then at last everyone will say, "There truly is a reward for those who live for God; surely there is a God who judges justly here on earth."

59 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Saul sent soldiers to watch David's house in order to kill him. To be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!" "Rescue me from my enemies, O God. Protect me from those who have come to destroy me.

² Rescue me from these criminals; save me from these murderers.

³ They have set an ambush for me. Fierce enemies are out there waiting,

though I have done them no wrong, O LORD.

⁴ Despite my innocence, they prepare to kill me. Rise up and help me! Look on my plight!

⁵ O LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, rise up to punish hostile nations. Show no mercy to wicked traitors.

Interlude

⁶ They come at night, snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets.

⁷ Listen to the filth that comes from their mouths, the piercing swords that fly from their lips. "Who can hurt us?" they sneer.

⁸ But LORD, you laugh at them. You scoff at all the hostile nations.

⁹ You are my strength; I wait for you to rescue me, for you, O God, are my place of safety.

¹⁰ In his unfailing love, my God will come and help me. He will let me look down in triumph on all my enemies.

¹¹ Don't kill them, for my people soon forget such lessons; stagger them with your power, and bring them to their knees, O Lord our shield.

¹² Because of the sinful things they say, because of the evil that is on their lips, let them be captured by their pride, their curses, and their lies.

¹³ Destroy them in your anger! Wipe them out completely! Then the whole world will know that God reigns in Israel.
Interlude

¹⁴ My enemies come out at night, snarling like vicious dogs as they prowl the streets.

¹⁵ They scavenge for food but go to sleep unsatisfied.

¹⁶ But as for me, I will sing about your power. I will shout with joy each morning

because of your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety in the day of distress.

¹⁷ O my Strength, to you I sing praises, for you, O God, are my refuge, the God who shows me unfailing love.

60 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David useful for teaching, regarding the time David fought Aram–naharaim and Aram–zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. To be sung to the tune “Lily of the Testimony.”” You have rejected us, O God, and broken our defenses. You have been angry with us; now restore us to your favor.

² You have shaken our land and split it open. Seal the cracks before it completely collapses.

³ You have been very hard on us, making us drink wine that sent us reeling.

⁴ But you have raised a banner for those who honor you—a rallying point in the face of attack. Interlude

⁵ Use your strong right arm to save us, and rescue your beloved people.

⁶ God has promised this by his holiness: "I will divide up Shechem with joy. I will measure out the valley of Succoth.

⁷ Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine. Ephraim will produce my warriors, and Judah will produce my kings.

⁸ Moab will become my lowly servant, and Edom will be my slave. I will shout in triumph over the Philistines."

⁹ But who will bring me into the fortified city? Who will bring me victory over Edom?

¹⁰ Have you rejected us, O God? Will you no longer march with our armies?

¹¹ Oh, please help us against our enemies, for all human help is useless.

¹² With God's help we will do mighty things, for he will trample down our foes.

61 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments.” O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer!

² From the ends of the earth, I will cry to you for help, for my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety,

³ for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.

⁴ Let me live forever in your sanctuary, safe beneath the shelter of your wings!
Interlude

⁵ For you have heard my vows, O God. You have given me an inheritance reserved for those who fear your name.

⁶ Add many years to the life of the king! May his years span the generations!

⁷ May he reign under God's protection forever. Appoint your unfailing love and faithfulness to watch over him.

⁸ Then I will always sing praises to your name as I fulfill my vows day after day.

62 ¹ "For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of David." I wait quietly before God, for my salvation comes from him.

² He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken.

³ So many enemies against one man—all of them trying to kill me. To them I'm just a broken-down wall or a tottering fence.

⁴ They plan to topple me from my high position. They delight in telling lies about me. They are friendly to my face, but they curse me in their hearts. Interlude

⁵ I wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him.

⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.

⁷ My salvation and my honor come
from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock
where no enemy can reach me.

⁸ O my people, trust in him at all times.
Pour out your heart to him, for God is
our refuge. Interlude

⁹ From the greatest to the lowliest—all
are nothing in his sight. If you weigh
them on the scales, they are lighter than
a puff of air.

¹⁰ Don't try to get rich by extortion or
robbery. And if your wealth increases,
don't make it the center of your life.

¹¹ God has spoken plainly, and I have
heard it many times: Power, O God,
belongs to you;

¹² unfailing love, O Lord, is yours. Surely
you judge all people according to what
they have done.

63 ¹ “A psalm of David, regarding a time when David was in the wilderness of Judah.” O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water.

² I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory.

³ Your unfailing love is better to me than life itself; how I praise you!

⁴ I will honor you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer.

⁵ You satisfy me more than the richest of foods. I will praise you with songs of joy.

⁶ I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night.

⁷ I think how much you have helped me; I sing for joy in the shadow of your protecting wings.

⁸ I follow close behind you; your strong right hand holds me securely.

⁹ But those plotting to destroy me will come to ruin. They will go down into the depths of the earth.

¹⁰ They will die by the sword and become the food of jackals.

¹¹ But the king will rejoice in God. All who trust in him will praise him, while liars will be silenced.

64 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” O God, listen to my complaint. Do not let my enemies’ threats overwhelm me.

² Protect me from the plots of the wicked, from the scheming of those who do evil.

³ Sharp tongues are the swords they wield; bitter words are the arrows they aim.

⁴ They shoot from ambush at the innocent, attacking suddenly and fearlessly.

⁵ They encourage each other to do evil and plan how to set their traps. "Who will ever notice?" they ask.

⁶ As they plot their crimes, they say, "We have devised the perfect plan!" Yes, the human heart and mind are cunning.

⁷ But God himself will shoot them down. Suddenly, his arrows will pierce them.

⁸ Their own words will be turned against them, destroying them. All who see it happening will shake their heads in scorn.

⁹ Then everyone will stand in awe, proclaiming the mighty acts of God, realizing all the amazing things he does.

¹⁰ The godly will rejoice in the LORD and find shelter in him. And those who do what is right will praise him.

65 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David. A song.” What mighty praise, O God, belongs to you in Zion.

We will fulfill our vows to you,

² for you answer our prayers, and to you all people will come.

³ Though our hearts are filled with sins, you forgive them all.

⁴ What joy for those you choose to bring near, those who live in your holy courts. What joys await us inside your holy Temple.

⁵ You faithfully answer our prayers with awesome deeds, O God our savior. You are the hope of everyone on earth, even those who sail on distant seas.

⁶ You formed the mountains by your power and armed yourself with mighty strength.

⁷ You quieted the raging oceans with their pounding waves and silenced the shouting of the nations.

⁸ Those who live at the ends of the earth stand in awe of your wonders. From where the sun rises to where it sets, you inspire shouts of joy.

⁹ You take care of the earth and water it, making it rich and fertile. The rivers of God will not run dry; they provide a bountiful harvest of grain, for you have ordered it so.

¹⁰ You drench the plowed ground with rain, melting the clods and leveling the ridges. You soften the earth with showers and bless its abundant crops.

¹¹ You crown the year with a bountiful harvest; even the hard pathways overflow with abundance.

¹² The wilderness becomes a lush pasture, and the hillsides blossom with joy.

¹³ The meadows are clothed with flocks of sheep, and the valleys are carpeted

with grain. They all shout and sing for joy!

66 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm. A song.” Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!

² Sing about the glory of his name! Tell the world how glorious he is.

³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Your enemies cringe before your mighty power.

⁴ Everything on earth will worship you; they will sing your praises, shouting your name in glorious songs." Interlude

⁵ Come and see what our God has done, what awesome miracles he does for his people!

⁶ He made a dry path through the Red Sea, and his people went across on foot. Come, let us rejoice in who he is.

⁷ For by his great power he rules forever. He watches every movement of

the nations; let no rebel rise in defiance.

Interlude

⁸ Let the whole world bless our God and sing aloud his praises.

⁹ Our lives are in his hands, and he keeps our feet from stumbling.

¹⁰ You have tested us, O God; you have purified us like silver melted in a crucible.

¹¹ You captured us in your net and laid the burden of slavery on our backs.

¹² You sent troops to ride across our broken bodies. We went through fire and flood. But you brought us to a place of great abundance.

¹³ Now I come to your Temple with burnt offerings to fulfill the vows I made to you—

¹⁴ yes, the sacred vows you heard me make when I was in deep trouble.

¹⁵ That is why I am sacrificing burnt offerings to you—the best of my rams

as a pleasing aroma. And I will sacrifice bulls and goats. Interlude

¹⁶ Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me.

¹⁷ For I cried out to him for help, praising him as I spoke.

¹⁸ If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.

¹⁹ But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer.

²⁰ Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer and did not withdraw his unfailing love from me.

67 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm, to be accompanied by stringed instruments. A song.” May God be merciful and bless us. May his face shine with favor upon us. Interlude

² May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere.

³ May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.

⁴ How glad the nations will be, singing
for joy, because you govern them with
justice and direct the actions of the
whole world. Interlude

⁵ May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.

⁶ Then the earth will yield its harvests,
and God, our God, will richly bless us.

⁷ Yes, God will bless us, and people all
over the world will fear him.

68 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm
of David. A song.” Arise, O God,
and scatter your enemies. Let those who
hate God run for their lives.

² Drive them off like smoke blown by
the wind. Melt them like wax in fire. Let
the wicked perish in the presence of
God.

³ But let the godly rejoice. Let them be glad in God's presence. Let them be filled with joy.

⁴ Sing praises to God and to his name! Sing loud praises to him who rides the clouds. His name is the LORD—rejoice in his presence!

⁵ Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy.

⁶ God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy. But for rebels, there is only famine and distress.

⁷ O God, when you led your people from Egypt, when you marched through the wilderness, Interlude

⁸ the earth trembled, and the heavens poured rain before you, the God of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel.

⁹ You sent abundant rain, O God, to refresh the weary Promised Land.

¹⁰ There your people finally settled, and with a bountiful harvest, O God, you provided for your needy people.

¹¹ The Lord announces victory, and throngs of women shout the happy news.

¹² Enemy kings and their armies flee, while the women of Israel divide the plunder.

¹³ Though they lived among the sheepfolds, now they are covered with silver and gold, as a dove is covered by its wings.

¹⁴ The Almighty scattered the enemy kings like a blowing snowstorm on Mount Zalmon.

¹⁵ The majestic mountains of Bashan stretch high into the sky.

¹⁶ Why do you look with envy, O rugged mountains, at Mount Zion, where God has chosen to live, where the LORD himself will live forever?

¹⁷ Surrounded by unnumbered thousands of chariots, the Lord came from Mount Sinai into his sanctuary.

¹⁸ When you ascended to the heights, you led a crowd of captives. You received gifts from the people, even from those who rebelled against you. Now the LORD God will live among us here.

¹⁹ Praise the Lord; praise God our savior! For each day he carries us in his arms. Interlude

²⁰ Our God is a God who saves! The Sovereign LORD rescues us from death.

²¹ But God will smash the heads of his enemies, crushing the skulls of those who love their guilty ways.

²² The Lord says, "I will bring my enemies down from Bashan; I will bring them up from the depths of the sea.

²³ You, my people, will wash your feet in their blood, and even your dogs will get their share!"

²⁴ Your procession has come into view, O God—the procession of my God and King as he goes into the sanctuary.

²⁵ Singers are in front, musicians are behind; with them are young women playing tambourines.

²⁶ Praise God, all you people of Israel; praise the LORD, the source of Israel's life.

²⁷ Look, the little tribe of Benjamin leads the way. Then comes a great throng of rulers from Judah and all the rulers of Zebulun and Naphtali.

²⁸ Summon your might, O God. Display your power, O God, as you have in the past.

²⁹ The kings of the earth are bringing tribute to your Temple in Jerusalem.

³⁰ Rebuke these enemy nations—these wild animals lurking in the reeds, this herd of bulls among the weaker calves. Humble those who demand tribute from

us. Scatter the nations that delight in war.

³¹ Let Egypt come with gifts of precious metals; let Ethiopia bow in submission to God.

³² Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth. Sing praises to the Lord. Interlude

³³ Sing to the one who rides across the ancient heavens, his mighty voice thundering from the sky.

³⁴ Tell everyone about God's power. His majesty shines down on Israel; his strength is mighty in the heavens.

³⁵ God is awesome in his sanctuary. The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!

69 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Lilies." Save me, O God, for the floodwaters are up to my neck.

² Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire; I can't find a foothold to stand

on. I am in deep water, and the floods overwhelm me.

³ I am exhausted from crying for help; my throat is parched and dry. My eyes are swollen with weeping, waiting for my God to help me.

⁴ Those who hate me without cause are more numerous than the hairs on my head. These enemies who seek to destroy me are doing so without cause. They attack me with lies, demanding that I give back what I didn't steal.

⁵ O God, you know how foolish I am; my sins cannot be hidden from you.

⁶ Don't let those who trust in you stumble because of me, O Sovereign LORD Almighty. Don't let me cause them to be humiliated, O God of Israel.

⁷ For I am mocked and shamed for your sake; humiliation is written all over my face.

⁸ Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me; they treat me like a stranger.

⁹ Passion for your house burns within me, so those who insult you are also insulting me.

¹⁰ When I weep and fast before the LORD, they scoff at me.

¹¹ When I dress in sackcloth to show sorrow, they make fun of me.

¹² I am the favorite topic of town gossip, and all the drunkards sing about me.

¹³ But I keep right on praying to you, LORD, hoping this is the time you will show me favor. In your unfailing love, O God, answer my prayer with your sure salvation.

¹⁴ Pull me out of the mud; don't let me sink any deeper! Rescue me from those who hate me, and pull me from these deep waters.

¹⁵ Don't let the floods overwhelm me, or the deep waters swallow me, or the pit of death devour me.

¹⁶ Answer my prayers, O LORD, for your unfailing love is wonderful. Turn and take care of me, for your mercy is so plentiful.

¹⁷ Don't hide from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in deep trouble!

¹⁸ Come and rescue me; free me from all my enemies.

¹⁹ You know the insults I endure—the humiliation and disgrace. You have seen all my enemies and know what they have said.

²⁰ Their insults have broken my heart, and I am in despair. If only one person would show some pity; if only one would turn and comfort me.

²¹ But instead, they give me poison for food; they offer me sour wine to satisfy my thirst.

²² Let the bountiful table set before them become a snare, and let their security become a trap.

²³ Let their eyes go blind so they cannot see, and let their bodies grow weaker and weaker.

²⁴ Pour out your fury on them; consume them with your burning anger.

²⁵ May their homes become desolate and their tents be deserted.

²⁶ To those you have punished, they add insult to injury; they scoff at the pain of those you have hurt.

²⁷ Pile their sins up high, and don't let them go free.

²⁸ Erase their names from the Book of Life; don't let them be counted among the righteous.

²⁹ I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power.

³⁰ Then I will praise God's name with singing, and I will honor him with thanksgiving.

³¹ For this will please the LORD more than sacrificing an ox or presenting a bull with its horns and hooves.

³² The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help live in joy.

³³ For the LORD hears the cries of his needy ones; he does not despise his people who are oppressed.

³⁴ Praise him, O heaven and earth, the seas and all that move in them.

³⁵ For God will save Jerusalem and rebuild the towns of Judah. His people will live there and take possession of the land.

³⁶ The descendants of those who obey him will inherit the land, and those who love him will live there in safety.

70¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David, to bring us to the LORD’s remembrance.” Please, God, rescue me! Come quickly, LORD, and help me.

² May those who try to destroy me be humiliated and put to shame. May those who take delight in my trouble be turned back in disgrace.

³ Let them be horrified by their shame, for they said, “Aha! We’ve got him now!”

⁴ But may all who search for you be filled with joy and gladness. May those who love your salvation repeatedly shout, “God is great!”

⁵ But I am poor and needy; please hurry to my aid, O God. You are my helper and my savior; O LORD, do not delay!

71¹ O LORD, you are my refuge; never let me be disgraced.

² Rescue me! Save me from my enemies, for you are just. Turn your ear to listen and set me free.

³ Be to me a protecting rock of safety, where I am always welcome. Give the order to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

⁴ My God, rescue me from the power of the wicked, from the clutches of cruel oppressors.

⁵ O Lord, you alone are my hope. I've trusted you, O LORD, from childhood.

⁶ Yes, you have been with me from birth; from my mother's womb you have cared for me. No wonder I am always praising you!

⁷ My life is an example to many, because you have been my strength and protection.

⁸ That is why I can never stop praising you; I declare your glory all day long.

⁹ And now, in my old age, don't set me aside. Don't abandon me when my strength is failing.

¹⁰ For my enemies are whispering against me. They are plotting together to kill me.

¹¹ They say, "God has abandoned him. Let's go and get him, for there is no one to help him now."

¹² O God, don't stay away. My God, please hurry to help me.

¹³ Bring disgrace and destruction on those who accuse me. May humiliation and shame cover those who want to harm me.

¹⁴ But I will keep on hoping for you to help me; I will praise you more and more.

¹⁵ I will tell everyone about your righteousness. All day long I will proclaim your saving power, for I am overwhelmed by how much you have done for me.

¹⁶ I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign LORD. I will tell everyone that you alone are just and good.

¹⁷ O God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood, and I have constantly told others about the wonderful things you do.

¹⁸ Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me.

¹⁹ Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the highest heavens. You have done such wonderful things. Who can compare with you, O God?

²⁰ You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth.

²¹ You will restore me to even greater honor and comfort me once again.

²² Then I will praise you with music on the harp, because you are faithful to

your promises, O God. I will sing for you with a lyre, O Holy One of Israel.

²³ I will shout for joy and sing your praises, for you have redeemed me.

²⁴ I will tell about your righteous deeds all day long, for everyone who tried to hurt me has been shamed and humiliated.

72 ¹ “A psalm of Solomon.” Give justice to the king, O God, and righteousness to the king’s son.

² Help him judge your people in the right way; let the poor always be treated fairly.

³ May the mountains yield prosperity for all, and may the hills be fruitful, because the king does what is right.

⁴ Help him to defend the poor, to rescue the children of the needy, and to crush their oppressors.

⁵ May he live as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon continues in the skies. Yes, forever!

⁶ May his reign be as refreshing as the springtime rains—like the showers that water the earth.

⁷ May all the godly flourish during his reign. May there be abundant prosperity until the end of time.

⁸ May he reign from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

⁹ Desert nomads will bow before him; his enemies will fall before him in the dust.

¹⁰ The western kings of Tarshish and the islands will bring him tribute. The eastern kings of Sheba and Seba will bring him gifts.

¹¹ All kings will bow before him, and all nations will serve him.

¹² He will rescue the poor when they cry to him; he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.

¹³ He feels pity for the weak and the needy, and he will rescue them.

¹⁴ He will save them from oppression and from violence, for their lives are precious to him.

¹⁵ Long live the king! May the gold of Sheba be given to him. May the people always pray for him and bless him all day long.

¹⁶ May there be abundant crops throughout the land, flourishing even on the mountaintops. May the fruit trees flourish as they do in Lebanon, sprouting up like grass in a field.

¹⁷ May the king's name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun shines. May all nations be blessed through him and bring him praise.

¹⁸ Bless the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does such wonderful things.

¹⁹ Bless his glorious name forever! Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen!

²⁰ (This ends the prayers of David son of Jesse.)

73 ¹ “A psalm of Asaph.” Truly God is good to Israel, to those whose hearts are pure.

² But as for me, I came so close to the edge of the cliff! My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.

³ For I envied the proud when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.

⁴ They seem to live such a painless life; their bodies are so healthy and strong.

⁵ They aren’t troubled like other people or plagued with problems like everyone else.

⁶ They wear pride like a jeweled necklace, and their clothing is woven of cruelty.

⁷ These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for!

⁸ They scoff and speak only evil; in their pride they seek to crush others.

⁹ They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut throughout the earth.

¹⁰ And so the people are dismayed and confused, drinking in all their words.

¹¹ "Does God realize what is going on?" they ask. "Is the Most High even aware of what is happening?"

¹² Look at these arrogant people—enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.

¹³ Was it for nothing that I kept my heart pure and kept myself from doing wrong?

¹⁴ All I get is trouble all day long; every morning brings me pain.

¹⁵ If I had really spoken this way, I would have been a traitor to your people.

¹⁶ So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is!

¹⁷ Then one day I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I thought about the destiny of the wicked.

¹⁸ Truly, you put them on a slippery path and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.

¹⁹ In an instant they are destroyed, swept away by terrors.

²⁰ Their present life is only a dream that is gone when they awake. When you arise, O Lord, you will make them vanish from this life.

²¹ Then I realized how bitter I had become, how pained I had been by all I had seen.

²² I was so foolish and ignorant—I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.

²³ Yet I still belong to you; you are holding my right hand.

²⁴ You will keep on guiding me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny.

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth.

²⁶ My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.

²⁷ But those who desert him will perish, for you destroy those who abandon you.

²⁸ But as for me, how good it is to be near God! I have made the Sovereign LORD my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.

74 ¹ “A psalm of Asaph.” O God, why have you rejected us forever?

Why is your anger so intense against the sheep of your own pasture?

² Remember that we are the people you chose in ancient times, the tribe you redeemed as your own special possession! And remember Jerusalem, your home here on earth.

³ Walk through the awful ruins of the city; see how the enemy has destroyed your sanctuary.

⁴ There your enemies shouted their victorious battle cries; there they set up their battle standards.

⁵ They chopped down the entrance like woodcutters in a forest.

⁶ With axes and picks, they smashed the carved paneling.

⁷ They set the sanctuary on fire, burning it to the ground. They utterly defiled the place that bears your holy name.

⁸ Then they thought, "Let's destroy everything!" So they burned down all the places where God was worshiped.

⁹ We see no miraculous signs as evidence that you will save us. All the prophets are gone; no one can tell us when it will end.

¹⁰ How long, O God, will you allow our enemies to mock you? Will you let them dishonor your name forever?

¹¹ Why do you hold back your strong right hand? Unleash your powerful fist and deliver a deathblow.

¹² You, O God, are my king from ages past, bringing salvation to the earth.

¹³ You split the sea by your strength and smashed the sea monster's heads.

¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan and let the desert animals eat him.

¹⁵ You caused the springs and streams to gush forth, and you dried up rivers that never run dry.

¹⁶ Both day and night belong to you; you made the starlight and the sun.

¹⁷ You set the boundaries of the earth, and you make both summer and winter.

¹⁸ See how these enemies scoff at you, LORD. A foolish nation has dishonored your name.

¹⁹ Don't let these wild beasts destroy your doves. Don't forget your afflicted people forever.

²⁰ Remember your covenant promises, for the land is full of darkness and violence!

²¹ Don't let the downtrodden be constantly disgraced! Instead, let these poor and needy ones give praise to your name.

²² Arise, O God, and defend your cause. Remember how these fools insult you all day long.

²³ Don't overlook these things your enemies have said. Their uproar of rebellion grows ever louder.

75 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be sung to the tune "Do Not Destroy!" A song." We thank you, O God! We give thanks because you are near. People everywhere tell of your mighty miracles.

² God says, "At the time I have planned, I will bring justice against the wicked.

³ When the earth quakes and its people live in turmoil, I am the one who keeps its foundations firm. Interlude

⁴ "I warned the proud, 'Stop your boasting!' I told the wicked, 'Don't raise your fists!

⁵ Don't lift your fists in defiance at the heavens or speak with rebellious arrogance.'"

⁶ For no one on earth—from east or west, or even from the wilderness—can raise another person up.

⁷ It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall.

⁸ For the LORD holds a cup in his hand; it is full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours the wine out in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it, draining it to the dregs.

⁹ But as for me, I will always proclaim what God has done; I will sing praises to the God of Israel.

¹⁰ For God says, "I will cut off the strength of the wicked, but I will increase the power of the godly."

76 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be accompanied by stringed instruments. A song." God is well known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

² Jerusalem is where he lives; Mount Zion is his home.

³ There he breaks the arrows of the enemy, the shields and swords and weapons of his foes. Interlude

⁴ You are glorious and more majestic than the everlasting mountains.

⁵ The mightiest of our enemies have been plundered. They lie before us in the sleep of death. No warrior could lift a hand against us.

⁶ When you rebuked them, O God of Jacob, their horses and chariots stood still.

⁷ No wonder you are greatly feared! Who can stand before you when your anger explodes?

⁸ From heaven you sentenced your enemies; the earth trembled and stood silent before you.

⁹ You stand up to judge those who do evil, O God, and to rescue the oppressed of the earth. Interlude

¹⁰ Human opposition only enhances your glory, for you use it as a sword of judgment.

¹¹ Make vows to the LORD your God, and fulfill them. Let everyone bring tribute to the Awesome One.

¹² For he breaks the spirit of princes and is feared by the kings of the earth.

77 ¹ “For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of Asaph.” I cry out to God without holding back. Oh, that God would listen to me!

² When I was in deep trouble, I searched for the Lord. All night long I pray, with hands lifted toward heaven, pleading. There can be no joy for me until he acts.

³ I think of God, and I moan, overwhelmed with longing for his help. Interlude

⁴ You don't let me sleep. I am too distressed even to pray!

⁵ I think of the good old days, long since ended,

⁶ when my nights were filled with joyful songs. I search my soul and think about the difference now.

⁷ Has the Lord rejected me forever? Will he never again show me favor?

⁸ Is his unfailing love gone forever? Have his promises permanently failed?

⁹ Has God forgotten to be kind? Has he slammed the door on his compassion?

Interlude

¹⁰ And I said, "This is my fate, that the blessings of the Most High have changed to hatred."

¹¹ I recall all you have done, O LORD; I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago.

¹² They are constantly in my thoughts. I cannot stop thinking about them.

¹³ O God, your ways are holy. Is there any god as mighty as you?

¹⁴ You are the God of miracles and wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations.

¹⁵ You have redeemed your people by your strength, the descendants of Jacob and of Joseph by your might. Interlude

¹⁶ When the Red Sea saw you, O God, its waters looked and trembled! The sea quaked to its very depths.

¹⁷ The clouds poured down their rain; the thunder rolled and crackled in the sky. Your arrows of lightning flashed.

¹⁸ Your thunder roared from the whirlwind; the lightning lit up the world! The earth trembled and shook.

¹⁹ Your road led through the sea, your pathway through the mighty waters—a pathway no one knew was there!

²⁰ You led your people along that road like a flock of sheep, with Moses and Aaron as their shepherds.

78 ¹ “A psalm of Asaph.” O my people, listen to my teaching.

Open your ears to what I am saying,

² for I will speak to you in a parable. I will teach you hidden lessons from our past—

³ stories we have heard and know, stories our ancestors handed down to us.

⁴ We will not hide these truths from our children but will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the LORD. We will tell of his power and the mighty miracles he did.

⁵ For he issued his decree to Jacob; he gave his law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children,

⁶ so the next generation might know them—even the children not yet born—that they in turn might teach their children.

⁷ So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands.

⁸ Then they will not be like their ancestors—stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God.

⁹ The warriors of Ephraim, though fully armed, turned their backs and fled when the day of battle came.

¹⁰ They did not keep God's covenant, and they refused to live by his law.

¹¹ They forgot what he had done—the wonderful miracles he had shown them,

¹² the miracles he did for their ancestors in Egypt, on the plain of Zoan.

¹³ For he divided the sea before them and led them through! The water stood up like walls beside them!

¹⁴ In the daytime he led them by a cloud, and at night by a pillar of fire.

¹⁵ He split open the rocks in the wilderness to give them plenty of water, as from a gushing spring.

¹⁶ He made streams pour from the rock, making the waters flow down like a river!

¹⁷ Yet they kept on with their sin, rebelling against the Most High in the desert.

¹⁸ They willfully tested God in their hearts, demanding the foods they craved.

¹⁹ They even spoke against God himself, saying, "God can't give us food in the desert.

²⁰ Yes, he can strike a rock so water gushes out, but he can't give his people bread and meat."

²¹ When the LORD heard them, he was angry. The fire of his wrath burned against Jacob. Yes, his anger rose against Israel,

²² for they did not believe God or trust him to care for them.

²³ But he commanded the skies to open—he opened the doors of heaven—

²⁴ and rained down manna for them to eat. He gave them bread from heaven.

²⁵ They ate the food of angels! God gave them all they could hold.

²⁶ He released the east wind in the heavens and guided the south wind by his mighty power.

²⁷ He rained down meat as thick as dust—birds as plentiful as the sands along the seashore!

²⁸ He caused the birds to fall within their camp and all around their tents.

²⁹ The people ate their fill. He gave them what they wanted.

³⁰ But before they finished eating this food they had craved, while the meat was yet in their mouths,

³¹ the anger of God rose against them, and he killed their strongest men; he struck down the finest of Israel's young men.

³² But in spite of this, the people kept on sinning. They refused to believe in his miracles.

³³ So he ended their lives in failure and gave them years of terror.

³⁴ When God killed some of them, the rest finally sought him. They repented and turned to God.

³⁵ Then they remembered that God was their rock, that their redeemer was the Most High.

³⁶ But they followed him only with their words; they lied to him with their tongues.

³⁷ Their hearts were not loyal to him. They did not keep his covenant.

³⁸ Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins and didn't destroy them all. Many a time he held back his anger and did not unleash his fury!

³⁹ For he remembered that they were merely mortal, gone in a moment like a breath of wind, never to return.

⁴⁰ Oh, how often they rebelled against him in the desert and grieved his heart in the wilderness.

⁴¹ Again and again they tested God's patience and frustrated the Holy One of Israel.

⁴² They forgot about his power and how he rescued them from their enemies.

⁴³ They forgot his miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders on the plain of Zoan.

⁴⁴ For he turned their rivers into blood,
so no one could drink from the streams.

⁴⁵ He sent vast swarms of flies to
consume them and hordes of frogs to
ruin them.

⁴⁶ He gave their crops to caterpillars;
their harvest was consumed by locusts.

⁴⁷ He destroyed their grapevines with
hail and shattered their sycamores with
sleet.

⁴⁸ He abandoned their cattle to the hail,
their livestock to bolts of lightning.

⁴⁹ He loosed on them his fierce
anger—all his fury, rage, and hostility.
He dispatched against them a band of
destroying angels.

⁵⁰ He turned his anger against them;
he did not spare the Egyptians' lives but
handed them over to the plague.

⁵¹ He killed the oldest son in each
Egyptian family, the flower of youth
throughout the land of Egypt.

⁵² But he led his own people like a flock of sheep, guiding them safely through the wilderness.

⁵³ He kept them safe so they were not afraid; but the sea closed in upon their enemies.

⁵⁴ He brought them to the border of his holy land, to this land of hills he had won for them.

⁵⁵ He drove out the nations before them; he gave them their inheritance by lot. He settled the tribes of Israel into their homes.

⁵⁶ Yet though he did all this for them, they continued to test his patience. They rebelled against the Most High and refused to follow his decrees.

⁵⁷ They turned back and were as faithless as their parents had been. They were as useless as a crooked bow.

⁵⁸ They made God angry by building altars to other gods; they made him jealous with their idols.

⁵⁹ When God heard them, he was very angry, and he rejected Israel completely.

⁶⁰ Then he abandoned his dwelling at Shiloh, the Tabernacle where he had lived among the people.

⁶¹ He allowed the Ark of his might to be captured; he surrendered his glory into enemy hands.

⁶² He gave his people over to be butchered by the sword, because he was so angry with his own people—his special possession.

⁶³ Their young men were killed by fire; their young women died before singing their wedding songs.

⁶⁴ Their priests were slaughtered, and their widows could not mourn their deaths.

⁶⁵ Then the Lord rose up as though waking from sleep, like a mighty man aroused from a drunken stupor.

⁶⁶ He routed his enemies and sent them to eternal shame.

⁶⁷ But he rejected Joseph's descendants; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.

⁶⁸ He chose instead the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved.

⁶⁹ There he built his towering sanctuary, as solid and enduring as the earth itself.

⁷⁰ He chose his servant David, calling him from the sheep pens.

⁷¹ He took David from tending the ewes and lambs and made him the shepherd of Jacob's descendants—God's own people, Israel.

⁷² He cared for them with a true heart and led them with skillful hands.

79 ¹ "A psalm of Asaph." O God, pagan nations have conquered

your land, your special possession. They have defiled your holy Temple and made Jerusalem a heap of ruins.

² They have left the bodies of your servants as food for the birds of heaven. The flesh of your godly ones has become food for the wild animals.

³ Blood has flowed like water all around Jerusalem; no one is left to bury the dead.

⁴ We are mocked by our neighbors, an object of scorn and derision to those around us.

⁵ O LORD, how long will you be angry with us? Forever? How long will your jealousy burn like fire?

⁶ Pour out your wrath on the nations that refuse to recognize you—on kingdoms that do not call upon your name.

⁷ For they have devoured your people Israel, making the land a desolate wilderness.

⁸ Oh, do not hold us guilty for our former sins! Let your tenderhearted mercies quickly meet our needs, for we are brought low to the dust.

⁹ Help us, O God of our salvation! Help us for the honor of your name. Oh, save us and forgive our sins for the sake of your name.

¹⁰ Why should pagan nations be allowed to scoff, asking, "Where is their God?" Show us your vengeance against the nations, for they have spilled the blood of your servants.

¹¹ Listen to the moaning of the prisoners. Demonstrate your great power by saving those condemned to die.

¹² O Lord, take sevenfold vengeance on our neighbors for the scorn they have hurled at you.

¹³ Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will thank you forever and ever, praising your greatness from generation to generation.

80 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be sung to the tune “Lilies of the Covenant.”” Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Israel like a flock. O God, enthroned above the cherubim, display your radiant glory

² to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Show us your mighty power. Come to rescue us!

³ Turn us again to yourself, O God. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

⁴ O LORD God Almighty, how long will you be angry and reject our prayers?

⁵ You have fed us with sorrow and made us drink tears by the bucketful.

⁶ You have made us the scorn of neighboring nations. Our enemies treat us as a joke.

⁷ Turn us again to yourself, O God Almighty. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

⁸ You brought us from Egypt as though we were a tender vine; you drove away the pagan nations and transplanted us into your land.

⁹ You cleared the ground for us, and we took root and filled the land.

¹⁰ The mountains were covered with our shade; the mighty cedars were covered with our branches.

¹¹ We spread our branches west to the Mediterranean Sea, our limbs east to the Euphrates River.

¹² But now, why have you broken down our walls so that all who pass may steal our fruit?

¹³ The boar from the forest devours us, and the wild animals feed on us.

¹⁴ Come back, we beg you, O God Almighty. Look down from heaven and see our plight. Watch over and care for this vine

¹⁵ that you yourself have planted, this son you have raised for yourself.

¹⁶ For we are chopped up and burned by our enemies. May they perish at the sight of your frown.

¹⁷ Strengthen the man you love, the son of your choice.

¹⁸ Then we will never forsake you again. Revive us so we can call on your name once more.

¹⁹ Turn us again to yourself, O LORD God Almighty. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

81 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.” Sing praises to God, our strength. Sing to the God of Israel.

² Sing! Beat the tambourine. Play the sweet lyre and the harp.

³ Sound the trumpet for a sacred feast when the moon is new, when the moon is full.

⁴ For this is required by the laws of Israel; it is a law of the God of Jacob.

⁵ He made it a decree for Israel when he attacked Egypt to set us free. I heard an unknown voice that said,

⁶ “Now I will relieve your shoulder of its burden; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks.

⁷ You cried to me in trouble, and I saved you; I answered out of the thundercloud. I tested your faith at Meribah, when you

complained that there was no water.

Interlude

⁸ "Listen to me, O my people, while I give you stern warnings. O Israel, if you would only listen!

⁹ You must never have a foreign god; you must not bow down before a false god.

¹⁰ For it was I, the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it with good things.

¹¹ "But no, my people wouldn't listen. Israel did not want me around.

¹² So I let them follow their blind and stubborn way, living according to their own desires.

¹³ But oh, that my people would listen to me! Oh, that Israel would follow me, walking in my paths!

¹⁴ How quickly I would then subdue their enemies! How soon my hands would be upon their foes!

¹⁵ Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him; their desolation would last forever.

¹⁶ But I would feed you with the best of foods. I would satisfy you with wild honey from the rock."

82 ¹ "A psalm of Asaph." God presides over heaven's court; he pronounces judgment on the judges:

² "How long will you judges hand down unjust decisions? How long will you shower special favors on the wicked?"

Interlude

³ "Give fair judgment to the poor and the orphan; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute.

⁴ Rescue the poor and helpless; deliver them from the grasp of evil people.

⁵ But these oppressors know nothing; they are so ignorant! And because they are in darkness, the whole world is shaken to the core.

⁶ I say, ‘You are gods and children of the Most High.

⁷ But in death you are mere men. You will fall as any prince, for all must die.’”

⁸ Rise up, O God, and judge the earth, for all the nations belong to you.

83 ¹ “A psalm of Asaph. A song.” O God, don’t sit idly by, silent and inactive!

² Don’t you hear the tumult of your enemies? Don’t you see what your arrogant enemies are doing?

³ They devise crafty schemes against your people, laying plans against your precious ones.

⁴ “Come,” they say, “let us wipe out Israel as a nation. We will destroy the very memory of its existence.”

⁵ This was their unanimous decision.
They signed a treaty as allies against
you—

⁶ these Edomites and Ishmaelites,
Moabites and Hagrites,

⁷ Gebalites, Ammonites, and
Amalekites, and people from Philistia
and Tyre.

⁸ Assyria has joined them, too, and
is allied with the descendants of Lot.
Interlude

⁹ Do to them as you did to the
Midianites or as you did to Sisera and
Jabin at the Kishon River.

¹⁰ They were destroyed at Endor, and
their decaying corpses fertilized the soil.

¹¹ Let their mighty nobles die as Oreb
and Zeeb did. Let all their princes die like
Zebah and Zalmunna,

¹² for they said, "Let us seize for our
own use these pasturelands of God!"

¹³ O my God, blow them away like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind!

¹⁴ As a fire roars through a forest and as a flame sets mountains ablaze,

¹⁵ chase them with your fierce storms; terrify them with your tempests.

¹⁶ Utterly disgrace them until they submit to your name, O LORD.

¹⁷ Let them be ashamed and terrified forever. Make them failures in everything they do,

¹⁸ until they learn that you alone are called the LORD, that you alone are the Most High, supreme over all the earth.

84 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument.” How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty.

² I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the LORD. With my whole

being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God.

³ Even the sparrow finds a home there, and the swallow builds her nest and raises her young—at a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God!

⁴ How happy are those who can live in your house, always singing your praises.
Interlude

⁵ Happy are those who are strong in the LORD, who set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

⁶ When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs, where pools of blessing collect after the rains!

⁷ They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem.

⁸ O LORD God Almighty, hear my prayer. Listen, O God of Israel. Interlude

⁹ O God, look with favor upon the king, our protector! Have mercy on the one you have anointed.

¹⁰ A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked.

¹¹ For the LORD God is our light and protector. He gives us grace and glory. No good thing will the LORD withhold from those who do what is right.

¹² O LORD Almighty, happy are those who trust in you.

85 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.” LORD, you have poured out amazing blessings on your land! You have restored the fortunes of Israel.

² You have forgiven the guilt of your people—yes, you have covered all their sins. Interlude

³ You have withdrawn your fury. You have ended your blazing anger.

⁴ Now turn to us again, O God of our salvation. Put aside your anger against us.

⁵ Will you be angry with us always? Will you prolong your wrath to distant generations?

⁶ Won't you revive us again, so your people can rejoice in you?

⁷ Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

⁸ I listen carefully to what God the LORD is saying, for he speaks peace to his people, his faithful ones. But let them not return to their foolish ways.

⁹ Surely his salvation is near to those who honor him; our land will be filled with his glory.

¹⁰ Unfailing love and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed!

¹¹ Truth springs up from the earth, and righteousness smiles down from heaven.

¹² Yes, the LORD pours down his blessings. Our land will yield its bountiful crops.

¹³ Righteousness goes as a herald before him, preparing the way for his steps.

86 ¹ “A prayer of David.” Bend down, O LORD, and hear my prayer; answer me, for I need your help.

² Protect me, for I am devoted to you. Save me, for I serve you and trust you. You are my God.

³ Be merciful, O Lord, for I am calling on you constantly.

⁴ Give me happiness, O Lord, for my life depends on you.

⁵ O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask your aid.

⁶ Listen closely to my prayer, O LORD;
hear my urgent cry.

⁷ I will call to you whenever trouble
strikes, and you will answer me.

⁸ Nowhere among the pagan gods is
there a god like you, O Lord. There are
no other miracles like yours.

⁹ All the nations—and you made each
one—will come and bow before you,
Lord; they will praise your great and holy
name.

¹⁰ For you are great and perform great
miracles. You alone are God.

¹¹ Teach me your ways, O LORD, that I
may live according to your truth! Grant
me purity of heart, that I may honor you.

¹² With all my heart I will praise you,
O Lord my God. I will give glory to your
name forever,

¹³ for your love for me is very great.
You have rescued me from the depths of
death!

¹⁴ O God, insolent people rise up against me; violent people are trying to kill me. And you mean nothing to them.

¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love and truth.

¹⁶ Look down and have mercy on me. Give strength to your servant; yes, save me, for I am your servant.

¹⁷ Send me a sign of your favor. Then those who hate me will be put to shame, for you, O LORD, help and comfort me.

87 ¹ “A psalm of the descendants of Korah. A song.” On the holy mountain stands the city founded by the LORD.

² He loves the city of Jerusalem more than any other city in Israel.

³ O city of God, what glorious things are said of you! Interlude

⁴ I will record Egypt and Babylon among those who know me—also Philistia and

Tyre, and even distant Ethiopia. They have all become citizens of Jerusalem!

⁵ And it will be said of Jerusalem, "Everyone has become a citizen here." And the Most High will personally bless this city.

⁶ When the LORD registers the nations, he will say, "This one has become a citizen of Jerusalem." Interlude

⁷ At all the festivals, the people will sing, "The source of my life is in Jerusalem!"

88 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah, to be sung to the tune "The Suffering of Affliction." A psalm of Heman the Ezrahite. A song." O LORD, God of my salvation, I have cried out to you day and night.

² Now hear my prayer; listen to my cry.

³ For my life is full of troubles, and death draws near.

⁴ I have been dismissed as one who is dead, like a strong man with no strength left.

⁵ They have abandoned me to death, and I am as good as dead. I am forgotten, cut off from your care.

⁶ You have thrust me down to the lowest pit, into the darkest depths.

⁷ Your anger lies heavy on me; wave after wave engulfs me. Interlude

⁸ You have caused my friends to loathe me; you have sent them all away. I am in a trap with no way of escape.

⁹ My eyes are blinded by my tears. Each day I beg for your help, O LORD; I lift my pleading hands to you for mercy.

¹⁰ Of what use to the dead are your miracles? Do the dead get up and praise you? Interlude

¹¹ Can those in the grave declare your unfailing love? In the place of

destruction, can they proclaim your faithfulness?

¹² Can the darkness speak of your miracles? Can anyone in the land of forgetfulness talk about your righteousness?

¹³ O LORD, I cry out to you. I will keep on pleading day by day.

¹⁴ O LORD, why do you reject me? Why do you turn your face away from me?

¹⁵ I have been sickly and close to death since my youth. I stand helpless and desperate before your terrors.

¹⁶ Your fierce anger has overwhelmed me. Your terrors have cut me off.

¹⁷ They swirl around me like floodwaters all day long. They have encircled me completely.

¹⁸ You have taken away my companions and loved ones; only darkness remains.

89 ¹ “A psalm of Ethan the Ezrahite.”
I will sing of the tender mercies

of the LORD forever! Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.

² Your unfailing love will last forever. Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.

³ The LORD said, "I have made a solemn agreement with David, my chosen servant. I have sworn this oath to him:

⁴ 'I will establish your descendants as kings forever; they will sit on your throne from now until eternity.'" Interlude

⁵ All heaven will praise your miracles, LORD; myriads of angels will praise you for your faithfulness.

⁶ For who in all of heaven can compare with the LORD? What mightiest angel is anything like the LORD?

⁷ The highest angelic powers stand in awe of God. He is far more awesome than those who surround his throne.

⁸ O LORD God Almighty! Where is there anyone as mighty as you, LORD? Faithfulness is your very character.

⁹ You are the one who rules the oceans. When their waves rise in fearful storms, you subdue them.

¹⁰ You are the one who crushed the great sea monster. You scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.

¹¹ The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours; everything in the world is yours—you created it all.

¹² You created north and south. Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon praise your name.

¹³ Powerful is your arm! Strong is your hand! Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength.

¹⁴ Your throne is founded on two strong pillars—righteousness and justice. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.

¹⁵ Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, LORD.

¹⁶ They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation. They exult in your righteousness.

¹⁷ You are their glorious strength. Our power is based on your favor.

¹⁸ Yes, our protection comes from the LORD, and he, the Holy One of Israel, has given us our king.

¹⁹ You once spoke in a vision to your prophet and said, "I have given help to a warrior. I have selected him from the common people to be king.

²⁰ I have found my servant David. I have anointed him with my holy oil.

²¹ I will steady him, and I will make him strong.

²² His enemies will not get the best of him, nor will the wicked overpower him.

²³ I will beat down his adversaries before him and destroy those who hate him.

²⁴ My faithfulness and unfailing love will be with him, and he will rise to power because of me.

²⁵ I will extend his rule from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the east.

²⁶ And he will say to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'

²⁷ I will make him my firstborn son, the mightiest king on earth.

²⁸ I will love him and be kind to him forever; my covenant with him will never end.

²⁹ I will preserve an heir for him; his throne will be as endless as the days of heaven.

³⁰ But if his sons forsake my law and fail to walk in my ways,

³¹ if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands,

³² then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating.

³³ But I will never stop loving him, nor let my promise to him fail.

³⁴ No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said.

³⁵ I have sworn an oath to David, and in my holiness I cannot lie:

³⁶ His dynasty will go on forever; his throne is as secure as the sun,

³⁷ as eternal as the moon, my faithful witness in the sky!" Interlude

³⁸ But now you have rejected him. Why are you so angry with the one you chose as king?

³⁹ You have renounced your covenant with him, for you have thrown his crown in the dust.

⁴⁰ You have broken down the walls protecting him and laid in ruins every fort defending him.

⁴¹ Everyone who comes along has robbed him while his neighbors mock.

⁴² You have strengthened his enemies against him and made them all rejoice.

⁴³ You have made his sword useless and have refused to help him in battle.

⁴⁴ You have ended his splendor and overturned his throne.

⁴⁵ You have made him old before his time and publicly disgraced him.

Interlude

⁴⁶ O LORD, how long will this go on? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your anger burn like fire?

⁴⁷ Remember how short my life is, how empty and futile this human existence!

⁴⁸ No one can live forever; all will die. No one can escape the power of the grave. Interlude

⁴⁹ Lord, where is your unfailing love? You promised it to David with a faithful pledge.

⁵⁰ Consider, Lord, how your servants are disgraced! I carry in my heart the insults of so many people.

⁵¹ Your enemies have mocked me, O LORD; they mock the one you anointed as king.

⁵² Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and amen!

90 ¹ “A prayer of Moses, the man of God.” Lord, through all the generations you have been our home!

² Before the mountains were created, before you made the earth and the world, you are God, without beginning or end.

³ You turn people back to dust, saying, “Return to dust!”

⁴ For you, a thousand years are as yesterday! They are like a few hours!

⁵ You sweep people away like dreams that disappear or like grass that springs up in the morning.

⁶ In the morning it blooms and flourishes, but by evening it is dry and withered.

⁷ We wither beneath your anger; we are overwhelmed by your fury.

⁸ You spread out our sins before you—our secret sins—and you see them all.

⁹ We live our lives beneath your wrath. We end our lives with a groan.

¹⁰ Seventy years are given to us! Some may even reach eighty. But even the best of these years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we are gone.

¹¹ Who can comprehend the power of your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear you deserve.

¹² Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom.

¹³ O LORD, come back to us! How long will you delay? Take pity on your servants!

¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives.

¹⁵ Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery! Replace the evil years with good.

¹⁶ Let us see your miracles again; let our children see your glory at work.

¹⁷ And may the Lord our God show us his approval and make our efforts successful. Yes, make our efforts successful!

91 ¹ Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² This I declare of the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I am trusting him.

³ For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from the fatal plague.

⁴ He will shield you with his wings. He will shelter you with his feathers. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.

⁵ Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor fear the dangers of the day,

⁶ nor dread the plague that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday.

⁷ Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you.

⁸ But you will see it with your eyes; you will see how the wicked are punished.

⁹ If you make the LORD your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter,

¹⁰ no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your dwelling.

¹¹ For he orders his angels to protect you wherever you go.

¹² They will hold you with their hands to keep you from striking your foot on a stone.

¹³ You will trample down lions and poisonous snakes; you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!

¹⁴ The LORD says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name.

¹⁵ When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue them and honor them.

¹⁶ I will satisfy them with a long life and give them my salvation."

92 ¹ "A psalm to be sung on the LORD's Day. A song." It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to the Most High.

² It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning, your faithfulness in the evening,

³ accompanied by the harp and lute and the harmony of the lyre.

⁴ You thrill me, LORD, with all you have done for me! I sing for joy because of what you have done.

⁵ O LORD, what great miracles you do! And how deep are your thoughts.

⁶ Only an ignorant person would not know this! Only a fool would not understand it.

⁷ Although the wicked flourish like weeds, and evildoers blossom with success, there is only eternal destruction ahead of them.

⁸ But you are exalted in the heavens. You, O LORD, continue forever.

⁹ Your enemies, LORD, will surely perish; all evildoers will be scattered.

¹⁰ But you have made me as strong as a wild bull. How refreshed I am by your power!

¹¹ With my own eyes I have seen the downfall of my enemies; with my own ears I have heard the defeat of my wicked opponents.

¹² But the godly will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon.

¹³ For they are transplanted into the LORD's own house. They flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴ Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green.

¹⁵ They will declare, "The LORD is just! He is my rock! There is nothing but goodness in him!"

93 ¹ The LORD is king! He is robed in majesty. Indeed, the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with

strength. The world is firmly established; it cannot be shaken.

² Your throne, O LORD, has been established from time immemorial. You yourself are from the everlasting past.

³ The mighty oceans have roared, O LORD. The mighty oceans roar like thunder; the mighty oceans roar as they pound the shore.

⁴ But mightier than the violent raging of the seas, mightier than the breakers on the shore—the LORD above is mightier than these!

⁵ Your royal decrees cannot be changed. The nature of your reign, O LORD, is holiness forever.

94 ¹ O LORD, the God to whom vengeance belongs, O God of vengeance, let your glorious justice be seen!

² Arise, O judge of the earth. Sentence the proud to the penalties they deserve.

³ How long, O LORD? How long will the wicked be allowed to gloat?

⁴ Hear their arrogance! How these evildoers boast!

⁵ They oppress your people, LORD, hurting those you love.

⁶ They kill widows and foreigners and murder orphans.

⁷ "The LORD isn't looking," they say, "and besides, the God of Israel doesn't care."

⁸ Think again, you fools! When will you finally catch on?

⁹ Is the one who made your ears deaf? Is the one who formed your eyes blind?

¹⁰ He punishes the nations—won't he also punish you? He knows everything—doesn't he also know what you are doing?

¹¹ The LORD knows people's thoughts, that they are worthless!

¹² Happy are those whom you discipline, LORD, and those whom you teach from your law.

¹³ You give them relief from troubled times until a pit is dug for the wicked.

¹⁴ The LORD will not reject his people; he will not abandon his own special possession.

¹⁵ Judgment will come again for the righteous, and those who are upright will have a reward.

¹⁶ Who will protect me from the wicked? Who will stand up for me against evildoers?

¹⁷ Unless the LORD had helped me, I would soon have died.

¹⁸ I cried out, "I'm slipping!" and your unfailing love, O LORD, supported me.

¹⁹ When doubts filled my mind, your comfort gave me renewed hope and cheer.

²⁰ Can unjust leaders claim that God is on their side—leaders who permit injustice by their laws?

²¹ They attack the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.

²² But the LORD is my fortress; my God is a mighty rock where I can hide.

²³ God will make the sins of evil people fall back upon them. He will destroy them for their sins. The LORD our God will destroy them.

95 ¹ Come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us give a joyous shout to the rock of our salvation!

² Let us come before him with thanksgiving. Let us sing him psalms of praise.

³ For the LORD is a great God, the great King above all gods.

⁴ He owns the depths of the earth, and even the mightiest mountains are his.

⁵ The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too.

⁶ Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker,

⁷ for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the sheep under his care. Oh, that you would listen to his voice today!

⁸ The LORD says, "Don't harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness.

⁹ For there your ancestors tried my patience; they courted my wrath though they had seen my many miracles.

¹⁰ For forty years I was angry with them, and I said, 'They are a people whose hearts turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.'

¹¹ So in my anger I made a vow: 'They will never enter my place of rest.'"

96 ¹ Sing a new song to the LORD!
Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!

² Sing to the LORD; bless his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.

³ Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

⁴ Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be revered above all the gods.

⁵ The gods of other nations are merely idols, but the LORD made the heavens!

⁶ Honor and majesty surround him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

⁷ O nations of the world, recognize the LORD; recognize that the LORD is glorious and strong.

⁸ Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come to worship him.

⁹ Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor. Let all the earth tremble before him.

¹⁰ Tell all the nations that the LORD is king. The world is firmly established and cannot be shaken. He will judge all peoples fairly.

¹¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice! Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!

¹² Let the fields and their crops burst forth with joy! Let the trees of the forest rustle with praise

¹³ before the LORD! For the LORD is coming! He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and all the nations with his truth.

97 ¹ The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice! Let the farthest islands be glad.

² Clouds and darkness surround him.
Righteousness and justice are the
foundation of his throne.

³ Fire goes forth before him and burns
up all his foes.

⁴ His lightning flashes out across the
world. The earth sees and trembles.

⁵ The mountains melt like wax before
the LORD, before the Lord of all the
earth.

⁶ The heavens declare his
righteousness; every nation sees
his glory.

⁷ Those who worship idols are
disgraced—all who brag about their
worthless gods—for every god must
bow to him.

⁸ Jerusalem has heard and rejoiced, and
all the cities of Judah are glad because of
your justice, LORD!

⁹ For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰ You who love the LORD, hate evil! He protects the lives of his godly people and rescues them from the power of the wicked.

¹¹ Light shines on the godly, and joy on those who do right.

¹² May all who are godly be happy in the LORD and praise his holy name!

98 ¹ “A psalm.” Sing a new song to the LORD, for he has done wonderful deeds. He has won a mighty victory by his power and holiness.

² The LORD has announced his victory and has revealed his righteousness to every nation!

³ He has remembered his promise to love and be faithful to Israel. The whole earth has seen the salvation of our God.

⁴ Shout to the LORD, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy!

⁵ Sing your praise to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and melodious song,

⁶ with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn. Make a joyful symphony before the LORD, the King!

⁷ Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the earth and all living things join in.

⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands in glee! Let the hills sing out their songs of joy

⁹ before the LORD. For the LORD is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness.

99 ¹ The LORD is king! Let the nations tremble! He sits on his throne between the cherubim. Let the whole earth quake!

² The LORD sits in majesty in Jerusalem, supreme above all the nations.

³ Let them praise your great and awesome name. Your name is holy!

⁴ Mighty king, lover of justice, you have established fairness. You have acted with justice and righteousness throughout Israel.

⁵ Exalt the LORD our God! Bow low before his feet, for he is holy!

⁶ Moses and Aaron were among his priests; Samuel also called on his name. They cried to the LORD for help, and he answered them.

⁷ He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud, and they followed the decrees and principles he gave them.

⁸ O LORD our God, you answered them. You were a forgiving God, but you punished them when they went wrong.

⁹ Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain in Jerusalem, for the LORD our God is holy!

100¹ “A psalm of thanksgiving.”
Shout with joy to the LORD, O
earth!

² Worship the LORD with gladness.
Come before him, singing with joy.

³ Acknowledge that the LORD is God!
He made us, and we are his. We are his
people, the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go
into his courts with praise. Give thanks
to him and bless his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good. His unfailing love
continues forever, and his faithfulness
continues to each generation.

101¹ “A psalm of David.” I will sing
of your love and justice. I will
praise you, LORD, with songs.

² I will be careful to live a blameless
life—when will you come to my aid?
I will lead a life of integrity in my own
home.

³ I will refuse to look at anything vile and vulgar. I hate all crooked dealings; I will have nothing to do with them.

⁴ I will reject perverse ideas and stay away from every evil.

⁵ I will not tolerate people who slander their neighbors. I will not endure conceit and pride.

⁶ I will keep a protective eye on the godly, so they may dwell with me in safety. Only those who are above reproach will be allowed to serve me.

⁷ I will not allow deceivers to serve me, and liars will not be allowed to enter my presence.

⁸ My daily task will be to ferret out criminals and free the city of the LORD from their grip.

102¹ “A prayer of one overwhelmed with trouble, pouring out problems before the LORD.” LORD, hear my prayer! Listen to my plea!

² Don't turn away from me in my time of distress. Bend down your ear and answer me quickly when I call to you,

³ for my days disappear like smoke, and my bones burn like red-hot coals.

⁴ My heart is sick, withered like grass, and I have lost my appetite.

⁵ Because of my groaning, I am reduced to skin and bones.

⁶ I am like an owl in the desert, like a lonely owl in a far-off wilderness.

⁷ I lie awake, lonely as a solitary bird on the roof.

⁸ My enemies taunt me day after day. They mock and curse me.

⁹ I eat ashes instead of my food. My tears run down into my drink

¹⁰ because of your anger and wrath. For you have picked me up and thrown me out.

¹¹ My life passes as swiftly as the evening shadows. I am withering like grass.

¹² But you, O LORD, will rule forever. Your fame will endure to every generation.

¹³ You will arise and have mercy on Jerusalem —and now is the time to pity her, now is the time you promised to help.

¹⁴ For your people love every stone in her walls and show favor even to the dust in her streets.

¹⁵ And the nations will tremble before the LORD. The kings of the earth will tremble before his glory.

¹⁶ For the LORD will rebuild Jerusalem. He will appear in his glory.

¹⁷ He will listen to the prayers of the destitute. He will not reject their pleas.

¹⁸ Let this be recorded for future generations, so that a nation yet to be created will praise the LORD.

¹⁹ Tell them the LORD looked down from his heavenly sanctuary. He looked to the earth from heaven

²⁰ to hear the groans of the prisoners, to release those condemned to die.

²¹ And so the LORD's fame will be celebrated in Zion, his praises in Jerusalem,

²² when multitudes gather together and kingdoms come to worship the LORD.

²³ He has cut me down in midlife, shortening my days.

²⁴ But I cried to him, "My God, who lives forever, don't take my life while I am still so young!

²⁵ In ages past you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

²⁶ Even they will perish, but you remain forever; they will wear out like old clothing. You will change them like a garment, and they will fade away.

²⁷ But you are always the same; your years never end.

²⁸ The children of your people will live in security. Their children's children will thrive in your presence."

103 ¹ "A psalm of David." Praise the LORD, I tell myself; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.

² Praise the LORD, I tell myself, and never forget the good things he does for me.

³ He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.

⁴ He ransoms me from death and surrounds me with love and tender mercies.

⁵ He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

⁶ The LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly.

⁷ He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel.

⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love.

⁹ He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever.

¹⁰ He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve.

¹¹ For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.

¹² He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west.

¹³ The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

¹⁴ For he understands how weak we are; he knows we are only dust.

¹⁵ Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die.

¹⁶ The wind blows, and we are gone—as though we had never been here.

¹⁷ But the love of the LORD remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children's children

¹⁸ of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who obey his commandments!

¹⁹ The LORD has made the heavens his throne; from there he rules over everything.

²⁰ Praise the LORD, you angels of his, you mighty creatures who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands.

²¹ Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will!

²² Praise the LORD, everything he has created, everywhere in his kingdom. As for me—I, too, will praise the LORD.

104 ¹ Praise the LORD, I tell myself;
O LORD my God, how great you are! You are robed with honor and with majesty;

² you are dressed in a robe of light. You stretch out the starry curtain of the heavens;

³ you lay out the rafters of your home in the rain clouds. You make the clouds your chariots; you ride upon the wings of the wind.

⁴ The winds are your messengers; flames of fire are your servants.

⁵ You placed the world on its foundation so it would never be moved.

⁶ You clothed the earth with floods of water, water that covered even the mountains.

⁷ At the sound of your rebuke, the water fled; at the sound of your thunder, it fled away.

⁸ Mountains rose and valleys sank to the levels you decreed.

⁹ Then you set a firm boundary for the seas, so they would never again cover the earth.

¹⁰ You make the springs pour water into ravines, so streams gush down from the mountains.

¹¹ They provide water for all the animals, and the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

¹² The birds nest beside the streams and sing among the branches of the trees.

¹³ You send rain on the mountains from your heavenly home, and you fill the earth with the fruit of your labor.

¹⁴ You cause grass to grow for the cattle. You cause plants to grow for people to

use. You allow them to produce food from the earth—

¹⁵ wine to make them glad, olive oil as lotion for their skin, and bread to give them strength.

¹⁶ The trees of the LORD are well cared for—the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

¹⁷ There the birds make their nests, and the storks make their homes in the firs.

¹⁸ High in the mountains are pastures for the wild goats, and the rocks form a refuge for rock badgers.

¹⁹ You made the moon to mark the seasons and the sun that knows when to set.

²⁰ You send the darkness, and it becomes night, when all the forest animals prowl about.

²¹ Then the young lions roar for their food, but they are dependent on God.

²² At dawn they slink back into their dens to rest.

²³ Then people go off to their work; they labor until the evening shadows fall again.

²⁴ O LORD, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵ Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both great and small.

²⁶ See the ships sailing along, and Leviathan, which you made to play in the sea.

²⁷ Every one of these depends on you to give them their food as they need it.

²⁸ When you supply it, they gather it. You open your hand to feed them, and they are satisfied.

²⁹ But if you turn away from them, they panic. When you take away their breath, they die and turn again to dust.

³⁰ When you send your Spirit, new life is born to replenish all the living of the earth.

³¹ May the glory of the LORD last forever! The LORD rejoices in all he has made!

³² The earth trembles at his glance; the mountains burst into flame at his touch.

³³ I will sing to the LORD as long as I live. I will praise my God to my last breath!

³⁴ May he be pleased by all these thoughts about him, for I rejoice in the LORD.

³⁵ Let all sinners vanish from the face of the earth; let the wicked disappear forever. As for me—I will praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

105 ¹ Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done.

² Sing to him; yes, sing his praises. Tell everyone about his miracles.

³ Exult in his holy name; O worshipers of the LORD, rejoice!

⁴ Search for the LORD and for his strength, and keep on searching.

⁵ Think of the wonderful works he has done, the miracles and the judgments he handed down,

⁶ O children of Abraham, God's servant, O descendants of Jacob, God's chosen one.

⁷ He is the LORD our God. His rule is seen throughout the land.

⁸ He always stands by his covenant—the commitment he made to a thousand generations.

⁹ This is the covenant he made with Abraham and the oath he swore to Isaac.

¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to the people of Israel as a never-ending treaty:

¹¹ "I will give you the land of Canaan as your special possession."

¹² He said this when they were few in number, a tiny group of strangers in Canaan.

¹³ They wandered back and forth between nations, from one kingdom to another.

¹⁴ Yet he did not let anyone oppress them. He warned kings on their behalf:

¹⁵ "Do not touch these people I have chosen, and do not hurt my prophets."

¹⁶ He called for a famine on the land of Canaan, cutting off its food supply.

¹⁷ Then he sent someone to Egypt ahead of them—Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

¹⁸ There in prison, they bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar.

¹⁹ Until the time came to fulfill his word, the LORD tested Joseph's character.

²⁰ Then Pharaoh sent for him and set him free; the ruler of the nation opened his prison door.

²¹ Joseph was put in charge of all the king's household; he became ruler over all the king's possessions.

²² He could instruct the king's aides as he pleased and teach the king's advisers.

²³ Then Israel arrived in Egypt; Jacob lived as a foreigner in the land of Ham.

²⁴ And the LORD multiplied the people of Israel until they became too mighty for their enemies.

²⁵ Then he turned the Egyptians against the Israelites, and they plotted against the LORD's servants.

²⁶ But the LORD sent Moses his servant, along with Aaron, whom he had chosen.

²⁷ They performed miraculous signs among the Egyptians, and miracles in the land of Ham.

²⁸ The LORD blanketed Egypt in darkness, for they had defied his commands to let his people go.

²⁹ He turned the nation's water into blood, poisoning all the fish.

³⁰ Then frogs overran the land; they were found even in the king's private rooms.

³¹ When he spoke, flies descended on the Egyptians, and gnats swarmed across Egypt.

³² Instead of rain, he sent murderous hail, and flashes of lightning overwhelmed the land.

³³ He ruined their grapevines and fig trees and shattered all the trees.

³⁴ He spoke, and hordes of locusts came—locusts beyond number.

³⁵ They ate up everything green in the land, destroying all the crops.

³⁶ Then he killed the oldest child in each Egyptian home, the pride and joy of each family.

³⁷ But he brought his people safely out of Egypt, loaded with silver and gold; there were no sick or feeble people among them.

³⁸ Egypt was glad when they were gone, for the dread of them was great.

³⁹ The LORD spread out a cloud above them as a covering and gave them a great fire to light the darkness.

⁴⁰ They asked for meat, and he sent them quail; he gave them manna—bread from heaven.

⁴¹ He opened up a rock, and water gushed out to form a river through the dry and barren land.

⁴² For he remembered his sacred promise to Abraham his servant.

⁴³ So he brought his people out of Egypt with joy, his chosen ones with rejoicing.

⁴⁴ He gave his people the lands of pagan nations, and they harvested crops that others had planted.

⁴⁵ All this happened so they would follow his principles and obey his laws. Praise the LORD!

106 ¹ Praise the LORD! Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

² Who can list the glorious miracles of the LORD? Who can ever praise him half enough?

³ Happy are those who deal justly with others and always do what is right.

⁴ Remember me, too, LORD, when you show favor to your people; come to me with your salvation.

⁵ Let me share in the prosperity of your chosen ones. Let me rejoice in the joy of your people; let me praise you with those who are your heritage.

⁶ Both we and our ancestors have sinned. We have done wrong! We have acted wickedly!

⁷ Our ancestors in Egypt were not impressed by the LORD's miracles. They soon forgot his many acts of kindness to them. Instead, they rebelled against him at the Red Sea.

⁸ Even so, he saved them—to defend the honor of his name and to demonstrate his mighty power.

⁹ He commanded the Red Sea to divide, and a dry path appeared. He led Israel across the sea bottom that was as dry as a desert.

¹⁰ So he rescued them from their enemies and redeemed them from their foes.

¹¹ Then the water returned and covered their enemies; not one of them survived.

¹² Then at last his people believed his promises. Then they finally sang his praise.

¹³ Yet how quickly they forgot what he had done! They wouldn't wait for his counsel!

¹⁴ In the wilderness, their desires ran wild, testing God's patience in that dry land.

¹⁵ So he gave them what they asked for, but he sent a plague along with it.

¹⁶ The people in the camp were jealous of Moses and envious of Aaron, the LORD's holy priest.

¹⁷ Because of this, the earth opened up; it swallowed Dathan and buried Abiram and the other rebels.

¹⁸ Fire fell upon their followers; a flame consumed the wicked.

¹⁹ The people made a calf at Mount Sinai; they bowed before an image made of gold.

²⁰ They traded their glorious God for a statue of a grass-eating ox!

²¹ They forgot God, their savior, who had done such great things in Egypt—

²² such wonderful things in that land, such awesome deeds at the Red Sea.

²³ So he declared he would destroy them. But Moses, his chosen one, stepped between the LORD and the people. He begged him to turn from his anger and not destroy them.

²⁴ The people refused to enter the pleasant land, for they wouldn't believe his promise to care for them.

²⁵ Instead, they grumbled in their tents and refused to obey the LORD.

²⁶ Therefore, he swore that he would kill them in the wilderness,

²⁷ that he would scatter their descendants among the nations, exiling them to distant lands.

²⁸ Then our ancestors joined in the worship of Baal at Peor; they even ate sacrifices offered to the dead!

²⁹ They angered the LORD with all these things, so a plague broke out among them.

³⁰ But Phinehas had the courage to step in, and the plague was stopped.

³¹ So he has been regarded as a righteous man ever since that time.

³² At Meribah, too, they angered the LORD, causing Moses serious trouble.

³³ They made Moses angry, and he spoke foolishly.

³⁴ Israel failed to destroy the nations in the land, as the LORD had told them to.

³⁵ Instead, they mingled among the pagans and adopted their evil customs.

³⁶ They worshiped their idols, and this led to their downfall.

³⁷ They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons.

³⁸ They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters. By sacrificing them to the idols of Canaan, they polluted the land with murder.

³⁹ They defiled themselves by their evil deeds, and their love of idols was adultery in the LORD's sight.

⁴⁰ That is why the LORD's anger burned against his people, and he abhorred his own special possession.

⁴¹ He handed them over to pagan nations, and those who hated them ruled over them.

⁴² Their enemies crushed them and brought them under their cruel power.

⁴³ Again and again he delivered them, but they continued to rebel against him,

and they were finally destroyed by their sin.

⁴⁴ Even so, he pitied them in their distress and listened to their cries.

⁴⁵ He remembered his covenant with them and relented because of his unfailing love.

⁴⁶ He even caused their captors to treat them with kindness.

⁴⁷ O LORD our God, save us! Gather us back from among the nations, so we can thank your holy name and rejoice and praise you.

⁴⁸ Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the LORD!

107 ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

² Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has saved you from your enemies.

³ For he has gathered the exiles from many lands, from east and west, from north and south.

⁴ Some wandered in the desert, lost and homeless.

⁵ Hungry and thirsty, they nearly died.

⁶ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he rescued them from their distress.

⁷ He led them straight to safety, to a city where they could live.

⁸ Let them praise the LORD for his great love and for all his wonderful deeds to them.

⁹ For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and deepest gloom, miserable prisoners in chains.

¹¹ They rebelled against the words of God, scorning the counsel of the Most High.

¹² That is why he broke them with hard labor; they fell, and no one helped them rise again.

¹³ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

¹⁴ He led them from the darkness and deepest gloom; he snapped their chains.

¹⁵ Let them praise the LORD for his great love and for all his wonderful deeds to them.

¹⁶ For he broke down their prison gates of bronze; he cut apart their bars of iron.

¹⁷ Some were fools in their rebellion; they suffered for their sins.

¹⁸ Their appetites were gone, and death was near.

¹⁹ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

²⁰ He spoke, and they were healed—snatched from the door of death.

²¹ Let them praise the LORD for his great love and for all his wonderful deeds to them.

²² Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and sing joyfully about his glorious acts.

²³ Some went off in ships, plying the trade routes of the world.

²⁴ They, too, observed the LORD's power in action, his impressive works on the deepest seas.

²⁵ He spoke, and the winds rose, stirring up the waves.

²⁶ Their ships were tossed to the heavens and sank again to the depths; the sailors cringed in terror.

²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunkards and were at their wits' end.

²⁸ "LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

²⁹ He calmed the storm to a whisper and stilled the waves.

³⁰ What a blessing was that stillness as he brought them safely into harbor!

³¹ Let them praise the LORD for his great love and for all his wonderful deeds to them.

³² Let them exalt him publicly before the congregation and before the leaders of the nation.

³³ He changes rivers into deserts, and springs of water into dry land.

³⁴ He turns the fruitful land into salty wastelands, because of the wickedness of those who live there.

³⁵ But he also turns deserts into pools of water, the dry land into flowing springs.

³⁶ He brings the hungry to settle there and build their cities.

³⁷ They sow their fields, plant their vineyards, and harvest their bumper crops.

³⁸ How he blesses them! They raise large families there, and their herds of cattle increase.

³⁹ When they decrease in number and become impoverished through oppression, trouble, and sorrow,

⁴⁰ the LORD pours contempt on their princes, causing them to wander in trackless wastelands.

⁴¹ But he rescues the poor from their distress and increases their families like vast flocks of sheep.

⁴² The godly will see these things and be glad, while the wicked are stricken silent.

⁴³ Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love of the LORD.

108 ¹ “A psalm of David. A song.”
My heart is confident in you, O God; no wonder I can sing your praises! Wake up, my soul!

² Wake up, O harp and lyre! I will waken the dawn with my song.

³ I will thank you, LORD, in front of all the people. I will sing your praises among the nations.

⁴ For your unfailing love is higher than the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens. May your glory shine over all the earth.

⁶ Use your strong right arm to save me, and rescue your beloved people.

⁷ God has promised this by his holiness: "I will divide up Shechem with joy. I will measure out the valley of Succoth.

⁸ Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine. Ephraim will produce my warriors, and Judah will produce my kings.

⁹ Moab will become my lowly servant, and Edom will be my slave. I will shout in triumph over the Philistines."

¹⁰ But who will bring me into the fortified city? Who will bring me victory over Edom?

¹¹ Have you rejected us, O God? Will you no longer march with our armies?

¹² Oh, please help us against our enemies, for all human help is useless.

¹³ With God's help we will do mighty things, for he will trample down our foes.

109 ¹ "For the choir director: A psalm of David." O God, whom I praise, don't stand silent and aloof

² while the wicked slander me and tell lies about me.

³ They are all around me with their hateful words, and they fight against me for no reason.

⁴ I love them, but they try to destroy me—even as I am praying for them!

⁵ They return evil for good, and hatred for my love.

⁶ Arrange for an evil person to turn on him. Send an accuser to bring him to trial.

⁷ When his case is called for judgment, let him be pronounced guilty. Count his prayers as sins.

⁸ Let his years be few; let his position be given to someone else.

⁹ May his children become fatherless, and may his wife become a widow.

¹⁰ May his children wander as beggars; may they be evicted from their ruined homes.

¹¹ May creditors seize his entire estate, and strangers take all he has earned.

¹² Let no one be kind to him; let no one pity his fatherless children.

¹³ May all his offspring die. May his family name be blotted out in a single generation.

¹⁴ May the LORD never forget the sins of his ancestors; may his mother's sins never be erased from the record.

¹⁵ May these sins always remain before the LORD, but may his name be cut off from human memory.

¹⁶ For he refused all kindness to others; he persecuted the poor and needy, and he hounded the brokenhearted to death.

¹⁷ He loved to curse others; now you curse him. He never blessed others; now don't you bless him.

¹⁸ Cursing is as much a part of him as his clothing, or as the water he drinks, or the rich food he eats.

¹⁹ Now may his curses return and cling to him like clothing; may they be tied around him like a belt.

²⁰ May those curses become the LORD's punishment for my accusers who are plotting against my life.

²¹ But deal well with me, O Sovereign LORD, for the sake of your own reputation! Rescue me because you are so faithful and good.

²² For I am poor and needy, and my heart is full of pain.

²³ I am fading like a shadow at dusk; I am falling like a grasshopper that is brushed aside.

²⁴ My knees are weak from fasting, and I am skin and bones.

²⁵ I am an object of mockery to people everywhere; when they see me, they shake their heads.

²⁶ Help me, O LORD my God! Save me because of your unfailing love.

²⁷ Let them see that this is your doing, that you yourself have done it, LORD.

²⁸ Then let them curse me if they like, but you will bless me! When they attack me, they will be disgraced! But I, your servant, will go right on rejoicing!

²⁹ Make their humiliation obvious to all; clothe my accusers with disgrace.

³⁰ But I will give repeated thanks to the LORD, praising him to everyone.

³¹ For he stands beside the needy, ready to save them from those who condemn them.

110 ¹ “A psalm of David.” The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit in honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet.”

² The LORD will extend your powerful dominion from Jerusalem; you will rule over your enemies.

³ In that day of battle, your people will serve you willingly. Arrayed in holy garments, your vigor will be renewed each day like the morning dew.

⁴ The LORD has taken an oath and will not break his vow: "You are a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek."

⁵ The Lord stands at your right hand to protect you. He will strike down many kings in the day of his anger.

⁶ He will punish the nations and fill them with their dead; he will shatter heads over the whole earth.

⁷ But he himself will be refreshed from brooks along the way. He will be victorious.

111 ¹ Praise the LORD! I will thank the LORD with all my heart as I meet with his godly people.

² How amazing are the deeds of the LORD! All who delight in him should ponder them.

³ Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty. His righteousness never fails.

⁴ Who can forget the wonders he performs? How gracious and merciful is our LORD!

⁵ He gives food to those who trust him; he always remembers his covenant.

⁶ He has shown his great power to his people by giving them the lands of other nations.

⁷ All he does is just and good, and all his commandments are trustworthy.

⁸ They are forever true, to be obeyed faithfully and with integrity.

⁹ He has paid a full ransom for his people. He has guaranteed his covenant with them forever. What a holy, awe–inspiring name he has!

¹⁰ Reverence for the LORD is the foundation of true wisdom. The rewards

of wisdom come to all who obey him.
Praise his name forever!

112 ¹ Praise the LORD! Happy are those who fear the LORD. Yes, happy are those who delight in doing what he commands.

² Their children will be successful everywhere; an entire generation of godly people will be blessed.

³ They themselves will be wealthy, and their good deeds will never be forgotten.

⁴ When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous.

⁵ All goes well for those who are generous, who lend freely and conduct their business fairly.

⁶ Such people will not be overcome by evil circumstances. Those who are righteous will be long remembered.

⁷ They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the LORD to care for them.

⁸ They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly.

⁹ They give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will never be forgotten. They will have influence and honor.

¹⁰ The wicked will be infuriated when they see this. They will grind their teeth in anger; they will slink away, their hopes thwarted.

113 ¹ Praise the LORD! Yes, give praise, O servants of the LORD. Praise the name of the LORD!

² Blessed be the name of the LORD forever and ever.

³ Everywhere—from east to west—praise the name of the LORD.

⁴ For the LORD is high above the nations; his glory is far greater than the heavens.

⁵ Who can be compared with the LORD our God, who is enthroned on high?

⁶ Far below him are the heavens and the earth. He stoops to look,

⁷ and he lifts the poor from the dirt and the needy from the garbage dump.

⁸ He sets them among princes, even the princes of his own people!

⁹ He gives the barren woman a home, so that she becomes a happy mother. Praise the LORD!

114 ¹ When the Israelites escaped from Egypt—when the family of Jacob left that foreign land—

² the land of Judah became God's sanctuary, and Israel became his kingdom.

³ The Red Sea saw them coming and hurried out of their way! The water of the Jordan River turned away.

⁴ The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs!

⁵ What's wrong, Red Sea, that made you hurry out of their way? What happened, Jordan River, that you turned away?

⁶ Why, mountains, did you skip like rams? Why, little hills, like lambs?

⁷ Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Israel.

⁸ He turned the rock into pools of water; yes, springs of water came from solid rock.

115 ¹ Not to us, O LORD, but to you goes all the glory for your unfailing love and faithfulness.

² Why let the nations say, "Where is their God?"

³ For our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes.

⁴ Their idols are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands.

⁵ They cannot talk, though they have mouths, or see, though they have eyes!

⁶ They cannot hear with their ears, or smell with their noses,

⁷ or feel with their hands, or walk with their feet, or utter sounds with their throats!

⁸ And those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

⁹ O Israel, trust the LORD! He is your helper; he is your shield.

¹⁰ O priests of Aaron, trust the LORD! He is your helper; he is your shield.

¹¹ All you who fear the LORD, trust the LORD! He is your helper; he is your shield.

¹² The LORD remembers us, and he will surely bless us. He will bless the people of Israel and the family of Aaron, the priests.

¹³ He will bless those who fear the LORD, both great and small.

¹⁴ May the LORD richly bless both you and your children.

¹⁵ May you be blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

¹⁶ The heavens belong to the LORD, but he has given the earth to all humanity.

¹⁷ The dead cannot sing praises to the LORD, for they have gone into the silence of the grave.

¹⁸ But we can praise the LORD both now and forever! Praise the LORD!

116 ¹ I love the LORD because he hears and answers my prayers.

² Because he bends down and listens, I will pray as long as I have breath!

³ Death had its hands around my throat; the terrors of the grave overtook me. I saw only trouble and sorrow.

⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD: "Please, LORD, save me!"

⁵ How kind the LORD is! How good he is! So merciful, this God of ours!

⁶ The LORD protects those of childlike faith; I was facing death, and then he saved me.

⁷ Now I can rest again, for the LORD has been so good to me.

⁸ He has saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

⁹ And so I walk in the LORD's presence as I live here on earth!

¹⁰ I believed in you, so I prayed, "I am deeply troubled, LORD."

¹¹ In my anxiety I cried out to you, "These people are all liars!"

¹² What can I offer the LORD for all he has done for me?

¹³ I will lift up a cup symbolizing his salvation; I will praise the LORD's name for saving me.

¹⁴ I will keep my promises to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ The LORD's loved ones are precious to him; it grieves him when they die.

¹⁶ O LORD, I am your servant; yes, I am your servant, the son of your handmaid, and you have freed me from my bonds!

¹⁷ I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.

¹⁸ I will keep my promises to the LORD in the presence of all his people,

¹⁹ in the house of the LORD, in the heart of Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

117 ¹ Praise the LORD, all you nations. Praise him, all you people of the earth.

² For he loves us with unfailing love; the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

118 ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

² Let the congregation of Israel repeat: "His faithful love endures forever."

³ Let Aaron's descendants, the priests, repeat: "His faithful love endures forever."

⁴ Let all who fear the LORD repeat: "His faithful love endures forever."

⁵ In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and rescued me.

⁶ The LORD is for me, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

⁷ Yes, the LORD is for me; he will help me. I will look in triumph at those who hate me.

⁸ It is better to trust the LORD than to put confidence in people.

⁹ It is better to trust the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

¹⁰ Though hostile nations surrounded me, I destroyed them all in the name of the LORD.

¹¹ Yes, they surrounded and attacked me, but I destroyed them all in the name of the LORD.

¹² They swarmed around me like bees; they blazed against me like a roaring flame. But I destroyed them all in the name of the LORD.

¹³ You did your best to kill me, O my enemy, but the LORD helped me.

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my victory.

¹⁵ Songs of joy and victory are sung in the camp of the godly. The strong right arm of the LORD has done glorious things!

¹⁶ The strong right arm of the LORD is raised in triumph. The strong right arm of the LORD has done glorious things!

¹⁷ I will not die, but I will live to tell what the LORD has done.

¹⁸ The LORD has punished me severely, but he has not handed me over to death.

¹⁹ Open for me the gates where the righteous enter, and I will go in and thank the LORD.

²⁰ Those gates lead to the presence of the LORD, and the godly enter there.

²¹ I thank you for answering my prayer and saving me!

²² The stone rejected by the builders has now become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous to see.

²⁴ This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Please, LORD, please save us. Please, LORD, please give us success.

²⁶ Bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God, shining upon us. Bring forward the sacrifice and put it on the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you!
You are my God, and I will exalt you!

²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

119 ¹ Happy are people of integrity,
who follow the law of the LORD.

² Happy are those who obey his decrees and search for him with all their hearts.

³ They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths.

⁴ You have charged us to keep your commandments carefully.

⁵ Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your principles!

⁶ Then I will not be disgraced when I compare my life with your commands.

⁷ When I learn your righteous laws, I will thank you by living as I should!

⁸ I will obey your principles. Please don't give up on me!

⁹ How can a young person stay pure?
By obeying your word and following its
rules.

¹⁰ I have tried my best to find you—
—don't let me wander from your
commands.

¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.

¹² Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me
your principles.

¹³ I have recited aloud all the laws you
have given us.

¹⁴ I have rejoiced in your decrees as
much as in riches.

¹⁵ I will study your commandments and
reflect on your ways.

¹⁶ I will delight in your principles and
not forget your word.

¹⁷ Be good to your servant, that I may
live and obey your word.

¹⁸ Open my eyes to see the wonderful
truths in your law.

¹⁹ I am but a foreigner here on earth; I need the guidance of your commands. Don't hide them from me!

²⁰ I am overwhelmed continually with a desire for your laws.

²¹ You rebuke those cursed proud ones who wander from your commands.

²² Don't let them scorn and insult me, for I have obeyed your decrees.

²³ Even princes sit and speak against me, but I will meditate on your principles.

²⁴ Your decrees please me; they give me wise advice.

²⁵ I lie in the dust, completely discouraged; revive me by your word.

²⁶ I told you my plans, and you answered. Now teach me your principles.

²⁷ Help me understand the meaning of your commandments, and I will meditate on your wonderful miracles.

²⁸ I weep with grief; encourage me by your word.

²⁹ Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your law.

³⁰ I have chosen to be faithful; I have determined to live by your laws.

³¹ I cling to your decrees. LORD, don't let me be put to shame!

³² If you will help me, I will run to follow your commands.

³³ Teach me, O LORD, to follow every one of your principles.

³⁴ Give me understanding and I will obey your law; I will put it into practice with all my heart.

³⁵ Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my happiness is found.

³⁶ Give me an eagerness for your decrees; do not inflict me with love for money!

³⁷ Turn my eyes from worthless things,
and give me life through your word.

³⁸ Reassure me of your promise, which
is for those who honor you.

³⁹ Help me abandon my shameful ways;
your laws are all I want in life.

⁴⁰ I long to obey your commandments!
Renew my life with your goodness.

⁴¹ LORD, give to me your unfailing love,
the salvation that you promised me.

⁴² Then I will have an answer for those
who taunt me, for I trust in your word.

⁴³ Do not snatch your word of truth
from me, for my only hope is in your
laws.

⁴⁴ I will keep on obeying your law
forever and forever.

⁴⁵ I will walk in freedom, for I have
devoted myself to your commandments.

⁴⁶ I will speak to kings about your
decrees, and I will not be ashamed.

⁴⁷ How I delight in your commands!
How I love them!

⁴⁸ I honor and love your commands. I
meditate on your principles.

⁴⁹ Remember your promise to me, for it
is my only hope.

⁵⁰ Your promise revives me; it comforts
me in all my troubles.

⁵¹ The proud hold me in utter contempt,
but I do not turn away from your law.

⁵² I meditate on your age-old laws; O
LORD, they comfort me.

⁵³ I am furious with the wicked, those
who reject your law.

⁵⁴ Your principles have been the music
of my life throughout the years of my
pilgrimage.

⁵⁵ I reflect at night on who you are, O
LORD, and I obey your law because of
this.

⁵⁶ This is my happy way of life: obeying
your commandments.

⁵⁷ LORD, you are mine! I promise to obey your words!

⁵⁸ With all my heart I want your blessings. Be merciful just as you promised.

⁵⁹ I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your statutes.

⁶⁰ I will hurry, without lingering, to obey your commands.

⁶¹ Evil people try to drag me into sin, but I am firmly anchored to your law.

⁶² At midnight I rise to thank you for your just laws.

⁶³ Anyone who fears you is my friend—anyone who obeys your commandments.

⁶⁴ O LORD, the earth is full of your unfailing love; teach me your principles.

⁶⁵ You have done many good things for me, LORD, just as you promised.

⁶⁶ I believe in your commands;
now teach me good judgment and
knowledge.

⁶⁷ I used to wander off until you
disciplined me; but now I closely follow
your word.

⁶⁸ You are good and do only good; teach
me your principles.

⁶⁹ Arrogant people have made up lies
about me, but in truth I obey your
commandments with all my heart.

⁷⁰ Their hearts are dull and stupid, but I
delight in your law.

⁷¹ The suffering you sent was good for
me, for it taught me to pay attention to
your principles.

⁷² Your law is more valuable to me than
millions in gold and silver!

⁷³ You made me; you created me.
Now give me the sense to follow your
commands.

⁷⁴ May all who fear you find in me a cause for joy, for I have put my hope in your word.

⁷⁵ I know, O LORD, that your decisions are fair; you disciplined me because I needed it.

⁷⁶ Now let your unfailing love comfort me, just as you promised me, your servant.

⁷⁷ Surround me with your tender mercies so I may live, for your law is my delight.

⁷⁸ Bring disgrace upon the arrogant people who lied about me; meanwhile, I will concentrate on your commandments.

⁷⁹ Let me be reconciled with all who fear you and know your decrees.

⁸⁰ May I be blameless in keeping your principles; then I will never have to be ashamed.

⁸¹ I faint with longing for your salvation; but I have put my hope in your word.

⁸² My eyes are straining to see your promises come true. When will you comfort me?

⁸³ I am shriveled like a wineskin in the smoke, exhausted with waiting. But I cling to your principles and obey them.

⁸⁴ How long must I wait? When will you punish those who persecute me?

⁸⁵ These arrogant people who hate your law have dug deep pits for me to fall into.

⁸⁶ All your commands are trustworthy. Protect me from those who hunt me down without cause.

⁸⁷ They almost finished me off, but I refused to abandon your commandments.

⁸⁸ In your unfailing love, spare my life; then I can continue to obey your decrees.

⁸⁹ Forever, O LORD, your word stands firm in heaven.

⁹⁰ Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created.

⁹¹ Your laws remain true today, for everything serves your plans.

⁹² If your law hadn't sustained me with joy, I would have died in my misery.

⁹³ I will never forget your commandments, for you have used them to restore my joy and health.

⁹⁴ I am yours; save me! For I have applied myself to obey your commandments.

⁹⁵ Though the wicked hide along the way to kill me, I will quietly keep my mind on your decrees.

⁹⁶ Even perfection has its limits, but your commands have no limit.

⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law! I think about it all day long.

⁹⁸ Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for your commands are my constant guide.

⁹⁹ Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your decrees.

¹⁰⁰ I am even wiser than my elders, for I have kept your commandments.

¹⁰¹ I have refused to walk on any path of evil, that I may remain obedient to your word.

¹⁰² I haven't turned away from your laws, for you have taught me well.

¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste; they are sweeter than honey.

¹⁰⁴ Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

¹⁰⁶ I've promised it once, and I'll promise again: I will obey your wonderful laws.

¹⁰⁷ I have suffered much, O LORD; restore my life again, just as you promised.

¹⁰⁸ LORD, accept my grateful thanks and teach me your laws.

¹⁰⁹ My life constantly hangs in the balance, but I will not stop obeying your law.

¹¹⁰ The wicked have set their traps for me along your path, but I will not turn from your commandments.

¹¹¹ Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight.

¹¹² I am determined to keep your principles, even forever, to the very end.

¹¹³ I hate those who are undecided about you, but my choice is clear—I love your law.

¹¹⁴ You are my refuge and my shield;
your word is my only source of hope.

¹¹⁵ Get out of my life, you evil-minded
people, for I intend to obey the
commands of my God.

¹¹⁶ LORD, sustain me as you promised,
that I may live! Do not let my hope be
crushed.

¹¹⁷ Sustain me, and I will be saved;
then I will meditate on your principles
continually.

¹¹⁸ But you have rejected all who stray
from your principles. They are only
fooling themselves.

¹¹⁹ All the wicked of the earth are the
scum you skim off; no wonder I love to
obey your decrees!

¹²⁰ I tremble in fear of you; I fear your
judgments.

¹²¹ Don't leave me to the mercy of my
enemies, for I have done what is just and
right.

¹²² Please guarantee a blessing for me.
Don't let those who are arrogant oppress me!

¹²³ My eyes strain to see your deliverance, to see the truth of your promise fulfilled.

¹²⁴ I am your servant; deal with me in unfailing love, and teach me your principles.

¹²⁵ Give discernment to me, your servant; then I will understand your decrees.

¹²⁶ LORD, it is time for you to act, for these evil people have broken your law.

¹²⁷ Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold.

¹²⁸ Truly, each of your commandments is right. That is why I hate every false way.

¹²⁹ Your decrees are wonderful. No wonder I obey them!

¹³⁰ As your words are taught, they give light; even the simple can understand them.

¹³¹ I open my mouth, panting expectantly, longing for your commands.

¹³² Come and show me your mercy, as you do for all who love your name.

¹³³ Guide my steps by your word, so I will not be overcome by any evil.

¹³⁴ Rescue me from the oppression of evil people; then I can obey your commandments.

¹³⁵ Look down on me with love; teach me all your principles.

¹³⁶ Rivers of tears gush from my eyes because people disobey your law.

¹³⁷ O LORD, you are righteous, and your decisions are fair.

¹³⁸ Your decrees are perfect; they are entirely worthy of our trust.

¹³⁹ I am overwhelmed with rage, for my enemies have disregarded your words.

¹⁴⁰ Your promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much.

¹⁴¹ I am insignificant and despised, but I don't forget your commandments.

¹⁴² Your justice is eternal, and your law is perfectly true.

¹⁴³ As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands.

¹⁴⁴ Your decrees are always fair; help me to understand them, that I may live.

¹⁴⁵ I pray with all my heart; answer me, LORD! I will obey your principles.

¹⁴⁶ I cry out to you; save me, that I may obey your decrees.

¹⁴⁷ I rise early, before the sun is up; I cry out for help and put my hope in your words.

¹⁴⁸ I stay awake through the night, thinking about your promise.

¹⁴⁹ In your faithful love, O LORD, hear my cry; in your justice, save my life.

¹⁵⁰ Those lawless people are coming near to attack me; they live far from your law.

¹⁵¹ But you are near, O LORD, and all your commands are true.

¹⁵² I have known from my earliest days that your decrees never change.

¹⁵³ Look down upon my sorrows and rescue me, for I have not forgotten your law.

¹⁵⁴ Argue my case; take my side! Protect my life as you promised.

¹⁵⁵ The wicked are far from salvation, for they do not bother with your principles.

¹⁵⁶ LORD, how great is your mercy; in your justice, give me back my life.

¹⁵⁷ Many persecute and trouble me, yet I have not swerved from your decrees.

¹⁵⁸ I hate these traitors because they care nothing for your word.

¹⁵⁹ See how I love your commandments, LORD. Give back my life because of your unfailing love.

¹⁶⁰ All your words are true; all your just laws will stand forever.

¹⁶¹ Powerful people harass me without cause, but my heart trembles only at your word.

¹⁶² I rejoice in your word like one who finds a great treasure.

¹⁶³ I hate and abhor all falsehood, but I love your law.

¹⁶⁴ I will praise you seven times a day because all your laws are just.

¹⁶⁵ Those who love your law have great peace and do not stumble.

¹⁶⁶ I long for your salvation, LORD, so I have obeyed your commands.

¹⁶⁷ I have obeyed your decrees, and I love them very much.

¹⁶⁸ Yes, I obey your commandments and decrees, because you know everything I do.

¹⁶⁹ O LORD, listen to my cry; give me the discerning mind you promised.

¹⁷⁰ Listen to my prayer; rescue me as you promised.

¹⁷¹ Let my lips burst forth with praise, for you have taught me your principles.

¹⁷² Let my tongue sing about your word, for all your commands are right.

¹⁷³ Stand ready to help me, for I have chosen to follow your commandments.

¹⁷⁴ O LORD, I have longed for your salvation, and your law is my delight.

¹⁷⁵ Let me live so I can praise you, and may your laws sustain me.

¹⁷⁶ I have wandered away like a lost sheep; come and find me, for I have not forgotten your commands.

120 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem.” I took my troubles

to the LORD; I cried out to him, and he answered my prayer.

² Rescue me, O LORD, from liars and from all deceitful people.

³ O deceptive tongue, what will God do to you? How will he increase your punishment?

⁴ You will be pierced with sharp arrows and burned with glowing coals.

⁵ How I suffer among these scoundrels of Meshech! It pains me to live with these people from Kedar!

⁶ I am tired of living here among people who hate peace.

⁷ As for me, I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war!

121 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem.” I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there?

² My help comes from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth!

³ He will not let you stumble and fall; the one who watches over you will not sleep.

⁴ Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps.

⁵ The LORD himself watches over you! The LORD stands beside you as your protective shade.

⁶ The sun will not hurt you by day, nor the moon at night.

⁷ The LORD keeps you from all evil and preserves your life.

⁸ The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.

122 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.”
I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”

² And now we are standing here inside your gates, O Jerusalem.

³ Jerusalem is a well–built city, knit together as a single unit.

⁴ All the people of Israel—the LORD’s people—make their pilgrimage here. They come to give thanks to the name of the LORD as the law requires.

⁵ Here stand the thrones where judgment is given, the thrones of the dynasty of David.

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May all who love this city prosper.

⁷ O Jerusalem, may there be peace within your walls and prosperity in your palaces.

⁸ For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, "Peace be with you."

⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek what is best for you, O Jerusalem.

123 ¹ "A song for the ascent to Jerusalem." I lift my eyes to you, O God, enthroned in heaven.

² We look to the LORD our God for his mercy, just as servants keep their eyes

on their master, as a slave girl watches her mistress for the slightest signal.

³ Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy, for we have had our fill of contempt.

⁴ We have had our fill of the scoffing of the proud and the contempt of the arrogant.

124 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.” If the LORD had not been on our side—let Israel now say—

² if the LORD had not been on our side when people rose up against us,

³ they would have swallowed us alive because of their burning anger against us.

⁴ The waters would have engulfed us; a torrent would have overwhelmed us.

⁵ Yes, the raging waters of their fury would have overwhelmed our very lives.

⁶ Blessed be the LORD, who did not let their teeth tear us apart!

⁷ We escaped like a bird from a hunter's trap. The trap is broken, and we are free!

⁸ Our help is from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth.

125 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem.” Those who trust in the LORD are as secure as Mount Zion; they will not be defeated but will endure forever.

² Just as the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds and protects his people, both now and forever.

³ The wicked will not rule the godly, for then the godly might be forced to do wrong.

⁴ O LORD, do good to those who are good, whose hearts are in tune with you.

⁵ But banish those who turn to crooked ways, O LORD. Take them away with those who do evil. And let Israel have quietness and peace.

126 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem.” When the LORD restored his exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream!

² We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, “What amazing things the LORD has done for them.”

³ Yes, the LORD has done amazing things for us! What joy!

⁴ Restore our fortunes, LORD, as streams renew the desert.

⁵ Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy.

⁶ They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

127 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem. A psalm of Solomon.” Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is

useless. Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good.

² It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones.

³ Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.

⁴ Children born to a young man are like sharp arrows in a warrior's hands.

⁵ How happy is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.

128 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem.” How happy are those who fear the LORD—all who follow his ways!

² You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How happy you will be! How rich your life!

³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine, flourishing within your home. And look at all those children! There they sit around your table as vigorous and healthy as young olive trees.

⁴ That is the LORD's reward for those who fear him.

⁵ May the LORD continually bless you from Zion. May you see Jerusalem prosper as long as you live.

⁶ May you live to enjoy your grandchildren. And may Israel have quietness and peace.

129 ¹ "A song for the ascent to Jerusalem." From my earliest youth my enemies have persecuted me—let Israel now say—

² from my earliest youth my enemies have persecuted me, but they have never been able to finish me off.

³ My back is covered with cuts, as if a farmer had plowed long furrows.

⁴ But the LORD is good; he has cut the cords used by the ungodly to bind me.

⁵ May all who hate Jerusalem be turned back in shameful defeat.

⁶ May they be as useless as grass on a rooftop, turning yellow when only half grown,

⁷ ignored by the harvester, despised by the binder.

⁸ And may those who pass by refuse to give them this blessing: "The LORD's blessings be upon you; we bless you in the LORD's name."

130¹ "A song for the ascent to Jerusalem." From the depths of despair, O LORD, I call for your help.

² Hear my cry, O Lord. Pay attention to my prayer.

³ LORD, if you kept a record of our sins, who, O Lord, could ever survive?

⁴ But you offer forgiveness, that we might learn to fear you.

⁵ I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word.

⁶ I long for the Lord more than sentries long for the dawn, yes, more than sentries long for the dawn.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is unfailing love and an overflowing supply of salvation.

⁸ He himself will free Israel from every kind of sin.

131 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem. A psalm of David.”
LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don’t concern myself with matters too great or awesome for me.

² But I have stilled and quieted myself, just as a small child is quiet with its mother. Yes, like a small child is my soul within me.

³ O Israel, put your hope in the LORD—now and always.

132 ¹ “A song for the ascent to Jerusalem.” LORD, remember David and all that he suffered.

² He took an oath before the LORD. He vowed to the Mighty One of Israel,

³ “I will not go home; I will not let myself rest.

⁴ I will not let my eyes sleep nor close my eyelids in slumber

⁵ until I find a place to build a house for the LORD, a sanctuary for the Mighty One of Israel.”

⁶ We heard that the Ark was in Ephrathah; then we found it in the distant countryside of Jaar.

⁷ Let us go to the dwelling place of the LORD; let us bow low before him.

⁸ Arise, O LORD, and enter your sanctuary, along with the Ark, the symbol of your power.

⁹ Your priests will be agents of salvation; may your loyal servants sing for joy.

¹⁰ For the sake of your servant David, do not reject the king you chose for your people.

¹¹ The LORD swore to David a promise he will never take back: "I will place one of your descendants on your throne.

¹² If your descendants obey the terms of my covenant and follow the decrees that I teach them, then your royal line will never end."

¹³ For the LORD has chosen Jerusalem; he has desired it as his home.

¹⁴ "This is my home where I will live forever," he said. "I will live here, for this is the place I desired.

¹⁵ I will make this city prosperous and satisfy its poor with food.

¹⁶ I will make its priests the agents of salvation; its godly people will sing for joy.

¹⁷ Here I will increase the power of David; my anointed one will be a light for my people.

¹⁸ I will clothe his enemies with shame, but he will be a glorious king."

133 ¹ "A song for the ascent to Jerusalem. A psalm of David." How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when brothers live together in harmony!

² For harmony is as precious as the fragrant anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe.

³ Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And the LORD has pronounced his blessing, even life forevermore.

134 ¹ "A song for the ascent to Jerusalem." Oh, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, you

who serve as night watchmen in the house of the LORD.

² Lift your hands in holiness, and bless the LORD.

³ May the LORD, who made heaven and earth, bless you from Jerusalem.

135 ¹ Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD! Praise him, you who serve the LORD,

² you who serve in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.

³ Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; celebrate his wonderful name with music.

⁴ For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel for his own special treasure.

⁵ I know the greatness of the LORD—that our Lord is greater than any other god.

⁶ The LORD does whatever pleases him throughout all heaven and earth, and on the seas and in their depths.

⁷ He causes the clouds to rise over the earth. He sends the lightning with the rain and releases the wind from his storehouses.

⁸ He destroyed the firstborn in each Egyptian home, both people and animals.

⁹ He performed miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt; Pharaoh and all his people watched.

¹⁰ He struck down great nations and slaughtered mighty kings—

¹¹ Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan, and all the kings of Canaan.

¹² He gave their land as an inheritance, a special possession to his people Israel.

¹³ Your name, O LORD, endures forever; your fame, O LORD, is known to every generation.

¹⁴ For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.

¹⁵ Their idols are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands.

¹⁶ They cannot talk, though they have mouths, or see, though they have eyes!

¹⁷ They cannot hear with their ears or smell with their noses.

¹⁸ And those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

¹⁹ O Israel, praise the LORD! O priests of Aaron, praise the LORD!

²⁰ O Levites, praise the LORD! All you who fear the LORD, praise the LORD!

²¹ The LORD be praised from Zion, for he lives here in Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

136 ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.

² Give thanks to the God of gods. His faithful love endures forever.

³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords. His faithful love endures forever.

⁴ Give thanks to him who alone does mighty miracles. His faithful love endures forever.

⁵ Give thanks to him who made the heavens so skillfully. His faithful love endures forever.

⁶ Give thanks to him who placed the earth on the water. His faithful love endures forever.

⁷ Give thanks to him who made the heavenly lights—His faithful love endures forever.

⁸ the sun to rule the day, His faithful love endures forever.

⁹ and the moon and stars to rule the night. His faithful love endures forever.

¹⁰ Give thanks to him who killed the firstborn of Egypt. His faithful love endures forever.

¹¹ He brought Israel out of Egypt. His faithful love endures forever.

¹² He acted with a strong hand and powerful arm. His faithful love endures forever.

¹³ Give thanks to him who parted the Red Sea. His faithful love endures forever.

¹⁴ He led Israel safely through, His faithful love endures forever.

¹⁵ but he hurled Pharaoh and his army into the sea. His faithful love endures forever.

¹⁶ Give thanks to him who led his people through the wilderness. His faithful love endures forever.

¹⁷ Give thanks to him who struck down mighty kings. His faithful love endures forever.

¹⁸ He killed powerful kings—His faithful love endures forever.

¹⁹ Sihon king of the Amorites, His faithful love endures forever.

²⁰ and Og king of Bashan. His faithful love endures forever.

²¹ God gave the land of these kings as an inheritance—His faithful love endures forever.

²² a special possession to his servant Israel. His faithful love endures forever.

²³ He remembered our utter weakness. His faithful love endures forever.

²⁴ He saved us from our enemies. His faithful love endures forever.

²⁵ He gives food to every living thing. His faithful love endures forever.

²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven. His faithful love endures forever.

137 ¹ Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept as we thought of Jerusalem.

² We put away our lyres, hanging them on the branches of the willow trees.

³ For there our captors demanded a song of us. Our tormentors requested a joyful hymn: "Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!"

⁴ But how can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill upon the harp.

⁶ May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember you, if I don't make Jerusalem my highest joy.

⁷ O LORD, remember what the Edomites did on the day the armies of Babylon captured Jerusalem. "Destroy it!" they yelled. "Level it to the ground!"

⁸ O Babylon, you will be destroyed. Happy is the one who pays you back for what you have done to us.

⁹ Happy is the one who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!

138 ¹ “A psalm of David.” I give you thanks, O LORD, with all my heart; I will sing your praises before the gods.

² I bow before your holy Temple as I worship. I will give thanks to your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness, because your promises are backed by all the honor of your name.

³ When I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me the strength I need.

⁴ Every king in all the earth will give you thanks, O LORD, for all of them will hear your words.

⁵ Yes, they will sing about the LORD’s ways, for the glory of the LORD is very great.

⁶ Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud.

⁷ Though I am surrounded by troubles, you will preserve me against the anger of my enemies. You will clench your fist against my angry enemies! Your power will save me.

⁸ The LORD will work out his plans for my life—for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever. Don't abandon me, for you made me.

139 ¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

² You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my every thought when far away.

³ You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am.

⁴ You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD.

⁵ You both precede and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to know!

⁷ I can never escape from your spirit! I can never get away from your presence!

⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there.

⁹ If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.

¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—

¹² but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you.

¹³ You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it.

¹⁵ You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.

¹⁶ You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

¹⁷ How precious are your thoughts about me, O God! They are innumerable!

¹⁸ I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up in the morning, you are still with me!

¹⁹ O God, if only you would destroy the wicked! Get out of my life, you murderers!

²⁰ They blaspheme you; your enemies take your name in vain.

²¹ O LORD, shouldn't I hate those who hate you? Shouldn't I despise those who resist you?

²² Yes, I hate them with complete hatred, for your enemies are my enemies.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.

²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

140¹ “For the choir director: A psalm of David.” O LORD, rescue me from evil people. Preserve me from those who are violent,

² those who plot evil in their hearts and stir up trouble all day long.

³ Their tongues sting like a snake; the poison of a viper drips from their lips.

Interlude

⁴ O LORD, keep me out of the hands of the wicked. Preserve me from those who are violent, for they are plotting against me.

⁵ The proud have set a trap to catch me; they have stretched out a net; they have placed traps all along the way. Interlude

⁶ I said to the LORD, "You are my God!" Listen, O LORD, to my cries for mercy!

⁷ O Sovereign LORD, my strong savior, you protected me on the day of battle.

⁸ LORD, do not give in to their evil desires. Do not let their evil schemes succeed, O God. Interlude

⁹ Let my enemies be destroyed by the very evil they have planned for me.

¹⁰ Let burning coals fall down on their heads, or throw them into the fire, or into deep pits from which they can't escape.

¹¹ Don't let liars prosper here in our land. Cause disaster to fall with great force on the violent.

¹² But I know the LORD will surely help those they persecute; he will maintain the rights of the poor.

¹³ Surely the godly are praising your name, for they will live in your presence.

141 ¹ "A psalm of David." O LORD, I am calling to you. Please hurry! Listen when I cry to you for help!

² Accept my prayer as incense offered to you, and my upraised hands as an evening offering.

³ Take control of what I say, O LORD, and keep my lips sealed.

⁴ Don't let me lust for evil things; don't let me participate in acts of wickedness. Don't let me share in the delicacies of those who do evil.

⁵ Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they reprove me, it is

soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it. But I am in constant prayer against the wicked and their deeds.

⁶ When their leaders are thrown down from a cliff, they will listen to my words and find them pleasing.

⁷ Even as a farmer breaks up the soil and brings up rocks, so the bones of the wicked will be scattered without a decent burial.

⁸ I look to you for help, O Sovereign LORD. You are my refuge; don't let them kill me.

⁹ Keep me out of the traps they have set for me, out of the snares of those who do evil.

¹⁰ Let the wicked fall into their own snares, but let me escape.

142¹ "A psalm of David, regarding his experience in the cave. A prayer." I cry out to the LORD; I plead for the LORD's mercy.

² I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles.

³ For I am overwhelmed, and you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me.

⁴ I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me.

⁵ Then I pray to you, O LORD. I say, "You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life.

⁶ Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.

⁷ Bring me out of prison so I can thank you. The godly will crowd around me, for you treat me kindly."

143 ¹ "A psalm of David." Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my plea! Answer me because you are faithful and righteous.

² Don't bring your servant to trial!
Compared to you, no one is perfect.

³ My enemy has chased me. He has
knocked me to the ground. He forces me
to live in darkness like those in the grave.

⁴ I am losing all hope; I am paralyzed
with fear.

⁵ I remember the days of old. I ponder
all your great works. I think about what
you have done.

⁶ I reach out for you. I thirst for you as
parched land thirsts for rain. Interlude

⁷ Come quickly, LORD, and answer me,
for my depression deepens. Don't turn
away from me, or I will die.

⁸ Let me hear of your unfailing love to
me in the morning, for I am trusting you.
Show me where to walk, for I have come
to you in prayer.

⁹ Save me from my enemies, LORD; I
run to you to hide me.

¹⁰ Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing.

¹¹ For the glory of your name, O LORD, save me. In your righteousness, bring me out of this distress.

¹² In your unfailing love, cut off all my enemies and destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

144 ¹ “A psalm of David.” Bless the LORD, who is my rock. He gives me strength for war and skill for battle.

² He is my loving ally and my fortress, my tower of safety, my deliverer. He stands before me as a shield, and I take refuge in him. He subdues the nations under me.

³ O LORD, what are mortals that you should notice us, mere humans that you should care for us?

⁴ For we are like a breath of air; our days are like a passing shadow.

⁵ Bend down the heavens, LORD, and come down. Touch the mountains so they billow smoke.

⁶ Release your lightning bolts and scatter your enemies! Release your arrows and confuse them!

⁷ Reach down from heaven and rescue me; deliver me from deep waters, from the power of my enemies.

⁸ Their mouths are full of lies; they swear to tell the truth, but they lie.

⁹ I will sing a new song to you, O God! I will sing your praises with a ten-stringed harp.

¹⁰ For you grant victory to kings! You are the one who rescued your servant David.

¹¹ Save me from the fatal sword! Rescue me from the power of my enemies. Their mouths are full of lies; they swear to tell the truth, but they lie.

¹² May our sons flourish in their youth like well-nurtured plants. May our daughters be like graceful pillars, carved to beautify a palace.

¹³ May our farms be filled with crops of every kind. May the flocks in our fields multiply by the thousands, even tens of thousands,

¹⁴ and may our oxen be loaded down with produce. May there be no breached walls, no forced exile, no cries of distress in our squares.

¹⁵ Yes, happy are those who have it like this! Happy indeed are those whose God is the LORD.

145 ¹ “A psalm of praise of David.”
I will praise you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

² I will bless you every day, and I will praise you forever.

³ Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! His greatness is beyond discovery!

⁴ Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts.

⁵ I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor and your wonderful miracles.

⁶ Your awe–inspiring deeds will be on every tongue; I will proclaim your greatness.

⁷ Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness; they will sing with joy of your righteousness.

⁸ The LORD is kind and merciful, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love.

⁹ The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.

¹⁰ All of your works will thank you, LORD, and your faithful followers will bless you.

¹¹ They will talk together about the glory of your kingdom; they will celebrate examples of your power.

¹² They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign.

¹³ For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule generation after generation. The LORD is faithful in all he says; he is gracious in all he does.

¹⁴ The LORD helps the fallen and lifts up those bent beneath their loads.

¹⁵ All eyes look to you for help; you give them their food as they need it.

¹⁶ When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.

¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness.

¹⁸ The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him sincerely.

¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them.

²⁰ The LORD protects all those who love him, but he destroys the wicked.

²¹ I will praise the LORD, and everyone on earth will bless his holy name forever and forever.

146 ¹ Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, I tell myself.

² I will praise the LORD as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God even with my dying breath.

³ Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there.

⁴ When their breathing stops, they return to the earth, and in a moment all their plans come to an end.

⁵ But happy are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

⁶ He is the one who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. He is the one who keeps every promise forever,

⁷ who gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry. The LORD frees the prisoners.

⁸ The LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts the burdens of those bent beneath their loads. The LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD protects the foreigners among us. He cares for the orphans and widows, but he frustrates the plans of the wicked.

¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever. O Jerusalem, your God is King in every generation! Praise the LORD!

147 ¹ Praise the LORD! How good it is to sing praises to our God! How delightful and how right!

² The LORD is rebuilding Jerusalem and bringing the exiles back to Israel.

³ He heals the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds.

⁴ He counts the stars and calls them all by name.

⁵ How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!

⁶ The LORD supports the humble, but he brings the wicked down into the dust.

⁷ Sing out your thanks to the LORD; sing praises to our God, accompanied by harps.

⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds, provides rain for the earth, and makes the green grass grow in mountain pastures.

⁹ He feeds the wild animals, and the young ravens cry to him for food.

¹⁰ The strength of a horse does not impress him; how puny in his sight is the strength of a man.

¹¹ Rather, the LORD's delight is in those who honor him, those who put their hope in his unfailing love.

¹² Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

¹³ For he has fortified the bars of your gates and blessed your children within you.

¹⁴ He sends peace across your nation and satisfies you with plenty of the finest wheat.

¹⁵ He sends his orders to the world—how swiftly his word flies!

¹⁶ He sends the snow like white wool; he scatters frost upon the ground like ashes.

¹⁷ He hurls the hail like stones. Who can stand against his freezing cold?

¹⁸ Then, at his command, it all melts.
He sends his winds, and the ice thaws.

¹⁹ He has revealed his words to Jacob,
his principles and laws to Israel.

²⁰ He has not done this with any other
nation; they do not know his laws. Praise
the LORD!

148 ¹ Praise the LORD! Praise
the LORD from the heavens!
Praise him from the skies!

² Praise him, all his angels! Praise him,
all the armies of heaven!

³ Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him,
all you twinkling stars!

⁴ Praise him, skies above! Praise him,
vapors high above the clouds!

⁵ Let every created thing give praise to
the LORD, for he issued his command,
and they came into being.

⁶ He established them forever and
forever. His orders will never be revoked.

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth, you
creatures of the ocean depths,
⁸ fire and hail, snow and storm, wind
and weather that obey him,
⁹ mountains and all hills, fruit trees and
all cedars,
¹⁰ wild animals and all livestock, reptiles
and birds,
¹¹ kings of the earth and all people,
rulers and judges of the earth,
¹² young men and maidens, old men
and children.

¹³ Let them all praise the name of the
LORD. For his name is very great; his
glory towers over the earth and heaven!

¹⁴ He has made his people strong,
honoring his godly ones—the people of
Israel who are close to him. Praise the
LORD!

149 ¹ Praise the LORD! Sing to the
LORD a new song. Sing his
praises in the assembly of the faithful.

² O Israel, rejoice in your Maker. O people of Jerusalem, exult in your King.

³ Praise his name with dancing, accompanied by tambourine and harp.

⁴ For the LORD delights in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

⁵ Let the faithful rejoice in this honor. Let them sing for joy as they lie on their beds.

⁶ Let the praises of God be in their mouths, and a sharp sword in their hands—

⁷ to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples,

⁸ to bind their kings with shackles and their leaders with iron chains,

⁹ to execute the judgment written against them. This is the glory of his faithful ones. Praise the LORD!

150 ¹ Praise the LORD! Praise God in his heavenly dwelling; praise him in his mighty heaven!

² Praise him for his mighty works; praise his unequalled greatness!

³ Praise him with a blast of the trumpet; praise him with the lyre and harp!

⁴ Praise him with the tambourine and dancing; praise him with stringed instruments and flutes!

⁵ Praise him with a clash of cymbals; praise him with loud clanging cymbals.

⁶ Let everything that lives sing praises to the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Proverbs

1 ¹ These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.

² The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings.

³ Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair.

⁴ These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people.

⁵ Let those who are wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. And let those who understand receive guidance

⁶ by exploring the depth of meaning in these proverbs, parables, wise sayings, and riddles.

⁷ Fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. Only fools despise wisdom and discipline.

⁸ Listen, my child, to what your father teaches you. Don't neglect your mother's teaching.

⁹ What you learn from them will crown you with grace and clothe you with honor.

¹⁰ My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them!

¹¹ They may say, "Come and join us. Let's hide and kill someone! Let's ambush the innocent!"

¹² Let's swallow them alive as the grave swallows its victims. Though they are in the prime of life, they will go down into the pit of death.

¹³ And the loot we'll get! We'll fill our houses with all kinds of things!

¹⁴ Come on, throw in your lot with us; we'll split our loot with you."

¹⁵ Don't go along with them, my child! Stay far away from their paths.

¹⁶ They rush to commit crimes. They hurry to commit murder.

¹⁷ When a bird sees a trap being set, it stays away.

¹⁸ But not these people! They set an ambush for themselves; they booby-trap their own lives!

¹⁹ Such is the fate of all who are greedy for gain. It ends up robbing them of life.

²⁰ Wisdom shouts in the streets. She cries out in the public square.

²¹ She calls out to the crowds along the main street, and to those in front of city hall.

²² "You simpletons!" she cries. "How long will you go on being simpleminded?"

How long will you mockers relish your mocking? How long will you fools fight the facts?

²³ Come here and listen to me! I'll pour out the spirit of wisdom upon you and make you wise.

²⁴ "I called you so often, but you didn't come. I reached out to you, but you paid no attention.

²⁵ You ignored my advice and rejected the correction I offered.

²⁶ So I will laugh when you are in trouble! I will mock you when disaster overtakes you—

²⁷ when calamity overcomes you like a storm, when you are engulfed by trouble, and when anguish and distress overwhelm you.

²⁸ "I will not answer when they cry for help. Even though they anxiously search for me, they will not find me.

²⁹ For they hated knowledge and chose not to fear the LORD.

³⁰ They rejected my advice and paid no attention when I corrected them.

³¹ That is why they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way. They must experience the full terror of the path they have chosen.

³² For they are simpletons who turn away from me—to death. They are fools, and their own complacency will destroy them.

³³ But all who listen to me will live in peace and safety, unafraid of harm."

2 ¹ My child, listen to me and treasure my instructions.

² Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding.

³ Cry out for insight and understanding.

⁴ Search for them as you would for lost money or hidden treasure.

⁵ Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain knowledge of God.

⁶ For the LORD grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

⁷ He grants a treasure of good sense to the godly. He is their shield, protecting those who walk with integrity.

⁸ He guards the paths of justice and protects those who are faithful to him.

⁹ Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will know how to find the right course of action every time.

¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy.

¹¹ Wise planning will watch over you. Understanding will keep you safe.

¹² Wisdom will save you from evil people, from those whose speech is corrupt.

¹³ These people turn from right ways to walk down dark and evil paths.

¹⁴ They rejoice in doing wrong, and they enjoy evil as it turns things upside down.

¹⁵ What they do is crooked, and their ways are wrong.

¹⁶ Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the adulterous woman.

¹⁷ She has abandoned her husband and ignores the covenant she made before God.

¹⁸ Entering her house leads to death; it is the road to hell.

¹⁹ The man who visits her is doomed. He will never reach the paths of life.

²⁰ Follow the steps of good men instead, and stay on the paths of the righteous.

²¹ For only the upright will live in the land, and those who have integrity will remain in it.

²² But the wicked will be removed from the land, and the treacherous will be destroyed.

3 ¹ My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart,

² for they will give you a long and satisfying life.

³ Never let loyalty and kindness get away from you! Wear them like a necklace; write them deep within your heart.

⁴ Then you will find favor with both God and people, and you will gain a good reputation.

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.

⁷ Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn your back on evil.

⁸ Then you will gain renewed health and vitality.

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything your land produces.

¹⁰ Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine.

¹¹ My child, don't ignore it when the LORD disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you.

¹² For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.

¹³ Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding.

¹⁴ For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold.

¹⁵ Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.

¹⁶ She offers you life in her right hand, and riches and honor in her left.

¹⁷ She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying.

¹⁸ Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her; happy are those who hold her tightly.

¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens.

²⁰ By his knowledge the deep fountains of the earth burst forth, and the clouds poured down rain.

²¹ My child, don't lose sight of good planning and insight. Hang on to them,

²² for they fill you with life and bring you honor and respect.

²³ They keep you safe on your way and keep your feet from stumbling.

²⁴ You can lie down without fear and enjoy pleasant dreams.

²⁵ You need not be afraid of disaster or the destruction that comes upon the wicked,

²⁶ for the LORD is your security. He will keep your foot from being caught in a trap.

²⁷ Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them.

²⁸ If you can help your neighbor now, don't say, "Come back tomorrow, and then I'll help you."

²⁹ Do not plot against your neighbors, for they trust you.

³⁰ Don't make accusations against someone who hasn't wronged you.

³¹ Do not envy violent people; don't copy their ways.

³² Such wicked people are an abomination to the LORD, but he offers his friendship to the godly.

³³ The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but his blessing is on the home of the upright.

³⁴ The LORD mocks at mockers, but he shows favor to the humble.

³⁵ The wise inherit honor, but fools are put to shame!

4 ¹ My children, listen to me. Listen to your father's instruction. Pay attention and grow wise,

² for I am giving you good guidance. Don't turn away from my teaching.

³ For I, too, was once my father's son, tenderly loved by my mother as an only child.

⁴ My father told me, "Take my words to heart. Follow my instructions and you will live.

⁵ Learn to be wise, and develop good judgment. Don't forget or turn away from my words.

⁶ Don't turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you.

⁷ Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do! And whatever else you do, get good judgment.

⁸ If you prize wisdom, she will exalt you. Embrace her and she will honor you.

⁹ She will place a lovely wreath on your head; she will present you with a beautiful crown."

¹⁰ My child, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life.

¹¹ I will teach you wisdom's ways and lead you in straight paths.

¹² If you live a life guided by wisdom, you won't limp or stumble as you run.

¹³ Carry out my instructions; don't forsake them. Guard them, for they will lead you to a fulfilled life.

¹⁴ Do not do as the wicked do or follow the path of evildoers.

¹⁵ Avoid their haunts. Turn away and go somewhere else,

¹⁶ for evil people cannot sleep until they have done their evil deed for the day. They cannot rest unless they have caused someone to stumble.

¹⁷ They eat wickedness and drink violence!

¹⁸ The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.

¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is like complete darkness. Those who follow it have no idea what they are stumbling over.

²⁰ Pay attention, my child, to what I say. Listen carefully.

²¹ Don't lose sight of my words. Let them penetrate deep within your heart,

²² for they bring life and radiant health to anyone who discovers their meaning.

²³ Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.

²⁴ Avoid all perverse talk; stay far from corrupt speech.

²⁵ Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you.

²⁶ Mark out a straight path for your feet; then stick to the path and stay safe.

²⁷ Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.

5 ¹ My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen carefully to my wise counsel.

² Then you will learn to be discreet and will store up knowledge.

³ The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil.

⁴ But the result is as bitter as poison,
sharp as a double-edged sword.

⁵ Her feet go down to death; her steps
lead straight to the grave.

⁶ For she does not care about the path
to life. She staggers down a crooked trail
and doesn't even realize where it leads.

⁷ So now, my sons, listen to me. Never
stray from what I am about to say:

⁸ Run from her! Don't go near the door
of her house!

⁹ If you do, you will lose your honor
and hand over to merciless people
everything you have achieved in life.

¹⁰ Strangers will obtain your wealth,
and someone else will enjoy the fruit of
your labor.

¹¹ Afterward you will groan in anguish
when disease consumes your body,

¹² and you will say, "How I hated
discipline! If only I had not demanded
my own way!"

¹³ Oh, why didn't I listen to my teachers? Why didn't I pay attention to those who gave me instruction?

¹⁴ I have come to the brink of utter ruin, and now I must face public disgrace."

¹⁵ Drink water from your own well—
—share your love only with your wife.

¹⁶ Why spill the water of your springs in public, having sex with just anyone?

¹⁷ You should reserve it for yourselves. Don't share it with strangers.

¹⁸ Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth.

¹⁹ She is a loving doe, a graceful deer. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love.

²⁰ Why be captivated, my son, with an immoral woman, or embrace the breasts of an adulterous woman?

²¹ For the LORD sees clearly what a man does, examining every path he takes.

²² An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him.

²³ He will die for lack of self-control; he will be lost because of his incredible folly.

6¹ My child, if you co-sign a loan for a friend or guarantee the debt of someone you hardly know—

² if you have trapped yourself by your agreement and are caught by what you said—

³ quick, get out of it if you possibly can! You have placed yourself at your friend's mercy. Now swallow your pride; go and beg to have your name erased.

⁴ Don't put it off. Do it now! Don't rest until you do.

⁵ Save yourself like a deer escaping from a hunter, like a bird fleeing from a net.

⁶ Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and be wise!

⁷ Even though they have no prince, governor, or ruler to make them work,
⁸ they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter.

⁹ But you, lazybones, how long will you sleep? When will you wake up? I want you to learn this lesson:

¹⁰ A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—

¹¹ and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber.

¹² Here is a description of worthless and wicked people: They are constant liars,

¹³ signaling their true intentions to their friends by making signs with their eyes and feet and fingers.

¹⁴ Their perverted hearts plot evil. They stir up trouble constantly.

¹⁵ But they will be destroyed suddenly, broken beyond all hope of healing.

¹⁶ There are six things the LORD hates—no, seven things he detests:

¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent,

¹⁸ a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong,

¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord among brothers.

²⁰ My son, obey your father's commands, and don't neglect your mother's teaching.

²¹ Keep their words always in your heart. Tie them around your neck.

²² Wherever you walk, their counsel can lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up in the morning, they will advise you.

²³ For these commands and this teaching are a lamp to light the way ahead of you. The correction of discipline is the way to life.

²⁴ These commands and this teaching will keep you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of an adulterous woman.

²⁵ Don't lust for her beauty. Don't let her coyness seduce you.

²⁶ For a prostitute will bring you to poverty, and sleeping with another man's wife may cost you your very life.

²⁷ Can a man scoop fire into his lap and not be burned?

²⁸ Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet?

²⁹ So it is with the man who sleeps with another man's wife. He who embraces her will not go unpunished.

³⁰ Excuses might be found for a thief who steals because he is starving.

³¹ But if he is caught, he will be fined seven times as much as he stole, even if it means selling everything in his house to pay it back.

³² But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul.

³³ Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot. His shame will never be erased.

³⁴ For the woman's husband will be furious in his jealousy, and he will have no mercy in his day of vengeance.

³⁵ There is no compensation or bribe that will satisfy him.

7 ¹ Follow my advice, my son; always treasure my commands.

² Obey them and live! Guard my teachings as your most precious possession.

³ Tie them on your fingers as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.

⁴ Love wisdom like a sister; make insight a beloved member of your family.

⁵ Let them hold you back from an affair with an immoral woman, from listening to the flattery of an adulterous woman.

⁶ I was looking out the window of my house one day

⁷ and saw a simpleminded young man who lacked common sense.

⁸ He was crossing the street near the house of an immoral woman. He was strolling down the path by her house

⁹ at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in.

¹⁰ The woman approached him, dressed seductively and sly of heart.

¹¹ She was the brash, rebellious type who never stays at home.

¹² She is often seen in the streets and markets, soliciting at every corner.

¹³ She threw her arms around him and kissed him, and with a brazen look she said,

¹⁴ "I've offered my sacrifices and just finished my vows.

¹⁵ It's you I was looking for! I came out to find you, and here you are!

¹⁶ My bed is spread with colored sheets of finest linen imported from Egypt.

¹⁷ I've perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

¹⁸ Come, let's drink our fill of love until morning. Let's enjoy each other's caresses,

¹⁹ for my husband is not home. He's away on a long trip.

²⁰ He has taken a wallet full of money with him, and he won't return until later in the month."

²¹ So she seduced him with her pretty speech. With her flattery she enticed him.

²² He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped stag,

²³ awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life.

²⁴ Listen to me, my sons, and pay attention to my words.

²⁵ Don't let your hearts stray away toward her. Don't wander down her wayward path.

²⁶ For she has been the ruin of many; numerous men have been her victims.

²⁷ Her house is the road to the grave. Her bedroom is the den of death.

8 ¹ Listen as wisdom calls out! Hear as understanding raises her voice!

² She stands on the hilltop and at the crossroads.

³ At the entrance to the city, at the city gates, she cries aloud,

⁴ "I call to you, to all of you! I am raising my voice to all people.

⁵ How naive you are! Let me give you common sense. O foolish ones, let me give you understanding.

⁶ Listen to me! For I have excellent things to tell you. Everything I say is right,

⁷ for I speak the truth and hate every kind of deception.

⁸ My advice is wholesome and good. There is nothing crooked or twisted in it.

⁹ My words are plain to anyone with understanding, clear to those who want to learn.

¹⁰ "Choose my instruction rather than silver, and knowledge over pure gold.

¹¹ For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can be compared with it.

¹² "I, Wisdom, live together with good judgment. I know where to discover knowledge and discernment.

¹³ All who fear the LORD will hate evil. That is why I hate pride, arrogance, corruption, and perverted speech.

¹⁴ Good advice and success belong to me. Insight and strength are mine.

¹⁵ Because of me, kings reign, and rulers make just laws.

¹⁶ Rulers lead with my help, and nobles make righteous judgments.

¹⁷ "I love all who love me. Those who search for me will surely find me.

¹⁸ Unending riches, honor, wealth, and justice are mine to distribute.

¹⁹ My gifts are better than the purest gold, my wages better than sterling silver!

²⁰ I walk in righteousness, in paths of justice.

²¹ Those who love me inherit wealth,
for I fill their treasuries.

²² "The LORD formed me from the
beginning, before he created anything
else.

²³ I was appointed in ages past, at the
very first, before the earth began.

²⁴ I was born before the oceans were
created, before the springs bubbled
forth their waters.

²⁵ Before the mountains and the hills
were formed, I was born—

²⁶ before he had made the earth and
fields and the first handfuls of soil.

²⁷ "I was there when he established the
heavens, when he drew the horizon on
the oceans.

²⁸ I was there when he set the clouds
above, when he established the deep
fountains of the earth.

²⁹ I was there when he set the limits
of the seas, so they would not spread

beyond their boundaries. And when he marked off the earth's foundations,

³⁰ I was the architect at his side. I was his constant delight, rejoicing always in his presence.

³¹ And how happy I was with what he created—his wide world and all the human family!

³² "And so, my children, listen to me, for happy are all who follow my ways.

³³ Listen to my counsel and be wise. Don't ignore it.

³⁴ "Happy are those who listen to me, watching for me daily at my gates, waiting for me outside my home!

³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life and wins approval from the LORD.

³⁶ But those who miss me have injured themselves. All who hate me love death."

9¹ Wisdom has built her spacious house with seven pillars.

² She has prepared a great banquet, mixed the wines, and set the table.

³ She has sent her servants to invite everyone to come. She calls out from the heights overlooking the city.

⁴ "Come home with me," she urges the simple. To those without good judgment, she says,

⁵ "Come, eat my food, and drink the wine I have mixed.

⁶ Leave your foolish ways behind, and begin to live; learn how to be wise."

⁷ Anyone who rebukes a mocker will get a smart retort. Anyone who rebukes the wicked will get hurt.

⁸ So don't bother rebuking mockers; they will only hate you. But the wise, when rebuked, will love you all the more.

⁹ Teach the wise, and they will be wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn more.

¹⁰ Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in understanding.

¹¹ Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life.

¹² If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.

¹³ The woman named Folly is loud and brash. She is ignorant and doesn't even know it.

¹⁴ She sits in her doorway on the heights overlooking the city.

¹⁵ She calls out to men going by who are minding their own business.

¹⁶ "Come home with me," she urges the simple. To those without good judgment, she says,

¹⁷ "Stolen water is refreshing; food eaten in secret tastes the best!"

¹⁸ But the men don't realize that her former guests are now in the grave.

10 ¹ The proverbs of Solomon: A wise child brings joy to a father; a foolish child brings grief to a mother.

² Ill-gotten gain has no lasting value, but right living can save your life.

³ The LORD will not let the godly starve to death, but he refuses to satisfy the craving of the wicked.

⁴ Lazy people are soon poor; hard workers get rich.

⁵ A wise youth works hard all summer; a youth who sleeps away the hour of opportunity brings shame.

⁶ The godly are showered with blessings; evil people cover up their harmful intentions.

⁷ We all have happy memories of the godly, but the name of a wicked person rots away.

⁸ The wise are glad to be instructed, but babbling fools fall flat on their faces.

⁹ People with integrity have firm footing, but those who follow crooked paths will slip and fall.

¹⁰ People who wink at wrong cause trouble, but a bold reproof promotes peace.

¹¹ The words of the godly lead to life; evil people cover up their harmful intentions.

¹² Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love covers all offenses.

¹³ Wise words come from the lips of people with understanding, but fools will be punished with a rod.

¹⁴ Wise people treasure knowledge, but the babbling of a fool invites trouble.

¹⁵ The wealth of the rich is their fortress; the poverty of the poor is their calamity.

¹⁶ The earnings of the godly enhance their lives, but evil people squander their money on sin.

¹⁷ People who accept correction are on the pathway to life, but those who ignore it will lead others astray.

¹⁸ To hide hatred is to be a liar; to slander is to be a fool.

¹⁹ Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow!

²⁰ The words of the godly are like sterling silver; the heart of a fool is worthless.

²¹ The godly give good advice, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense.

²² The blessing of the LORD makes a person rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

²³ Doing wrong is fun for a fool, while wise conduct is a pleasure to the wise.

²⁴ The fears of the wicked will all come true; so will the hopes of the godly.

²⁵ Disaster strikes like a cyclone, whirling the wicked away, but the godly have a lasting foundation.

²⁶ Lazy people are a pain to their employer. They are like smoke in the eyes or vinegar that sets the teeth on edge.

²⁷ Fear of the LORD lengthens one's life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.

²⁸ The hopes of the godly result in happiness, but the expectations of the wicked are all in vain.

²⁹ The LORD protects the upright but destroys the wicked.

³⁰ The godly will never be disturbed, but the wicked will be removed from the land.

³¹ The godly person gives wise advice, but the tongue that deceives will be cut off.

³² The godly speak words that are helpful, but the wicked speak only what is corrupt.

11 ¹ The LORD hates cheating, but he delights in honesty.

² Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

³ Good people are guided by their honesty; treacherous people are destroyed by their dishonesty.

⁴ Riches won't help on the day of judgment, but right living is a safeguard against death.

⁵ The godly are directed by their honesty; the wicked fall beneath their load of sin.

⁶ The godliness of good people rescues them; the ambition of treacherous people traps them.

⁷ When the wicked die, their hopes all perish, for they rely on their own feeble strength.

⁸ God rescues the godly from danger, but he lets the wicked fall into trouble.

⁹ Evil words destroy one's friends; wise discernment rescues the godly.

¹⁰ The whole city celebrates when the godly succeed; they shout for joy when the godless die.

¹¹ Upright citizens bless a city and make it prosper, but the talk of the wicked tears it apart.

¹² It is foolish to belittle a neighbor; a person with good sense remains silent.

¹³ A gossip goes around revealing secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence.

¹⁴ Without wise leadership, a nation falls; with many counselors, there is safety.

¹⁵ Guaranteeing a loan for a stranger is dangerous; it is better to refuse than to suffer later.

¹⁶ Beautiful women obtain wealth, and violent men get rich.

¹⁷ Your own soul is nourished when you are kind, but you destroy yourself when you are cruel.

¹⁸ Evil people get rich for the moment, but the reward of the godly will last.

¹⁹ Godly people find life; evil people find death.

²⁰ The LORD hates people with twisted hearts, but he delights in those who have integrity.

²¹ You can be sure that evil people will be punished, but the children of the godly will go free.

²² A woman who is beautiful but lacks discretion is like a gold ring in a pig's snout.

²³ The godly can look forward to happiness, while the wicked can expect only wrath.

²⁴ It is possible to give freely and become more wealthy, but those who are stingy will lose everything.

²⁵ The generous prosper and are satisfied; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

²⁶ People curse those who hold their grain for higher prices, but they bless the one who sells to them in their time of need.

²⁷ If you search for good, you will find favor; but if you search for evil, it will find you!

²⁸ Trust in your money and down you go! But the godly flourish like leaves in spring.

²⁹ Those who bring trouble on their families inherit only the wind. The fool will be a servant to the wise.

³⁰ The godly are like trees that bear life-giving fruit, and those who save lives are wise.

³¹ If the righteous are rewarded here on earth, how much more true that the wicked and the sinner will get what they deserve!

12 ¹ To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction.

² The LORD approves of those who are good, but he condemns those who plan wickedness.

³ Wickedness never brings stability; only the godly have deep roots.

⁴ A worthy wife is her husband's joy and crown; a shameful wife saps his strength.

⁵ The plans of the godly are just; the advice of the wicked is treacherous.

⁶ The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives.

⁷ The wicked perish and are gone, but the children of the godly stand firm.

⁸ Everyone admires a person with good sense, but a warped mind is despised.

⁹ It is better to be a nobody with a servant than to be self-important but have no food.

¹⁰ The godly are concerned for the welfare of their animals, but even the kindness of the wicked is cruel.

¹¹ Hard work means prosperity; only fools idle away their time.

¹² Thieves are jealous of each other's loot, while the godly bear their own fruit.

¹³ The wicked are trapped by their own words, but the godly escape such trouble.

¹⁴ People can get many good things by the words they say; the work of their hands also gives them many benefits.

¹⁵ Fools think they need no advice, but the wise listen to others.

¹⁶ A fool is quick–tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted.

¹⁷ An honest witness tells the truth; a false witness tells lies.

¹⁸ Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.

¹⁹ Truth stands the test of time; lies are soon exposed.

²⁰ Deceit fills hearts that are plotting evil; joy fills hearts that are planning peace!

²¹ No real harm befalls the godly, but the wicked have their fill of trouble.

²² The LORD hates those who don't keep their word, but he delights in those who do.

²³ Wise people don't make a show of their knowledge, but fools broadcast their folly.

²⁴ Work hard and become a leader; be lazy and become a slave.

²⁵ Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.

²⁶ The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray.

²⁷ Lazy people don't even cook the game they catch, but the diligent make use of everything they find.

²⁸ The way of the godly leads to life; their path does not lead to death.

13 ¹ A wise child accepts a parent's discipline; a young mocker refuses to listen.

² Good people enjoy the positive results of their words, but those who are treacherous crave violence.

³ Those who control their tongue will have a long life; a quick retort can ruin everything.

⁴ Lazy people want much but get little, but those who work hard will prosper and be satisfied.

⁵ Those who are godly hate lies; the wicked come to shame and disgrace.

⁶ Godliness helps people all through life, while the evil are destroyed by their wickedness.

⁷ Some who are poor pretend to be rich; others who are rich pretend to be poor.

⁸ The rich can pay a ransom, but the poor won't even get threatened.

⁹ The life of the godly is full of light and joy, but the sinner's light is snuffed out.

¹⁰ Pride leads to arguments; those who take advice are wise.

¹¹ Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.

¹² Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when dreams come true, there is life and joy.

¹³ People who despise advice will find themselves in trouble; those who respect it will succeed.

¹⁴ The advice of the wise is like a life-giving fountain; those who accept it avoid the snares of death.

¹⁵ A person with good sense is respected; a treacherous person walks a rocky road.

¹⁶ Wise people think before they act; fools don't and even brag about it!

¹⁷ An unreliable messenger stumbles into trouble, but a reliable messenger brings healing.

¹⁸ If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace; if you accept criticism, you will be honored.

¹⁹ It is pleasant to see dreams come true, but fools will not turn from evil to attain them.

²⁰ Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; whoever walks with fools will suffer harm.

²¹ Trouble chases sinners, while blessings chase the righteous!

²² Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren, but the sinner's wealth passes to the godly.

²³ A poor person's farm may produce much food, but injustice sweeps it all away.

²⁴ If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.

²⁵ The godly eat to their hearts' content, but the belly of the wicked goes hungry.

14 ¹ A wise woman builds her house; a foolish woman tears hers down with her own hands.

² Those who follow the right path fear the LORD; those who take the wrong path despise him.

³ The talk of fools is a rod for their backs, but the words of the wise keep them out of trouble.

⁴ An empty stable stays clean, but no income comes from an empty stable.

⁵ A truthful witness does not lie; a false witness breathes lies.

⁶ A mocker seeks wisdom and never finds it, but knowledge comes easily to those with understanding.

⁷ Stay away from fools, for you won't find knowledge there.

⁸ The wise look ahead to see what is coming, but fools deceive themselves.

⁹ Fools make fun of guilt, but the godly acknowledge it and seek reconciliation.

¹⁰ Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can fully share its joy.

¹¹ The house of the wicked will perish, but the tent of the godly will flourish.

¹² There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

¹³ Laughter can conceal a heavy heart; when the laughter ends, the grief remains.

¹⁴ Backsliders get what they deserve; good people receive their reward.

¹⁵ Only simpletons believe everything they are told! The prudent carefully consider their steps.

¹⁶ The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with great confidence.

¹⁷ Those who are short-tempered do foolish things, and schemers are hated.

¹⁸ The simpleton is clothed with folly, but the wise person is crowned with knowledge.

¹⁹ Evil people will bow before good people; the wicked will bow at the gates of the godly.

²⁰ The poor are despised even by their neighbors, while the rich have many "friends."

²¹ It is sin to despise one's neighbors; blessed are those who help the poor.

²² If you plot evil, you will be lost; but if you plan good, you will be granted unfailing love and faithfulness.

²³ Work brings profit, but mere talk leads to poverty!

²⁴ Wealth is a crown for the wise; the effort of fools yields only folly.

²⁵ A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is a traitor.

²⁶ Those who fear the LORD are secure; he will be a place of refuge for their children.

²⁷ Fear of the LORD is a life-giving fountain; it offers escape from the snares of death.

²⁸ A growing population is a king's glory; a dwindling nation is his doom.

²⁹ Those who control their anger have great understanding; those with a hasty temper will make mistakes.

³⁰ A relaxed attitude lengthens life; jealousy rots it away.

³¹ Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who help the poor honor him.

³² The wicked are crushed by their sins, but the godly have a refuge when they die.

³³ Wisdom is enshrined in an understanding heart; wisdom is not found among fools.

³⁴ Godliness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.

³⁵ A king rejoices in servants who know what they are doing; he is angry with those who cause trouble.

15 ¹ A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.

² The wise person makes learning a joy; fools spout only foolishness.

³ The LORD is watching everywhere, keeping his eye on both the evil and the good.

⁴ Gentle words bring life and health; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

⁵ Only a fool despises a parent's discipline; whoever learns from correction is wise.

⁶ There is treasure in the house of the godly, but the earnings of the wicked bring trouble.

⁷ Only the wise can give good advice; fools cannot do so.

⁸ The LORD hates the sacrifice of the wicked, but he delights in the prayers of the upright.

⁹ The LORD despises the way of the wicked, but he loves those who pursue godliness.

¹⁰ Whoever abandons the right path will be severely punished; whoever hates correction will die.

¹¹ Even the depths of Death and Destruction are known by the LORD. How much more does he know the human heart!

¹² Mockers don't love those who rebuke them, so they stay away from the wise.

¹³ A glad heart makes a happy face; a broken heart crushes the spirit.

¹⁴ A wise person is hungry for truth, while the fool feeds on trash.

¹⁵ For the poor, every day brings trouble; for the happy heart, life is a continual feast.

¹⁶ It is better to have little with fear for the LORD than to have great treasure with turmoil.

¹⁷ A bowl of soup with someone you love is better than steak with someone you hate.

¹⁸ A hothead starts fights; a cool-tempered person tries to stop them.

¹⁹ A lazy person has trouble all through life; the path of the upright is easy!

²⁰ Sensible children bring joy to their father; foolish children despise their mother.

²¹ Foolishness brings joy to those who have no sense; a sensible person stays on the right path.

²² Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many counselors bring success.

²³ Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time!

²⁴ The path of the wise leads to life above; they leave the grave behind.

²⁵ The LORD destroys the house of the proud, but he protects the property of widows.

²⁶ The LORD despises the thoughts of the wicked, but he delights in pure words.

²⁷ Dishonest money brings grief to the whole family, but those who hate bribes will live.

²⁸ The godly think before speaking; the wicked spout evil words.

²⁹ The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayers of the righteous.

³⁰ A cheerful look brings joy to the heart; good news makes for good health.

³¹ If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise.

³² If you reject criticism, you only harm yourself; but if you listen to correction, you grow in understanding.

³³ Fear of the LORD teaches a person to be wise; humility precedes honor.

16 ¹ We can gather our thoughts, but the LORD gives the right answer.

² People may be pure in their own eyes, but the LORD examines their motives.

³ Commit your work to the LORD, and then your plans will succeed.

⁴ The LORD has made everything for his own purposes, even the wicked for punishment.

⁵ The LORD despises pride; be assured that the proud will be punished.

⁶ Unfailing love and faithfulness cover sin; evil is avoided by fear of the LORD.

⁷ When the ways of people please the LORD, he makes even their enemies live at peace with them.

⁸ It is better to be poor and godly than rich and dishonest.

⁹ We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.

¹⁰ The king speaks with divine wisdom; he must never judge unfairly.

¹¹ The LORD demands fairness in every business deal; he sets the standard.

¹² A king despises wrongdoing, for his rule depends on his justice.

¹³ The king is pleased with righteous lips; he loves those who speak honestly.

¹⁴ The anger of the king is a deadly threat; the wise do what they can to appease it.

¹⁵ When the king smiles, there is life; his favor refreshes like a gentle rain.

¹⁶ How much better to get wisdom than gold, and understanding than silver!

¹⁷ The path of the upright leads away from evil; whoever follows that path is safe.

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.

¹⁹ It is better to live humbly with the poor than to share plunder with the proud.

²⁰ Those who listen to instruction will prosper; those who trust the LORD will be happy.

²¹ The wise are known for their understanding, and instruction is appreciated if it's well presented.

²² Discretion is a life-giving fountain to those who possess it, but discipline is wasted on fools.

²³ From a wise mind comes wise speech; the words of the wise are persuasive.

²⁴ Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.

²⁵ There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

²⁶ It is good for workers to have an appetite; an empty stomach drives them on.

²⁷ Scoundrels hunt for scandal; their words are a destructive blaze.

²⁸ A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.

²⁹ Violent people deceive their companions, leading them down a harmful path.

³⁰ With narrowed eyes, they plot evil; without a word, they plan their mischief.

³¹ Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by living a godly life.

³² It is better to be patient than powerful; it is better to have self-control than to conquer a city.

³³ We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall.

17 ¹ A dry crust eaten in peace is better than a great feast with strife.

² A wise slave will rule over the master's shameful sons and will share their inheritance.

³ Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart.

⁴ Wrongdoers listen to wicked talk; liars pay attention to destructive words.

⁵ Those who mock the poor insult their Maker; those who rejoice at the misfortune of others will be punished.

⁶ Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged; parents are the pride of their children.

⁷ Eloquent speech is not fitting for a fool; even less are lies fitting for a ruler.

⁸ A bribe seems to work like magic for those who give it; they succeed in all they do.

⁹ Disregarding another person's faults preserves love; telling about them separates close friends.

¹⁰ A single rebuke does more for a person of understanding than a hundred lashes on the back of a fool.

¹¹ Evil people seek rebellion, but they will be severely punished.

¹² It is safer to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than to confront a fool caught in folly.

¹³ If you repay evil for good, evil will never leave your house.

¹⁴ Beginning a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

¹⁵ The LORD despises those who acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent.

¹⁶ It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a fool who has no heart for wisdom.

¹⁷ A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.

¹⁸ It is poor judgment to co-sign a friend's note, to become responsible for a neighbor's debts.

¹⁹ Anyone who loves to quarrel loves sin; anyone who speaks boastfully invites disaster.

²⁰ The crooked heart will not prosper; the twisted tongue tumbles into trouble.

²¹ It is painful to be the parent of a fool; there is no joy for the father of a rebel.

²² A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.

²³ The wicked accept secret bribes to pervert justice.

²⁴ Sensible people keep their eyes glued on wisdom, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.

²⁵ A foolish child brings grief to a father and bitterness to a mother.

²⁶ It is wrong to fine the godly for being good or to punish nobles for being honest!

²⁷ A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered.

²⁸ Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent; when they keep their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.

18 ¹ A recluse is self-indulgent, snarling at every sound principle of conduct.

² Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions.

³ When the wicked arrive, contempt, shame, and disgrace are sure to follow.

⁴ A person's words can be life-giving water; words of true wisdom are as refreshing as a bubbling brook.

⁵ It is wrong for a judge to favor the guilty or condemn the innocent.

⁶ Fools get into constant quarrels; they are asking for a beating.

⁷ The mouths of fools are their ruin; their lips get them into trouble.

⁸ What dainty morsels rumors are—but they sink deep into one's heart.

⁹ A lazy person is as bad as someone who destroys things.

¹⁰ The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe.

¹¹ The rich think of their wealth as an impregnable defense; they imagine it is a high wall of safety.

¹² Haughtiness goes before destruction; humility precedes honor.

¹³ What a shame, what folly, to give advice before listening to the facts!

¹⁴ The human spirit can endure a sick body, but who can bear it if the spirit is crushed?

¹⁵ Intelligent people are always open to new ideas. In fact, they look for them.

¹⁶ Giving a gift works wonders; it may bring you before important people!

¹⁷ Any story sounds true until someone sets the record straight.

¹⁸ Casting lots can end arguments and settle disputes between powerful opponents.

¹⁹ It's harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with iron bars.

²⁰ Words satisfy the soul as food satisfies the stomach; the right words on a person's lips bring satisfaction.

²¹ Those who love to talk will experience the consequences, for the tongue can kill or nourish life.

²² The man who finds a wife finds a treasure and receives favor from the LORD.

²³ The poor plead for mercy; the rich answer with insults.

²⁴ There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.

19 ¹ It is better to be poor and honest than to be a fool and dishonest.

² Zeal without knowledge is not good; a person who moves too quickly may go the wrong way.

³ People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the LORD.

⁴ Wealth makes many "friends"; poverty drives them away.

⁵ A false witness will not go unpunished, nor will a liar escape.

⁶ Many beg favors from a prince; everyone is the friend of a person who gives gifts!

⁷ If the relatives of the poor despise them, how much more will their friends avoid them. The poor call after them, but they are gone.

⁸ To acquire wisdom is to love oneself; people who cherish understanding will prosper.

⁹ A false witness will not go unpunished, and a liar will be destroyed.

¹⁰ It isn't right for a fool to live in luxury or for a slave to rule over princes!

¹¹ People with good sense restrain their anger; they earn esteem by overlooking wrongs.

¹² The king's anger is like a lion's roar, but his favor is like dew on the grass.

¹³ A foolish child is a calamity to a father; a nagging wife annoys like a constant dripping.

¹⁴ Parents can provide their sons with an inheritance of houses and wealth, but only the LORD can give an understanding wife.

¹⁵ A lazy person sleeps soundly—and goes hungry.

¹⁶ Keep the commandments and keep your life; despising them leads to death.

¹⁷ If you help the poor, you are lending to the LORD—and he will repay you!

¹⁸ Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives.

¹⁹ Short-tempered people must pay their own penalty. If you rescue them once, you will have to do it again.

²⁰ Get all the advice and instruction you can, and be wise the rest of your life.

²¹ You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail.

²² Loyalty makes a person attractive. And it is better to be poor than dishonest.

²³ Fear of the LORD gives life, security, and protection from harm.

²⁴ Some people are so lazy that they won't even lift a finger to feed themselves.

²⁵ If you punish a mocker, the simpleminded will learn a lesson; if you reprove the wise, they will be all the wiser.

²⁶ Children who mistreat their father or chase away their mother are a public disgrace and an embarrassment.

²⁷ If you stop listening to instruction, my child, you have turned your back on knowledge.

²⁸ A corrupt witness makes a mockery of justice; the mouth of the wicked gulps down evil.

²⁹ Mockers will be punished, and the backs of fools will be beaten.

20 ¹ Wine produces mockers; liquor leads to brawls. Whoever is led astray by drink cannot be wise.

² The king's fury is like a lion's roar; to rouse his anger is to risk your life.

³ Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling.

⁴ If you are too lazy to plow in the right season, you will have no food at the harvest.

⁵ Though good advice lies deep within a person's heart, the wise will draw it out.

⁶ Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is really faithful?

⁷ The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children after them.

⁸ When a king judges, he carefully weighs all the evidence, distinguishing the bad from the good.

⁹ Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart; I am pure and free from sin"?

¹⁰ The LORD despises double standards of every kind.

¹¹ Even children are known by the way they act, whether their conduct is pure and right.

¹² Ears to hear and eyes to see—both are gifts from the LORD.

¹³ If you love sleep, you will end in poverty. Keep your eyes open, and there will be plenty to eat!

¹⁴ The buyer haggles over the price, saying, "It's worthless," then brags about getting a bargain!

¹⁵ Wise speech is rarer and more valuable than gold and rubies.

¹⁶ Be sure to get collateral from anyone who guarantees the debt of a stranger. Get a deposit if someone guarantees the debt of a foreigner.

¹⁷ Stolen bread tastes sweet, but it turns to gravel in the mouth.

¹⁸ Plans succeed through good counsel; don't go to war without the advice of others.

¹⁹ A gossip tells secrets, so don't hang around with someone who talks too much.

²⁰ If you curse your father or mother, the lamp of your life will be snuffed out.

²¹ An inheritance obtained early in life is not a blessing in the end.

²² Don't say, "I will get even for this wrong." Wait for the LORD to handle the matter.

²³ The LORD despises double standards; he is not pleased by dishonest scales.

²⁴ How can we understand the road we travel? It is the LORD who directs our steps.

²⁵ It is dangerous to make a rash promise to God before counting the cost.

²⁶ A wise king finds the wicked, lays them out like wheat, then runs the crushing wheel over them.

²⁷ The LORD's searchlight penetrates the human spirit, exposing every hidden motive.

²⁸ Unfailing love and faithfulness protect the king; his throne is made secure through love.

²⁹ The glory of the young is their strength; the gray hair of experience is the splendor of the old.

³⁰ Physical punishment cleanses away evil; such discipline purifies the heart.

21 ¹ The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the LORD; he turns it wherever he pleases.

² People may think they are doing what is right, but the LORD examines the heart.

³ The LORD is more pleased when we do what is just and right than when we give him sacrifices.

⁴ Haughty eyes, a proud heart, and evil actions are all sin.

⁵ Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.

⁶ Wealth created by lying is a vanishing mist and a deadly trap.

⁷ Because the wicked refuse to do what is just, their violence boomerangs and destroys them.

⁸ The guilty walk a crooked path; the innocent travel a straight road.

⁹ It is better to live alone in the corner of an attic than with a contentious wife in a lovely home.

¹⁰ Evil people love to harm others; their neighbors get no mercy from them.

¹¹ A simpleton can learn only by seeing mockers punished; a wise person learns from instruction.

¹² The Righteous One knows what is going on in the homes of the wicked; he will bring the wicked to disaster.

¹³ Those who shut their ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in their own time of need.

¹⁴ A secret gift calms anger; a secret bribe pacifies fury.

¹⁵ Justice is a joy to the godly, but it causes dismay among evildoers.

¹⁶ The person who strays from common sense will end up in the company of the dead.

¹⁷ Those who love pleasure become poor; wine and luxury are not the way to riches.

¹⁸ Sometimes the wicked are punished to save the godly, and the treacherous for the upright.

¹⁹ It is better to live alone in the desert than with a crabby, complaining wife.

²⁰ The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get.

²¹ Whoever pursues godliness and unfailing love will find life, godliness, and honor.

²² The wise conquer the city of the strong and level the fortress in which they trust.

²³ If you keep your mouth shut, you will stay out of trouble.

²⁴ Mockers are proud and haughty; they act with boundless arrogance.

²⁵ The desires of lazy people will be their ruin, for their hands refuse to work.

²⁶ They are always greedy for more, while the godly love to give!

²⁷ God loathes the sacrifice of an evil person, especially when it is brought with ulterior motives.

²⁸ A false witness will be cut off, but an attentive witness will be allowed to speak.

²⁹ The wicked put up a bold front, but the upright proceed with care.

³⁰ Human plans, no matter how wise or well advised, cannot stand against the LORD.

³¹ The horses are prepared for battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD.

22 ¹ Choose a good reputation over great riches, for being held in high esteem is better than having silver or gold.

² The rich and the poor have this in common: The LORD made them both.

³ A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions; the simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.

⁴ True humility and fear of the LORD lead to riches, honor, and long life.

⁵ The deceitful walk a thorny, treacherous road; whoever values life will stay away.

⁶ Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.

⁷ Just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender.

⁸ Those who plant seeds of injustice will harvest disaster, and their reign of terror will end.

⁹ Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor.

¹⁰ Throw out the mocker, and fighting, quarrels, and insults will disappear.

¹¹ Anyone who loves a pure heart and gracious speech is the king's friend.

¹² The LORD preserves knowledge, but he ruins the plans of the deceitful.

¹³ The lazy person is full of excuses, saying, "If I go outside, I might meet a lion in the street and be killed!"

¹⁴ The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit; those living under the LORD's displeasure will fall into it.

¹⁵ A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness, but discipline will drive it away.

¹⁶ A person who gets ahead by oppressing the poor or by showering gifts on the rich will end in poverty.

¹⁷ Listen to the words of the wise; apply your heart to my instruction.

¹⁸ For it is good to keep these sayings deep within yourself, always ready on your lips.

¹⁹ I am teaching you today—yes, you—so you will trust in the LORD.

²⁰ I have written thirty sayings for you, filled with advice and knowledge.

²¹ In this way, you may know the truth and bring an accurate report to those who sent you.

²² Do not rob the poor because they are poor or exploit the needy in court.

²³ For the LORD is their defender. He will injure anyone who injures them.

²⁴ Keep away from angry, short-tempered people,

²⁵ or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul.

²⁶ Do not co-sign another person's note or put up a guarantee for someone else's loan.

²⁷ If you can't pay it, even your bed will be snatched from under you.

²⁸ Do not steal your neighbor's property by moving the ancient boundary markers set up by your ancestors.

²⁹ Do you see any truly competent workers? They will serve kings rather than ordinary people.

23 ¹ When dining with a ruler, pay attention to what is put before you.

² If you are a big eater, put a knife to your throat,

³ and don't desire all the delicacies—deception may be involved.

⁴ Don't weary yourself trying to get rich. Why waste your time?

⁵ For riches can disappear as though they had the wings of a bird!

⁶ Don't eat with people who are stingy; don't desire their delicacies.

⁷ "Eat and drink," they say, but they don't mean it. They are always thinking about how much it costs.

⁸ You will vomit up the delicious food they serve, and you will have to take back your words of appreciation for their "kindness."

⁹ Don't waste your breath on fools, for they will despise the wisest advice.

¹⁰ Don't steal the land of defenseless orphans by moving the ancient boundary markers,

¹¹ for their Redeemer is strong. He himself will bring their charges against you.

¹² Commit yourself to instruction; attune your ears to hear words of knowledge.

¹³ Don't fail to correct your children.
They won't die if you spank them.

¹⁴ Physical discipline may well save
them from death.

¹⁵ My child, how I will rejoice if you
become wise.

¹⁶ Yes, my heart will thrill when you
speak what is right and just.

¹⁷ Don't envy sinners, but always
continue to fear the LORD.

¹⁸ For surely you have a future ahead of
you; your hope will not be disappointed.

¹⁹ My child, listen and be wise. Keep
your heart on the right course.

²⁰ Do not carouse with drunkards and
gluttons,

²¹ for they are on their way to poverty.
Too much sleep clothes a person with
rags.

²² Listen to your father, who gave you
life, and don't despise your mother's
experience when she is old.

²³ Get the truth and don't ever sell it; also get wisdom, discipline, and discernment.

²⁴ The father of godly children has cause for joy. What a pleasure it is to have wise children.

²⁵ So give your parents joy! May she who gave you birth be happy.

²⁶ O my son, give me your heart. May your eyes delight in my ways of wisdom.

²⁷ A prostitute is a deep pit; an adulterous woman is treacherous.

²⁸ She hides and waits like a robber, looking for another victim who will be unfaithful to his wife.

²⁹ Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?

³⁰ It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks.

³¹ Don't let the sparkle and smooth taste of wine deceive you.

³² For in the end it bites like a poisonous serpent; it stings like a viper.

³³ You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things.

³⁴ You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast.

³⁵ And you will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can have another drink?"

24 ¹ Don't envy evil people; don't desire their company.

² For they spend their days plotting violence, and their words are always stirring up trouble.

³ A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense.

⁴ Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables.

⁵ A wise man is mightier than a strong man, and a man of knowledge is more powerful than a strong man.

⁶ So don't go to war without wise guidance; victory depends on having many counselors.

⁷ Wisdom is too much for a fool. When the leaders gather, the fool has nothing to say.

⁸ A person who plans evil will get a reputation as a troublemaker.

⁹ The schemes of a fool are sinful; everyone despises a mocker.

¹⁰ If you fail under pressure, your strength is not very great.

¹¹ Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to death; don't stand back and let them die.

¹² Don't try to avoid responsibility by saying you didn't know about it. For God knows all hearts, and he sees you. He keeps watch over your soul, and he

knows you knew! And he will judge all people according to what they have done.

¹³ My child, eat honey, for it is good, and the honeycomb is sweet to the taste.

¹⁴ In the same way, wisdom is sweet to your soul. If you find it, you will have a bright future, and your hopes will not be cut short.

¹⁵ Do not lie in wait like an outlaw at the home of the godly. And don't raid the house where the godly live.

¹⁶ They may trip seven times, but each time they will rise again. But one calamity is enough to lay the wicked low.

¹⁷ Do not rejoice when your enemies fall into trouble. Don't be happy when they stumble.

¹⁸ For the LORD will be displeased with you and will turn his anger away from them.

¹⁹ Do not fret because of evildoers; don't envy the wicked.

²⁰ For the evil have no future; their light will be snuffed out.

²¹ My child, fear the LORD and the king, and don't associate with rebels.

²² For you will go down with them to sudden disaster. Who knows where the punishment from the LORD and the king will end?

²³ Here are some further sayings of the wise: It is wrong to show favoritism when passing judgment.

²⁴ A judge who says to the wicked, "You are innocent," will be cursed by many people and denounced by the nations.

²⁵ But blessings are showered on those who convict the guilty.

²⁶ It is an honor to receive an honest reply.

²⁷ Develop your business first before building your house.

²⁸ Do not testify spitefully against innocent neighbors; don't lie about them.

²⁹ And don't say, "Now I can pay them back for all their meanness to me! I'll get even!"

³⁰ I walked by the field of a lazy person, the vineyard of one lacking sense.

³¹ I saw that it was overgrown with thorns. It was covered with weeds, and its walls were broken down.

³² Then, as I looked and thought about it, I learned this lesson:

³³ A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—

³⁴ and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber.

25 ¹ These are more proverbs of Solomon, collected by the advisers of King Hezekiah of Judah.

² It is God's privilege to conceal things and the king's privilege to discover them.

³ No one can discover the height of heaven, the depth of the earth, or all that goes on in the king's mind!

⁴ Remove the dross from silver, and the sterling will be ready for the silversmith.

⁵ Remove the wicked from the king's court, and his reign will be made secure by justice.

⁶ Don't demand an audience with the king or push for a place among the great.

⁷ It is better to wait for an invitation than to be sent to the end of the line, publicly disgraced! Just because you see something,

⁸ don't be in a hurry to go to court. You might go down before your neighbors in shameful defeat.

⁹ So discuss the matter with them privately. Don't tell anyone else,

¹⁰ or others may accuse you of gossip. Then you will never regain your good reputation.

¹¹ Timely advice is as lovely as golden apples in a silver basket.

¹² Valid criticism is as treasured by the one who heeds it as jewelry made from finest gold.

¹³ Faithful messengers are as refreshing as snow in the heat of summer. They revive the spirit of their employer.

¹⁴ A person who doesn't give a promised gift is like clouds and wind that don't bring rain.

¹⁵ Patience can persuade a prince, and soft speech can crush strong opposition.

¹⁶ Do you like honey? Don't eat too much of it, or it will make you sick!

¹⁷ Don't visit your neighbors too often, or you will wear out your welcome.

¹⁸ Telling lies about others is as harmful as hitting them with an ax, wounding

them with a sword, or shooting them with a sharp arrow.

¹⁹ Putting confidence in an unreliable person is like chewing with a toothache or walking on a broken foot.

²⁰ Singing cheerful songs to a person whose heart is heavy is as bad as stealing someone's jacket in cold weather or rubbing salt in a wound.

²¹ If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat. If they are thirsty, give them water to drink.

²² You will heap burning coals on their heads, and the LORD will reward you.

²³ As surely as a wind from the north brings rain, so a gossiping tongue causes anger!

²⁴ It is better to live alone in the corner of an attic than with a contentious wife in a lovely home.

²⁵ Good news from far away is like cold water to the thirsty.

²⁶ If the godly compromise with the wicked, it is like polluting a fountain or muddying a spring.

²⁷ Just as it is not good to eat too much honey, it is not good for people to think about all the honors they deserve.

²⁸ A person without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls.

26 ¹ Honor doesn't go with fools any more than snow with summer or rain with harvest.

² Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an unfair curse will not land on its intended victim.

³ Guide a horse with a whip, a donkey with a bridle, and a fool with a rod to his back!

⁴ When arguing with fools, don't answer their foolish arguments, or you will become as foolish as they are.

⁵ When arguing with fools, be sure to answer their foolish arguments, or they will become wise in their own estimation.

⁶ Trusting a fool to convey a message is as foolish as cutting off one's feet or drinking poison!

⁷ In the mouth of a fool, a proverb becomes as limp as a paralyzed leg.

⁸ Honoring a fool is as foolish as tying a stone to a slingshot.

⁹ A proverb in a fool's mouth is as dangerous as a thornbush brandished by a drunkard.

¹⁰ An employer who hires a fool or a bystander is like an archer who shoots recklessly.

¹¹ As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.

¹² There is more hope for fools than for people who think they are wise.

¹³ The lazy person is full of excuses, saying, "I can't go outside because there might be a lion on the road! Yes, I'm sure there's a lion out there!"

¹⁴ As a door turns back and forth on its hinges, so the lazy person turns over in bed.

¹⁵ Some people are so lazy that they won't lift a finger to feed themselves.

¹⁶ Lazy people consider themselves smarter than seven wise counselors.

¹⁷ Yanking a dog's ears is as foolish as interfering in someone else's argument.

¹⁸ Just as damaging as a mad man shooting a lethal weapon

¹⁹ is someone who lies to a friend and then says, "I was only joking."

²⁰ Fire goes out for lack of fuel, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops.

²¹ A quarrelsome person starts fights as easily as hot embers light charcoal or fire lights wood.

²² What dainty morsels rumors are—but they sink deep into one’s heart.

²³ Smooth words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a common clay pot.

²⁴ People with hate in their hearts may sound pleasant enough, but don’t believe them.

²⁵ Though they pretend to be kind, their hearts are full of all kinds of evil.

²⁶ While their hatred may be concealed by trickery, it will finally come to light for all to see.

²⁷ If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will roll back and crush you.

²⁸ A lying tongue hates its victims, and flattery causes ruin.

27 ¹ Don’t brag about tomorrow, since you don’t know what the day will bring.

² Don't praise yourself; let others do it!

³ A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but the resentment caused by a fool is heavier than both.

⁴ Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but who can survive the destructiveness of jealousy?

⁵ An open rebuke is better than hidden love!

⁶ Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

⁷ Honey seems tasteless to a person who is full, but even bitter food tastes sweet to the hungry.

⁸ A person who strays from home is like a bird that strays from its nest.

⁹ The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.

¹⁰ Never abandon a friend—either yours or your father's. Then in your time of need, you won't have to ask your relatives for assistance. It is better to go

to a neighbor than to a relative who lives far away.

¹¹ My child, how happy I will be if you turn out to be wise! Then I will be able to answer my critics.

¹² A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.

¹³ Be sure to get collateral from anyone who guarantees the debt of a stranger. Get a deposit if someone guarantees the debt of an adulterous woman.

¹⁴ If you shout a pleasant greeting to your neighbor too early in the morning, it will be counted as a curse!

¹⁵ A nagging wife is as annoying as the constant dripping on a rainy day.

¹⁶ Trying to stop her complaints is like trying to stop the wind or hold something with greased hands.

¹⁷ As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend.

¹⁸ Workers who tend a fig tree are allowed to eat its fruit. In the same way, workers who protect their employer's interests will be rewarded.

¹⁹ As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the person.

²⁰ Just as Death and Destruction are never satisfied, so human desire is never satisfied.

²¹ Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but a person is tested by being praised.

²² You cannot separate fools from their foolishness, even though you grind them like grain with mortar and pestle.

²³ Know the state of your flocks, and put your heart into caring for your herds,

²⁴ for riches don't last forever, and the crown might not be secure for the next generation.

²⁵ After the hay is harvested, the new crop appears, and the mountain grasses are gathered in,

²⁶ your sheep will provide wool for clothing, and your goats will be sold for the price of a field.

²⁷ And you will have enough goats' milk for you, your family, and your servants.

28 ¹ The wicked run away when no one is chasing them, but the godly are as bold as lions.

² When there is moral rot within a nation, its government topples easily. But with wise and knowledgeable leaders, there is stability.

³ A poor person who oppresses the poor is like a pounding rain that destroys the crops.

⁴ To reject the law is to praise the wicked; to obey the law is to fight them.

⁵ Evil people don't understand justice, but those who follow the LORD understand completely.

⁶ It is better to be poor and honest than rich and crooked.

⁷ Young people who obey the law are wise; those who seek out worthless companions bring shame to their parents.

⁸ A person who makes money by charging interest will lose it. It will end up in the hands of someone who is kind to the poor.

⁹ The prayers of a person who ignores the law are despised.

¹⁰ Those who lead the upright into sin will fall into their own trap, but the honest will inherit good things.

¹¹ Rich people picture themselves as wise, but their real poverty is evident to the poor.

¹² When the godly succeed, everyone is glad. When the wicked take charge, people go into hiding.

¹³ People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy.

¹⁴ Blessed are those who have a tender conscience, but the stubborn are headed for serious trouble.

¹⁵ A wicked ruler is as dangerous to the poor as a lion or bear attacking them.

¹⁶ Only a stupid prince will oppress his people, but a king will have a long reign if he hates dishonesty and bribes.

¹⁷ A murderer's tormented conscience will drive him into the grave. Don't protect him!

¹⁸ The honest will be rescued from harm, but those who are crooked will be destroyed.

¹⁹ Hard workers have plenty of food; playing around brings poverty.

²⁰ The trustworthy will get a rich reward. But the person who wants to get rich quick will only get into trouble.

²¹ Showing partiality is never good, yet some will do wrong for something as small as a piece of bread.

²² A greedy person tries to get rich quick, but it only leads to poverty.

²³ In the end, people appreciate frankness more than flattery.

²⁴ Robbing your parents and then saying, "What's wrong with that?" is as serious as committing murder.

²⁵ Greed causes fighting; trusting the LORD leads to prosperity.

²⁶ Trusting oneself is foolish, but those who walk in wisdom are safe.

²⁷ Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing. But a curse will come upon those who close their eyes to poverty.

²⁸ When the wicked take charge, people hide. When the wicked meet disaster, the godly multiply.

29 ¹ Whoever stubbornly refuses to accept criticism will suddenly be broken beyond repair.

² When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan.

³ The man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but if he hangs around with prostitutes, his wealth is wasted.

⁴ A just king gives stability to his nation, but one who demands bribes destroys it.

⁵ To flatter people is to lay a trap for their feet.

⁶ Evil people are trapped by sin, but the righteous escape, shouting for joy.

⁷ The godly know the rights of the poor; the wicked don't care to know.

⁸ Mockers can get a whole town agitated, but those who are wise will calm anger.

⁹ If a wise person takes a fool to court, there will be ranting and ridicule but no satisfaction.

¹⁰ The bloodthirsty hate the honest, but the upright seek out the honest.

¹¹ A fool gives full vent to anger, but a wise person quietly holds it back.

¹² If a ruler honors liars, all his advisers will be wicked.

¹³ The poor and the oppressor have this in common—the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.

¹⁴ A king who is fair to the poor will have a long reign.

¹⁵ To discipline and reprimand a child produces wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by an undisciplined child.

¹⁶ When the wicked are in authority, sin increases. But the godly will live to see the tyrant's downfall.

¹⁷ Discipline your children, and they will give you happiness and peace of mind.

¹⁸ When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is happy.

¹⁹ For a servant, mere words are not enough—discipline is needed. For the words may be understood, but they are not heeded.

²⁰ There is more hope for a fool than for someone who speaks without thinking.

²¹ A servant who is pampered from childhood will later become a rebel.

²² A hot-tempered person starts fights and gets into all kinds of sin.

²³ Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.

²⁴ If you assist a thief, you are only hurting yourself. You will be punished

if you report the crime, but you will be cursed if you don't.

²⁵ Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but to trust the LORD means safety.

²⁶ Many seek the ruler's favor, but justice comes from the LORD.

²⁷ The godly despise the wicked; the wicked despise the godly.

30 ¹ The message of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle. I am weary, O God; I am weary and worn out, O God.

² I am too ignorant to be human, and I lack common sense.

³ I have not mastered human wisdom, nor do I know the Holy One.

⁴ Who but God goes up to heaven and comes back down? Who holds the wind in his fists? Who wraps up the oceans in his cloak? Who has created the whole wide world? What is his name—and his son's name? Tell me if you know!

⁵ Every word of God proves true. He defends all who come to him for protection.

⁶ Do not add to his words, or he may rebuke you, and you will be found a liar.

⁷ O God, I beg two favors from you before I die.

⁸ First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs.

⁹ For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name.

¹⁰ Never slander a person to his employer. If you do, the person will curse you, and you will pay for it.

¹¹ Some people curse their father and do not thank their mother.

¹² They feel pure, but they are filthy and unwashed.

¹³ They are proud beyond description and disdainful.

¹⁴ They devour the poor with teeth as sharp as swords or knives. They destroy the needy from the face of the earth.

¹⁵ The leech has two suckers that cry out, "More, more!" There are three other things—no, four!—that are never satisfied:

¹⁶ the grave, the barren womb, the thirsty desert, the blazing fire.

¹⁷ The eye that mocks a father and despises a mother will be plucked out by ravens of the valley and eaten by vultures.

¹⁸ There are three things that amaze me—no, four things I do not understand:

¹⁹ how an eagle glides through the sky, how a snake slithers on a rock, how a ship navigates the ocean, how a man loves a woman.

²⁰ Equally amazing is how an adulterous woman can satisfy her sexual appetite, shrug her shoulders, and then say, "What's wrong with that?"

²¹ There are three things that make the earth tremble—no, four it cannot endure:

²² a slave who becomes a king, an overbearing fool who prospers,

²³ a bitter woman who finally gets a husband, a servant girl who supplants her mistress.

²⁴ There are four things on earth that are small but unusually wise:

²⁵ Ants—they aren't strong, but they store up food for the winter.

²⁶ Rock badgers—they aren't powerful, but they make their homes among the rocky cliffs.

²⁷ Locusts—they have no king, but they march like an army in ranks.

²⁸ Lizards—they are easy to catch, but they are found even in kings' palaces.

²⁹ There are three stately monarchs on the earth—no, four:

³⁰ the lion, king of animals, who won't turn aside for anything,

³¹ the strutting rooster, the male goat, a king as he leads his army.

³² If you have been a fool by being proud or plotting evil, don't brag about it—cover your mouth with your hand in shame.

³³ As the beating of cream yields butter, and a blow to the nose causes bleeding, so anger causes quarrels.

31 ¹ These are the sayings of King Lemuel, an oracle that his mother taught him.

² O my son, O son of my womb, O son of my promises,

³ do not spend your strength on women, on those who ruin kings.

⁴ And it is not for kings, O Lemuel, to guzzle wine. Rulers should not crave liquor.

⁵ For if they drink, they may forget their duties and be unable to give justice to those who are oppressed.

⁶ Liquor is for the dying, and wine for those in deep depression.

⁷ Let them drink to forget their poverty and remember their troubles no more.

⁸ Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those who are perishing.

⁹ Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.

¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is worth more than precious rubies.

¹¹ Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life.

¹² She will not hinder him but help him all her life.

¹³ She finds wool and flax and busily spins it.

¹⁴ She is like a merchant's ship; she brings her food from afar.

¹⁵ She gets up before dawn to prepare breakfast for her household and plan the day's work for her servant girls.

¹⁶ She goes out to inspect a field and buys it; with her earnings she plants a vineyard.

¹⁷ She is energetic and strong, a hard worker.

¹⁸ She watches for bargains; her lights burn late into the night.

¹⁹ Her hands are busy spinning thread, her fingers twisting fiber.

²⁰ She extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy.

²¹ She has no fear of winter for her household because all of them have warm clothes.

²² She quilts her own bedspreads. She dresses like royalty in gowns of finest cloth.

²³ Her husband is well known, for he sits in the council meeting with the other civic leaders.

²⁴ She makes belted linen garments and sashes to sell to the merchants.

²⁵ She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs with no fear of the future.

²⁶ When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule when she gives instructions.

²⁷ She carefully watches all that goes on in her household and does not have to bear the consequences of laziness.

²⁸ Her children stand and bless her. Her husband praises her:

²⁹ "There are many virtuous and capable women in the world, but you surpass them all!"

³⁰ Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised.

³¹ Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.

Ecclesiastes

1 ¹ These are the words of the Teacher, King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem.

² "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "utterly meaningless!"

³ What do people get for all their hard work?

⁴ Generations come and go, but nothing really changes.

⁵ The sun rises and sets and hurries around to rise again.

⁶ The wind blows south and north, here and there, twisting back and forth, getting nowhere.

⁷ The rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows again to the sea.

⁸ Everything is so weary and tiresome! No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.

⁹ History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new.

¹⁰ What can you point to that is new? How do you know it didn't already exist long ago?

¹¹ We don't remember what happened in those former times. And in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.

¹² I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem.

¹³ I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done in the world. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race.

¹⁴ Everything under the sun is meaningless, like chasing the wind.

¹⁵ What is wrong cannot be righted. What is missing cannot be recovered.

¹⁶ I said to myself, "Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them."

¹⁷ So I worked hard to distinguish wisdom from foolishness. But now I realize that even this was like chasing the wind.

¹⁸ For the greater my wisdom, the greater my grief. To increase knowledge only increases sorrow.

2 ¹ I said to myself, "Come now, let's give pleasure a try. Let's look for the 'good things' in life." But I found that this, too, was meaningless.

² "It is silly to be laughing all the time," I said. "What good does it do to seek only pleasure?"

³ After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. While still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I hoped to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.

⁴ I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards.

⁵ I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees.

⁶ I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves.

⁷ I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned great herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who lived in Jerusalem before me.

⁸ I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!

⁹ So I became greater than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. And with it all, I remained clear-eyed so that I could evaluate all these things.

¹⁰ Anything I wanted, I took. I did not restrain myself from any joy. I even found great pleasure in hard work, an additional reward for all my labors.

¹¹ But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

¹² So I decided to compare wisdom and folly, and anyone else would come to the same conclusions I did.

¹³ Wisdom is of more value than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness.

¹⁴ For the wise person sees, while the fool is blind. Yet I saw that wise and foolish people share the same fate.

¹⁵ Both of them die. Just as the fool will die, so will I. So of what value is all my wisdom? Then I said to myself, "This is all so meaningless!"

¹⁶ For the wise person and the fool both die, and in the days to come, both will be forgotten.

¹⁷ So now I hate life because everything done here under the sun is so irrational. Everything is meaningless, like chasing the wind.

¹⁸ I am disgusted that I must leave the fruits of my hard work to others.

¹⁹ And who can tell whether my successors will be wise or foolish? And yet they will control everything I have

gained by my skill and hard work. How meaningless!

²⁰ So I turned in despair from hard work. It was not the answer to my search for satisfaction in this life.

²¹ For though I do my work with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, I must leave everything I gain to people who haven't worked to earn it. This is not only foolish but highly unfair.

²² So what do people get for all their hard work?

²³ Their days of labor are filled with pain and grief; even at night they cannot rest. It is all utterly meaningless.

²⁴ So I decided there is nothing better than to enjoy food and drink and to find satisfaction in work. Then I realized that this pleasure is from the hand of God.

²⁵ For who can eat or enjoy anything apart from him?

²⁶ God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him. But if a sinner becomes wealthy, God takes the wealth away and gives it to those who please him. Even this, however, is meaningless, like chasing the wind.

3 ¹ There is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven.

² A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.

³ A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to rebuild.

⁴ A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.

⁵ A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away.

⁶ A time to search and a time to lose. A time to keep and a time to throw away.

⁷ A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak up.

⁸ A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

⁹ What do people really get for all their hard work?

¹⁰ I have thought about this in connection with the various kinds of work God has given people to do.

¹¹ God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

¹² So I concluded that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to enjoy themselves as long as they can.

¹³ And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.

¹⁴ And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose in this is that people should fear him.

¹⁵ Whatever exists today and whatever will exist in the future has already existed in the past. For God calls each event back in its turn.

¹⁶ I also noticed that throughout the world there is evil in the courtroom. Yes, even the courts of law are corrupt!

¹⁷ I said to myself, "In due season God will judge everyone, both good and bad, for all their deeds."

¹⁸ Then I realized that God allows people to continue in their sinful ways so he can test them. That way, they can see for themselves that they are no better than animals.

¹⁹ For humans and animals both breathe the same air, and both die. So people have no real advantage over the animals. How meaningless!

²⁰ Both go to the same place—the dust from which they came and to which they must return.

²¹ For who can prove that the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward into the earth?

²² So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is why they are here! No one will bring them back from death to enjoy life in the future.

4 ¹ Again I observed all the oppression that takes place in our world. I saw the tears of the oppressed, with no one to comfort them. The oppressors have great power, and the victims are helpless.

² So I concluded that the dead are better off than the living.

³ And most fortunate of all are those who were never born. For they have never seen all the evil that is done in our world.

⁴ Then I observed that most people are motivated to success by their envy

of their neighbors. But this, too, is meaningless, like chasing the wind.

⁵ Foolish people refuse to work and almost starve.

⁶ They feel it is better to be lazy and barely survive than to work hard, especially when in the long run everything is so futile.

⁷ I observed yet another example of meaninglessness in our world.

⁸ This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, "Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?" It is all so meaningless and depressing.

⁹ Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor.

¹⁰ If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble.

¹¹ And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone?

¹² A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

¹³ It is better to be a poor but wise youth than to be an old and foolish king who refuses all advice.

¹⁴ Such a youth could come from prison and succeed. He might even become king, though he was born in poverty.

¹⁵ Everyone is eager to help such a youth, even to help him take the throne.

¹⁶ He might become the leader of millions and be very popular. But then

the next generation grows up and rejects him! So again, it is all meaningless, like chasing the wind.

5¹ As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut! Don't be a fool who doesn't realize that mindless offerings to God are evil.

² And don't make rash promises to God, for he is in heaven, and you are only here on earth. So let your words be few.

³ Just as being too busy gives you nightmares, being a fool makes you a blabbermouth.

⁴ So when you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him.

⁵ It is better to say nothing than to promise something that you don't follow through on.

⁶ In such cases, your mouth is making you sin. And don't defend yourself by

telling the Temple messenger that the promise you made was a mistake. That would make God angry, and he might wipe out everything you have achieved.

⁷ Dreaming all the time instead of working is foolishness. And there is ruin in a flood of empty words. Fear God instead.

⁸ If you see a poor person being oppressed by the powerful and justice being miscarried throughout the land, don't be surprised! For every official is under orders from higher up, and matters of justice only get lost in red tape and bureaucracy.

⁹ Even the king milks the land for his own profit!

¹⁰ Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness!

¹¹ The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what is the

advantage of wealth—except perhaps to watch it run through your fingers!

¹² People who work hard sleep well, whether they eat little or much. But the rich are always worrying and seldom get a good night's sleep.

¹³ There is another serious problem I have seen in the world. Riches are sometimes hoarded to the harm of the saver,

¹⁴ or they are put into risky investments that turn sour, and everything is lost. In the end, there is nothing left to pass on to one's children.

¹⁵ People who live only for wealth come to the end of their lives as naked and empty-handed as on the day they were born.

¹⁶ And this, too, is a very serious problem. As people come into this world, so they depart. All their hard work is for nothing. They have been

working for the wind, and everything will be swept away.

¹⁷ Throughout their lives, they live under a cloud—frustrated, discouraged, and angry.

¹⁸ Even so, I have noticed one thing, at least, that is good. It is good for people to eat well, drink a good glass of wine, and enjoy their work—whatever they do under the sun—for however long God lets them live.

¹⁹ And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—that is indeed a gift from God.

²⁰ People who do this rarely look with sorrow on the past, for God has given them reasons for joy.

6 ¹ There is another serious tragedy I have seen in our world.

² God gives great wealth and honor to some people and gives them everything they could ever want, but then he doesn't give them the health to enjoy it. They die, and others get it all! This is meaningless—a sickening tragedy.

³ A man might have a hundred children and live to be very old. But if he finds no satisfaction in life and in the end does not even get a decent burial, I say he would have been better off born dead.

⁴ I realize that his birth would have been meaningless and ended in darkness. He wouldn't even have had a name,

⁵ and he would never have seen the sun or known of its existence. Yet he would have had more peace than he has in growing up to be an unhappy man.

⁶ He might live a thousand years twice over but not find contentment. And since he must die like everyone else—well, what's the use?

⁷ All people spend their lives scratching for food, but they never seem to have enough.

⁸ Considering this, do wise people really have any advantage over fools? Do poor people gain anything by being wise and knowing how to act in front of others?

⁹ Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless; it is like chasing the wind.

¹⁰ Everything has already been decided. It was known long ago what each person would be. So there's no use arguing with God about your destiny.

¹¹ The more words you speak, the less they mean. So why overdo it?

¹² In the few days of our empty lives, who knows how our days can best be spent? And who can tell what will happen in the future after we are gone?

7¹ A good reputation is more valuable than the most expensive perfume. In the same way, the day you die is better than the day you are born.

² It is better to spend your time at funerals than at festivals. For you are going to die, and you should think about it while there is still time.

³ Sorrow is better than laughter, for sadness has a refining influence on us.

⁴ A wise person thinks much about death, while the fool thinks only about having a good time now.

⁵ It is better to be criticized by a wise person than to be praised by a fool!

⁶ Indeed, a fool's laughter is quickly gone, like thorns crackling in a fire. This also is meaningless.

⁷ Extortion turns wise people into fools, and bribes corrupt the heart.

⁸ Finishing is better than starting.
Patience is better than pride.

⁹ Don't be quick-tempered, for anger is the friend of fools.

¹⁰ Don't long for "the good old days," for you don't know whether they were any better than today.

¹¹ Being wise is as good as being rich; in fact, it is better.

¹² Wisdom or money can get you almost anything, but it's important to know that only wisdom can save your life.

¹³ Notice the way God does things; then fall into line. Don't fight the ways of God, for who can straighten out what he has made crooked?

¹⁴ Enjoy prosperity while you can. But when hard times strike, realize that both come from God. That way you will realize that nothing is certain in this life.

¹⁵ In this meaningless life, I have seen everything, including the fact that some good people die young and some wicked people live on and on.

¹⁶ So don't be too good or too wise!
Why destroy yourself?

¹⁷ On the other hand, don't be too wicked either—don't be a fool! Why should you die before your time?

¹⁸ So try to walk a middle course—but those who fear God will succeed either way.

¹⁹ A wise person is stronger than the ten leading citizens of a town!

²⁰ There is not a single person in all the earth who is always good and never sins.

²¹ Don't eavesdrop on others—you may hear your servant laughing at you.

²² For you know how often you yourself have laughed at others.

²³ All along I have tried my best to let wisdom guide my thoughts and actions. I said to myself, "I am determined to be wise." But it didn't really work.

²⁴ Wisdom is always distant and very difficult to find.

²⁵ I searched everywhere, determined to find wisdom and to understand the reason for things. I was determined to prove to myself that wickedness is stupid and that foolishness is madness.

²⁶ I discovered that a seductive woman is more bitter than death. Her passion is a trap, and her soft hands will bind you. Those who please God will escape from her, but sinners will be caught in her snare.

²⁷ "This is my conclusion," says the Teacher. "I came to this result after looking into the matter from every possible angle.

²⁸ Just one out of every thousand men I interviewed can be said to be upright, but not one woman!

²⁹ I discovered that God created people to be upright, but they have each turned to follow their own downward path."

8¹ How wonderful to be wise, to be able to analyze and interpret things. Wisdom lights up a person's face, softening its hardness.

² Obey the king because you have vowed before God to do this.

³ Don't try to avoid doing your duty, and don't take a stand with those who plot evil. For the king will punish those who disobey him.

⁴ The king's command is backed by great power. No one can resist or question it.

⁵ Those who obey him will not be punished. Those who are wise will find a time and a way to do what is right.

⁶ Yes, there is a time and a way for everything, even as people's troubles lie heavily upon them.

⁷ Indeed, how can people avoid what they don't know is going to happen?

⁸ None of us can hold back our spirit from departing. None of us has the power to prevent the day of our death. There is no escaping that obligation, that dark battle. And in the face of death, wickedness will certainly not rescue those who practice it.

⁹ I have thought deeply about all that goes on here in the world, where people have the power to hurt each other.

¹⁰ I have seen wicked people buried with honor. How strange that they were the very ones who frequented the Temple and are praised in the very city where they committed their crimes!

¹¹ When a crime is not punished, people feel it is safe to do wrong.

¹² But even though a person sins a hundred times and still lives a long time, I know that those who fear God will be better off.

¹³ The wicked will never live long, good lives, for they do not fear God. Their days will never grow long like the evening shadows.

¹⁴ And this is not all that is meaningless in our world. In this life, good people are often treated as though they were wicked, and wicked people are often treated as though they were good. This is so meaningless!

¹⁵ So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people to do in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them.

¹⁶ In my search for wisdom, I tried to observe everything that goes on all across the earth. I discovered that there is ceaseless activity, day and night.

¹⁷ This reminded me that no one can discover everything God has created

in our world, no matter how hard they work at it. Not even the wisest people know everything, even if they say they do.

9¹ This, too, I carefully explored: Even though the actions of godly and wise people are in God's hands, no one knows whether or not God will show them favor in this life.

² The same destiny ultimately awaits everyone, whether they are righteous or wicked, good or bad, ceremonially clean or unclean, religious or irreligious. Good people receive the same treatment as sinners, and people who take oaths are treated like people who don't.

³ It seems so tragic that one fate comes to all. That is why people are not more careful to be good. Instead, they choose their own mad course, for they have no hope. There is nothing ahead but death anyway.

⁴ There is hope only for the living. For as they say, "It is better to be a live dog than a dead lion!"

⁵ The living at least know they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered.

⁶ Whatever they did in their lifetime—loving, hating, envying—is all long gone. They no longer have a part in anything here on earth.

⁷ So go ahead. Eat your food and drink your wine with a happy heart, for God approves of this!

⁸ Wear fine clothes, with a dash of cologne!

⁹ Live happily with the woman you love through all the meaningless days of life that God has given you in this world. The wife God gives you is your reward for all your earthly toil.

¹⁰ Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.

¹¹ I have observed something else in this world of ours. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise are often poor, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives. It is all decided by chance, by being at the right place at the right time.

¹² People can never predict when hard times might come. Like fish in a net or birds in a snare, people are often caught by sudden tragedy.

¹³ Here is another bit of wisdom that has impressed me as I have watched the way our world works.

¹⁴ There was a small town with only a few people living in it, and a great king came with his army and besieged it.

¹⁵ There was a poor, wise man living there who knew how to save the town, and so it was rescued. But afterward no one thought any more about him.

¹⁶ Then I realized that though wisdom is better than strength, those who are wise will be despised if they are poor. What they say will not be appreciated for long.

¹⁷ But even so, the quiet words of a wise person are better than the shouts of a foolish king.

¹⁸ A wise person can overcome weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much that is good.

10¹ Dead flies will cause even a bottle of perfume to stink! Yes, an ounce of foolishness can outweigh a pound of wisdom and honor.

² The hearts of the wise lead them to do right, and the hearts of the foolish lead them to do evil.

³ You can identify fools just by the way they walk down the street!

⁴ If your boss is angry with you, don't quit! A quiet spirit can overcome even great mistakes.

⁵ There is another evil I have seen as I have watched the world go by. Kings and rulers make a grave mistake

⁶ if they give foolish people great authority, and if they fail to give people of proven worth their rightful place of dignity.

⁷ I have even seen servants riding like princes—and princes walking like servants.

⁸ When you dig a well, you may fall in. When you demolish an old wall, you could be bitten by a snake.

⁹ When you work in a quarry, stones might fall and crush you! When you chop wood, there is danger with each stroke of your ax! Such are the risks of life.

¹⁰ Since a dull ax requires great strength, sharpen the blade. That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.

¹¹ It does no good to charm a snake after it has bitten you.

¹² It is pleasant to listen to wise words, but the speech of fools brings them to ruin.

¹³ Since fools base their thoughts on foolish premises, their conclusions will be wicked madness.

¹⁴ Foolish people claim to know all about the future and tell everyone the details! But who can really know what is going to happen?

¹⁵ Fools are so exhausted by a little work that they have no strength for even the simplest tasks.

¹⁶ Destruction is certain for the land whose king is a child and whose leaders feast in the morning.

¹⁷ Happy is the land whose king is a nobleman and whose leaders feast only to gain strength for their work, not to get drunk.

¹⁸ Laziness lets the roof leak, and soon the rafters begin to rot.

¹⁹ A party gives laughter, and wine gives happiness, and money gives everything!

²⁰ Never make light of the king, even in your thoughts. And don't make fun of a rich man, either. A little bird may tell them what you have said.

11 ¹ Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later.

² Divide your gifts among many, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead.

³ When the clouds are heavy, the rains come down. When a tree falls, whether south or north, there it lies.

⁴ If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.

⁵ God's ways are as hard to discern as the pathways of the wind, and as mysterious as a tiny baby being formed in a mother's womb.

⁶ Be sure to stay busy and plant a variety of crops, for you never know which will grow—perhaps they all will.

⁷ Light is sweet; it's wonderful to see the sun!

⁸ When people live to be very old, let them rejoice in every day of life. But let them also remember that the dark days will be many. Everything still to come is meaningless.

⁹ Young man, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.

¹⁰ So banish grief and pain, but remember that youth, with a whole life before it, still faces the threat of meaninglessness.

12 ¹ Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living.

² It will be too late then to remember him, when the light of the sun and moon and stars is dim to your old eyes, and there is no silver lining left among the clouds.

³ Your limbs will tremble with age, and your strong legs will grow weak. Your teeth will be too few to do their work, and you will be blind, too.

⁴ And when your teeth are gone, keep your lips tightly closed when you eat! Even the chirping of birds will wake you up. But you yourself will be deaf and tuneless, with a quavering voice.

⁵ You will be afraid of heights and of falling, white-haired and withered, dragging along without any sexual desire. You will be standing at death's door. And as you near your everlasting home, the mourners will walk along the streets.

⁶ Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well.

⁷ For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

⁸ "All is meaningless," says the Teacher, "utterly meaningless."

⁹ Because the Teacher was wise, he taught the people everything he knew. He collected proverbs and classified them.

¹⁰ Indeed, the Teacher taught the plain truth, and he did so in an interesting way.

¹¹ A wise teacher's words spur students to action and emphasize important truths. The collected sayings of the wise are like guidance from a shepherd.

¹² But, my child, be warned: There is no end of opinions ready to be expressed. Studying them can go on forever and become very exhausting!

¹³ Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person.

¹⁴ God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.

Song of Solomon

1 ¹ This is Solomon's song of songs,
more wonderful than any other.

² Young Woman: "Kiss me again and
again, for your love is sweeter than wine.

³ How fragrant your cologne, and how
pleasing your name! No wonder all the
young women love you!

⁴ Take me with you. Come, let's run!
Bring me into your bedroom, O my
king." Young Women of Jerusalem: "How
happy we are for him! We praise his love
even more than wine." Young Woman:
"How right that the young women love
you!

⁵ "I am dark and beautiful, O women of
Jerusalem, tanned as the dark tents of
Kedar. Yes, even as the tents of Solomon!

⁶ "Don't look down on me, you fair city girls, just because my complexion is so dark. The sun has burned my skin. My brothers were angry with me and sent me out to tend the vineyards in the hot sun. Now see what it has done to me!

⁷ "Tell me, O my love, where are you leading your flock today? Where will you rest your sheep at noon? For why should I wander like a prostitute among the flocks of your companions?"

⁸ Young Man: "If you don't know, O most beautiful woman, follow the trail of my flock to the shepherds' tents, and there feed your young goats.

⁹ What a lovely filly you are, my beloved one!

¹⁰ How lovely are your cheeks, with your earrings setting them afire! How stately is your neck, accented with a long string of jewels.

¹¹ We will make earrings of gold for you and beads of silver."

¹² Young Woman: "The king is lying on his couch, enchanted by the fragrance of my perfume.

¹³ My lover is like a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts.

¹⁴ He is like a bouquet of flowers in the gardens of En-gedi."

¹⁵ Young Man: "How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful! Your eyes are soft like doves."

¹⁶ Young Woman: "What a lovely, pleasant sight you are, my love, as we lie here on the grass,

¹⁷ shaded by cedar trees and spreading firs."

2 ¹ Young Woman: "I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley."

² Young Man: "Yes, compared to other women, my beloved is like a lily among thorns."

³ Young Woman: "And compared to other youths, my lover is like the finest apple tree in the orchard. I am seated in his delightful shade, and his fruit is delicious to eat.

⁴ He brings me to the banquet hall, so everyone can see how much he loves me.

⁵ Oh, feed me with your love—your 'raisins' and your 'apples'—for I am utterly lovesick!

⁶ His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me.

⁷ "Promise me, O women of Jerusalem, by the swift gazelles and the deer of the wild, not to awaken love until the time is right.

⁸ "Ah, I hear him—my lover! Here he comes, leaping on the mountains and bounding over the hills.

⁹ My lover is like a swift gazelle or a young deer. Look, there he is behind the

wall! Now he is looking in through the window, gazing into the room.

¹⁰ "My lover said to me, 'Rise up, my beloved, my fair one, and come away.

¹¹ For the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone.

¹² The flowers are springing up, and the time of singing birds has come, even the cooing of turtledoves.

¹³ The fig trees are budding, and the grapevines are in blossom. How delicious they smell! Yes, spring is here! Arise, my beloved, my fair one, and come away.'"

¹⁴ Young Man: "My dove is hiding behind some rocks, behind an outcrop on the cliff. Let me see you; let me hear your voice. For your voice is pleasant, and you are lovely."

¹⁵ Young Women of Jerusalem: "Quick! Catch all the little foxes before they ruin the vineyard of your love, for the grapevines are all in blossom."

¹⁶ Young Woman: "My lover is mine, and I am his. He feeds among the lilies!

¹⁷ Before the dawn comes and the shadows flee away, come back to me, my love. Run like a gazelle or a young stag on the rugged mountains."

3 ¹ Young Woman: "One night as I lay in bed, I yearned deeply for my lover, but he did not come.

² So I said to myself, 'I will get up now and roam the city, searching for him in all its streets and squares.' But my search was in vain.

³ The watchmen stopped me as they made their rounds, and I said to them, 'Have you seen him anywhere, this one I love so much?'

⁴ A little while later I found him and held him. I didn't let him go until I had brought him to my childhood home, into my mother's bedroom, where I had been conceived.

⁵ "Promise me, O women of Jerusalem, by the swift gazelles and the deer of the wild, not to awaken love until the time is right."

⁶ Young Women of Jerusalem: "Who is this sweeping in from the deserts like a cloud of smoke along the ground? Who is it that smells of myrrh and frankincense and every other spice?"

⁷ Look, it is Solomon's carriage, with sixty of Israel's mightiest men surrounding it.

⁸ They are all skilled swordsmen and experienced warriors. Each one wears a sword on his thigh, ready to defend the king against an attack during the night.

⁹ "King Solomon has built a carriage for himself from wood imported from Lebanon's forests.

¹⁰ Its posts are of silver, its canopy is gold, and its seat is upholstered in purple

cloth. Its interior was a gift of love from the young women of Jerusalem."

¹¹ Young Woman: "Go out to look upon King Solomon, O young women of Jerusalem. See the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day, the day of his gladness."

4 ¹ Young Man: "How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are like doves. Your hair falls in waves, like a flock of goats frisking down the slopes of Gilead.

² Your teeth are as white as sheep, newly shorn and washed. They are perfectly matched; not one is missing.

³ Your lips are like a ribbon of scarlet. Oh, how beautiful your mouth! Your cheeks behind your veil are like pomegranate halves—lovely and delicious.

⁴ Your neck is as stately as the tower of David, jeweled with the shields of a thousand heroes.

⁵ Your breasts are like twin fawns of a gazelle, feeding among the lilies.

⁶ Before the dawn comes and the shadows flee away, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.

⁷ You are so beautiful, my beloved, so perfect in every part.

⁸ "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride. Come down from the top of Mount Amana, from Mount Senir and Mount Hermon, where lions have their dens and panthers prowl.

⁹ You have ravished my heart, my treasure, my bride. I am overcome by one glance of your eyes, by a single bead of your necklace.

¹⁰ How sweet is your love, my treasure, my bride! How much better it is than

wine! Your perfume is more fragrant than the richest of spices.

¹¹ Your lips, my bride, are as sweet as honey. Yes, honey and cream are under your tongue. The scent of your clothing is like that of the mountains and the cedars of Lebanon.

¹² "You are like a private garden, my treasure, my bride! You are like a spring that no one else can drink from, a fountain of my own.

¹³ You are like a lovely orchard bearing precious fruit, with the rarest of perfumes:

¹⁴ nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, myrrh and aloes, perfume from every incense tree, and every other lovely spice.

¹⁵ You are a garden fountain, a well of living water, as refreshing as the streams from the Lebanon mountains."

¹⁶ Young Woman: "Awake, north wind! Come, south wind! Blow on my garden and waft its lovely perfume to my lover. Let him come into his garden and eat its choicest fruits."

5 ¹ Young Man: "I am here in my garden, my treasure, my bride! I gather my myrrh with my spices and eat my honeycomb with my honey. I drink my wine with my milk." Young Women of Jerusalem: "Oh, lover and beloved, eat and drink! Yes, drink deeply of this love!"

² Young Woman: "One night as I was sleeping, my heart awakened in a dream. I heard the voice of my lover. He was knocking at my bedroom door. 'Open to me, my darling, my treasure, my lovely dove,' he said, 'for I have been out in the night. My head is soaked with dew, my hair with the wetness of the night.'

³ "But I said, 'I have taken off my robe. Should I get dressed again? I have washed my feet. Should I get them soiled?'

⁴ "My lover tried to unlatch the door, and my heart thrilled within me.

⁵ I jumped up to open it. My hands dripped with perfume, my fingers with lovely myrrh, as I pulled back the bolt.

⁶ I opened to my lover, but he was gone. I yearned for even his voice! I searched for him, but I couldn't find him anywhere. I called to him, but there was no reply.

⁷ The watchmen found me as they were making their rounds; they struck and wounded me. The watchman on the wall tore off my veil.

⁸ "Make this promise to me, O women of Jerusalem! If you find my beloved one, tell him that I am sick with love."

⁹ Young Women of Jerusalem: "O woman of rare beauty, what is it about your loved one that brings you to tell us this?"

¹⁰ Young Woman: "My lover is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!

¹¹ His head is the finest gold, and his hair is wavy and black.

¹² His eyes are like doves beside brooks of water; they are set like jewels.

¹³ His cheeks are like sweetly scented beds of spices. His lips are like perfumed lilies. His breath is like myrrh.

¹⁴ His arms are like round bars of gold, set with chrysolite. His body is like bright ivory, aglow with sapphires.

¹⁵ His legs are like pillars of marble set in sockets of the finest gold, strong as the cedars of Lebanon. None can rival him.

¹⁶ His mouth is altogether sweet; he is lovely in every way. Such, O women of Jerusalem, is my lover, my friend."

6 ¹ Young Women of Jerusalem: "O rarest of beautiful women, where has your lover gone? We will help you find him."

² Young Woman: "He has gone down to his garden, to his spice beds, to graze and to gather the lilies.

³ I am my lover's, and my lover is mine. He grazes among the lilies!"

⁴ Young Man: "O my beloved, you are as beautiful as the lovely town of Tirzah. Yes, as beautiful as Jerusalem! You are as majestic as an army with banners!

⁵ Look away, for your eyes overcome me! Your hair falls in waves, like a flock of goats frisking down the slopes of Gilead.

⁶ Your teeth are as white as newly washed sheep. They are perfectly matched; not one is missing.

⁷ Your cheeks behind your veil are like pomegranate halves—lovely and delicious.

⁸ There may be sixty wives, all queens, and eighty concubines and unnumbered virgins available to me.

⁹ But I would still choose my dove, my perfect one, the only beloved daughter of her mother! The young women are delighted when they see her; even queens and concubines sing her praises!

¹⁰ 'Who is this,' they ask, 'arising like the dawn, as fair as the moon, as bright as the sun, as majestic as an army with banners?'

¹¹ "I went down into the grove of nut trees and out to the valley to see the new growth brought on by spring. I wanted to see whether the grapevines

were budding yet, or whether the pomegranates were blossoming.

¹² Before I realized it, I found myself in my princely bed with my beloved one."

¹³ Young Women of Jerusalem: "Return, return to us, O maid of Shulam. Come back, come back, that we may see you once again." Young Man: "Why do you gaze so intently at this young woman of Shulam, as she moves so gracefully between two lines of dancers?"

7 ¹ Young Man: "How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O queenly maiden. Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a skilled craftsman.

² Your navel is as delicious as a goblet filled with wine. Your belly is lovely, like a heap of wheat set about with lilies.

³ Your breasts are like twin fawns of a gazelle.

⁴ Your neck is as stately as an ivory tower. Your eyes are like the sparkling

pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is as fine as the tower of Lebanon overlooking Damascus.

⁵ Your head is as majestic as Mount Carmel, and the sheen of your hair radiates royalty. A king is held captive in your queenly tresses.

⁶ "Oh, how delightful you are, my beloved; how pleasant for utter delight!

⁷ You are tall and slim like a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters of dates.

⁸ I said, 'I will climb up into the palm tree and take hold of its branches.' Now may your breasts be like grape clusters, and the scent of your breath like apples.

⁹ May your kisses be as exciting as the best wine, smooth and sweet, flowing gently over lips and teeth."

¹⁰ Young Woman: "I am my lover's, the one he desires.

¹¹ Come, my love, let us go out into the fields and spend the night among the wildflowers.

¹² Let us get up early and go out to the vineyards. Let us see whether the vines have budded, whether the blossoms have opened, and whether the pomegranates are in flower. And there I will give you my love.

¹³ There the mandrakes give forth their fragrance, and the rarest fruits are at our doors, the new as well as old, for I have stored them up for you, my lover."

8 ¹ Young Woman: "Oh, if only you were my brother, who nursed at my mother's breast. Then I could kiss you no matter who was watching, and no one would criticize me.

² I would bring you to my childhood home, and there you would teach me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, my sweet pomegranate wine.

³ Your left hand would be under my head and your right hand would embrace me.

⁴ "I want you to promise, O women of Jerusalem, not to awaken love until the time is right."

⁵ Young Women of Jerusalem: "Who is this coming up from the desert, leaning on her lover?" Young Woman: "I aroused you under the apple tree, where your mother gave you birth, where in great pain she delivered you.

⁶ Place me like a seal over your heart, or like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, and its jealousy is as enduring as the grave. Love flashes like fire, the brightest kind of flame.

⁷ Many waters cannot quench love; neither can rivers drown it. If a man tried to buy love with everything he owned, his offer would be utterly despised."

⁸ The Young Woman's Brothers: "We have a little sister too young for breasts. What will we do if someone asks to marry her?"

⁹ If she is chaste, we will strengthen and encourage her. But if she is promiscuous, we will shut her off from men."

¹⁰ Young Woman: "I am chaste, and I am now full breasted. And my lover is content with me.

¹¹ "Solomon has a vineyard at Baal-hamon, which he rents to some farmers there. Each of them pays one thousand pieces of silver for its use.

¹² But as for my own vineyard, O Solomon, you can take my thousand pieces of silver. And I will give two hundred pieces of silver to those who care for its vines."

¹³ Young Man: "O my beloved, lingering in the gardens, how wonderful that your

companions can listen to your voice. Let me hear it, too!

¹⁴ Young Woman: "Come quickly, my love! Move like a swift gazelle or a young deer on the mountains of spices."

Isaiah

1 ¹ These visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem came to Isaiah son of Amoz during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—all kings of Judah.

² Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! This is what the LORD says: "The children I raised and cared for have turned against me.

³ Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—know their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still do not understand."

⁴ Oh, what a sinful nation they are! They are loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil and corrupt children who have turned away from the LORD.

They have despised the Holy One of Israel, cutting themselves off from his help.

⁵ Why do you continue to invite punishment? Must you rebel forever? Your head is injured, and your heart is sick.

⁶ You are sick from head to foot—covered with bruises, welts, and infected wounds—without any ointments or bandages.

⁷ Your country lies in ruins, and your cities are burned. As you watch, foreigners plunder your fields and destroy everything they see.

⁸ Jerusalem stands abandoned like a watchman's shelter in a vineyard or field after the harvest is over. It is as helpless as a city under siege.

⁹ If the LORD Almighty had not spared a few of us, we would have been

wiped out as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹⁰ Listen to the LORD, you leaders of Israel! Listen to the law of our God, people of Israel. You act just like the rulers and people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹¹ "I am sick of your sacrifices," says the LORD. "Don't bring me any more burnt offerings! I don't want the fat from your rams or other animals. I don't want to see the blood from your offerings of bulls and rams and goats.

¹² Why do you keep parading through my courts with your worthless sacrifices?

¹³ The incense you bring me is a stench in my nostrils! Your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath day, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—are all sinful and false. I want nothing more to do with them.

¹⁴ I hate all your festivals and sacrifices. I cannot stand the sight of them!

¹⁵ From now on, when you lift up your hands in prayer, I will refuse to look. Even though you offer many prayers, I will not listen. For your hands are covered with the blood of your innocent victims.

¹⁶ Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways.

¹⁷ Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the orphan. Fight for the rights of widows.

¹⁸ "Come now, let us argue this out," says the LORD. "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool.

¹⁹ If you will only obey me and let me help you, then you will have plenty to eat.

²⁰ But if you keep turning away and refusing to listen, you will be destroyed by your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

²¹ See how Jerusalem, once so faithful, has become a prostitute. Once the home of justice and righteousness, she is now filled with murderers.

²² Once like pure silver, you have become like worthless slag. Once so pure, you are now like watered-down wine.

²³ Your leaders are rebels, the companions of thieves. All of them take bribes and refuse to defend the orphans and the widows.

²⁴ Therefore, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, says, "I will pour out my fury on you, my enemies!

²⁵ I will turn against you. I will melt you down and skim off your slag. I will remove all your impurities.

²⁶ Afterward I will give you good judges and wise counselors like the ones you used to have. Then Jerusalem will again be called the Home of Justice and the Faithful City."

²⁷ Because the LORD is just and righteous, the repentant people of Jerusalem will be redeemed.

²⁸ But all sinners will be completely destroyed, for they refuse to come to the LORD.

²⁹ Shame will cover you when you think of the times you offered sacrifices to idols in your groves of sacred oaks. You will blush when you think of all the sins you committed in your sacred gardens.

³⁰ You will wither away like an oak or garden without water.

³¹ The strongest among you will disappear like burning straw. Your evil deeds are the spark that will set the straw on fire, and no one will be able to put it out.

2 ¹ This is another vision that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the last days, the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship.

³ Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him." For in those days the LORD's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem.

⁴ The LORD will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their

swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end.

⁵ Come, people of Israel, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

⁶ The LORD has rejected the people of Israel because they have made alliances with foreigners from the East who practice magic and divination, just like the Philistines.

⁷ Israel has vast treasures of silver and gold and many horses and chariots.

⁸ The land is filled with idols. The people bow down and worship these things they have made.

⁹ So now everyone will be humbled and brought low. The LORD cannot simply ignore their sins!

¹⁰ Crawl into caves in the rocks. Hide from the terror of the LORD and the glory of his majesty.

¹¹ The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the LORD alone will be exalted.

¹² In that day the LORD Almighty will punish the proud, bringing them down to the dust.

¹³ He will cut down the tall cedars of Lebanon and the mighty oaks of Bashan.

¹⁴ He will level the high mountains and hills.

¹⁵ He will break down every high tower and wall.

¹⁶ He will destroy the great trading ships and all the small boats in the harbor.

¹⁷ The arrogance of all people will be brought low. Their pride will lie in the dust. The LORD alone will be exalted!

¹⁸ Idols will be utterly abolished and destroyed.

¹⁹ When the LORD rises to shake the earth, his enemies will crawl with fear into holes in the ground. They will hide

in caves in the rocks from the terror of the LORD and the glory of his majesty.

²⁰ They will abandon their gold and silver idols to the moles and bats.

²¹ They will crawl into caverns and hide among the jagged rocks at the tops of cliffs. In this way, they will try to escape the terror of the LORD and the glory of his majesty as he rises to shake the earth.

²² Stop putting your trust in mere humans. They are as frail as breath. How can they be of help to anyone?

3 ¹ The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will cut off the supplies of food and water from Jerusalem and Judah.

² He will destroy all the nation's leaders—the heroes, soldiers, judges, prophets, diviners, elders,

³ army officers, honorable citizens, advisers, skilled magicians, and expert enchanters.

⁴ Then he will appoint children to rule over them, and anarchy will prevail.

⁵ People will take advantage of each other—man against man, neighbor fighting neighbor. Young people will revolt against authority, and nobodies will sneer at honorable people.

⁶ In those days a man will say to his brother, "Since you have a cloak, you be our leader! Take charge of this heap of ruins!"

⁷ "No!" he will reply. "I can't help. I don't have any extra food or clothes. Don't ask me to get involved!"

⁸ Judah and Jerusalem will lie in ruins because they speak out against the LORD and refuse to obey him. They have offended his glorious presence among them.

⁹ The very look on their faces gives them away and displays their guilt. They sin openly like the people of Sodom.

They are not one bit ashamed. How terrible it will be for them! They have brought about their own destruction.

¹⁰ But all will be well for those who are godly. Tell them, "You will receive a wonderful reward!"

¹¹ But say to the wicked, "Your destruction is sure. You, too, will get what you deserve. Your well-earned punishment is on the way."

¹² Children oppress my people, and women rule over them. O my people, can't you see what fools your rulers are? They are leading you down a pretty garden path to destruction.

¹³ The LORD takes his place in court. He is the great prosecuting attorney, presenting his case against his people!

¹⁴ The leaders and the princes will be the first to feel the LORD's judgment. "You have ruined Israel, which is my vineyard. You have taken advantage of

the poor, filling your barns with grain extorted from helpless people.

¹⁵ How dare you grind my people into the dust like that!" demands the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

¹⁶ Next the LORD will judge the women of Jerusalem, who walk around with their noses in the air, with tinkling ornaments on their ankles. Their eyes rove among the crowds, flirting with the men.

¹⁷ The Lord will send a plague of scabs to ornament their heads. Yes, the LORD will make them bald for all to see!

¹⁸ The Lord will strip away their artful beauty—their ornaments, headbands, and crescent necklaces;

¹⁹ their earrings, bracelets, and veils of shimmering gauze.

²⁰ Gone will be their scarves, ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and charms;

²¹ their rings, jewels,

²² party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses;

²³ their mirrors, linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls.

²⁴ Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, they will stink. They will wear ropes for sashes, and their well-set hair will fall out. They will wear rough sackcloth instead of rich robes. Their beauty will be gone. Only shame will be left to them.

²⁵ The men of the city will die in battle.

²⁶ The gates of Jerusalem will weep and mourn. The city will be like a ravaged woman, huddled on the ground.

4 ¹ In that day few men will be left alive. Seven women will fight over each of them and say, "Let us all marry you! We will provide our own food and clothing. Only let us be called by your name so we won't be mocked as old maids."

² But in the future, Israel—the branch of the LORD—will be lush and beautiful, and the fruit of the land will be the pride of its people.

³ All those whose names are written down, who have survived the destruction of Jerusalem, will be a holy people.

⁴ The Lord will wash the moral filth from the women of Jerusalem. He will cleanse Jerusalem of its bloodstains by a spirit of judgment that burns like fire.

⁵ Then the LORD will provide shade for Jerusalem and all who assemble there. There will be a canopy of smoke and cloud throughout the day and clouds of fire at night, covering the glorious land.

⁶ It will be a shelter from daytime heat and a hiding place from storms and rain.

5¹ Now I will sing a song for the one I love about his vineyard: My beloved has a vineyard on a rich and fertile hill.

² He plowed the land, cleared its stones, and planted it with choice vines. In the middle he built a watchtower and carved a winepress in the nearby rocks. Then he waited for a harvest of sweet grapes, but the grapes that grew were wild and sour.

³ "Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah, you have heard the case; you be the judges.

⁴ What more could I have done to cultivate a rich harvest? Why did my vineyard give me wild grapes when I expected sweet ones?

⁵ Now this is what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will tear down its fences and let it be destroyed. I will break down its walls and let the animals trample it.

⁶ I will make it a wild place. I will not prune the vines or hoe the ground. I will let it be overgrown with briars and thorns. I will command the clouds to drop no more rain on it."

⁷ This is the story of the LORD's people. They are the vineyard of the LORD Almighty. Israel and Judah are his pleasant garden. He expected them to yield a crop of justice, but instead he found bloodshed. He expected to find righteousness, but instead he heard cries of oppression.

⁸ Destruction is certain for you who buy up property so others have no place to live. Your homes are built on great estates so you can be alone in the land.

⁹ But the LORD Almighty has sealed your awful fate. With my own ears I heard him say, "Many beautiful homes will stand deserted, the owners dead or gone.

¹⁰ Ten acres of vineyard will not produce even six gallons of wine. Ten measures of seed will yield only one measure of grain."

¹¹ Destruction is certain for you who get up early to begin long drinking bouts that last late into the night.

¹² You furnish lovely music and wine at your grand parties; the harps, lyres, tambourines, and flutes are superb! But you never think about the LORD or notice what he is doing.

¹³ So I will send my people into exile far away because they do not know me. The great and honored among them will starve, and the common people will die of thirst.

¹⁴ The grave is licking its chops in anticipation of Jerusalem, this delicious morsel. Her great and lowly will be swallowed up, with all her drunken crowds.

¹⁵ In that day the arrogant will be brought down to the dust; the proud will be humbled.

¹⁶ But the LORD Almighty is exalted by his justice. The holiness of God is displayed by his righteousness.

¹⁷ In those days flocks will feed among the ruins; lambs and kids will pasture there.

¹⁸ Destruction is certain for those who drag their sins behind them, tied with cords of falsehood.

¹⁹ They even mock the Holy One of Israel and say, "Hurry up and do something! Quick, show us what you can do. We want to see what you have planned."

²⁰ Destruction is certain for those who say that evil is good and good is evil; that dark is light and light is dark; that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter.

²¹ Destruction is certain for those who think they are wise and consider themselves to be clever.

²² Destruction is certain for those who are heroes when it comes to drinking, who boast about all the liquor they can hold.

²³ They take bribes to pervert justice. They let the wicked go free while punishing the innocent.

²⁴ Therefore, they will all disappear like burning straw. Their roots will rot and their flowers wither, for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty. They have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

²⁵ That is why the anger of the LORD burns against his people. That is why he has raised his fist to crush them. The hills tremble, and the rotting bodies of his people are thrown as garbage into the streets. But even then the LORD's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike!

²⁶ He will send a signal to the nations far away. He will whistle to those at the ends of the earth, and they will come racing toward Jerusalem.

²⁷ They will not get tired or stumble. They will run without stopping for rest or sleep. Not a belt will be loose, not a sandal thong broken.

²⁸ Their arrows will be sharp and their bows ready for battle. Sparks will fly from their horses' hooves as the wheels of their chariots spin like the wind.

²⁹ Roaring like lions, they will pounce on their prey. They will seize my people and carry them off into captivity, and no one will be there to rescue them.

³⁰ The enemy nations will growl over their victims like the roaring of the sea. A cloud of darkness and sorrow will hover over Israel. The clouds will blot out the light.

6¹ In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple.

² Hovering around him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew.

³ In a great chorus they sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

⁴ The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then I said, "My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!"

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew over to the altar, and he picked up a burning coal with a pair of tongs.

⁷ He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

⁸ Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go for us?" And I said, "Lord, I'll go! Send me."

⁹ And he said, "Yes, go. But tell my people this: 'You will hear my words, but you will not understand. You will see what I do, but you will not perceive its meaning.'

¹⁰ Harden the hearts of these people. Close their ears, and shut their eyes. That way, they will not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn to me for healing."

¹¹ Then I said, "Lord, how long must I do this?" And he replied, "Until their cities are destroyed, with no one left in them."

Until their houses are deserted and the whole country is an utter wasteland.

¹² Do not stop until the LORD has sent everyone away to distant lands and the entire land of Israel lies deserted.

¹³ Even if only a tenth—a remnant—survive, it will be invaded again and burned. Israel will remain a stump, like a tree that is cut down, but the stump will be a holy seed that will grow again."

7 ¹ During the reign of Ahaz son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, Jerusalem was attacked by King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel, the son of Remaliah. The city withstood the attack, however, and was not taken.

² The news had come to the royal court: "Aram is allied with Israel against us!" So the hearts of the king and his people trembled with fear, just as trees shake in a storm.

³ Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet King Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub. You will find the king at the end of the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is bleached.

⁴ Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn't need to fear the fierce anger of those two burned-out embers, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah.

⁵ "Yes, the kings of Aram and Israel are coming against you. They are saying,

⁶ 'We will invade Judah and throw its people into panic. Then we will fight our way into Jerusalem and install the son of Tabeel as Judah's king.'

⁷ "But this is what the Sovereign LORD says: This invasion will never happen,

⁸ because Aram is no stronger than its capital, Damascus. And Damascus is

no stronger than its king, Rezin. As for Israel, within sixty–five years it will be crushed and completely destroyed.

⁹ Israel is no stronger than its capital, Samaria. And Samaria is no stronger than its king, Pekah son of Remaliah. You do not believe me? If you want me to protect you, learn to believe what I say."

¹⁰ Not long after this, the LORD sent this message to King Ahaz:

¹¹ "Ask me for a sign, Ahaz, to prove that I will crush your enemies as I have promised. Ask for anything you like, and make it as difficult as you want."

¹² But the king refused. "No," he said, "I wouldn't test the LORD like that."

¹³ Then Isaiah said, "Listen well, you royal family of David! You aren't satisfied to exhaust my patience. You exhaust the patience of God as well!

¹⁴ All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will

conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel—‘God is with us.’

¹⁵ By the time this child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will know enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong.

¹⁶ But before he knows right from wrong, the two kings you fear so much—the kings of Israel and Aram—will both be dead.

¹⁷ "The LORD will bring a terrible curse on you, your nation, and your family. You will soon experience greater terror than has been known in all the years since Solomon's empire was divided into Israel and Judah. The mighty king of Assyria will come with his great army!"

¹⁸ In that day the LORD will whistle for the army of Upper Egypt and for the army of Assyria. They will swarm around

you like flies. Like bees, they will sting and kill.

¹⁹ They will come in vast hordes, spreading across the whole land. They will settle in the fertile areas and also in the desolate valleys, caves, and thorny places.

²⁰ In that day the Lord will take this "razor"—these Assyrians you have hired to protect you—and use it to shave off everything: your land, your crops, and your people.

²¹ When they finally stop plundering, a farmer will be fortunate to have a cow and two sheep left.

²² The few people still left in the land will live on curds and wild honey because that is all the land will produce.

²³ In that day the lush vineyards, now worth as much as a thousand pieces of silver, will become patches of briars and thorns.

²⁴ The entire land will be one vast brier patch, a hunting ground overrun by wildlife.

²⁵ No one will go to the fertile hillsides where the gardens once grew, for briars and thorns will cover them. Cattle, sheep, and goats will graze there.

8 ¹ Again the LORD said to me, "Make a large signboard and clearly write this name on it: Maher–shalal–hash–baz."

² I asked Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah, both known as honest men, to testify that I had written it before the child was conceived.

³ Then I slept with my wife, and she became pregnant and had a son. And the LORD said, "Call him Maher–shalal–hash–baz.

⁴ This name prophesies that within a couple of years, before this child is old enough to say 'Papa' or 'Mama,' the king

of Assyria will invade both Damascus and Samaria and carry away their riches."

⁵ Then the LORD spoke to me again and said,

⁶ "The people of Judah have rejected my gentle care and are rejoicing over what will happen to King Rezin and King Pekah.

⁷ Therefore, the Lord will overwhelm them with a mighty flood from the Euphrates River —the king of Assyria and all his mighty armies.

⁸ This flood will overflow all its channels and sweep into Judah. It will submerge Immanuel's land from one end to the other.

⁹ "The Assyrians will cry, 'Do your best to defend yourselves, but you will be shattered! Listen all you nations. Prepare for battle—and die! Yes, die!

¹⁰ Call your councils of war, develop your strategies, prepare your plans of

attack—and then die! For God is with us!"

¹¹ The LORD has said to me in the strongest terms: "Do not think like everyone else does.

¹² Do not be afraid that some plan conceived behind closed doors will be the end of you.

¹³ Do not fear anything except the LORD Almighty. He alone is the Holy One. If you fear him, you need fear nothing else.

¹⁴ He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap that entangles them.

¹⁵ Many of them will stumble and fall, never to rise again. Many will be captured."

¹⁶ I will write down all these things as a testimony of what the LORD will do. I

will entrust it to my disciples, who will pass it down to future generations.

¹⁷ I will wait for the LORD to help us, though he has turned away from the people of Israel. My only hope is in him.

¹⁸ I and the children the LORD has given me have names that reveal the plans the LORD Almighty has for his people.

¹⁹ So why are you trying to find out the future by consulting mediums and psychics? Do not listen to their whisperings and mutterings. Can the living find out the future from the dead? Why not ask your God?

²⁰ "Check their predictions against my testimony," says the LORD. "If their predictions are different from mine, it is because there is no light or truth in them.

²¹ My people will be led away as captives, weary and hungry. And because they are hungry, they will rage

and shake their fists at heaven and curse their king and their God.

²² Wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness."

9 ¹ Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will soon be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

² The people who walk in darkness will see a great light—a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow.

³ Israel will again be great, and its people will rejoice as people rejoice at harvesttime. They will shout with joy like warriors dividing the plunder.

⁴ For God will break the chains that bind his people and the whip that scourges them, just as he did when he destroyed the army of Midian with Gideon's little band.

⁵ In that day of peace, battle gear will no longer be issued. Never again will uniforms be bloodstained by war. All such equipment will be burned.

⁶ For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the LORD Almighty will guarantee this!

⁸ The Lord has spoken out against that braggart Israel,

⁹ and the people of Israel and Samaria will soon discover it. In their pride and arrogance they say,

¹⁰ "Our land lies in ruins now, but we will rebuild it better than before. We will replace the broken bricks with cut stone, the fallen sycamore trees with cedars."

¹¹ The LORD will reply to their bragging by bringing Rezin's enemies, the Assyrians, against them—

¹² along with Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west. With bared fangs, they will devour Israel. But even then the LORD's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

¹³ For after all this punishment, the people will still not repent and turn to the LORD Almighty.

¹⁴ Therefore, in a single day, the LORD will destroy both the head and the tail, the palm branch and the reed.

¹⁵ The leaders of Israel are the head, and the lying prophets are the tail.

¹⁶ For the leaders of the people have led them down the path of destruction.

¹⁷ That is why the Lord has no joy in the young men and no mercy on even the widows and orphans. For they are all hypocrites, speaking wickedness with lies. But even then the LORD's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

¹⁸ This wickedness is like a brushfire. It burns not only briars and thorns but the forests, too. Its burning sends up vast clouds of smoke.

¹⁹ The land is blackened by the fury of the LORD Almighty. The people are fuel for the fire, and no one spares anyone else.

²⁰ They fight against their own neighbors to steal food, but they will still

be hungry. In the end they will even eat their own children.

²¹ Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, Ephraim will feed on Manasseh, and both will devour Judah. But even then the LORD's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

10 ¹ Destruction is certain for the unjust judges, for those who issue unfair laws.

² They deprive the poor, the widows, and the orphans of justice. Yes, they rob widows and fatherless children!

³ What will you do when I send desolation upon you from a distant land? To whom will you turn for help? Where will your treasures be safe?

⁴ I will not help you. You will stumble along as prisoners or lie among the dead. But even then the LORD's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

⁵ "Destruction is certain for Assyria, the whip of my anger. Its military power is a club in my hand.

⁶ Assyria will enslave my people, who are a godless nation. It will plunder them, trampling them like dirt beneath its feet.

⁷ But the king of Assyria will not know that it is I who sent him. He will merely think he is attacking my people as part of his plan to conquer the world.

⁸ He will say, 'Each of my princes will soon be a king, ruling a conquered land.

⁹ We will destroy Calno just as we did Carchemish. Hamath will fall before us as Arpad did. And we will destroy Samaria just as we did Damascus.

¹⁰ Yes, we have finished off many a kingdom whose gods were far greater than those in Jerusalem and Samaria.

¹¹ So when we have defeated Samaria and her gods, we will destroy Jerusalem with hers.'"

¹² After the Lord has used the king of Assyria to accomplish his purposes in Jerusalem, he will turn against the king of Assyria and punish him—for he is proud and arrogant.

¹³ He boasts, "By my own power and wisdom I have won these wars. By my own strength I have captured many lands, destroyed their kings, and carried off their treasures.

¹⁴ By my greatness I have robbed their nests of riches and gathered up kingdoms as a farmer gathers eggs. No one can even flap a wing against me or utter a peep of protest."

¹⁵ Can the ax boast greater power than the person who uses it? Is the saw greater than the person who saws? Can

a whip strike unless a hand is moving it?
Can a cane walk by itself?

¹⁶ Listen now, king of Assyria! Because of all your evil boasting, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will send a plague among your proud troops, and a flaming fire will ignite your glory.

¹⁷ The LORD, the Light of Israel and the Holy One, will be a flaming fire that will destroy them. In a single night he will burn those thorns and briers, the Assyrians.

¹⁸ Assyria's vast army is like a glorious forest, yet it will be destroyed. The LORD will completely destroy Assyria's warriors, and they will waste away like sick people in a plague.

¹⁹ Only a few from all that mighty army will survive—so few that a child could count them!

²⁰ Then at last those left in Israel and Judah will trust the LORD, the Holy One

of Israel. They will no longer depend on the Assyrians, who would destroy them.

²¹ A remnant of them will return to the Mighty God.

²² But though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand on the seashore, only a few of them will return at that time. The LORD has rightly decided to destroy his people.

²³ Yes, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, has already decided to consume them.

²⁴ So this is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty, says: "My people in Jerusalem, do not be afraid of the Assyrians when they oppress you just as the Egyptians did long ago.

²⁵ It will not last very long. In a little while my anger against you will end, and then my anger will rise up to destroy them."

²⁶ The LORD Almighty will beat them with his whip, as he did when Gideon

triumphed over the Midianites at the rock of Oreb, or when the LORD's staff was raised to drown the Egyptian army in the sea.

²⁷ In that day the LORD will end the bondage of his people. He will break the yoke of slavery and lift it from their shoulders.

²⁸ Look, the mighty armies of Assyria are coming! They are now at Aiath, now at Migron. They are storing some of their equipment at Micmash.

²⁹ They are crossing the pass and are staying overnight at Geba. Fear strikes the city of Ramah. All the people of Gibeah—the city of Saul—are running for their lives.

³⁰ Well may you scream in terror, you people of Gallim! Shout out a warning to Laishah, for the mighty army comes. Poor Anathoth, what a fate is yours!

³¹ There go the people of Madmenah, all fleeing. And the citizens of Gebim are preparing to run.

³² But the enemy stops at Nob for the rest of that day. He shakes his fist at Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

³³ But look! The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will chop down the mighty tree! He will destroy all that vast army of Assyria—officers and high officials alike.

³⁴ The Mighty One will cut down the enemy as an ax cuts down the forest trees in Lebanon.

11 ¹ Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot—yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ He will delight in obeying the LORD. He will never judge by appearance, false evidence, or hearsay.

⁴ He will defend the poor and the exploited. He will rule against the wicked and destroy them with the breath of his mouth.

⁵ He will be clothed with fairness and truth.

⁶ In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all.

⁷ The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves will lie down together. And lions will eat grass as the livestock do.

⁸ Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed.

⁹ Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD.

¹⁰ In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, for the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

¹¹ In that day the Lord will bring back a remnant of his people for the second time, returning them to the land of Israel from Assyria, Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, Ethiopia, Elam, Babylonia, Hamath, and all the distant coastlands.

¹² He will raise a flag among the nations for Israel to rally around. He will gather the scattered people of Judah from the ends of the earth.

¹³ Then at last the jealousy between Israel and Judah will end. They will not fight against each other anymore.

¹⁴ They will join forces to swoop down on Philistia to the west. Together they will attack and plunder the nations to the east. They will occupy all the lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon.

¹⁵ The LORD will make a dry path through the Red Sea. He will wave his hand over the Euphrates River, sending a mighty wind to divide it into seven streams that can easily be crossed.

¹⁶ He will make a highway from Assyria for the remnant there, just as he did for Israel long ago when they returned from Egypt.

12 ¹ In that day you will sing: "Praise the LORD! He was angry with me, but now he comforts me.

² See, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The LORD GOD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

³ With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation!

⁴ In that wonderful day you will sing: "Thank the LORD! Praise his name! Tell the world what he has done. Oh, how mighty he is!

⁵ Sing to the LORD, for he has done wonderful things. Make known his praise around the world.

⁶ Let all the people of Jerusalem shout his praise with joy! For great is the Holy One of Israel who lives among you."

13 ¹ Isaiah son of Amoz received this message concerning the destruction of Babylon:

² "See the flags waving as the enemy attacks. Cheer them on, O Israel! Wave to them as they march against Babylon to destroy the palaces of the high and mighty.

³ I, the LORD, have assigned this task to these armies, and they will rejoice when

I am exalted. I have called them to satisfy my anger."

⁴ Hear the noise on the mountains! Listen, as the armies march! It is the noise and the shout of many nations. The LORD Almighty has brought them here to form an army.

⁵ They came from countries far away. They are the LORD's weapons; they carry his anger with them and will destroy the whole land.

⁶ Scream in terror, for the LORD's time has arrived—the time for the Almighty to destroy.

⁷ Every arm is paralyzed with fear. Even the strongest hearts melt

⁸ and are afraid. Fear grips them with terrible pangs, like those of a woman about to give birth. They look helplessly at one another as the flames of the burning city reflect on their faces.

⁹ For see, the day of the LORD is coming—the terrible day of his fury and fierce anger. The land will be destroyed and all the sinners with it.

¹⁰ The heavens will be black above them. No light will shine from stars or sun or moon.

¹¹ "I, the LORD, will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sin. I will crush the arrogance of the proud and the haughtiness of the mighty.

¹² Few will be left alive when I have finished my work. People will be as scarce as gold—more rare than the gold of Ophir.

¹³ For I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move from its place. I, the LORD Almighty, will show my fury and fierce anger."

¹⁴ Everyone will run until exhausted, rushing back to their own lands like

hunted deer, wandering like sheep without a shepherd.

¹⁵ Anyone who is captured will be run through with a sword.

¹⁶ Their little children will be dashed to death right before their eyes. Their homes will be sacked and their wives raped by the attacking hordes.

¹⁷ For I will stir up the Medes against Babylon, and no amount of silver or gold will buy them off.

¹⁸ The attacking armies will shoot down the young people with arrows. They will have no mercy on helpless babies and will show no compassion for the children.

¹⁹ Babylon, the most glorious of kingdoms, the flower of Chaldean culture, will be devastated like Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed them.

²⁰ Babylon will never rise again.

Generation after generation will come and go, but the land will never again be lived in. Nomads will refuse to camp there, and shepherds will not allow their sheep to stay overnight.

²¹ Wild animals of the desert will move into the ruined city. The houses will be haunted by howling creatures. Ostriches will live among the ruins, and wild goats will come there to dance.

²² Hyenas will howl in its fortresses, and jackals will make their dens in its palaces. Babylon's days are numbered; its time of destruction will soon arrive.

14 ¹ But the LORD will have mercy on the descendants of Jacob. Israel will be his special people once again. He will bring them back to settle once again in their own land. And people from many different nations will come and

join them there and become a part of the people of Israel.

² The nations of the world will help the LORD's people to return, and those who come to live in their land will serve them. Those who captured Israel will be captured, and Israel will rule over its enemies.

³ In that wonderful day when the LORD gives his people rest from sorrow and fear, from slavery and chains,

⁴ you will taunt the king of Babylon. You will say, "The mighty man has been destroyed. Yes, your insolence is ended.

⁵ For the LORD has crushed your wicked power and broken your evil rule.

⁶ You persecuted the people with unceasing blows of rage and held the nations in your angry grip. Your tyranny was unrestrained.

⁷ But at last the land is at rest and is quiet. Finally it can sing again!

⁸ Even the trees of the forest—the cypress trees and the cedars of Lebanon—sing out this joyous song: ‘Your power is broken! No one will come to cut us down now!’

⁹ "In the place of the dead there is excitement over your arrival. World leaders and mighty kings long dead are there to see you.

¹⁰ With one voice they all cry out, ‘Now you are as weak as we are!’

¹¹ Your might and power are gone; they were buried with you. All the pleasant music in your palace has ceased. Now maggots are your sheet and worms your blanket.’

¹² "How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world.

¹³ For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north.

¹⁴ I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.'

¹⁵ But instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths.

¹⁶ Everyone there will stare at you and ask, 'Can this be the one who shook the earth and the kingdoms of the world?

¹⁷ Is this the one who destroyed the world and made it into a wilderness? Is this the king who demolished the world's greatest cities and had no mercy on his prisoners?'

¹⁸ "The kings of the nations lie in stately glory in their tombs,

¹⁹ but you will be thrown out of your grave like a worthless branch. Like a

corpse trampled underfoot, you will be dumped into a mass grave with those killed in battle. You will descend to the pit.

²⁰ You will not be given a proper burial, for you have destroyed your nation and slaughtered your people. Your son will not succeed you as king.

²¹ Kill the children of this sinner! Do not let them rise and conquer the land or rebuild the cities of the world."

²² This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I, myself, have risen against him! I will destroy his children and his children's children, so they will never sit on his throne.

²³ I will make Babylon into a desolate land, a place of porcupines, filled with swamps and marshes. I will sweep the land with the broom of destruction. I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!"

²⁴ The LORD Almighty has sworn this oath: "It will all happen as I have planned. It will come about according to my purposes.

²⁵ I will break the Assyrians when they are in Israel; I will trample them on my mountains. My people will no longer be their slaves.

²⁶ I have a plan for the whole earth, for my mighty power reaches throughout the world.

²⁷ The LORD Almighty has spoken—who can change his plans? When his hand moves, who can stop him?"

²⁸ This message came to me the year King Ahaz died:

²⁹ Do not rejoice, you Philistines, that the king who attacked you is dead. For even though that whip is broken, his son will be worse than his father ever was. From that snake a poisonous snake will be born, a fiery serpent to destroy you!

³⁰ I will feed the poor in my pasture; the needy will lie down in peace. But as for you, I will wipe you out with famine. I will destroy the few who remain.

³¹ Weep, you Philistine cities, for you are doomed! Melt in fear, for everyone will be destroyed. A powerful army is coming out of the north. Each soldier rushes forward ready to fight.

³² What should we tell the enemy messengers? Tell them that the LORD has built Jerusalem, and that the poor of his people will find refuge in its walls.

15 ¹ This message came to me concerning Moab: In one night your cities of Ar and Kir will be destroyed.

² Your people in Dibon will mourn at their temples and shrines, weeping for the fate of Nebo and Medeba. They will shave their heads in sorrow and cut off their beards.

³ They will wear sackcloth as they wander the streets. From every home will come the sound of weeping.

⁴ The cries from the cities of Heshbon and Elealeh will be heard far away, even in Jahaz! The bravest warriors of Moab will cry out in utter terror.

⁵ My heart weeps for Moab. Its people flee to Zoar and Eglath–shelishiyah. Weeping, they climb the road to Luhith. Their crying can be heard all along the road to Horonaim.

⁶ Even the waters of Nimrim are dried up! The grassy banks are scorched, and the tender plants are gone.

⁷ The desperate refugees take only the possessions they can carry and flee across the Ravine of Willows.

⁸ The whole land of Moab is a land of weeping from one end to the other—from Eglaim to Beer–elim.

⁹ The stream near Dibon runs red with blood, but I am still not finished with Dibon! Lions will hunt down the survivors, both those who try to run and those who remain behind.

16 ¹ Moab's refugees at Sela send lambs to Jerusalem as a token of alliance with the king of Judah.

² The women of Moab are left like homeless birds at the shallow crossings of the Arnon River.

³ "Help us," they cry. "Defend us against our enemies. Protect us from their relentless attack. Do not betray us.

⁴ Let our outcasts stay among you. Hide them from our enemies until the terror is past." When oppression and destruction have ceased and enemy raiders have disappeared,

⁵ then David's throne will be established by love. From that throne a faithful king

will reign, one who always does what is just and right.

⁶ Is this Moab, the proud land we have heard so much about? Its pride and insolence are all gone now!

⁷ The entire land of Moab weeps. Yes, you people of Moab, mourn for the delicacies of Kir-hareseth.

⁸ Weep for the abandoned farms of Heshbon and the vineyards at Sibmah. The wine from those vineyards used to make the rulers of the nations drunk. Moab was once like a spreading grapevine. Her tendrils spread out as far as Jazer and trailed out into the desert. Her shoots once reached as far as the Dead Sea.

⁹ But now the enemy has completely destroyed that vine. So I wail and lament for Jazer and the vineyards of Sibmah. My tears will flow for Heshbon and

Elealeh, for their summer fruits and harvests have all been destroyed.

¹⁰ Gone now is the gladness; gone is the joy of harvest. The happy singing in the vineyards will be heard no more. The treading out of grapes in the winepresses has ceased forever. I have ended all their harvest joys.

¹¹ I will weep for Moab. My sorrow for Kir-hareseth will be very great.

¹² On the hilltops the people of Moab will pray in anguish to their idols, but it will do them no good. They will cry to the gods in their temples, but no one will come to save them.

¹³ The LORD has already said this about Moab in the past.

¹⁴ But now the LORD says, "Within three years, without fail, the glory of Moab will be ended, and few of its people will be left alive."

17 ¹This message came to me concerning Damascus: "Look, Damascus will disappear! It will become a heap of ruins.

²The cities of Aroer will be deserted. Sheep will graze in the streets and lie down unafraid. There will be no one to chase them away.

³The fortified cities of Israel will also be destroyed, and the power of Damascus will end. The few left in Aram will share the fate of Israel's departed glory," says the LORD Almighty.

⁴"In that day the glory of Israel will be very dim, for poverty will stalk the land.

⁵Israel will be abandoned like the grainfields in the valley of Rephaim after the harvest.

⁶Only a few of its people will be left, like the stray olives left on the tree after the harvest. Only two or three remain in the highest branches, four or five out on

the tips of the limbs. Yes, Israel will be stripped bare of people," says the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁷ Then at last the people will think of their Creator and have respect for the Holy One of Israel.

⁸ They will no longer ask their idols for help or worship what their own hands have made. They will never again bow down to their Asherah poles or burn incense on the altars they built.

⁹ Their largest cities will be as deserted as overgrown thickets. They will become like the cities the Amorites abandoned when the Israelites came here so long ago.

¹⁰ Why? Because you have turned from the God who can save you—the Rock who can hide you. You may plant the finest imported grapevines,

¹¹ and they may grow so well that they blossom on the very morning you plant

them, but you will never pick any grapes from them. Your only harvest will be a load of grief and incurable pain.

¹² Look! The armies rush forward like waves thundering toward the shore.

¹³ But though they roar like breakers on a beach, God will silence them. They will flee like chaff scattered by the wind or like dust whirling before a storm.

¹⁴ In the evening Israel waits in terror, but by dawn its enemies are dead. This is the just reward of those who plunder and destroy the people of God.

18 ¹ Destruction is certain for the land of Ethiopia, which lies at the headwaters of the Nile. Its winged sailboats glide along the river,

² and ambassadors are sent in fast boats down the Nile. Go home, swift messengers! Take a message to your land divided by rivers, to your tall, smooth-skinned people, who are feared

far and wide for their conquests and destruction.

³ When I raise my battle flag on the mountain, let all the world take notice. When I blow the trumpet, listen!

⁴ For the LORD has told me this: "I will watch quietly from my dwelling place—as quietly as the heat rises on a summer day, or as the dew forms on an autumn morning during the harvest."

⁵ Even before you begin your attack, while your plans are ripening like grapes, the LORD will cut you off as though with pruning shears. He will snip your spreading branches.

⁶ Your mighty army will be left dead in the fields for the mountain birds and wild animals to eat. The vultures will tear at corpses all summer. The wild animals will gnaw at bones all winter.

⁷ But the time will come when the LORD Almighty will receive gifts from

this land divided by rivers, from this tall, smooth-skinned people, who are feared far and wide for their conquests and destruction. They will bring the gifts to the LORD Almighty in Jerusalem, the place where his name dwells.

19 ¹This message came to me concerning Egypt: Look! The LORD is advancing against Egypt, riding on a swift cloud. The idols of Egypt tremble. The hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear.

²"I will make the Egyptians fight against each other—brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, province against province.

³The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will confuse their plans. They will plead with their idols for wisdom. They will call on spirits, mediums, and psychics to show them which way to turn.

⁴ I will hand Egypt over to a hard, cruel master, to a fierce king," says the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

⁵ The waters of the Nile will fail to rise and flood the fields. The riverbed will be parched and dry.

⁶ The canals of the Nile will dry up, and the streams of Egypt will become foul with rotting reeds and rushes.

⁷ All the greenery along the riverbank will wither and blow away. All the crops will dry up, and everything will die.

⁸ The fishermen will weep for lack of work. Those who fish with hooks and those who use nets will all be unemployed.

⁹ The weavers will have no flax or cotton, for the crops will fail.

¹⁰ The weavers and all the workers will be sick at heart.

¹¹ What fools are the counselors of Zoan! Their best counsel to the king of

Egypt is stupid and wrong. Will they still boast of their wisdom? Will they dare tell Pharaoh about their long line of wise ancestors?

¹² What has happened to your wise counselors, Pharaoh? If they are so wise, let them tell you what the LORD Almighty is going to do to Egypt.

¹³ The wise men from Zoan are fools, and those from Memphis are deluded. The leaders of Egypt have ruined the land with their foolish counsel.

¹⁴ The LORD has sent a spirit of foolishness on them, so all their suggestions are wrong. They cause the land of Egypt to stagger like a sick drunkard.

¹⁵ Nobody in Egypt, whether rich or poor, important or unknown, can offer any help.

¹⁶ In that day the Egyptians will be as weak as women. They will cower in fear

beneath the upraised fist of the LORD Almighty.

¹⁷ Just to speak the name of Israel will strike deep terror in their hearts, for the LORD Almighty has laid out his plans against them.

¹⁸ In that day five of Egypt's cities will follow the LORD Almighty. They will even begin to speak the Hebrew language. One of these will be Heliopolis, the City of the Sun.

¹⁹ In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and there will be a monument to the LORD at its border.

²⁰ It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When the people cry to the LORD for help against those who oppress them, he will send them a savior who will rescue them.

²¹ In that day the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians. Yes, they will know the LORD and will give their sacrifices and offerings to him. They will make promises to the LORD and keep them.

²² The LORD will strike Egypt in a way that will bring healing. For the Egyptians will turn to the LORD, and he will listen to their pleas and heal them.

²³ In that day Egypt and Assyria will be connected by a highway. The Egyptians and Assyrians will move freely between their lands, and they will worship the same God.

²⁴ And Israel will be their ally. The three will be together, and Israel will be a blessing to them.

²⁵ For the LORD Almighty will say, "Blessed be Egypt, my people. Blessed be Assyria, the land I have made. Blessed be Israel, my special possession!"

20 ¹ In the year when King Sargon of Assyria captured the Philistine city of Ashdod,

² the LORD told Isaiah son of Amoz, "Take off all your clothes, including your sandals." Isaiah did as he was told and walked around naked and barefoot.

³ Then the LORD said, "My servant Isaiah has been walking around naked and barefoot for the last three years. This is a sign—a symbol of the terrible troubles I will bring upon Egypt and Ethiopia.

⁴ For the king of Assyria will take away the Egyptians and Ethiopians as prisoners. He will make them walk naked and barefoot, both young and old, their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

⁵ How dismayed will be the Philistines, who counted on the power of Ethiopia and boasted of their allies in Egypt!

⁶ They will say, 'If this can happen to Egypt, what chance do we have? For we counted on Egypt to protect us from the king of Assyria.'

21 ¹ This message came to me concerning the land of Babylonia: Disaster is roaring down on you from the desert, like a whirlwind sweeping in from the Negev.

² I see an awesome vision: I see you plundered and destroyed. Go ahead, you Elamites and Medes, take part in the siege. Babylon will fall, and the groaning of all the nations she enslaved will end.

³ My stomach aches and burns with pain. Sharp pangs of horror are upon me, like the pangs of a woman giving birth. I grow faint when I hear what God is planning; I am blinded with dismay.

⁴ My mind reels; my heart races. The sleep I once enjoyed at night is now a faint memory. I lie awake, trembling.

⁵ Look! They are preparing a great feast. They are spreading rugs for people to sit on. Everyone is eating and drinking. Quick! Grab your shields and prepare for battle! You are being attacked!

⁶ Meanwhile, the Lord said to me, "Put a watchman on the city wall to shout out what he sees.

⁷ Tell him to sound the alert when he sees chariots drawn by horses and warriors mounted on donkeys and camels."

⁸ Then the watchman called out, "Day after day I have stood on the watchtower, my lord. Night after night I have remained at my post.

⁹ Now at last—look! Here come the chariots and warriors!" Then the watchman said, "Babylon is fallen! All the idols of Babylon lie broken on the ground!"

¹⁰ O my people, threshed and winnowed, I have told you everything the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, has said.

¹¹ This message came to me concerning Edom: Someone from Edom keeps calling to me, "Watchman, how much longer until morning? When will the night be over?"

¹² The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but night will soon follow. If you wish to ask again, then come back and ask."

¹³ This message came to me concerning Arabia: O caravans from Dedan, hide in the deserts of Arabia.

¹⁴ O people of Tema, bring food and water to these weary refugees.

¹⁵ They have fled from drawn swords and sharp arrows and the terrors of war.

¹⁶ "But within a year," says the Lord, "all the glory of Kedar will come to an end.

¹⁷ Only a few of its courageous archers will survive. I, the LORD, the God of Israel, have spoken!"

22 ¹ This message came to me concerning Jerusalem: What is happening? Why is everyone running to the rooftops?

² The whole city is in a terrible uproar. What do I see in this reveling city? Bodies are lying everywhere, killed by famine and disease.

³ All your leaders flee. They surrender without resistance. The people try to slip away, but they are captured, too.

⁴ Leave me alone to weep; do not try to comfort me. Let me cry for my people as I watch them being destroyed.

⁵ Oh, what a day of crushing trouble! What a day of confusion and terror the Lord, the LORD Almighty, has brought upon the Valley of Vision! The walls of

Jerusalem have been broken, and cries of death echo from the mountainsides.

⁶ Elamites are the archers; Arameans drive the chariots. The men of Kir hold up the shields.

⁷ They fill your beautiful valleys and crowd against your gates.

⁸ Judah's defenses have been stripped away. You run to the armory for your weapons.

⁹ You inspect the walls of Jerusalem to see what needs to be repaired. You store up water in the lower pool.

¹⁰ You check the houses and tear some down to get stone to fix the walls.

¹¹ Between the city walls, you build a reservoir for water from the old pool. But all your feverish plans are to no avail because you never ask God for help. He is the one who planned this long ago.

¹² The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you to weep and mourn. He told you to

shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of sackcloth to show your remorse.

¹³ But instead, you dance and play; you slaughter sacrificial animals, feast on meat, and drink wine. "Let's eat, drink, and be merry," you say. "What's the difference, for tomorrow we die."

¹⁴ The LORD Almighty has revealed to me that this sin will never be forgiven you until the day you die. That is the judgment of the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

¹⁵ Furthermore, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, told me to confront Shebna, the palace administrator, and to give him this message:

¹⁶ "Who do you think you are, building a beautiful tomb for yourself in the rock?"

¹⁷ For the LORD is about to seize you and hurl you away. He is going to send you into captivity, you strong man!

¹⁸ He will crumple you up into a ball and toss you away into a distant, barren land. There you will die, and there your glorious chariots will remain, broken and useless. You are a disgrace to your master.

¹⁹ "Yes, I will drive you out of office," says the LORD. "I will pull you down from your high position.

²⁰ And then I will call my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah to replace you.

²¹ He will have your royal robes, your title, and your authority. And he will be a father to the people of Jerusalem and Judah.

²² I will give him the key to the house of David—the highest position in the royal court. He will open doors, and no one will be able to shut them; he will close doors, and no one will be able to open them.

²³ He will bring honor to his family name, for I will drive him firmly in place like a tent stake.

²⁴ He will be loaded down with responsibility, and he will bring honor to even the lowliest members of his family."

²⁵ The LORD Almighty says: "When that time comes, I will pull out the stake that seemed so firm. It will come out and fall to the ground. Everything it supports will fall with it. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

23 ¹ This message came to me concerning Tyre: Weep, O ships of Tarshish, returning home from distant lands! Weep for your harbor at Tyre because it is gone! The rumors you heard in Cyprus are all true.

² Mourn in silence, you people of the coast and you merchants of Sidon. Your traders crossed the sea,

³ sailing over deep waters. They brought you grain from Egypt and harvests from along the Nile. You were the merchandise mart of the world.

⁴ But now you are put to shame, city of Sidon, fortress on the sea. For the sea says, "Now I am childless; I have no sons or daughters."

⁵ When Egypt hears the news about Tyre, there will be great sorrow.

⁶ Flee now to Tarshish! Wail, you people who live by the sea!

⁷ How can this silent ruin be all that is left of your once joyous city? What a history was yours! Think of all the colonists you sent to distant lands.

⁸ Who has brought this disaster on Tyre, empire builder and chief trader of the world?

⁹ The LORD Almighty has done it to destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness.

¹⁰ Come, Tarshish, sweep over your mother Tyre like the flooding Nile, for the city is defenseless.

¹¹ The LORD holds out his hand over the seas. He shakes the kingdoms of the earth. He has spoken out against Phoenicia and depleted its strength.

¹² He says, "Never again will you rejoice, O daughter of Sidon. Once you were a lovely city, but you will never again be strong. Even if you flee to Cyprus, you will find no rest."

¹³ Look at the land of Babylonia —the people of that land are gone! The Assyrians have handed Babylon over to the wild beasts. They have built siege ramps against its walls, torn down its palaces, and turned it into a heap of rubble.

¹⁴ Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your home port is destroyed!

¹⁵ For seventy years, the length of a king's life, Tyre will be forgotten. But then the city will come back to life and sing sweet songs like a prostitute.

¹⁶ Long absent from her lovers, she will take a harp, walk the streets, and sing her songs, so that she will again be remembered.

¹⁷ Yes, after seventy years the LORD will revive Tyre. But she will be no different than she was before. She will return again to all her evil ways around the world.

¹⁸ But in the end her businesses will give their profits to the LORD. Her wealth will not be hoarded but will be used to provide good food and fine clothing for the LORD's priests.

24 ¹ Look! The LORD is about to destroy the earth and make it a vast wasteland. See how he is scattering the people over the face of the earth.

² Priests and laypeople, servants and masters, maids and mistresses, buyers and sellers, lenders and borrowers, bankers and debtors—none will be spared.

³ The earth will be completely emptied and looted. The LORD has spoken!

⁴ The earth dries up, the crops wither, the skies refuse to rain.

⁵ The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted the instructions of God, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant.

⁶ Therefore, a curse consumes the earth and its people. They are left desolate, destroyed by fire. Few will be left alive.

⁷ All the joys of life will be gone. The grape harvest will fail, and there will be no wine. The merrymakers will sigh and mourn.

⁸ The clash of tambourines will be stilled; the happy cries of celebration

will be heard no more. The melodious chords of the harp will be silent.

⁹ Gone are the joys of wine and song; strong drink now turns bitter in the mouth.

¹⁰ The city writhes in chaos; every home is locked to keep out looters.

¹¹ Mobs gather in the streets, crying out for wine. Joy has reached its lowest ebb. Gladness has been banished from the land.

¹² The city is left in ruins, with its gates battered down.

¹³ Throughout the earth the story is the same—like the stray olives left on the tree or the few grapes left on the vine after harvest, only a remnant is left.

¹⁴ But all who are left will shout and sing for joy. Those in the west will praise the LORD's majesty.

¹⁵ In eastern lands, give glory to the LORD. In the coastlands of the sea, praise the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁶ Listen to them as they sing to the LORD from the ends of the earth. Hear them singing praises to the Righteous One! But my heart is heavy with grief. I am discouraged, for evil still prevails, and treachery is everywhere.

¹⁷ Terror and traps and snares will be your lot, you people of the earth.

¹⁸ Those who flee in terror will fall into a trap, and those who escape the trap will step into a snare. Destruction falls on you from the heavens. The world is shaken beneath you.

¹⁹ The earth has broken down and has utterly collapsed. Everything is lost, abandoned, and confused.

²⁰ The earth staggers like a drunkard. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls

and will not rise again, for its sins are very great.

²¹ In that day the LORD will punish the fallen angels in the heavens and the proud rulers of the nations on earth.

²² They will be rounded up and put in prison until they are tried and condemned.

²³ Then the LORD Almighty will mount his throne on Mount Zion. He will rule gloriously in Jerusalem, in the sight of all the leaders of his people. There will be such glory that the brightness of the sun and moon will seem to fade away.

25 ¹ O LORD, I will honor and praise your name, for you are my God. You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago, and now you have accomplished them.

² You turn mighty cities into heaps of ruins. Cities with strong walls are turned

to rubble. Beautiful palaces in distant lands disappear and will never be rebuilt.

³ Therefore, strong nations will declare your glory; ruthless nations will revere you.

⁴ But to the poor, O LORD, you are a refuge from the storm. To the needy in distress, you are a shelter from the rain and the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall,

⁵ or like the relentless heat of the desert. But you silence the roar of foreign nations. You cool the land with the shade of a cloud. So the boastful songs of ruthless people are stilled.

⁶ In Jerusalem, the LORD Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef.

⁷ In that day he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth.

⁸ He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign LORD will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The LORD has spoken!

⁹ In that day the people will proclaim, "This is our God. We trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!"

¹⁰ For the LORD's good hand will rest on Jerusalem. Moab will be crushed like trampled straw and left to rot.

¹¹ God will push down Moab's people as a swimmer pushes down water with his hands. He will end their pride and all their evil works.

¹² The high walls of Moab will be demolished and ground to dust.

26 ¹ In that day, everyone in the land of Judah will sing this song: Our city is now strong! We are surrounded by the walls of God's salvation.

² Open the gates to all who are righteous; allow the faithful to enter.

³ You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!

⁴ Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.

⁵ He humbles the proud and brings the arrogant city to the dust. Its walls come crashing down!

⁶ The poor and oppressed trample it underfoot.

⁷ But for those who are righteous, the path is not steep and rough. You are a God of justice, and you smooth out the road ahead of them.

⁸ LORD, we love to obey your laws; our heart's desire is to glorify your name.

⁹ All night long I search for you; earnestly I seek for God. For only when you come to judge the earth will people turn from wickedness and do what is right.

¹⁰ Your kindness to the wicked does not make them do good. They keep doing wrong and take no notice of the LORD's majesty.

¹¹ O LORD, they do not listen when you threaten. They do not see your upraised fist. Show them your eagerness to defend your people. Perhaps then they will be ashamed. Let your fire consume your enemies.

¹² LORD, you will grant us peace, for all we have accomplished is really from you.

¹³ O LORD our God, others have ruled us, but we worship you alone.

¹⁴ Those we served before are dead and gone. Never again will they return! You

attacked them and destroyed them, and they are long forgotten.

¹⁵ We praise you, LORD! You have made our nation great; you have extended our borders!

¹⁶ LORD, in distress we searched for you. We were bowed beneath the burden of your discipline.

¹⁷ We were like a woman about to give birth, writhing and crying out in pain. When we are in your presence, LORD,

¹⁸ we, too, writhe in agony, but nothing comes of our suffering. We have done nothing to rescue the world; no one has been born to populate the earth.

¹⁹ Yet we have this assurance: Those who belong to God will live; their bodies will rise again! Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For God's light of life will fall like dew on his people in the place of the dead!

²⁰ Go home, my people, and lock your doors! Hide until the LORD's anger against your enemies has passed.

²¹ Look! The LORD is coming from heaven to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will no longer hide those who have been murdered. They will be brought out for all to see.

27 ¹ In that day the LORD will take his terrible, swift sword and punish Leviathan, the swiftly moving serpent, the coiling, writhing serpent, the dragon of the sea.

² "In that day we will sing of the pleasant vineyard.

³ I, the LORD, will watch over it and tend its fruitful vines. Each day I will water them; day and night I will watch to keep enemies away.

⁴ My anger against Israel will be gone. If I find briars and thorns bothering her, I will burn them up.

⁵ These enemies will be spared only if they surrender and beg for peace and protection."

⁶ The time is coming when my people will take root. Israel will bud and blossom and fill the whole earth with her fruit!

⁷ Has the LORD punished Israel in the same way he has punished her enemies? No, for he devastated her enemies,

⁸ but he has punished Israel only a little. He has exiled her from her land as though blown away in a storm from the east.

⁹ The LORD did this to purge away Israel's sin. When he has finished, all the pagan altars will be crushed to dust. There won't be an Asherah pole or incense altar left standing.

¹⁰ Israel's fortified cities will be silent and empty, the houses abandoned, the streets covered with grass. Cattle

will graze there, chewing on twigs and branches.

¹¹ The people are like the dead branches of a tree, broken off and used for kindling beneath the cooking pots. Israel is a foolish and stupid nation, for its people have turned away from God. Therefore, the one who made them will show them no pity or mercy.

¹² Yet the time will come when the LORD will gather them together one by one like handpicked grain. He will bring them to his great threshing floor—from the Euphrates River in the east to the brook of Egypt in the west.

¹³ In that day the great trumpet will sound. Many who were dying in exile in Assyria and Egypt will return to Jerusalem to worship the LORD on his holy mountain.

28 ¹ Destruction is certain for the city of Samaria—the pride and

joy of the drunkards of Israel! It sits in a rich valley, but its glorious beauty will suddenly disappear. Destruction is certain for that city—the pride of a people brought low by wine.

² For the Lord will send the mighty Assyrian army against it. Like a mighty hailstorm and a torrential rain, they will burst upon it and dash it to the ground.

³ The proud city of Samaria—the pride and joy of the drunkards of Israel—will be trampled beneath its enemies' feet.

⁴ It sits in a fertile valley, but its glorious beauty will suddenly disappear. It will be greedily snatched up, as an early fig is hungrily picked and eaten.

⁵ Then at last the LORD Almighty will himself be Israel's crowning glory. He will be the pride and joy of the remnant of his people.

⁶ He will give a longing for justice to their judges. He will give great courage to their warriors who stand at the gates.

⁷ Now, however, Israel is being led by drunks! The priests and prophets reel and stagger from beer and wine. They make stupid mistakes as they carry out their responsibilities.

⁸ Their tables are covered with vomit; filth is everywhere.

⁹ They say, "Who does the LORD think we are? Why does he speak to us like this? Are we little children, barely old enough to talk?"

¹⁰ He tells us everything over and over again, a line at a time, in very simple words!"

¹¹ Since they refuse to listen, God will speak to them through foreign oppressors who speak an unknown language!

¹² God's people could have rest in their own land if they would only obey him, but they will not listen.

¹³ So the LORD will spell out his message for them again, repeating it over and over, a line at a time, in very simple words. Yet they will stumble over this simple, straightforward message. They will be injured, trapped, and captured.

¹⁴ Therefore, listen to this message from the LORD, you scoffing rulers in Jerusalem.

¹⁵ You boast that you have struck a bargain to avoid death and have made a deal to dodge the grave. You say, "The Assyrians can never touch us, for we have built a strong refuge made of lies and deception."

¹⁶ Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem. It is firm, a tested and precious cornerstone that is

safe to build on. Whoever believes need never run away again.

¹⁷ "I will take the measuring line of justice and the plumb line of righteousness to check the foundation wall you have built. Your refuge looks strong, but since it is made of lies, a hailstorm will knock it down. Since it is made of deception, the enemy will come like a flood to sweep it away.

¹⁸ I will cancel the bargain you made to avoid death, and I will overturn your deal to dodge the grave. When the terrible enemy floods in, you will be trampled into the ground.

¹⁹ Again and again that flood will come, morning after morning, day and night, until you are carried away." This message will bring terror to your people.

²⁰ For you have no place of refuge—the bed you have made is too short to lie

on. The blankets are too narrow to cover you.

²¹ The LORD will come suddenly and in anger, as he did against the Philistines at Mount Perazim and against the Amorites at Gibeon. He will come to do a strange, unusual thing: He will destroy his own people!

²² So scoff no more, or your punishment will be even greater. For the Lord, the LORD Almighty, has plainly told me that he is determined to crush you.

²³ Listen to me; listen as I plead!

²⁴ Does a farmer always plow and never sow? Is he forever cultivating the soil and never planting it?

²⁵ Does he not finally plant his seeds for dill, cumin, wheat, barley, and spelt, each in its own section of his land?

²⁶ The farmer knows just what to do, for God has given him understanding.

²⁷ He doesn't thresh all his crops the same way. A heavy sledge is never used on dill; rather, it is beaten with a light stick. A threshing wheel is never rolled on cumin; instead, it is beaten softly with a flail.

²⁸ Bread grain is easily crushed, so he doesn't keep on pounding it. He threshes it under the wheels of a cart, but he doesn't pulverize it.

²⁹ The LORD Almighty is a wonderful teacher, and he gives the farmer great wisdom.

29 ¹ "Destruction is certain for Ariel, the City of David. Year after year you offer your many sacrifices.

² Yet I will bring disaster upon you, and there will be much weeping and sorrow. For Jerusalem will become as her name Ariel means—an altar covered with blood.

³ I will be your enemy, surrounding Jerusalem and attacking its walls. I will build siege towers around it and will destroy it.

⁴ Your voice will whisper like a ghost from the earth where you will lie buried.

⁵ "But suddenly, your ruthless enemies will be driven away like chaff before the wind.

⁶ In an instant, I, the LORD Almighty, will come against them with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and storm and consuming fire.

⁷ All the nations fighting against Jerusalem will vanish like a dream! Those who are attacking her walls will vanish like a vision in the night.

⁸ A hungry person dreams of eating but is still hungry. A thirsty person dreams of drinking but is still faint from thirst when morning comes. In the same way,

your enemies will dream of a victorious conquest over Jerusalem, but all to no avail."

⁹ Are you amazed and incredulous? Do you not believe it? Then go ahead and be blind if you must. You are stupid, but not from wine! You stagger, but not from beer!

¹⁰ For the LORD has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep. He has closed the eyes of your prophets and visionaries.

¹¹ All these future events are a sealed book to them. When you give it to those who can read, they will say, "We can't read it because it is sealed."

¹² When you give it to those who cannot read, they will say, "Sorry, we don't know how to read."

¹³ And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. And their worship of me amounts to

nothing more than human laws learned by rote.

¹⁴ Because of this, I will do wonders among these hypocrites. I will show that human wisdom is foolish and even the most brilliant people lack understanding."

¹⁵ Destruction is certain for those who try to hide their plans from the LORD, who try to keep him in the dark concerning what they do! "The LORD can't see us," you say to yourselves. "He doesn't know what is going on!"

¹⁶ How stupid can you be? He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you. You are only the jars he makes! Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, "He didn't make us"? Does a jar ever say, "The potter who made me is stupid"?

¹⁷ Soon—and it will not be very long—the wilderness of Lebanon will be

a fertile field once again. And the fertile fields will become a lush and fertile forest.

¹⁸ In that day deaf people will hear words read from a book, and blind people will see through the gloom and darkness.

¹⁹ The humble will be filled with fresh joy from the LORD. Those who are poor will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

²⁰ Those who intimidate and harass will be gone, and all those who plot evil will be killed.

²¹ Those who make the innocent guilty by their false testimony will disappear. And those who use trickery to pervert justice and tell lies to tear down the innocent will be no more.

²² That is why the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the people of Israel, "My people will no longer pale with fear or be ashamed.

²³ For when they see their many children and material blessings, they will recognize the holiness of the Holy One of Israel. They will stand in awe of the God of Israel.

²⁴ Those in error will then believe the truth, and those who constantly complain will accept instruction.

30 ¹ "Destruction is certain for my rebellious children," says the LORD. "You make plans that are contrary to my will. You weave a web of plans that are not from my Spirit, thus piling up your sins.

² For without consulting me, you have gone down to Egypt to find help. You have put your trust in Pharaoh for his protection.

³ But in trusting Pharaoh, you will be humiliated and disgraced.

⁴ For though his power extends to Zoan and Hanes,

⁵ it will all turn out to your shame. He will not help you even one little bit."

⁶ Look at the animals moving slowly across the terrible desert to Egypt—donkeys and camels loaded with treasure to pay for Egypt's aid. On through the wilderness they go, where lions and poisonous snakes live. All this, and Egypt will give you nothing in return.

⁷ Egypt's promises are worthless! I call her the Harmless Dragon.

⁸ Now go and write down these words concerning Egypt. They will then stand until the end of time as a witness to Israel's unbelief.

⁹ For these people are stubborn rebels who refuse to pay any attention to the LORD's instructions.

¹⁰ They tell the prophets, "Shut up! We don't want any more of your reports." They say, "Don't tell us the truth. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies.

¹¹ Forget all this gloom. We have heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel.' We are tired of listening to what he has to say."

¹² This is the reply of the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise what I tell you and trust instead in oppression and lies,

¹³ calamity will come upon you suddenly. It will be like a bulging wall that bursts and falls. In an instant it will collapse and come crashing down.

¹⁴ You will be smashed like a piece of pottery—shattered so completely that there won't be a piece left that is big enough to carry coals from a fireplace or a little water from the well."

¹⁵ The Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says, "Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it.

¹⁶ You said, 'No, we will get our help from Egypt. They will give us swift horses for riding into battle.' But the only swiftness you are going to see is the swiftness of your enemies chasing you!

¹⁷ One of them will chase a thousand of you. Five of them will make all of you flee. You will be left like a lonely flagpole on a distant mountaintop."

¹⁸ But the LORD still waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the LORD is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for him to help them.

¹⁹ O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. He will be gracious if you ask for help. He will respond instantly to the sound of your cries.

²⁰ Though the Lord gave you adversity for food and affliction for drink, he will

still be with you to teach you. You will see your teacher with your own eyes,
21 and you will hear a voice say, "This is the way; turn around and walk here."

22 Then you will destroy all your silver idols and gold images. You will throw them out like filthy rags. "Ugh!" you will say to them. "Begone!"

23 Then the LORD will bless you with rain at planting time. There will be wonderful harvests and plenty of pastureland for your cattle.

24 The oxen and donkeys that till the ground will eat good grain, its chaff having been blown away by the wind.

25 In that day, when your enemies are slaughtered, there will be streams of water flowing down every mountain and hill.

26 The moon will be as bright as the sun, and the sun will be seven times brighter—like the light of seven days! So

it will be when the LORD begins to heal his people and cure the wounds he gave them.

²⁷ Look! The LORD is coming from far away, burning with anger, surrounded by a thick, rising smoke. His lips are filled with fury; his words consume like fire.

²⁸ His anger pours out like a flood on his enemies, sweeping them all away. He will sift out the proud nations. He will bridle them and lead them off to their destruction.

²⁹ But the people of God will sing a song of joy, like the songs at the holy festivals. You will be filled with joy, as when a flutist leads a group of pilgrims to Jerusalem—the mountain of the LORD—to the Rock of Israel.

³⁰ And the LORD will make his majestic voice heard. With angry indignation he will bring down his mighty arm on his enemies. It will descend with

devouring flames, with cloudbursts, thunderstorms, and huge hailstones, bringing their destruction.

³¹ At the LORD's command, the Assyrians will be shattered. He will strike them down with his rod.

³² And as the LORD strikes them, his people will keep time with the music of tambourines and harps.

³³ Topheth—the place of burning—has long been ready for the Assyrian king; it has been piled high with wood. The breath of the LORD, like fire from a volcano, will set it ablaze.

31 ¹ Destruction is certain for those who look to Egypt for help, trusting their cavalry and chariots instead of looking to the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

² In his wisdom, the LORD will send great disaster; he will not change his mind. He will rise against those who are

wicked, and he will crush their allies, too.

³ For these Egyptians are mere humans, not God! Their horses are puny flesh, not mighty spirits! When the LORD clenches his fist against them, they will stumble and fall among those they are trying to help. They will all fall down and die together.

⁴ But the LORD has told me this: "When a lion, even a young one, kills a sheep, it pays no attention to the shepherd's shouts and noise. It just goes right on eating. In the same way, the LORD Almighty will come and fight on Mount Zion. He will not be frightened away!

⁵ The LORD Almighty will hover over Jerusalem as a bird hovers around its nest. He will defend and save the city; he will pass over it and rescue it."

⁶ Therefore, my people, though you are such wicked rebels, come and return to the LORD.

⁷ I know the glorious day will come when every one of you will throw away the gold idols and silver images that your sinful hands have made.

⁸ "The Assyrians will be destroyed, but not by the swords of men. The sword of God will strike them, and they will panic and flee. The strong young Assyrians will be taken away as captives.

⁹ Even their generals will quake with terror and flee when they see the battle flags," says the LORD, whose flame burns brightly in Jerusalem.

32 ¹ Look, a righteous king is coming! And honest princes will rule under him.

² He will shelter Israel from the storm and the wind. He will refresh her as a river in the desert and as the cool

shadow of a large rock in a hot and weary land.

³ Then everyone who can see will be looking for God, and those who can hear will listen to his voice.

⁴ Even the hotheads among them will be full of sense and understanding. Those who stammer in uncertainty will speak out plainly.

⁵ In that day ungodly fools will not be heroes. Wealthy cheaters will not be respected as outstanding citizens.

⁶ Everyone will recognize ungodly fools for what they are. They spread lies about the LORD; they deprive the hungry of food and give no water to the thirsty.

⁷ The smooth tricks of evil people will be exposed, including all the lies they use to oppress the poor in the courts.

⁸ But good people will be generous to others and will be blessed for all they do.

⁹ Listen, you women who lie around in lazy ease. Listen to me, and I will tell you of your reward.

¹⁰ In a short time—in just a little more than a year—you careless ones will suddenly begin to care. For your fruit crop will fail, and the harvest will never take place.

¹¹ Tremble, you women of ease; throw off your unconcern. Strip off your pretty clothes, and wear sackcloth in your grief.

¹² Beat your breasts in sorrow for your bountiful farms that will soon be gone, and for those fruitful vines of other years.

¹³ For your land will be overgrown with thorns and briars. Your joyful homes and happy cities will be gone.

¹⁴ The palace and the city will be deserted, and busy towns will be empty. Herds of donkeys and goats will graze on the hills where the watchtowers are,

¹⁵ until at last the Spirit is poured down upon us from heaven. Then the wilderness will become a fertile field, and the fertile field will become a lush and fertile forest.

¹⁶ Justice will rule in the wilderness and righteousness in the fertile field.

¹⁷ And this righteousness will bring peace. Quietness and confidence will fill the land forever.

¹⁸ My people will live in safety, quietly at home. They will be at rest.

¹⁹ Even though the forest will be destroyed and the city torn down,

²⁰ God will greatly bless his people. Wherever they plant seed, bountiful crops will spring up. Their flocks and herds will graze in green pastures.

33 ¹ Destruction is certain for you Assyrians, who have destroyed everything around you but have never felt destruction yourselves. You expect

others to respect their promises to you, while you betray your promises to them. Now you, too, will be betrayed and destroyed!

² But LORD, be merciful to us, for we have waited for you. Be our strength each day and our salvation in times of trouble.

³ The enemy runs at the sound of your voice. When you stand up, the nations flee!

⁴ Just as locusts strip the fields and vines, so Jerusalem will strip the fallen army of Assyria!

⁵ Though the LORD is very great and lives in heaven, he will make Jerusalem his home of justice and righteousness.

⁶ In that day he will be your sure foundation, providing a rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

⁷ But now your ambassadors weep in bitter disappointment, for Assyria has refused their petition for peace.

⁸ Your roads are deserted; no one travels them anymore. The Assyrians have broken their peace pact and care nothing for the promises they made before witnesses. They have no respect for anyone.

⁹ All the land of Israel is in trouble. Lebanon has been destroyed. The plain of Sharon is now a wilderness. Bashan and Carmel have been plundered.

¹⁰ But the LORD says: "I will stand up and show my power and might.

¹¹ You Assyrians will gain nothing by all your efforts. Your own breath will turn to fire and kill you.

¹² Your people will be burned up completely, like thorns cut down and tossed in a fire.

¹³ Listen to what I have done, you nations far away! And you that are near, acknowledge my might!"

¹⁴ The sinners in Jerusalem shake with fear. "Which one of us," they cry, "can live here in the presence of this all-consuming fire?"

¹⁵ The ones who can live here are those who are honest and fair, who reject making a profit by fraud, who stay far away from bribes, who refuse to listen to those who plot murder, who shut their eyes to all enticement to do wrong.

¹⁶ These are the ones who will dwell on high. The rocks of the mountains will be their fortress of safety. Food will be supplied to them, and they will have water in abundance.

¹⁷ Your eyes will see the king in all his splendor, and you will see a land that stretches into the distance.

¹⁸ You will think back to this time of terror when the Assyrian officers outside your walls counted your towers and estimated how much plunder they would get from your fallen city.

¹⁹ But soon they will all be gone. These fierce, violent people with a strange, unknown language will disappear.

²⁰ Instead, you will see Zion as a place of worship and celebration. You will see Jerusalem, a city quiet and secure.

²¹ The LORD will be our Mighty One. He will be like a wide river of protection that no enemy can cross.

²² For the LORD is our judge, our lawgiver, and our king. He will care for us and save us.

²³ The enemies' sails hang loose on broken masts with useless tackle. Their treasure will be divided by the people of God. Even the lame will win their share!

²⁴ The people of Israel will no longer say, "We are sick and helpless," for the LORD will forgive their sins.

34 ¹ Come here and listen, O nations of the earth. Let the world and everything in it hear my words.

² For the LORD is enraged against the nations. His fury is against all their armies. He will completely destroy them, bringing about their slaughter.

³ Their dead will be left unburied, and the stench of rotting bodies will fill the land. The mountains will flow with their blood.

⁴ The heavens above will melt away and disappear like a rolled-up scroll. The stars will fall from the sky, just as withered leaves and fruit fall from a tree.

⁵ And when my sword has finished its work in the heavens, then watch. It will fall upon Edom, the nation I have completely destroyed.

⁶ The sword of the LORD is drenched with blood. It is covered with fat as though it had been used for killing lambs and goats and rams for a sacrifice. Yes, the LORD will offer a great sacrifice in the rich city of Bozrah. He will make a mighty slaughter in Edom.

⁷ The strongest will die—veterans and young men, too. The land will be soaked with blood and the soil enriched with fat.

⁸ For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year when Edom will be paid back for all it did to Israel.

⁹ The streams of Edom will be filled with burning pitch, and the ground will be covered with fire.

¹⁰ This judgment on Edom will never end; the smoke of its burning will rise forever. The land will lie deserted from generation to generation. No one will live there anymore.

¹¹ It will be haunted by the horned owl, the hawk, the screech owl, and the raven. For God will bring chaos and destruction to that land.

¹² It will be called the Land of Nothing, and its princes soon will all be gone.

¹³ Thorns will overrun its palaces; nettles will grow in its forts. The ruins will become a haunt for jackals and a home for ostriches.

¹⁴ Wild animals of the desert will mingle there with hyenas, their howls filling the night. Wild goats will bleat at one another among the ruins, and night creatures will come there to rest.

¹⁵ There the owl will make her nest and lay her eggs. She will hatch her young and cover them with her wings. And the vultures will come, each one with its mate.

¹⁶ Search the book of the LORD, and see what he will do. He will not miss a

single detail. Not one of these birds and animals will be missing, and none will lack a mate, for the LORD has promised this. His Spirit will make it all come true.

¹⁷ He has surveyed and divided the land and deeded it over to those creatures. They will possess it forever, from generation to generation.

35 ¹ Even the wilderness will rejoice in those days. The desert will blossom with flowers.

² Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as lovely as Mount Carmel's pastures and the plain of Sharon. There the LORD will display his glory, the splendor of our God.

³ With this news, strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees.

⁴ Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you."

⁵ And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf.

⁶ The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will shout and sing! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the desert.

⁷ The parched ground will become a pool, and springs of water will satisfy the thirsty land. Marsh grass and reeds and rushes will flourish where desert jackals once lived.

⁸ And a main road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-hearted people will never travel on it. It will be

only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there.

⁹ Lions will not lurk along its course, and there will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will follow it.

¹⁰ Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return to Jerusalem, singing songs of everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be overcome with joy and gladness.

36 ¹ In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them.

² Then the king of Assyria sent his personal representative with a huge army from Lachish 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.

³ These are the officials who went out to meet with them: Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian.

⁴ 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?"

⁵ 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?

⁶ 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!

⁷ "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?

⁸ "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!

⁹ 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?

¹⁰ 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!'"

¹¹ Then Eliakim, 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."

¹² 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."

¹³ Then he stood and shouted in Hebrew to the people on the wall, "Listen to this message from the great king of Assyria!

¹⁴ This is what the king says: Don't let King Hezekiah deceive you. He will never be able to rescue you.

¹⁵ 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.'

¹⁶ "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.

¹⁷ 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—a land of plenty.

¹⁸ "Don't let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, 'The LORD will rescue us!' Have the gods of any other nations ever saved their people from the king of Assyria?

¹⁹ What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? And what about the

gods of Sepharvaim? Did they rescue Samaria from my power?

²⁰ 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?"

²¹ But the people were silent and did not answer because Hezekiah had told them not to speak.

²² 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.

37 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 make sure that 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:

¹⁶ "O LORD Almighty, 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ "It is true, LORD, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all these nations, just as the message says.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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."

²¹ Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: "This is what the

LORD, the God of Israel, says: This is my answer to your prayer concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria.

²² 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.

²³ ‘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!

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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!"

²⁶ '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.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 'But I know you well—your comings and goings and all you do. I know the way you have raged against me.

²⁹ 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.'"

³⁰ 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.

³¹ 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.

³² 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!

³³ "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.

³⁴ The king will return to his own country by the road on which he came. He will not enter this city, says the LORD.

³⁵ For my own honor and for the sake of my servant David, I will defend it."

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there.

³⁸ 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.

38 ¹ 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 Then this message came to Isaiah from the LORD:

⁵ "Go back to Hezekiah and 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 add fifteen years to your life,

⁶ and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. Yes, I will defend this city.

⁷ "And this is the sign that the LORD will give you to prove he will do as he promised:

⁸ I will cause the sun's shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!" So the shadow on the sundial moved backward ten steps.

⁹ When King Hezekiah was well again, he wrote this poem about his experience:

¹⁰ I said, "In the prime of my life, must I now enter the place of the dead? Am I to be robbed of my normal years?"

¹¹ I said, "Never again will I see the LORD GOD while still in the land of the

living. Never again will I see my friends or laugh with those who live in this world.

¹² My life has been blown away like a shepherd's tent in a storm. It has been cut short, as when a weaver cuts cloth from a loom. Suddenly, my life was over.

¹³ I waited patiently all night, but I was torn apart as though by lions. Suddenly, my life was over.

¹⁴ Delirious, I chattered like a swallow or a crane, and then I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew tired of looking to heaven for help. I am in trouble, Lord. Help me!"

¹⁵ But what could I say? For he himself had sent this sickness. Now I will walk humbly throughout my years because of this anguish I have felt.

¹⁶ Lord, your discipline is good, for it leads to life and health. You have restored my health and have allowed me to live!

¹⁷ Yes, it was good for me to suffer this anguish, for you have rescued me from death and have forgiven all my sins.

¹⁸ For the dead cannot praise you; they cannot raise their voices in praise. Those who go down to destruction can no longer hope in your faithfulness.

¹⁹ Only the living can praise you as I do today. Each generation can make known your faithfulness to the next.

²⁰ Think of it—the LORD has healed me! I will sing his praises with instruments every day of my life in the Temple of the LORD.

²¹ Isaiah had said to Hezekiah's servants, "Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil, and Hezekiah will recover."

²² And Hezekiah had asked, "What sign will prove that I will go to the Temple of the LORD three days from now?"

39 ¹ Soon after this, Merodach–baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah his best wishes and a gift. He had heard that Hezekiah had been very sick and that he had recovered.

² 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.

³ 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."

⁴ "What did they see in your palace?" asked Isaiah. "They saw everything,"

Hezekiah replied. "I showed them everything I own—all my treasures."

⁵ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from the LORD Almighty:

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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."

⁸ 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."

40 ¹ "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God.

² "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and that her

sins are pardoned. Yes, the LORD has punished her in full for all her sins."

³ Listen! I hear the voice of someone shouting, "Make a highway for the LORD through the wilderness. Make a straight, smooth road through the desert for our God.

⁴ Fill the valleys and level the hills. Straighten out the curves and smooth off the rough spots.

⁵ Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!"

⁶ A voice said, "Shout!" I asked, "What should I shout?" "Shout that people are like the grass that dies away. Their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of flowers in a field.

⁷ The grass withers, and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the LORD. And so it is with people.

⁸ The grass withers, and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

⁹ Messenger of good news, shout to Zion from the mountaintops! Shout louder to Jerusalem—do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, "Your God is coming!"

¹⁰ Yes, the Sovereign LORD is coming in all his glorious power. He will rule with awesome strength. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

¹² Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has

weighed out the mountains and the hills?

¹³ Who is able to advise the Spirit of the LORD? Who knows enough to be his teacher or counselor?

¹⁴ Has the LORD ever needed anyone's advice? Does he need instruction about what is good or what is best?

¹⁵ No, for all the nations of the world are nothing in comparison with him. They are but a drop in the bucket, dust on the scales. He picks up the islands as though they had no weight at all.

¹⁶ All Lebanon's forests do not contain sufficient fuel to consume a sacrifice large enough to honor him. All Lebanon's sacrificial animals would not make an offering worthy of our God.

¹⁷ The nations of the world are as nothing to him. In his eyes they are less than nothing—mere emptiness and froth.

¹⁸ To whom, then, can we compare God? What image might we find to resemble him?

¹⁹ Can he be compared to an idol formed in a mold, overlaid with gold, and decorated with silver chains?

²⁰ Or is a poor person's wooden idol better? Can God be compared to an idol that must be placed on a stand so it won't fall down?

²¹ Have you never heard or understood? Are you deaf to the words of God—the words he gave before the world began? Are you so ignorant?

²² It is God who sits above the circle of the earth. The people below must seem to him like grasshoppers! He is the one who spreads out the heavens like a curtain and makes his tent from them.

²³ He judges the great people of the world and brings them all to nothing.

²⁴ They hardly get started, barely taking root, when he blows on them and their work withers. The wind carries them off like straw.

²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One.

²⁶ Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out one after another, calling each by its name. And he counts them to see that none are lost or have strayed away.

²⁷ O Israel, how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles? How can you say God refuses to hear your case?

²⁸ Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding.

²⁹ He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak.

³⁰ Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up.

³¹ But those who wait on the LORD will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

41 ¹ "Listen in silence before me, you lands beyond the sea. Bring your strongest arguments. Come now and speak. The court is ready for your case.

² "Who has stirred up this king from the east, who meets victory at every step? Who, indeed, but the LORD? He gives him victory over many nations and permits him to trample their kings underfoot. He puts entire armies to the sword. He scatters them in the wind with his bow.

³ He chases them away and goes on safely, though he is walking over unfamiliar ground.

⁴ Who has done such mighty deeds, directing the affairs of the human race as each new generation marches by? It is I, the LORD, the First and the Last. I alone am he."

⁵ The lands beyond the sea watch in fear. Remote lands tremble and mobilize for war.

⁶ They encourage one another with the words, "Be strong!"

⁷ The craftsmen rush to make new idols. The carver hurries the goldsmith, and the molder helps at the anvil. "Good," they say. "It's coming along fine." Carefully they join the parts together, then fasten the thing in place so it won't fall over.

⁸ "But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from my friend Abraham,

⁹ I have called you back from the ends of the earth so you can serve me. For I have chosen you and will not throw you away.

¹⁰ Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

¹¹ "See, all your angry enemies lie there, confused and ashamed. Anyone who opposes you will die.

¹² You will look for them in vain. They will all be gone!

¹³ I am holding you by your right hand—I, the LORD your God. And I say to you, 'Do not be afraid. I am here to help you.

¹⁴ Despised though you are, O Israel, don't be afraid, for I will help you. I am the LORD, your Redeemer. I am the Holy One of Israel.'

¹⁵ You will be a new threshing instrument with many sharp teeth. You will tear all your enemies apart, making chaff of mountains.

¹⁶ You will toss them in the air, and the wind will blow them all away; a whirlwind will scatter them. And the joy of the LORD will fill you to overflowing. You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁷ "When the poor and needy search for water and there is none, and their tongues are parched from thirst, then I, the LORD, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will never forsake them.

¹⁸ I will open up rivers for them on high plateaus. I will give them fountains of water in the valleys. In the deserts they will find pools of water. Rivers fed by

springs will flow across the dry, parched ground.

¹⁹ I will plant trees—cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, cypress, fir, and pine—on barren land.

²⁰ Everyone will see this miracle and understand that it is the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, who did it.

²¹ "Can your idols make such claims as these? Let them come and show what they can do!" says the LORD, the King of Israel.

²² "Let them try to tell us what happened long ago or what the future holds.

²³ Yes, that's it! If you are gods, tell what will occur in the days ahead. Or perform a mighty miracle that will fill us with amazement and fear. Do something, whether good or bad!

²⁴ But no! You are less than nothing and can do nothing at all. Anyone who

chooses you becomes filthy, just like you!

²⁵ "But I have stirred up a leader from the north and east. He will come against the nations and call on my name, and I will give him victory over kings and princes. He will trample them as a potter treads on clay.

²⁶ "Who but I have told you this would happen? Who else predicted this, making you admit that he was right? No one else said a word!

²⁷ I was the first to tell Jerusalem, 'Look! Help is on the way!'

²⁸ Not one of your idols told you this. Not one gave any answer when I asked.

²⁹ See, they are all foolish, worthless things. Your idols are all as empty as the wind.

42 ¹ "Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him. I have put my

Spirit upon him. He will reveal justice to the nations.

² He will be gentle—he will not shout or raise his voice in public.

³ He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope. He will bring full justice to all who have been wronged.

⁴ He will not stop until truth and righteousness prevail throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction."

⁵ God, the LORD, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath and life to everyone in all the world. And it is he who says,

⁶ "I, the LORD, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will guard and support you, for I have given you to my people as the personal confirmation of my covenant with them.

And you will be a light to guide all nations to me.

⁷ You will open the eyes of the blind and free the captives from prison. You will release those who sit in dark dungeons.

⁸ "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else. I will not share my praise with carved idols.

⁹ Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens."

¹⁰ Sing a new song to the LORD! Sing his praises from the ends of the earth! Sing, all you who sail the seas, all you who live in distant coastlands.

¹¹ Join in the chorus, you desert towns; let the villages of Kedar rejoice! Let the people of Sela sing for joy; shout praises from the mountaintops!

¹² Let the coastlands glorify the LORD; let them sing his praise.

¹³ The LORD will march forth like a mighty man; he will come out like a warrior, full of fury. He will shout his thundering battle cry, and he will crush all his enemies.

¹⁴ He will say, "I have long been silent; yes, I have restrained myself. But now I will give full vent to my fury; I will gasp and pant like a woman giving birth.

¹⁵ I will level the mountains and hills and bring a blight on all their greenery. I will turn the rivers into dry land and will dry up all the pools.

¹⁶ I will lead blind Israel down a new path, guiding them along an unfamiliar way. I will make the darkness bright before them and smooth out the road ahead of them. Yes, I will indeed do these things; I will not forsake them.

¹⁷ But those who trust in idols, calling them their gods—they will be turned away in shame.

¹⁸ "Oh, how deaf and blind you are toward me! Why won't you listen? Why do you refuse to see?

¹⁹ Who in all the world is as blind as my own people, my servant? Who is as deaf as my messengers? Who is as blind as my chosen people, the servant of the LORD?

²⁰ You see and understand what is right but refuse to act on it. You hear, but you don't really listen."

²¹ The LORD has magnified his law and made it truly glorious. Through it he had planned to show the world that he is righteous.

²² But what a sight his people are, for they have been robbed, enslaved, imprisoned, and trapped. They are fair game for all and have no one to protect them.

²³ Will not even one of you apply these lessons from the past and see the ruin that awaits you?

²⁴ Who allowed Israel to be robbed and hurt? Was it not the LORD? It was the LORD whom we sinned against, for the people would not go where he sent them, nor would they obey his law.

²⁵ That is why he poured out such fury on them and destroyed them in battle. They were set on fire and burned, but they still refused to understand.

43 ¹ But now, O Israel, the LORD who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine.

² When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will

not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.

³ For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba as a ransom for your freedom.

⁴ Others died that you might live. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you.

⁵ "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west

⁶ and from north and south. I will bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth.

⁷ All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them."

⁸ Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.

⁹ Gather the nations together! Which of their idols has ever foretold such things? Can any of them predict something even a single day in advance? Where are the witnesses of such predictions? Who can verify that they spoke the truth?

¹⁰ "But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the LORD. "And you are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be.

¹¹ I am the LORD, and there is no other Savior.

¹² First I predicted your deliverance; I declared what I would do, and then I did it—I saved you. No foreign god has ever done this before. You are witnesses that I am the only God," says the LORD.

¹³ "From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do. No one can reverse my actions."

¹⁴ The LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: "For your sakes I will send an invading army against Babylon. And the Babylonians will be forced to flee in those ships they are so proud of.

¹⁵ I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator and King.

¹⁶ I am the LORD, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea.

¹⁷ I called forth the mighty army of Egypt with all its chariots and horses. I drew them beneath the waves, and they drowned, their lives snuffed out like a smoldering candlewick.

¹⁸ "But forget all that—it is nothing compared to what I am going to do.

¹⁹ For I am about to do a brand-new thing. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness for my people to come

home. I will create rivers for them in the desert!

²⁰ The wild animals in the fields will thank me, the jackals and ostriches, too, for giving them water in the wilderness. Yes, I will make springs in the desert, so that my chosen people can be refreshed.

²¹ I have made Israel for myself, and they will someday honor me before the whole world.

²² "But, my dear people, you refuse to ask for my help. You have grown tired of me!

²³ You have not brought me lambs for burnt offerings. You have not honored me with sacrifices, though I have not burdened and wearied you with my requests for grain offerings and incense.

²⁴ You have not brought me fragrant incense or pleased me with the fat from sacrifices. Instead, you have burdened

me with your sins and wearied me with your faults.

²⁵ "I—yes, I alone—am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again.

²⁶ Let us review the situation together, and you can present your case if you have one.

²⁷ From the very beginning, your ancestors sinned against me—all your leaders broke my laws.

²⁸ That is why I have disgraced your priests and assigned Israel a future of complete destruction and shame.

44 ¹ "But now, listen to me, Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one.

² The LORD who made you and helps you says: O Jacob, my servant, do not be afraid. O Israel, my chosen one, do not fear.

³ For I will give you abundant water to quench your thirst and to moisten your

parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit and my blessings on your children.

⁴ They will thrive like watered grass, like willows on a riverbank.

⁵ Some will proudly claim, 'I belong to the LORD.' Others will say, 'I am a descendant of Jacob.' Some will write the LORD's name on their hands and will take the honored name of Israel as their own.

⁶ "This is what the LORD, Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty, says: I am the First and the Last; there is no other God.

⁷ Who else can tell you what is going to happen in the days ahead? Let them tell you if they can and thus prove their power. Let them do as I have done since ancient times.

⁸ Do not tremble; do not be afraid. Have I not proclaimed from ages past what my purposes are for you? You are

my witnesses—is there any other God? No! There is no other Rock—not one!"

⁹ How foolish are those who manufacture idols to be their gods. These highly valued objects are really worthless. They themselves are witnesses that this is so, for their idols neither see nor know. No wonder those who worship them are put to shame.

¹⁰ Who but a fool would make his own god—an idol that cannot help him one bit!

¹¹ All who worship idols will stand before the LORD in shame, along with all these craftsmen—mere humans—who claim they can make a god. Together they will stand in terror and shame.

¹² The blacksmith stands at his forge to make a sharp tool, pounding and shaping it with all his might. His work makes him hungry and thirsty, weak and faint.

¹³ Then the wood-carver measures and marks out a block of wood, takes the tool, and carves the figure of a man. Now he has a wonderful idol that cannot even move from where it is placed!

¹⁴ He cuts down cedars; he selects the cypress and the oak; he plants the cedar in the forest to be nourished by the rain.

¹⁵ And after his care, he uses part of the wood to make a fire to warm himself and bake his bread. Then—yes, it's true—he takes the rest of it and makes himself a god for people to worship! He makes an idol and bows down and praises it!

¹⁶ He burns part of the tree to roast his meat and to keep himself warm.

¹⁷ Then he takes what's left and makes his god: a carved idol! He falls down in front of it, worshiping and praying to it. "Rescue me!" he says. "You are my god!"

¹⁸ Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see.

Their minds are shut, and they cannot think.

¹⁹ The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, "Why, it's just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a chunk of wood?"

²⁰ The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He is trusting something that can give him no help at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, "Is this thing, this idol that I'm holding in my hand, a lie?"

²¹ "Pay attention, O Israel, for you are my servant. I, the LORD, made you, and I will not forget to help you.

²² I have swept away your sins like the morning mists. I have scattered your offenses like the clouds. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free."

²³ Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done this wondrous thing. Shout, O earth! Break forth into song, O mountains and forests and every tree! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and is glorified in Israel.

²⁴ The LORD, your Redeemer and Creator, says: "I am the LORD, who made all things. I alone stretched out the heavens. By myself I made the earth and everything in it.

²⁵ I am the one who exposes the false prophets as liars by causing events to happen that are contrary to their predictions. I cause wise people to give bad advice, thus proving them to be fools.

²⁶ But I carry out the predictions of my prophets! When they say Jerusalem will be saved and the towns of Judah will be lived in once again, it will be done!

²⁷ When I speak to the rivers and say, 'Be dry!' they will be dry.

²⁸ When I say of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,' he will certainly do as I say. He will command that Jerusalem be rebuilt and that the Temple be restored."

45 ¹ This is what the LORD says to Cyrus, his anointed one, whose right hand he will empower. Before him, mighty kings will be paralyzed with fear. Their fortress gates will be opened, never again to shut against him.

² This is what the LORD says: "I will go before you, Cyrus, and level the mountains. I will smash down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.

³ And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.

⁴ "And why have I called you for this work? It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one. I called you by name when you did not know me.

⁵ I am the LORD; there is no other God. I have prepared you, even though you do not know me,

⁶ so all the world from east to west will know there is no other God. I am the LORD, and there is no other.

⁷ I am the one who creates the light and makes the darkness. I am the one who sends good times and bad times. I, the LORD, am the one who does these things.

⁸ Open up, O heavens, and pour out your righteousness. Let the earth open wide so salvation and righteousness can sprout up together. I, the LORD, created them.

⁹ "Destruction is certain for those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot ever argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you are doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be!'

¹⁰ How terrible it would be if a newborn baby said to its father and mother, 'Why was I born? Why did you make me this way?'"

¹¹ This is what the LORD, the Creator and Holy One of Israel, says: "Do you question what I do? Do you give me orders about the work of my hands?"

¹² I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the millions of stars are at my command.

¹³ I will raise up Cyrus to fulfill my righteous purpose, and I will guide all his actions. He will restore my city and

free my captive people—and not for a reward! I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!"

¹⁴ This is what the LORD says: "The Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans will be subject to you. They will come to you with all their merchandise, and it will all be yours. They will follow you as prisoners in chains. They will fall to their knees in front of you and say, 'God is with you, and he is the only God.'"

¹⁵ Truly, O God of Israel, our Savior, you work in strange and mysterious ways.

¹⁶ All who make idols will be humiliated and disgraced.

¹⁷ But the LORD will save the people of Israel with eternal salvation. They will never again be humiliated and disgraced throughout everlasting ages.

¹⁸ For the LORD is God, and he created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. He made the world

to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos. "I am the LORD," he says, "and there is no other.

¹⁹ I publicly proclaim bold promises. I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner so no one can understand what I mean. And I did not tell the people of Israel to ask me for something I did not plan to give. I, the LORD, speak only what is true and right.

²⁰ "Gather together and come, you fugitives from surrounding nations. What fools they are who carry around their wooden idols and pray to gods that cannot save!

²¹ Consult together, argue your case, and state your proofs that idol worship pays. Who made these things known long ago? What idol ever told you they would happen? Was it not I, the LORD? For there is no other God but me—a just God and a Savior—no, not one!

²² Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.

²³ I have sworn by my own name, and I will never go back on my word: Every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will confess allegiance to my name."

²⁴ The people will declare, "The LORD is the source of all my righteousness and strength." And all who were angry with him will come to him and be ashamed.

²⁵ In the LORD all the generations of Israel will be justified, and in him they will boast.

46 ¹ The idols of Babylon, Bel and Nebo, are being hauled away on ox carts. But look! The beasts are staggering under the weight!

² Both the idols and the ones carrying them are bowed down. The gods cannot protect the people, and the people

cannot protect the gods. They go off into captivity together.

³ "Listen to me, all you who are left in Israel. I created you and have cared for you since before you were born.

⁴ I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.

⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?

⁶ Some people pour out their silver and gold and hire a craftsman to make a god from it. Then they bow down and worship it!

⁷ They carry it around on their shoulders, and when they set it down, it stays there. It cannot even move! And when someone prays to it, there is no answer. It has no power to get anyone out of trouble.

⁸ "Do not forget this, you guilty ones.

⁹ And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God—I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me.

¹⁰ Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

¹¹ I will call a swift bird of prey from the east—a leader from a distant land who will come and do my bidding. I have said I would do it, and I will.

¹² Listen to me, you stubborn, evil people!

¹³ For I am ready to set things right, not in the distant future, but right now! I am ready to save Jerusalem and give my glory to Israel.

47 ¹ "Come, Babylon, unconquered one, sit in the dust. For your days of glory, pomp, and honor have ended. O daughter of Babylonia, never again

will you be the lovely princess, tender and delicate.

² Take heavy millstones and grind the corn. Remove your veil and strip off your robe. Expose yourself to public view.

³ You will be naked and burdened with shame. I will take vengeance against you and will not negotiate."

⁴ Our Redeemer, whose name is the LORD Almighty, is the Holy One of Israel.

⁵ "O daughter of Babylon, sit now in darkness and silence. Never again will you be known as the queen of kingdoms.

⁶ For I was angry with my chosen people and began their punishment by letting them fall into your hands. But you, Babylon, showed them no mercy. You have forced even the elderly to carry heavy burdens.

⁷ You thought, 'I will reign forever as queen of the world!' You did not care at

all about my people or think about the consequences of your actions.

⁸ "You are a pleasure–crazy kingdom, living at ease and feeling secure, bragging as if you were the greatest in the world! You say, 'I'm self–sufficient and not accountable to anyone! I will never be a widow or lose my children.'

⁹ Well, those two things will come upon you in a moment: widowhood and the loss of your children. Yes, these calamities will come upon you, despite all your witchcraft and magic.

¹⁰ "You felt secure in all your wickedness. 'No one sees me,' you said. Your 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' have caused you to turn away from me and claim, 'I am self–sufficient and not accountable to anyone!'

¹¹ So disaster will overtake you suddenly, and you won't be able to charm it away. Calamity will fall upon

you, and you won't be able to buy your way out. A catastrophe will arise so fast that you won't know what hit you.

¹² "Call out the demon hordes you have worshiped all these years. Ask them to help you strike terror into the hearts of people once again.

¹³ You have more than enough advisers, astrologers, and stargazers. Let them stand up and save you from what the future holds.

¹⁴ But they are as useless as dried grass burning in a fire. They cannot even save themselves! You will get no help from them at all. Their hearth is not a place to sit for warmth.

¹⁵ And all your friends, those with whom you have done business since childhood, will slip away and disappear, unable to help.

48 ¹ "Listen to me, O family of Jacob, who are called by the name of

Israel and born into the family of Judah. Listen, you who take oaths in the name of the LORD and call on the God of Israel. You don't follow through on any of your promises,

² even though you call yourself the holy city and talk about depending on the God of Israel, whose name is the LORD Almighty.

³ Time and again I warned you about what was going to happen in the future. Then suddenly I took action, and all my predictions came true.

⁴ "I know how stubborn and obstinate you are. Your necks are as unbending as iron. You are as hardheaded as bronze.

⁵ That is why I told you ahead of time what I was going to do. That way, you could never say, 'My idols did it. My wooden image and metal god commanded it to happen!'

⁶ You have heard my predictions and seen them fulfilled, but you refuse to admit it. Now I will tell you new things I have not mentioned before, secrets you have not yet heard.

⁷ They are brand new, not things from the past. So you cannot say, 'We knew that all the time!'

⁸ "Yes, I will tell you of things that are entirely new, for I know so well what traitors you are. You have been rebels from your earliest childhood, rotten through and through.

⁹ Yet for my own sake and for the honor of my name, I will hold back my anger and not wipe you out.

¹⁰ I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering.

¹¹ I will rescue you for my sake—yes, for my own sake! That way, the pagan nations will not be able to claim that

their gods have conquered me. I will not let them have my glory!

¹² "Listen to me, O family of Jacob, Israel my chosen one! I alone am God, the First and the Last.

¹³ It was my hand that laid the foundations of the earth. The palm of my right hand spread out the heavens above. I spoke, and they came into being.

¹⁴ "Have any of your idols ever told you this? Come, all of you, and listen: 'The LORD has chosen Cyrus as his ally. He will use him to put an end to the empire of Babylon, destroying the Babylonian armies.'

¹⁵ I have said it: I am calling Cyrus! I will send him on this errand and will help him succeed.

¹⁶ Come closer and listen. I have always told you plainly what would happen so you would have no trouble

understanding." And now the Sovereign LORD and his Spirit have sent me with this message:

¹⁷ "The LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is good and leads you along the paths you should follow.

¹⁸ Oh, that you had listened to my commands! Then you would have had peace flowing like a gentle river and righteousness rolling like waves.

¹⁹ Then you would have become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count! There would have been no need for your destruction."

²⁰ Yet even now, be free from your captivity! Leave Babylon and the Babylonians, singing as you go! Shout to the ends of the earth that the LORD has

redeemed his servants, the people of Israel.

²¹ They were not thirsty when he led them through the desert. He divided the rock, and water gushed out for them to drink.

²² "But there is no peace for the wicked," says the LORD.

49 ¹ Listen to me, all of you in far-off lands! The LORD called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name.

² He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword. He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand. I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver.

³ He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory."

⁴ I replied, "But my work all seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose at all. Yet I

leave it all in the LORD's hand; I will trust God for my reward."

⁵ And now the LORD speaks—he who formed me in my mother's womb to be his servant, who commissioned me to bring his people of Israel back to him. The LORD has honored me, and my God has given me strength.

⁶ He says, "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

⁷ The LORD, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, says to the one who is despised and rejected by a nation, to the one who is the servant of rulers: "Kings will stand at attention when you pass by. Princes will bow low because the LORD has chosen you. He, the faithful LORD, the Holy One of Israel, chooses you."

⁸ This is what the LORD says: "At just the right time, I will respond to you. On the day of salvation, I will help you. I will give you as a token and pledge to Israel. This will prove that I will reestablish the land of Israel and reassign it to its own people again.

⁹ Through you I am saying to the prisoners of darkness, 'Come out! I am giving you your freedom!' They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare.

¹⁰ They will neither hunger nor thirst. The searing sun and scorching desert winds will not reach them anymore. For the LORD in his mercy will lead them beside cool waters.

¹¹ And I will make my mountains into level paths for them. The highways will be raised above the valleys.

¹² See, my people will return from far away, from lands to the north and west, and from as far south as Egypt."

¹³ Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their sorrow.

¹⁴ Yet Jerusalem says, "The LORD has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us."

¹⁵ "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!

¹⁶ See, I have written your name on my hand. Ever before me is a picture of Jerusalem's walls in ruins.

¹⁷ Soon your descendants will come back, and all who are trying to destroy you will go away.

¹⁸ Look and see, for all your children will come back to you. As surely as I live,"

says the LORD, "they will be like jewels or bridal ornaments for you to display.

¹⁹ "Even the most desolate parts of your abandoned land will soon be crowded with your people. Your enemies who enslaved you will be far away.

²⁰ The generations born in exile will return and say, 'We need more room! It's crowded here!'

²¹ Then you will think to yourself, 'Who has given me all these descendants? For most of my children were killed, and the rest were carried away into exile. I was left here all alone. Who bore these children? Who raised them for me?'"

²² This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I will give a signal to the godless nations. They will carry your little sons back to you in their arms; they will bring your daughters on their shoulders.

²³ Kings and queens will serve you. They will care for all your needs. They

will bow to the earth before you and lick the dust from your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD. Those who wait for me will never be put to shame."

²⁴ Who can snatch the plunder of war from the hands of a warrior? Who can demand that a tyrant let his captives go?

²⁵ But the LORD says, "The captives of warriors will be released, and the plunder of tyrants will be retrieved. For I will fight those who fight you, and I will save your children.

²⁶ I will feed your enemies with their own flesh. They will be drunk with rivers of their own blood. All the world will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel."

50 ¹ The LORD asks, "Did I sell you as slaves to my creditors? Is that why you are not here? Is your mother gone because I divorced her and sent her

away? No, you went away as captives because of your sins. And your mother, too, was taken because of your sins.

² Was I too weak to save you? Is that why the house is silent and empty when I come home? Is it because I have no power to rescue? No, that is not the reason! For I can speak to the sea and make it dry! I can turn rivers into deserts covered with dying fish.

³ I am the one who sends darkness out across the skies, bringing it to a state of mourning."

⁴ The Sovereign LORD has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know what to say to all these weary ones. Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will.

⁵ The Sovereign LORD has spoken to me, and I have listened. I do not rebel or turn away.

⁶ I give my back to those who beat me and my cheeks to those who pull out my beard. I do not hide from shame, for they mock me and spit in my face.

⁷ Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be dismayed. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will triumph.

⁸ He who gives me justice is near. Who will dare to oppose me now? Where are my enemies? Let them appear!

⁹ See, the Sovereign LORD is on my side! Who will declare me guilty? All my enemies will be destroyed like old clothes that have been eaten by moths!

¹⁰ Who among you fears the LORD and obeys his servant? If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the LORD and rely on your God.

¹¹ But watch out, you who live in your own light and warm yourselves by your

own fires. This is the reward you will receive from me: You will soon lie down in great torment.

51 ¹ "Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance—all who seek the LORD! Consider the quarry from which you were mined, the rock from which you were cut!

² Yes, think about your ancestors Abraham and Sarah, from whom you came. Abraham was alone when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation."

³ The LORD will comfort Israel again and make her deserts blossom. Her barren wilderness will become as beautiful as Eden—the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found there. Lovely songs of thanksgiving will fill the air.

⁴ "Listen to me, my people. Hear me, Israel, for my law will be proclaimed,

and my justice will become a light to the nations.

⁵ My mercy and justice are coming soon. Your salvation is on the way. I will rule the nations. They will wait for me and long for my power.

⁶ Look up to the skies above, and gaze down on the earth beneath. For the skies will disappear like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a piece of clothing. The people of the earth will die like flies, but my salvation lasts forever. My righteous rule will never end!

⁷ "Listen to me, you who know right from wrong and cherish my law in your hearts. Do not be afraid of people's scorn or their slanderous talk.

⁸ For the moth will destroy them as it destroys clothing. The worm will eat away at them as it eats wool. But my righteousness will last forever. My

salvation will continue from generation to generation."

⁹ Wake up, LORD! Robe yourself with strength! Rouse yourself as in the days of old when you slew Egypt, the dragon of the Nile.

¹⁰ Are you not the same today, the one who dried up the sea, making a path of escape when you saved your people?

¹¹ Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return to Jerusalem, singing songs of everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be overcome with joy and gladness.

¹² "I, even I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear?"

¹³ Yet you have forgotten the LORD, your Creator, the one who put the stars in the sky and established the earth. Will you remain in constant dread of human

oppression? Will you continue to fear the anger of your enemies from morning till night?

¹⁴ Soon all you captives will be released! Imprisonment, starvation, and death will not be your fate!

¹⁵ For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea, causing its waves to roar. My name is the LORD Almighty.

¹⁶ And I have put my words in your mouth and hidden you safely within my hand. I set all the stars in space and established the earth. I am the one who says to Israel, 'You are mine!'"

¹⁷ Wake up, wake up, O Jerusalem! You have drunk enough from the cup of the LORD's fury. You have drunk the cup of terror, tipping out its last drops.

¹⁸ Not one of your children is left alive to help you or tell you what to do.

¹⁹ These two things have been your lot: desolation and destruction, famine and

war. And who is left to sympathize? Who is left to comfort you?

²⁰ For your children have fainted and lie in the streets, helpless as antelopes caught in a net. The LORD has poured out his fury; God has rebuked them.

²¹ But now listen to this, you afflicted ones, who sit in a drunken stupor, though not from drinking wine.

²² This is what the Sovereign LORD, your God and Defender, says: "See, I am taking the terrible cup from your hands. You will drink no more of my fury. It is gone at last!

²³ But I will put that cup into the hands of those who tormented you. I will give it to those who trampled you into the dust and walked on your backs."

52 ¹ Wake up, wake up, O Zion!
Clothe yourselves with strength.
Put on your beautiful clothes, O holy city

of Jerusalem, for unclean and godless people will no longer enter your gates.

² Rise from the dust, O Jerusalem.

Remove the slave bands from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

³ For this is what the LORD says: "When I sold you into exile, I received no payment. Now I can redeem you without paying for you."

⁴ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "Long ago my people went to live as resident foreigners in Egypt. Now they have been oppressed without cause by Assyria.

⁵ And now, what is this?" asks the LORD. "Why are my people enslaved again? Those who rule them shout in exultation. My name is being blasphemed all day long.

⁶ But I will reveal my name to my people, and they will come to know its

power. Then at last they will recognize that it is I who speaks to them."

⁷ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!

⁸ The watchmen shout and sing with joy, for before their very eyes they see the LORD bringing his people home to Jerusalem.

⁹ Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song, for the LORD has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰ The LORD will demonstrate his holy power before the eyes of all the nations. The ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

¹¹ Go now, leave your bonds and slavery. Put Babylon behind you, with everything it represents, for it is unclean to you. You are the LORD's holy people.

Purify yourselves, you who carry home the vessels of the LORD.

¹² You will not leave in a hurry, running for your lives. For the LORD will go ahead of you, and the God of Israel will protect you from behind.

¹³ See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted.

¹⁴ Many were amazed when they saw him —beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know he was a person.

¹⁵ And he will again startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not previously been told about; they will understand what they had not heard about.

53 ¹ Who has believed our message?
To whom will the LORD reveal his saving power?

² My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

³ He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care.

⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins!

⁵ But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!

⁶ All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our

own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

⁸ From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realized that he was dying for their sins—that he was suffering their punishment?

⁹ He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

¹⁰ But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's plan will prosper in his hands.

¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of what he has experienced, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

¹² I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among those who were sinners. He bore the sins of many and interceded for sinners.

54 ¹ "Sing, O childless woman! Break forth into loud and joyful song, O Jerusalem, even though you never gave birth to a child. For the woman who could bear no children now has more than all the other women," says the LORD.

² "Enlarge your house; build an addition; spread out your home!

³ For you will soon be bursting at the seams. Your descendants will take over other nations and live in their cities.

⁴ "Fear not; you will no longer live in shame. The shame of your youth and the sorrows of widowhood will be remembered no more,

⁵ for your Creator will be your husband. The LORD Almighty is his name! He is your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth.

⁶ For the LORD has called you back from your grief—as though you were a young wife abandoned by her husband," says your God.

⁷ "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will take you back.

⁸ In a moment of anger I turned my face away for a little while. But with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer.

⁹ "Just as I swore in the time of Noah that I would never again let a flood cover the earth and destroy its life, so now I swear that I will never again pour out my anger on you.

¹⁰ For the mountains may depart and the hills disappear, but even then I will remain loyal to you. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

¹¹ "O storm-battered city, troubled and desolate! I will rebuild you on a foundation of sapphires and make the walls of your houses from precious jewels.

¹² I will make your towers of sparkling rubies and your gates and walls of shining gems.

¹³ I will teach all your citizens, and their prosperity will be great.

¹⁴ You will live under a government that is just and fair. Your enemies will stay far

away; you will live in peace. Terror will not come near.

¹⁵ If any nation comes to fight you, it will not be because I sent them to punish you. Your enemies will always be defeated because I am on your side.

¹⁶ I have created the blacksmith who fans the coals beneath the forge and makes the weapons of destruction. And I have created the armies that destroy.

¹⁷ But in that coming day, no weapon turned against you will succeed. And everyone who tells lies in court will be brought to justice. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the LORD; their vindication will come from me. I, the LORD, have spoken!

55 ¹ "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free!

² Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul!

³ "Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. I am ready to make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the mercies and unfailing love that I promised to David.

⁴ He displayed my power by being my witness and a leader among the nations.

⁵ You also will command the nations, and they will come running to obey, because I, the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious."

⁶ Seek the LORD while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.

⁷ Let the people turn from their wicked deeds. Let them banish from their minds the very thought of doing wrong! Let

them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

¹⁰ "The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry.

¹¹ It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.

¹² You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song,

and the trees of the field will clap their hands!

¹³ Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great honor to the LORD's name; it will be an everlasting sign of his power and love.

56 ¹ "Be just and fair to all," says the LORD. "Do what is right and good, for I am coming soon to rescue you.

² Blessed are those who are careful to do this. Blessed are those who honor my Sabbath days of rest by refusing to work. And blessed are those who keep themselves from doing wrong.

³ "And my blessings are for Gentiles, too, when they commit themselves to the LORD. Do not let them think that I consider them second-class citizens. And my blessings are also for

the eunuchs. They are as much mine as anyone else.

⁴ For I say this to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbath days holy, who choose to do what pleases me and commit their lives to me:

⁵ I will give them—in my house, within my walls—a memorial and a name far greater than the honor they would have received by having sons and daughters. For the name I give them is an everlasting one. It will never disappear!

⁶ "I will also bless the Gentiles who commit themselves to the LORD and serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who have accepted his covenant.

⁷ I will bring them also to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and will fill them with joy in my house of prayer. I will accept their burnt offerings and

sacrifices, because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

⁸ For the Sovereign LORD, who brings back the outcasts of Israel, says: I will bring others, too, besides my people Israel."

⁹ Come, wild animals of the field! Come, wild animals of the forest! Come and devour my people!

¹⁰ For the leaders of my people—the LORD's watchmen, his shepherds—are blind to every danger. They are like silent watchdogs that give no warning when danger comes. They love to lie around, sleeping and dreaming.

¹¹ And they are as greedy as dogs, never satisfied. They are stupid shepherds, all following their own path, all of them intent on personal gain.

¹² "Come," they say. "We will get some wine and have a party. Let's all get drunk.

Let this go on and on, and tomorrow will be even better."

57 ¹ The righteous pass away; the godly often die before their time. And no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come.

² For the godly who die will rest in peace.

³ "But you—come here, you witches' children, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes!

⁴ Whom do you mock, making faces and sticking out your tongues? You children of sinners and liars!

⁵ You worship your idols with great passion beneath every green tree. You slaughter your children as human sacrifices down in the valleys, under overhanging rocks.

⁶ Your gods are the smooth stones in the valleys. You worship them with drink offerings and grain offerings. They, not I, are your inheritance. Does all this make me happy?

⁷ You have committed adultery on the mountaintops by worshiping idols there, and so you have been unfaithful to me.

⁸ Behind closed doors, you have set up your idols and worship them instead of me. This is adultery, for you are loving these idols instead of loving me. You have climbed right into bed with these detestable gods.

⁹ You have given olive oil and perfume to Molech as your gift. You have traveled far, even into the world of the dead, to find new gods to love.

¹⁰ You grew weary in your search, but you never gave up. You strengthened yourself and went on.

¹¹ Why were you more afraid of them than of me? How is it that you don't even remember me or think about me? Is it because I have not corrected you that you have no fear of me?

¹² "Now I will expose your so-called good deeds that you consider so righteous. None of them will benefit or save you.

¹³ Let's see if your idols can do anything for you when you cry to them for help. They are so helpless that a breath of wind can knock them down! But whoever trusts in me will possess the land and inherit my holy mountain.

¹⁴ I will say, 'Rebuild the road! Clear away the rocks and stones so my people can return from captivity.'"

¹⁵ The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, the Holy One, says this: "I live in that high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble.

I refresh the humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts.

¹⁶ For I will not fight against you forever; I will not always show my anger. If I did, all people would pass away—all the souls I have made.

¹⁷ I was angry and punished these greedy people. I withdrew myself from them, but they went right on sinning.

¹⁸ I have seen what they do, but I will heal them anyway! I will lead them and comfort those who mourn.

¹⁹ Then words of praise will be on their lips. May they have peace, both near and far, for I will heal them all," says the LORD.

²⁰ "But those who still reject me are like the restless sea. It is never still but continually churns up mire and dirt.

²¹ There is no peace for the wicked," says my God.

58 ¹ "Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Tell my people Israel of their sins!

² Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to hear my laws. You would almost think this was a righteous nation that would never abandon its God. They love to make a show of coming to me and asking me to take action on their behalf.

³ 'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have done much penance, and you don't even notice it!' "I will tell you why! It's because you are living for yourselves even while you are fasting. You keep right on oppressing your workers.

⁴ What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me.

⁵ You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like a blade of grass in the wind. You dress in sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD?

⁶ "No, the kind of fasting I want calls you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned and to stop oppressing those who work for you. Treat them fairly and give them what they earn.

⁷ I want you to share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

⁸ "If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will come quickly. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind.

⁹ Then when you call, the LORD will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply. "Stop oppressing the helpless and stop making false accusations and spreading vicious rumors!

¹⁰ Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as day.

¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, watering your life when you are dry and keeping you healthy, too. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.

¹² Your children will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as the people who rebuild their walls and cities.

¹³ "Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the LORD's holy day.

Honor the LORD in everything you do, and don't follow your own desires or talk idly. If you do this,

¹⁴ the LORD will be your delight. I will give you great honor and give you your full share of the inheritance I promised to Jacob, your ancestor. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

59 ¹ Listen! The LORD is not too weak to save you, and he is not becoming deaf. He can hear you when you call.

² But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

³ Your hands are the hands of murderers, and your fingers are filthy with sin. Your mouth is full of lies, and your lips are tainted with corruption.

⁴ No one cares about being fair and honest. Their lawsuits are based on lies.

They spend their time plotting evil deeds and then doing them.

⁵ They spend their time and energy spinning evil plans that end up in deadly actions.

⁶ They cheat and shortchange everyone. Nothing they do is productive; all their activity is filled with sin. Violence is their trademark.

⁷ Their feet run to do evil, and they rush to commit murder. They think only about sinning. Wherever they go, misery and destruction follow them.

⁸ They do not know what true peace is or what it means to be just and good. They continually do wrong, and those who follow them cannot experience a moment's peace.

⁹ It is because of all this evil that deliverance is far from us. That is why God doesn't punish those who injure us. No wonder we are in darkness when

we expected light. No wonder we are walking in the gloom.

¹⁰ No wonder we grope like blind people and stumble along. Even at brightest noontime, we fall down as though it were dark. No wonder we are like corpses when compared to vigorous young men!

¹¹ We growl like hungry bears; we moan like mournful doves. We look for justice, but it is nowhere to be found. We look to be rescued, but it is far away from us.

¹² For our sins are piled up before God and testify against us. Yes, we know what sinners we are.

¹³ We know that we have rebelled against the LORD. We have turned our backs on God. We know how unfair and oppressive we have been, carefully planning our deceitful lies.

¹⁴ Our courts oppose people who are righteous, and justice is nowhere to be

found. Truth falls dead in the streets, and fairness has been outlawed.

¹⁵ Yes, truth is gone, and anyone who tries to live a godly life is soon attacked. The LORD looked and was displeased to find that there was no justice.

¹⁶ He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his mighty power and justice.

¹⁷ He put on righteousness as his body armor and placed the helmet of salvation on his head. He clothed himself with the robes of vengeance and godly fury.

¹⁸ He will repay his enemies for their evil deeds. His fury will fall on his foes in distant lands.

¹⁹ Then at last they will respect and glorify the name of the LORD throughout the world. For he will come like a flood tide driven by the breath of the LORD.

²⁰ "The Redeemer will come to Jerusalem," says the LORD, "to buy back those in Israel who have turned from their sins.

²¹ And this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit will not leave them, and neither will these words I have given you. They will be on your lips and on the lips of your children and your children's children forever. I, the LORD, have spoken!

60 ¹ "Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light shine for all the nations to see! For the glory of the LORD is shining upon you.

² Darkness as black as night will cover all the nations of the earth, but the glory of the LORD will shine over you.

³ All nations will come to your light. Mighty kings will come to see your radiance.

⁴ "Look and see, for everyone is coming home! Your sons are coming from distant lands; your little daughters will be carried home.

⁵ Your eyes will shine, and your hearts will thrill with joy, for merchants from around the world will come to you. They will bring you the wealth of many lands.

⁶ Vast caravans of camels will converge on you, the camels of Midian and Ephah. From Sheba they will bring gold and incense for the worship of the LORD.

⁷ The flocks of Kedar will be given to you, and the rams of Nebaioth will be brought for my altars. In that day I will make my Temple glorious.

⁸ "And what do I see flying like clouds to Israel, like doves to their nests?

⁹ They are the ships of Tarshish, reserved to bring the people of Israel home. They will bring their wealth with them, and it will bring great honor to the

LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he will fill you with splendor.

¹⁰ "Foreigners will come to rebuild your cities. Kings and rulers will send you aid. For though I have destroyed you in my anger, I will have mercy on you through my grace.

¹¹ Your gates will stay open around the clock to receive the wealth of many lands. The kings of the world will be led as captives in a victory procession.

¹² For the nations that refuse to be your allies will be destroyed.

¹³ The glory of Lebanon will be yours—the forests of cypress, fir, and pine—to beautify my sanctuary. My Temple will be glorious!

¹⁴ "The children of your tormentors will come and bow before you. Those who despised you will kiss your feet. They will call you the City of the LORD, and Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵ "Though you were once despised and hated and rebuffed by all, you will be beautiful forever. You will be a joy to all generations, for I will make you so.

¹⁶ Powerful kings and mighty nations will bring the best of their goods to satisfy your every need. You will know at last that I, the LORD, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.

¹⁷ I will exchange your bronze for gold, your iron for silver, your wood for bronze, and your stones for iron. Peace and righteousness will be your leaders!

¹⁸ Violence will disappear from your land; the desolation and destruction of war will end. Salvation will surround you like city walls, and praise will be on the lips of all who enter there.

¹⁹ "No longer will you need the sun or moon to give you light, for the LORD your God will be your everlasting light, and he will be your glory.

²⁰ The sun will never set; the moon will not go down. For the LORD will be your everlasting light. Your days of mourning will come to an end.

²¹ All your people will be righteous. They will possess their land forever, for I will plant them there with my own hands in order to bring myself glory.

²² The smallest family will multiply into a large clan. The tiniest group will become a mighty nation. I, the LORD, will bring it all to pass at the right time."

61 ¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.

² He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD's favor

has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.

³ To all who mourn in Israel, he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair. For the LORD has planted them like strong and graceful oaks for his own glory.

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities long ago destroyed. They will revive them, though they have been empty for many generations.

⁵ Foreigners will be your servants. They will feed your flocks and plow your fields and tend your vineyards.

⁶ You will be called priests of the LORD, ministers of our God. You will be fed with the treasures of the nations and will boast in their riches.

⁷ Instead of shame and dishonor, you will inherit a double portion of prosperity and everlasting joy.

⁸ "For I, the LORD, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹ Their descendants will be known and honored among the nations. Everyone will realize that they are a people the LORD has blessed."

¹⁰ I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels.

¹¹ The Sovereign LORD will show his justice to the nations of the world. Everyone will praise him! His righteousness will be like a garden in early spring, filled with young plants springing up everywhere.

62 ¹ Because I love Zion, because my heart yearns for Jerusalem, I cannot remain silent. I will not stop praying for her until her righteousness shines like the dawn, and her salvation blazes like a burning torch.

² The nations will see your righteousness. Kings will be blinded by your glory. And the LORD will give you a new name.

³ The LORD will hold you in his hands for all to see—a splendid crown in the hands of God.

⁴ Never again will you be called the Godforsaken City or the Desolate Land. Your new name will be the City of God's Delight and the Bride of God, for the LORD delights in you and will claim you as his own.

⁵ Your children will care for you with joy, O Jerusalem, just as a young man cares for his bride. Then God will rejoice

over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.

⁶ O Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen on your walls; they will pray to the LORD day and night for the fulfillment of his promises. Take no rest, all you who pray.

⁷ Give the LORD no rest until he makes Jerusalem the object of praise throughout the earth.

⁸ The LORD has sworn to Jerusalem by his own strength: "I will never again hand you over to your enemies. Never again will foreign warriors come and take away your grain and wine.

⁹ You raised it, and you will keep it, praising the LORD. Within the courtyards of the Temple, you yourselves will drink the wine that you have pressed."

¹⁰ Go out! Prepare the highway for my people to return! Smooth out the road; pull out the boulders; raise a flag for all the nations to see.

¹¹ The LORD has sent this message to every land: "Tell the people of Israel, 'Look, your Savior is coming. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes.'"

¹² They will be called the Holy People and the People Redeemed by the LORD. And Jerusalem will be known as the Desirable Place and the City No Longer Forsaken.

63 ¹ Who is this who comes from Edom, from the city of Bozrah, with his clothing stained red? Who is this in royal robes, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, the LORD, announcing your salvation! It is I, the LORD, who is mighty to save!"

² Why are your clothes so red, as if you have been treading out grapes?

³ "I have trodden the winepress alone; no one was there to help me. In my anger I have trampled my enemies as if they were grapes. In my fury I have

trampled my foes. It is their blood that has stained my clothes.

⁴ For the time has come for me to avenge my people, to ransom them from their oppressors.

⁵ I looked, but no one came to help my people. I was amazed and appalled at what I saw. So I executed vengeance alone; unaided, I passed down judgment.

⁶ I crushed the nations in my anger and made them stagger and fall to the ground."

⁷ I will tell of the LORD's unfailing love. I will praise the LORD for all he has done. I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel, which he has granted according to his mercy and love.

⁸ He said, "They are my very own people. Surely they will not be false again." And he became their Savior.

⁹ In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his

love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years.

¹⁰ But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit. That is why he became their enemy and fought against them.

¹¹ Then they remembered those days of old when Moses led his people out of Egypt. They cried out, "Where is the one who brought Israel through the sea, with Moses as their shepherd? Where is the one who sent his Holy Spirit to be among his people?"

¹² Where is the one whose power divided the sea before them, when Moses lifted up his hand, establishing his reputation forever?

¹³ Where is the one who led them through the bottom of the sea? They were like fine stallions racing through the desert, never stumbling.

¹⁴ As with cattle going down into a peaceful valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. You led your people, LORD, and gained a magnificent reputation."

¹⁵ LORD, look down from heaven and see us from your holy, glorious home. Where is the passion and the might you used to show on our behalf? Where are your mercy and compassion now?

¹⁶ Surely you are still our Father! Even if Abraham and Jacob would disown us, LORD, you would still be our Father. You are our Redeemer from ages past.

¹⁷ LORD, why have you allowed us to turn from your path? Why have you given us stubborn hearts so we no longer fear you? Return and help us, for we are your servants and your special possession.

¹⁸ How briefly your holy people possessed the holy place, and now our enemies have destroyed it.

¹⁹ LORD, why do you treat us as though we never belonged to you? Why do you act as though we had never been known as your people?

64 ¹ Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in your presence!

² As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, your coming would make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame!

³ When you came down long ago, you did awesome things beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked!

⁴ For since the world began, no ear has heard, and no eye has seen a God like

you, who works for those who wait for him!

⁵ You welcome those who cheerfully do good, who follow godly ways. But we are not godly. We are constant sinners, so your anger is heavy on us. How can people like us be saved?

⁶ We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away.

⁷ Yet no one calls on your name or pleads with you for mercy. Therefore, you have turned away from us and turned us over to our sins.

⁸ And yet, LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We are all formed by your hand.

⁹ Oh, don't be so angry with us, LORD. Please don't remember our sins forever.

Look at us, we pray, and see that we are all your people.

¹⁰ Your holy cities are destroyed; even Jerusalem is a desolate wilderness.

¹¹ The holy, beautiful Temple where our ancestors praised you has been burned down, and all the things of beauty are destroyed.

¹² After all this, LORD, must you still refuse to help us? Will you continue to be silent and punish us?

65 ¹ The LORD says, "People who never before inquired about me are now asking about me. I am being found by people who were not looking for me. To them I have said, 'I am here!'

² "I opened my arms to my own people all day long, but they have rebelled. They follow their own evil paths and thoughts.

³ All day long they insult me to my face by worshiping idols in their sacred

gardens. They burn incense on the rooftops of their homes.

⁴ At night they go out among the graves and secret places to worship evil spirits. They also eat pork and other forbidden foods.

⁵ Yet they say to each other, 'Don't come too close or you will defile me! I am holier than you!' They are a stench in my nostrils, an acrid smell that never goes away.

⁶ "Look, my decree is written out in front of me: I will not stand silent; I will repay them in full! Yes, I will repay them—

⁷ both for their own sins and for those of their ancestors," says the LORD.

"For they also burned incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. I will pay them back in full!

⁸ "But I will not destroy them all," says the LORD. "For just as good grapes are

found among a cluster of bad ones (and someone will say, 'Don't throw them all away—there are some good grapes there!'), so I will not destroy all Israel. For I still have true servants there.

⁹ I will preserve a remnant of the people of Israel and of Judah to possess my land. Those I choose will inherit it and serve me there.

¹⁰ For my people who have searched for me, the plain of Sharon will again be filled with flocks, and the valley of Achor will be a place to pasture herds.

¹¹ "But because the rest of you have forsaken the LORD and his Temple and worship the gods of Fate and Destiny,

¹² I will 'destine' you to the sword. All of you will bow before the executioner, for when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned—before my very

eyes—and chose to do what you know I despise."

¹³ Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "You will starve, but my servants will eat. You will be thirsty, but they will drink. You will be sad and ashamed, but they will rejoice.

¹⁴ You will cry in sorrow and despair, while my servants sing for joy.

¹⁵ Your name will be a curse word among my people, for the Sovereign LORD will destroy you and call his true servants by another name.

¹⁶ All who invoke a blessing or take an oath will do so by the God of truth. For I will put aside my anger and forget the evil of earlier days.

¹⁷ "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth—so wonderful that no one will even think about the old ones anymore.

¹⁸ Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy.

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more.

²⁰ "No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only sinners will die that young!

²¹ In those days, people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards.

²² It will not be like the past, when invaders took the houses and confiscated the vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees and will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains.

²³ They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the LORD, and their children, too, will be blessed.

²⁴ I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking to me about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers!

²⁵ The wolf and lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like the ox. Poisonous snakes will strike no more. In those days, no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

66 ¹ This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you ever build me a temple as good as that? Could you build a dwelling place for me?

² My hands have made both heaven and earth, and they are mine. I, the

LORD, have spoken! "I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word.

³ But those who choose their own ways, delighting in their sins, are cursed. Their offerings will not be accepted. When such people sacrifice an ox, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb or bring an offering of grain, it is as bad as putting a dog or the blood of a pig on the altar! When they burn incense, it is as if they had blessed an idol.

⁴ I will send great troubles against them—all the things they feared. For when I called, they did not answer. When I spoke, they did not listen. They deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what they know I despise."

⁵ Hear this message from the LORD, and tremble at his words: "Your close

relatives hate you and throw you out for being loyal to my name. 'Let the LORD be honored!' they scoff. 'Be joyful in him!' But they will be put to shame.

⁶ What is all the commotion in the city? What is that terrible noise from the Temple? It is the voice of the LORD taking vengeance against his enemies.

⁷ "Before the birth pains even begin, Jerusalem gives birth to a son.

⁸ Who has ever seen or heard of anything as strange as this? Has a nation ever been born in a single day? Has a country ever come forth in a mere moment? But by the time Jerusalem's birth pains begin, the baby will be born; the nation will come forth.

⁹ Would I ever bring this nation to the point of birth and then not deliver it?" asks the LORD. "No! I would never keep this nation from being born," says your God.

¹⁰ "Rejoice with Jerusalem! Be glad with her, all you who love her and mourn for her.

¹¹ Delight in Jerusalem! Drink deeply of her glory even as an infant drinks at its mother's generous breasts.

¹² Peace and prosperity will overflow Jerusalem like a river," says the LORD. "The wealth of the nations will flow to her. Her children will be nursed at her breasts, carried in her arms, and treated with love.

¹³ I will comfort you there as a child is comforted by its mother."

¹⁴ When you see these things, your heart will rejoice. Vigorous health will be yours! Everyone will see the good hand of the LORD on his people—and his anger against his enemies.

¹⁵ See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his swift chariots of destruction roar like a whirlwind. He will bring

punishment with the fury of his anger and the flaming fire of his hot rebuke.

¹⁶ The LORD will punish the world by fire and by his sword, and many will be killed by the LORD.

¹⁷ "Those who 'purify' themselves in a sacred garden, feasting on pork and rats and other forbidden meats, will come to a terrible end," says the LORD.

¹⁸ "I can see what they are doing, and I know what they are thinking. So I will gather all nations and peoples together, and they will see my glory.

¹⁹ I will perform a sign among them. And I will send those who survive to be messengers to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (who are famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to all the lands beyond the sea that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. There they will declare my glory to the nations.

²⁰ They will bring the remnant of your people back from every nation. They will bring them to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD. They will ride on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the LORD.

²¹ "And I will appoint some of those who return to be my priests and Levites. I, the LORD, have spoken!

²² "As surely as my new heavens and earth will remain, so will you always be my people, with a name that will never disappear," says the LORD.

²³ "All humanity will come to worship me from week to week and from month to month.

²⁴ And as they go out, they will see the dead bodies of those who have rebelled against me. For the worms that devour them will never die, and the fire that burns them will never go out. All

who pass by will view them with utter horror."

Jeremiah

1 ¹ These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests from Anathoth, a town in the land of Benjamin.

² The LORD first gave messages to Jeremiah during the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign in Judah.

³ He continued to give messages throughout the reign of Josiah's son, King Jehoiakim, until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah's reign in Judah. In August of that year, the people of Jerusalem were taken away as captives.

⁴ The LORD gave me a message. He said,

⁵ "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were

born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world."

⁶ "O Sovereign LORD," I said, "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!"

⁷ "Don't say that," the LORD replied, "for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you.

⁸ And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and take care of you. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

⁹ Then the LORD touched my mouth and said, "See, I have put my words in your mouth!

¹⁰ Today I appoint you to stand up against nations and kingdoms. You are to uproot some and tear them down, to destroy and overthrow them. You are to build others up and plant them."

¹¹ Then the LORD said to me, "Look, Jeremiah! What do you see?" And I replied, "I see a branch from an almond tree."

¹² And the LORD said, "That's right, and it means that I am watching, and I will surely carry out my threats of punishment."

¹³ Then the LORD spoke to me again and asked, "What do you see now?" And I replied, "I see a pot of boiling water, tipping from the north."

¹⁴ "Yes," the LORD said, "for terror from the north will boil out on the people of this land.

¹⁵ Listen! I am calling the armies of the kingdoms of the north to come to Jerusalem. They will set their thrones at the gates of the city. They will attack its walls and all the other towns of Judah.

¹⁶ I will pronounce judgment on my people for all their evil—for deserting me and worshiping other gods. Yes, they worship idols that they themselves have made!

¹⁷ "Get up and get dressed. Go out, and tell them whatever I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them, or I will make you look foolish in front of them.

¹⁸ For see, today I have made you immune to their attacks. You are strong like a fortified city that cannot be captured, like an iron pillar or a bronze wall. None of the kings, officials, priests, or people of Judah will be able to stand against you.

¹⁹ They will try, but they will fail. For I am with you, and I will take care of you. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

2 ¹ The LORD gave me another message. He said,

² "Go and shout in Jerusalem's streets: 'This is what the LORD says: I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness.

³ In those days Israel was holy to the LORD, the first of my children. All who harmed my people were considered guilty, and disaster fell upon them. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

⁴ Listen to the word of the LORD, people of Jacob—all you families of Israel!

⁵ This is what the LORD says: "What sin did your ancestors find in me that led them to stray so far? They worshiped foolish idols, only to become foolish themselves.

⁶ They did not ask, 'Where is the LORD who brought us safely out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness—a land of deserts and pits, of drought and death, where no one lives or even travels?'

⁷ "And when I brought you into a fruitful land to enjoy its bounty and goodness, you defiled my land and corrupted the inheritance I had promised you.

⁸ The priests did not ask, 'Where is the LORD?' The judges ignored me, the rulers turned against me, and the prophets spoke in the name of Baal, wasting their time on nonsense.

⁹ Therefore, I will bring my case against you and will keep on accusing you, even against your children's children in the years to come. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹⁰ "Go west to the land of Cyprus; go east to the land of Kedar. Think about what you see there. See if anyone has ever heard of anything as strange as this.

¹¹ Has any nation ever exchanged its gods for another god, even though its gods are nothing? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols!

¹² The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay, says the LORD.

¹³ For my people have done two evil things: They have forsaken me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!

¹⁴ "Why has Israel become a nation of slaves? Why has she been carried away as plunder?

¹⁵ Lions have roared against her. The land has been destroyed, and the cities are now in ruins. No one lives in them anymore.

¹⁶ Egyptians, marching from their cities of Memphis and Tahpanhes, have utterly destroyed Israel's glory and power.

¹⁷ And you have brought this on yourselves by rebelling against the LORD your God when he wanted to lead you and show you the way!

¹⁸ "What have you gained by your alliances with Egypt and Assyria? What

good to you are the waters of the Nile and the Euphrates?

¹⁹ Your own wickedness will punish you. You will see what an evil, bitter thing it is to forsake the LORD your God, having no fear of him. I, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!

²⁰ Long ago I broke your yoke and tore away the chains of your slavery, but still you would not obey me. On every hill and under every green tree, you have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols.

²¹ "How could this happen? When I planted you, I chose a vine of the purest stock—the very best. How did you grow into this corrupt wild vine?

²² No amount of soap or lye can make you clean. You are stained with guilt that cannot be washed away. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!

²³ "You say, 'That's not true! We haven't worshiped the images of Baal!' But how can you say that? Go and look in any valley in the land! Face the awful sins you have done. You are like a restless female camel, desperate for a male!

²⁴ You are like a wild donkey, sniffing the wind at mating time. Who can restrain your lust? Those who desire you do not even need to search, for you come running to them!

²⁵ Why do you refuse to turn from all this running after other gods? But you say, 'Don't waste your breath. I have fallen in love with these foreign gods, and I can't stop loving them now!'

²⁶ "Like a thief, Israel feels shame only when she gets caught. Kings, officials, priests, and prophets—all are alike in this.

²⁷ To an image carved from a piece of wood they say, 'You are my father.' To an

idol chiseled out of stone they say, 'You are my mother.' They turn their backs on me, but in times of trouble they cry out for me to save them!

²⁸ Why don't you call on these gods you have made? When danger comes, let them save you if they can! For you have as many gods as there are cities and towns in Judah.

²⁹ Why do you accuse me of doing wrong? You are the ones who have rebelled, says the LORD.

³⁰ I have punished your children, but it did them no good. They still refuse to obey. You yourselves have killed your prophets as a lion kills its prey.

³¹ "O my people, listen to the words of the LORD! Have I been like a desert to Israel? Have I been to them a land of darkness? Why then do my people say, 'At last we are free from God! We won't have anything to do with him anymore!'

³² Does a young woman forget her jewelry? Does a bride hide her wedding dress? No! Yet for years on end my people have forgotten me.

³³ "How you plot and scheme to win your lovers. The most experienced prostitute could learn from you!

³⁴ Your clothing is stained with the blood of the innocent and the poor. You killed them even though they didn't break into your houses!

³⁵ And yet you say, 'I haven't done anything wrong. Surely he isn't angry with me!' Now I will punish you severely because you claim you have not sinned.

³⁶ "First here, then there—you flit from one ally to another asking for help. But your new friends in Egypt will let you down, just as Assyria did before.

³⁷ In despair, you will be led into exile with your hands on your heads, for the

LORD has rejected the nations you trust. You will not succeed despite their help.

3¹ "If a man divorces a woman and she marries someone else, he is not to take her back again, for that would surely corrupt the land. But you have prostituted yourself with many lovers, says the LORD. Yet I am still calling you to come back to me.

² "Look all around you. Is there anywhere in the entire land where you have not been defiled by your adulteries? You sit like a prostitute beside the road waiting for a client. You sit alone like a nomad in the desert. You have polluted the land with your prostitution and wickedness.

³ That is why even the spring rains have failed. For you are a prostitute and are completely unashamed.

⁴ Yet you say to me, 'Father, you have been my guide since the days of my youth.

⁵ Surely you won't be angry about such a little thing! Surely you can forget it!' So you talk, and keep right on doing all the evil you can."

⁶ During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen what fickle Israel does? Like a wife who commits adultery, Israel has worshiped other gods on every hill and under every green tree.

⁷ I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me. But she did not come back. And though her faithless sister Judah saw this,

⁸ she paid no attention. She saw that I had divorced faithless Israel and sent her away. But now Judah, too, has left me and given herself to prostitution.

⁹ Israel treated it all so lightly—she thought nothing of committing adultery by worshiping idols made of wood and stone. So now the land has been greatly defiled.

¹⁰ But in spite of all this, her faithless sister Judah has never sincerely returned to me. She has only pretended to be sorry," says the LORD.

¹¹ Then the LORD said to me, "Even faithless Israel is less guilty than treacherous Judah!

¹² Therefore, go and say these words to Israel, 'This is what the LORD says: O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever.

¹³ Only acknowledge your guilt. Admit that you rebelled against the LORD your God and committed adultery against him by worshiping idols under every green

tree. Confess that you refused to follow me. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

¹⁴ "Return home, you wayward children," says the LORD, "for I am your husband. I will bring you again to the land of Israel—one from here and two from there, from wherever you are scattered.

¹⁵ And I will give you leaders after my own heart, who will guide you with knowledge and understanding.

¹⁶ "And when your land is once more filled with people," says the LORD, "you will no longer wish for 'the good old days' when you possessed the Ark of the LORD's covenant. Those days will not be missed or even thought about, and there will be no need to rebuild the Ark.

¹⁷ In that day Jerusalem will be known as The Throne of the LORD. All nations will come there to honor the LORD. They

will no longer stubbornly follow their own evil desires.

¹⁸ In those days the people of Judah and Israel will return together from exile in the north. They will return to the land I gave their ancestors as an inheritance forever.

¹⁹ "I thought to myself, 'I would love to treat you as my own children!' I wanted nothing more than to give you this beautiful land—the finest inheritance in the world. I looked forward to your calling me 'Father,' and I thought you would never turn away from me again.

²⁰ But you have betrayed me, you people of Israel! You have been like a faithless wife who leaves her husband," says the LORD.

²¹ Voices are heard high on the windswept mountains, the weeping and pleading of Israel's people. For they

have forgotten the LORD their God and wandered far from his ways.

²² "My wayward children," says the LORD, "come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts." "Yes, we will come," the people reply, "for you are the LORD our God.

²³ Our worship of idols and our religious orgies on the hills and mountains are completely false. Only in the LORD our God will Israel ever find salvation.

²⁴ From childhood we have watched as everything our ancestors worked for—their flocks and herds, their sons and daughters—was squandered on a delusion.

²⁵ Let us now lie down in shame and dishonor, for we and our ancestors have always sinned against the LORD our God. We have never obeyed him."

4 ¹ "O Israel, come back to me," says the LORD. "If you will throw away

your detestable idols and go astray no more,

² and if you will swear by my name alone, and begin to live good, honest lives and uphold justice, then you will be a blessing to the nations of the world, and all people will come and praise my name."

³ This is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: "Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! Do not waste your good seed among thorns.

⁴ Cleanse your minds and hearts before the LORD, or my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire because of all your sins.

⁵ "Shout to Jerusalem and to all Judah! Tell them to sound the alarm throughout the land: 'Run for your lives! Flee to the fortified cities!'

⁶ Send a signal toward Jerusalem: 'Flee now! Do not delay!' For I am bringing

terrible destruction upon you from the north."

⁷ A lion stalks from its den, a destroyer of nations. And it is headed for your land! Your towns will lie in ruins, empty of people.

⁸ So put on clothes of mourning and weep with broken hearts, for the fierce anger of the LORD is still upon us.

⁹ "In that day," says the LORD, "the king and the officials will tremble in fear. The priests and the prophets will be struck with horror."

¹⁰ Then I said, "O Sovereign LORD, the people have been deceived by what you said, for you promised peace for Jerusalem. Yet the sword is even now poised to strike them dead!"

¹¹ The time is coming when the LORD will say to the people of Jerusalem, "A burning wind is blowing in from the

desert. It is not a gentle breeze useful for winnowing grain.

¹² It is a roaring blast sent by me! Now I will pronounce your destruction!"

¹³ Our enemy rushes down on us like a storm wind! His chariots are like whirlwinds; his horses are swifter than eagles. How terrible it will be! Our destruction is sure!

¹⁴ O Jerusalem, cleanse your hearts that you may be saved. How long will you harbor your evil thoughts?

¹⁵ From Dan and the hill country of Ephraim, your destruction has been announced.

¹⁶ "Warn the surrounding nations and announce to Jerusalem: 'The enemy is coming from a distant land, raising a battle cry against the towns of Judah.

¹⁷ They surround Jerusalem like watchmen surrounding a field, for my

people have rebelled against me,'" says the LORD.

¹⁸ "Your own actions have brought this upon you. This punishment is a bitter dose of your own medicine. It has pierced you to the heart!"

¹⁹ My heart, my heart—I writhe in pain! My heart pounds within me! I cannot be still. For I have heard the blast of enemy trumpets and the roar of their battle cries.

²⁰ Waves of destruction roll over the land, until it lies in complete desolation. Suddenly, every tent is destroyed; in a moment, every shelter is crushed.

²¹ How long must this go on? How long must I be surrounded by war and death?

²² "My people are foolish and do not know me," says the LORD. "They are senseless children who have no understanding. They are clever enough

at doing wrong, but they have no talent at all for doing right!"

²³ I looked at the earth, and it was empty and formless. I looked at the heavens, and there was no light.

²⁴ I looked at the mountains and hills, and they trembled and shook.

²⁵ I looked, and all the people were gone. All the birds of the sky had flown away.

²⁶ I looked, and the fertile fields had become a wilderness. The cities lay in ruins, crushed by the LORD's fierce anger.

²⁷ This is what the LORD says: "The whole land will be ruined, but I will not destroy it completely.

²⁸ The earth will mourn, the heavens will be draped in black, because of my decree against my people. I have made up my mind and will not change it."

²⁹ At the noise of marching armies, the people flee in terror from the cities. They hide in the bushes and run for the mountains. All the cities have been abandoned—not a person remains!

³⁰ What are you doing, you who have been plundered? Why do you dress up in your most beautiful clothing and jewelry? Why do you brighten your eyes with mascara? It will do you no good! Your allies despise you and will kill you.

³¹ I hear a great cry, like that of a woman giving birth to her first child. It is the cry of Jerusalem's people gasping for breath, pleading for help, prostrate before their murderers.

5 ¹ "Run up and down every street in Jerusalem," says the LORD. "Look high and low; search throughout the city! If you can find even one person who is just and honest, I will not destroy the city."

² Even when they are under oath, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives,' they all tell lies!"

³ LORD, you are searching for honesty. You struck your people, but they paid no attention. You crushed them, but they refused to turn from sin. They are determined, with faces set like stone; they have refused to repent.

⁴ Then I said, "But what can we expect from the poor and ignorant? They don't know the ways of the LORD. They don't understand what God expects of them.

⁵ I will go and speak to their leaders. Surely they will know the LORD's ways and what God requires of them." But the leaders, too, had utterly rejected their God.

⁶ So now a lion from the forest will attack them; a wolf from the desert will pounce on them. A leopard will lurk near their towns, tearing apart any who

dare to venture out. For their rebellion is great, and their sins are many.

⁷ "How can I pardon you? For even your children have turned from me. They have sworn by gods that are not gods at all! I fed my people until they were fully satisfied. But they thanked me by committing adultery and lining up at the city's brothels.

⁸ They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife.

⁹ Should I not punish them for this?" asks the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself against a nation such as this?

¹⁰ "Go down the rows of the vineyards and destroy them, but leave a scattered few alive. Strip the branches from the vine, for they do not belong to the LORD.

¹¹ The people of Israel and Judah are full of treachery against me," says the LORD.

¹² "They have lied about the LORD and have said, 'He won't bother us! No disasters will come upon us! There will be no war or famine!

¹³ God's prophets are windbags full of words with no divine authority. Their predictions of disaster will fall on themselves!'"

¹⁴ Therefore, this is what the LORD God Almighty says: "Because the people are talking like this, I will give you messages that will burn them up as if they were kindling wood.

¹⁵ O Israel, I will bring a distant nation against you," says the LORD. "It is a mighty nation, an ancient nation, a people whose language you do not know, whose speech you cannot understand.

¹⁶ Their weapons are deadly; their warriors are mighty.

¹⁷ They will eat your harvests and your children's bread, your flocks of sheep and your herds of cattle. Yes, they will eat your grapes and figs. And they will destroy your fortified cities, which you think are so safe.

¹⁸ "Yet even in those days I will not blot you out completely," says the LORD.

¹⁹ "And when your people ask, 'Why is the LORD our God doing this to us?' you must reply, 'You rejected him and gave yourselves to foreign gods in your own land. Now you will serve foreigners in a land that is not your own.'

²⁰ "Make this announcement to Israel and to Judah:

²¹ Listen, you foolish and senseless people—who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear.

²² Do you have no respect for me? Why do you not tremble in my presence? I, the LORD, am the one who defines the

ocean's sandy shoreline, an everlasting boundary that the waters cannot cross. The waves may toss and roar, but they can never pass the bounds I set.

²³ "But my people have stubborn and rebellious hearts. They have turned against me and have chosen to practice idolatry.

²⁴ They do not say from the heart, 'Let us live in awe of the LORD our God, for he gives us rain each spring and fall, assuring us of plentiful harvests.'

²⁵ Your wickedness has deprived you of these wonderful blessings. Your sin has robbed you of all these good things.

²⁶ "Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait for victims like a hunter hiding in a blind. They are continually setting traps for other people.

²⁷ Like a cage filled with birds, their homes are filled with evil plots. And the result? Now they are great and rich.

²⁸ They are well fed and well groomed, and there is no limit to their wicked deeds. They refuse justice to orphans and deny the rights of the poor.

²⁹ Should I not punish them for this?" asks the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself against a nation such as this?"

³⁰ "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in this land—

³¹ the prophets give false prophecies, and the priests rule with an iron hand. And worse yet, my people like it that way! But what will you do when the end comes?

6 ¹ "Run for your lives, you people of Benjamin! Flee from Jerusalem! Sound the alarm in Tekoa! Send up a signal at Beth–hakerem! Warn everyone that a powerful army is coming from the north to destroy this nation.

² O Jerusalem, you are my beautiful and delicate daughter—but I will destroy you!

³ Enemy shepherds will surround you. They will set up camp around the city and divide your pastures for their flocks.

⁴ They shout, 'Prepare for battle and attack at noon! But now the day is fading, and the evening shadows are falling.

⁵ So let us attack by night and destroy her palaces!'"

⁶ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Cut down the trees for battering rams. Build ramps against the walls of Jerusalem. This is the city to be punished, for she is wicked through and through.

⁷ She spouts evil like a fountain! Her streets echo with the sounds of violence and destruction. Her sickness and sores are ever before me.

⁸ This is your last warning, Jerusalem! If you do not listen, I will empty the land."

⁹ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Disaster will fall upon you. Even the few who remain in Israel will be gleaned again, as when a harvester checks each vine a second time to pick the grapes that were missed."

¹⁰ To whom can I give warning? Who will listen when I speak? Their ears are closed, and they cannot hear. They scorn the word of the LORD. They don't want to listen at all.

¹¹ So now I am filled with the LORD's fury. Yes, I am weary of holding it in! "I will pour out my fury over Jerusalem, even on children playing in the streets, on gatherings of young men, and on husbands and wives and grandparents.

¹² Their homes will be turned over to their enemies, and so will their fields

and their wives. For I will punish the people of this land," says the LORD.

¹³ "From the least to the greatest, they trick others to get what does not belong to them. Yes, even my prophets and priests are like that!

¹⁴ They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when all is war.

¹⁵ Are they ashamed when they do these disgusting things? No, not at all—they don't even blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered. They will be humbled beneath my punishing anger," says the LORD.

¹⁶ So now the LORD says, "Stop right where you are! Look for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, 'No, that's not the road we want!'

¹⁷ I set watchmen over you who said, 'Listen for the sound of the trumpet!'

But you replied, 'No! We won't pay attention!'

¹⁸ "Therefore, listen to this, all you nations. Take note of my people's condition.

¹⁹ Listen, all the earth! I will bring disaster upon my people. It is the fruit of their own sin because they refuse to listen to me. They have rejected all my instructions.

²⁰ There is no use now in offering me sweet incense from Sheba. Keep your expensive perfumes! I cannot accept your burnt offerings. Your sacrifices have no sweet fragrance for me."

²¹ Therefore, this is what the LORD says: "I will put obstacles in my people's path. Fathers and sons will both fall over them. Neighbors and friends will collapse together."

²² This is what the LORD says: "See a great army marching from the north! A

great nation is rising against you from far-off lands.

²³ They are fully armed for slaughter. They are cruel and show no mercy. As they ride forward, the noise of their army is like a roaring sea. They are marching in battle formation to destroy you, Jerusalem."

²⁴ We have heard reports about the enemy, and we are weak with fright. Fear and pain have gripped us, like that of a woman about to give birth.

²⁵ Don't go out to the fields! Don't travel the roads! The enemy is everywhere, and they are ready to kill. We are terrorized at every turn!

²⁶ Now my people, dress yourselves in sackcloth, and sit among the ashes. Mourn and weep bitterly, as for the loss of an only son. For suddenly, the destroying armies will be upon you!

²⁷ "Jeremiah, I have made you a tester of metals, that you may determine the quality of my people.

²⁸ Are they not the worst of rebels, full of slander? They are as insolent as bronze, as hard and cruel as iron. All of them lead others into corruption.

²⁹ The bellows blow fiercely. The refining fire grows hotter. But it will never purify and cleanse them because there is no purity in them to refine.

³⁰ I will label them 'Rejected Silver' because I, the LORD, am discarding them."

7 ¹ The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said,

² "Go to the entrance of the LORD's Temple, and give this message to the people: 'O Judah, listen to this message from the LORD! Listen to it, all of you who worship here!

³ The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Even now, if you quit your evil ways, I will let you stay in your own land.

⁴ But do not be fooled by those who repeatedly promise your safety because the Temple of the LORD is here.

⁵ I will be merciful only if you stop your wicked thoughts and deeds and are fair to others;

⁶ and if you stop exploiting foreigners, orphans, and widows; and if you stop your murdering; and if you stop worshiping idols as you now do to your own harm.

⁷ Then I will let you stay in this land that I gave to your ancestors to keep forever.

⁸ "Do you think that because the Temple is here you will never suffer? Don't fool yourselves!

⁹ Do you really think you can steal, murder, commit adultery, lie, and

worship Baal and all those other new gods of yours,

¹⁰ and then come here and stand before me in my Temple and chant, "We are safe!"—only to go right back to all those evils again?

¹¹ Do you think this Temple, which honors my name, is a den of thieves? I see all the evil going on there, says the LORD.

¹² "Go to the place at Shiloh where I once put the Tabernacle to honor my name. See what I did there because of all the wickedness of my people, the Israelites.

¹³ While you were doing these wicked things, says the LORD, I spoke to you about it repeatedly, but you would not listen. I called out to you, but you refused to answer.

¹⁴ So just as I destroyed Shiloh, I will now destroy this Temple that was built

to honor my name, this Temple that you trust for help, this place that I gave to you and your ancestors.

¹⁵ And I will send you into exile, just as I did your relatives, the people of Israel.'

¹⁶ "Pray no more for these people, Jeremiah. Do not weep or pray for them, and don't beg me to help them, for I will not listen to you.

¹⁷ Do you not see what they are doing throughout the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁸ No wonder I am so angry! Watch how the children gather wood and the fathers build sacrificial fires. See how the women knead dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. And they give drink offerings to their other idol gods!

¹⁹ Am I the one they are hurting?" asks the LORD. "Most of all, they hurt themselves, to their own shame."

²⁰ So the Sovereign LORD says: "I will pour out my terrible fury on this place. Its people, animals, trees, and crops will be consumed by the unquenchable fire of my anger."

²¹ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Away with your burnt offerings and sacrifices! Eat them yourselves!

²² When I led your ancestors out of Egypt, it was not burnt offerings and sacrifices I wanted from them.

²³ This is what I told them: 'Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Only do as I say, and all will be well!'

²⁴ "But my people would not listen to me. They kept on doing whatever they wanted, following the stubborn desires of their evil hearts. They went backward instead of forward.

²⁵ From the day your ancestors left Egypt until now, I have continued to send my prophets—day in and day out.

²⁶ But my people have not listened to me or even tried to hear. They have been stubborn and sinful—even worse than their ancestors.

²⁷ "Tell them all this, but do not expect them to listen. Shout out your warnings, but do not expect them to respond.

²⁸ Say to them, 'This is the nation whose people will not obey the LORD their God and who refuse to be taught. Truth has vanished from among them; it is no longer heard on their lips.

²⁹ O Jerusalem, shave your head in mourning, and weep alone on the mountains. For the LORD has rejected and forsaken this generation that has provoked his fury.'

³⁰ "The people of Judah have sinned before my very eyes," says the LORD.

"They have set up their abominable idols right in my own Temple, defiling it.

³¹ They have built the pagan shrines of Topheth in the valley of the son of Hinnom, where they sacrifice their little sons and daughters in the fire. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing!

³² So beware, for the time is coming," says the LORD, "when that place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. They will bury so many bodies in Topheth that there won't be room for all the graves.

³³ The corpses of my people will be food for the vultures and wild animals, and no one will be left to scare them away.

³⁴ I will put an end to the happy singing and laughter in the streets of Jerusalem.

The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard in the towns of Judah. The land will lie in complete desolation.

8¹ "In that day," says the LORD, "the enemy will break open the graves of the kings and officials of Judah, and the graves of the priests, prophets, and common people.

² They will dig out their bones and spread them out on the ground before the sun, moon, and stars—the gods my people have loved, served, and worshiped. Their bones will not be gathered up again or buried but will be scattered on the ground like dung.

³ And the people of this evil nation who survive will wish to die rather than live where I will send them. I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!

⁴ "Jeremiah, say to the people, 'This is what the LORD says: When people fall

down, don't they get up again? When they start down the wrong road and discover their mistake, don't they turn back?

⁵ Then why do these people keep going along their self-destructive path, refusing to turn back, even though I have warned them?

⁶ I listen to their conversations, and what do I hear? Is anyone sorry for sin? Does anyone say, "What a terrible thing I have done"? No! All are running down the path of sin as swiftly as a horse rushing into battle!

⁷ The stork knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know what the LORD requires of them.

⁸ "How can you say, "We are wise because we have the law of the LORD,"

when your teachers have twisted it so badly?

⁹ These wise teachers will be shamed by exile for their sin, for they have rejected the word of the LORD. Are they so wise after all?

¹⁰ I will give their wives and their farms to others. From the least to the greatest, they trick others to get what does not belong to them. Yes, even my prophets and priests are like that.

¹¹ They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when all is war.

¹² Are they ashamed when they do these disgusting things? No, not at all—they don't even blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered. They will be humbled when they are punished, says the LORD.

¹³ I will take away their rich harvests of figs and grapes. Their fruit trees will

all die. All the good things I prepared for them will soon be gone. I, the LORD, have spoken!’

¹⁴ "Then the people will say, ‘Why should we wait here to die? Come, let’s go to the fortified cities to die there. For the LORD our God has decreed our destruction and has given us a cup of poison to drink because we sinned against the LORD.

¹⁵ We hoped for peace, but no peace came. We hoped for a time of healing, but found only terror.

¹⁶ The snorting of the enemies’ warhorses can be heard all the way from the land of Dan in the north! The whole land trembles at the approach of the terrible army, for it is coming to devour the land and everything in it—cities and people alike.’

¹⁷ "I will send these enemy troops among you like poisonous snakes you

cannot charm," says the LORD. "No matter what you do, they will bite you, and you will die."

¹⁸ My grief is beyond healing; my heart is broken.

¹⁹ Listen to the weeping of my people; it can be heard all across the land.

"Has the LORD abandoned Jerusalem?" the people ask. "Is her King no longer there?" "Oh, why have they angered me with their carved idols and worthless gods?" asks the LORD.

²⁰ "The harvest is finished, and the summer is gone," the people cry, "yet we are not saved!"

²¹ I weep for the hurt of my people. I am stunned and silent, mute with grief.

²² Is there no medicine in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why is there no healing for the wounds of my people?

9 ¹ Oh, that my eyes were a fountain of tears; I would weep forever! I would

sob day and night for all my people who have been slaughtered.

² Oh, that I could go away and forget them and live in a shack in the desert, for they are all adulterous and treacherous.

³ "My people bend their tongues like bows to shoot lies. They refuse to stand up for the truth. And they only go from bad to worse! They care nothing for me," says the LORD.

⁴ "Beware of your neighbor! Beware of your brother! They all take advantage of one another and spread their slanderous lies.

⁵ They all fool and defraud each other; no one tells the truth. With practiced tongues they tell lies; they wear themselves out with all their sinning.

⁶ They pile lie upon lie and utterly refuse to come to me," says the LORD.

⁷ Therefore, the LORD Almighty says, "See, I will melt them in a crucible and

test them like metal. What else can I do with them?

⁸ For their tongues aim lies like poisoned arrows. They promise peace to their neighbors while planning to kill them.

⁹ Should I not punish them for this?" asks the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself against a nation such as this?"

¹⁰ I will weep for the mountains and wail for the desert pastures. For they are desolate and empty of life; the lowing of cattle is heard no more; the birds and wild animals all have fled.

¹¹ "I will make Jerusalem into a heap of ruins," says the LORD. "It will be a place haunted by jackals. The towns of Judah will be ghost towns, with no one living in them."

¹² Who is wise enough to understand all this? Who has been instructed by the LORD and can explain it to others? Why

has the land been ruined so completely that no one even dares to travel through it?

¹³ The LORD replies, "This has happened because my people have abandoned the instructions I gave them; they have refused to obey my law.

¹⁴ Instead, they have stubbornly followed their own desires and worshiped the images of Baal, as their ancestors taught them.

¹⁵ So now, listen to what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Look! I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink.

¹⁶ I will scatter them around the world, and they will be strangers in distant lands. Their enemies will chase them with the sword until I have destroyed them completely."

¹⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Think about what is going on! Call for the mourners to come.

¹⁸ Quick! Begin your weeping! Let the tears flow from your eyes.

¹⁹ Hear the people of Jerusalem crying in despair, 'We are ruined! Disaster has come upon us! We must leave our land, because our homes have been torn down.'

²⁰ Listen, you women, to the words of the LORD; open your ears to what he has to say. Teach your daughters to wail; teach one another how to lament.

²¹ For death has crept in through our windows and has entered our mansions. It has killed off the flower of our youth: Children no longer play in the streets, and young men no longer gather in the squares.

²² And the LORD says, "Bodies will be scattered across the fields like dung, or

like bundles of grain after the harvest. No one will be left to bury them."

²³ This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches.

²⁴ Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD who is just and righteous, whose love is unfailing, and that I delight in these things. I, the LORD, have spoken!

²⁵ "A time is coming," says the LORD, "when I will punish all those who are circumcised in body but not in spirit—

²⁶ the Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, the people who live in distant places, and yes, even the people of Judah. Like all these pagan nations, the people of Israel also have uncircumcised hearts."

10 ¹ Hear the word of the LORD, O Israel!

² This is what the LORD says: "Do not act like other nations who try to read their future in the stars. Do not be afraid of their predictions, even though other nations are terrified by them.

³ Their ways are futile and foolish. They cut down a tree and carve an idol.

⁴ They decorate it with gold and silver and then fasten it securely with hammer and nails so it won't fall over.

⁵ There stands their god like a helpless scarecrow in a garden! It cannot speak, and it needs to be carried because it cannot walk. Do not be afraid of such gods, for they can neither harm you nor do you any good."

⁶ LORD, there is no one like you! For you are great, and your name is full of power.

⁷ Who would not fear you, O King of nations? That title belongs to you alone! Among all the wise people of the earth

and in all the kingdoms of the world,
there is no one like you.

⁸ The wisest of people who worship
idols are stupid and foolish. The things
they worship are made of wood!

⁹ They bring beaten sheets of silver
from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz,
and they give these materials to skillful
craftsmen who make their idols. Then
they dress these gods in royal purple
robes made by expert tailors.

¹⁰ But the LORD is the only true God,
the living God. He is the everlasting King!
The whole earth trembles at his anger.
The nations hide before his wrath.

¹¹ Say this to those who worship other
gods: "Your so-called gods, who did not
make the heavens and earth, will vanish
from the earth."

¹² But God made the earth by his power,
and he preserves it by his wisdom. He

has stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

¹³ When he speaks, there is thunder in the heavens. He causes the clouds to rise over the earth. He sends the lightning with the rain and releases the wind from his storehouses.

¹⁴ Compared to him, all people are foolish and have no knowledge at all! They make idols, but the idols will disgrace their makers, for they are frauds. They have no life or power in them.

¹⁵ Idols are worthless; they are lies! The time is coming when they will all be destroyed.

¹⁶ But the God of Israel is no idol! He is the Creator of everything that exists, including Israel, his own special possession. The LORD Almighty is his name!

¹⁷ "Pack your bag and prepare to leave; the siege is about to begin,"

¹⁸ says the LORD. "For suddenly, I will fling you from this land and pour great troubles upon you. At last you will feel my anger."

¹⁹ My wound is desperate, and my grief is great. My sickness is incurable, but I must bear it.

²⁰ My home is gone, and no one is left to help me rebuild it. My children have been taken away, and I will never see them again.

²¹ The shepherds of my people have lost their senses. They no longer follow the LORD or ask what he wants of them. Therefore, they fail completely, and their flocks are scattered.

²² Listen! Hear the terrifying roar of great armies as they roll down from the north. The towns of Judah will be

destroyed and will become a haunt for jackals.

²³ I know, LORD, that a person's life is not his own. No one is able to plan his own course.

²⁴ So correct me, LORD, but please be gentle. Do not correct me in anger, for I would die.

²⁵ Pour out your wrath on the nations that refuse to recognize you—on nations that do not call upon your name. For they have utterly devoured your people Israel, making the land a desolate wilderness.

11 ¹ The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said,

² "Remind the people of Judah and Jerusalem about the terms of their covenant with me.

³ Say to them, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Cursed is anyone

who does not obey the terms of my covenant!

⁴ For I said to your ancestors when I brought them out of slavery in Egypt, "If you obey me and do whatever I command you, then you will be my people, and I will be your God."

⁵ I said this so I could keep my promise to your ancestors to give you a land flowing with milk and honey—the land you live in today.'" Then I replied, "So be it, LORD!"

⁶ Then the LORD said, "Broadcast this message in the streets of Jerusalem. Go from town to town throughout the land and say, 'Remember the covenant your ancestors made, and do everything they promised.

⁷ For I solemnly warned your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, repeating over and over again to this day: "Obey me!"

⁸ But your ancestors did not pay any attention; they would not even listen. Instead, they stubbornly followed their own evil desires. And because they refused to obey, I brought upon them all the curses described in our covenant.'"

⁹ Again the LORD spoke to me and said, "I have discovered a conspiracy against me among the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰ They have returned to the sins of their forefathers. They have refused to listen to me and are worshiping idols. Israel and Judah have both broken the covenant I made with their ancestors.

¹¹ Therefore, says the LORD, I am going to bring calamity upon them, and they will not escape. Though they beg for mercy, I will not listen to their cries.

¹² Then the people of Judah and Jerusalem will pray to their idols and

offer incense before them. But the idols will not save them when disaster strikes!

¹³ Look now, people of Judah, you have as many gods as there are cities and towns. Your altars of shame—altars for burning incense to your god Baal—are along every street in Jerusalem.

¹⁴ "Pray no more for these people, Jeremiah. Do not weep or pray for them, for I will not listen to them when they cry out to me in distress.

¹⁵ What right do my beloved people have to come to my Temple, where they have done so many immoral things? Can their sacrifices avert their destruction? They actually rejoice in doing evil!

¹⁶ "I, the LORD, once called them a thriving olive tree, beautiful to see and full of good fruit. But now I have sent the fury of their enemies to burn them with fire, leaving them charred and broken.

¹⁷ I, the LORD Almighty, who planted this olive tree, have ordered it destroyed. For the people of Israel and Judah have done evil, provoking my anger by offering incense to Baal."

¹⁸ Then the LORD told me about the plots my enemies were making against me.

¹⁹ I had been as unaware as a lamb on the way to its slaughter. I had no idea that they were planning to kill me! "Let's destroy this man and all his words," they said. "Let's kill him, so his name will be forgotten forever."

²⁰ O LORD Almighty, you are just, and you examine the deepest thoughts of hearts and minds. Let me see your vengeance against them, for I have committed my cause to you.

²¹ The men of Anathoth wanted me dead. They said they would kill me if I did not stop speaking in the LORD's name.

²² So this is what the LORD Almighty says about them: "I will punish them! Their young men will die in battle, and their little boys and girls will starve.

²³ Not one of these plotters from Anathoth will survive, for I will bring disaster upon them when their time of punishment comes."

12 ¹ LORD, you always give me justice when I bring a case before you. Now let me bring you this complaint: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy?

² You have planted them, and they have taken root and prospered. Your name is on their lips, but in their hearts they give you no credit at all.

³ But as for me, LORD, ³ you know my heart. You see me and test my thoughts. Drag these people away like helpless sheep to be butchered! Set them aside to be slaughtered!

⁴ How long must this land weep? Even the grass in the fields has withered. The wild animals and birds have disappeared because of the evil in the land. Yet the people say, "The LORD won't do anything!"

⁵ Then the LORD replied to me, "If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground, what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan?"

⁶ Even your own brothers, members of your own family, have turned on you. They have plotted, raising a cry against you. Do not trust them, no matter how pleasantly they speak.

⁷ "I have abandoned my people, my special possession. I have surrendered my dearest ones to their enemies.

⁸ My chosen people have roared at me like a lion of the forest, so I have treated them as though I hated them.

⁹ My chosen people have become as disgusting to me as a vulture. And indeed, they are surrounded by vultures. Bring on the wild beasts to pick their corpses clean!

¹⁰ "Many rulers have ravaged my vineyard, trampling down the vines and turning all its beauty into a barren wilderness.

¹¹ They have made it an empty wasteland; I hear its mournful cry. The whole land is desolate, and no one even cares.

¹² Destroying armies plunder the land. The sword of the LORD kills people from one end of the nation to the other. No one will escape!

¹³ My people have planted wheat but are harvesting thorns. They have worked

hard, but it has done them no good. They will harvest a crop of shame, for the fierce anger of the LORD is upon them."

¹⁴ Now this is what the LORD says: "As for all the evil nations reaching out for the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands just as Judah will be uprooted from hers.

¹⁵ But afterward I will return and have compassion on all of them. I will bring them home to their own lands again, each nation to its own inheritance.

¹⁶ And if these nations quickly learn the ways of my people, and if they learn to swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives' (just as they taught my people to swear by the name of Baal), then they will be given a place among my people.

¹⁷ But any nation who refuses to obey me will be uprooted and destroyed. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

13 ¹ This is what the LORD said to me: "Go and buy a linen belt and put it around your waist, but do not wash it."

² So I bought the belt as the LORD directed me and put it around my waist.

³ Then the LORD gave me another message:

⁴ "Take the linen belt you are wearing, and go to the Euphrates River. Hide it there in a hole in the rocks."

⁵ So I went and hid it at the Euphrates as the LORD had instructed me.

⁶ A long time afterward, the LORD said to me, "Go back to the Euphrates and get the linen belt that I told you to hide there."

⁷ So I went to the Euphrates and dug it out of the hole where I had hidden

it. But now it was mildewed and falling apart. The belt was useless.

⁸ Then I received this message from the LORD:

⁹ "The LORD says: This illustrates how I will rot away the pride of Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰ These wicked people refuse to listen to me. They stubbornly follow their own desires and worship idols. Therefore, they will become like this linen belt—good for nothing!

¹¹ As a belt clings to a person's waist, so I created Judah and Israel to cling to me," says the LORD. "They were to be my people, my pride, my glory—an honor to my name. But they would not listen to me.

¹² "So tell them, 'The LORD, the God of Israel, says: All your wineskins will be full of wine.' And they will reply, 'Of

course, you don't need to tell us how prosperous we will be!

¹³ Then tell them, 'No, this is what the LORD means: I will make everyone in this land so confused that they will seem drunk—from the king sitting on David's throne and from the priests and the prophets, right on down to the common people.

¹⁴ I will smash them one against the other, even parents against children, says the LORD. I will not let my pity or mercy or compassion keep me from destroying them.'"

¹⁵ Listen! Do not be proud, for the LORD has spoken.

¹⁶ Give glory to the LORD your God before it is too late. Acknowledge him before he brings darkness upon you, causing you to stumble and fall on the dark mountains. For then, when you

look for light, you will find only terrible darkness.

¹⁷ And if you still refuse to listen, I will weep alone because of your pride. My eyes will overflow with tears because the LORD's flock will be led away into exile.

¹⁸ Say to the king and his mother, "Come down from your thrones and sit in the dust, for your glorious crowns will soon be snatched from your heads."

¹⁹ The towns of the Negev will close their gates, and no one will be able to open them. The people of Judah will be taken away as captives. They will all be carried into exile.

²⁰ See the armies marching down from the north! Where is your flock—your beautiful flock—that he gave you to care for?

²¹ How will you feel when the LORD sets your foreign allies over you as rulers?

You will writhe in pain like a woman giving birth!

²² You may ask yourself, "Why is all this happening to me?" It is because of your many sins! That is why you have been raped and destroyed by invading armies.

²³ Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Can a leopard take away its spots? Neither can you start doing good, for you always do evil.

²⁴ "I will scatter you, just as chaff is scattered by the winds blowing in from the desert.

²⁵ This is your allotment, that which is due you," says the LORD. "I have measured it out especially for you, because you have forgotten me and put your trust in false gods.

²⁶ I myself will expose you to shame.

²⁷ I am keenly aware of your adultery and lust, and your abominable idol worship out in the fields and on the hills.

Your destruction is sure, Jerusalem! How long will it be before you are pure?"

14 ¹ This message came to Jeremiah from the LORD, explaining why he was holding back the rain:

² "Judah wilts; her businesses have ground to a halt. All the people sit on the ground in mourning, and a great cry rises from Jerusalem.

³ The nobles send servants to get water, but all the wells are dry. The servants return with empty pitchers, confused and desperate, covering their heads in grief.

⁴ The ground is parched and cracked for lack of rain. The farmers are afraid; they, too, cover their heads.

⁵ The deer abandons her newborn fawn because there is no grass.

⁶ The wild donkeys stand on the bare hills panting like thirsty jackals. They

strain their eyes looking for grass to eat, but there is none to be found."

⁷ The people say, "LORD, our wickedness has caught up with us. We have sinned against you. So please, help us for the sake of your own reputation.

⁸ O Hope of Israel, our Savior in times of trouble! Why are you like a stranger to us? Why are you like someone passing through the land, stopping only for the night?

⁹ Are you also confused? Are you helpless to save us? You are right here among us, LORD. We are known as your people. Please don't abandon us now!"

¹⁰ So the LORD replies to his people, "You love to wander far from me and do not follow in my paths. Now I will no longer accept you as my people. I will remember all your wickedness and will punish you for your sins."

¹¹ Then the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for these people anymore.

¹² When they fast in my presence, I will pay no attention. When they present their burnt offerings and grain offerings to me, I will not accept them. In return, I will give them only war, famine, and disease."

¹³ Then I said, "O Sovereign LORD, their prophets are telling them, 'All is well—no war or famine will come. The LORD will surely send you peace.'"

¹⁴ Then the LORD said, "These prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or tell them to speak. I did not give them any messages. They prophesy of visions and revelations they have never seen or heard. They speak foolishness made up in their own lying hearts.

¹⁵ Therefore, says the LORD, I will punish these lying prophets, for they have spoken in my name even though I

never sent them. They say that no war or famine will come, but they themselves will die by war and famine!

¹⁶ As for the people to whom they prophesy—their bodies will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and war. There will be no one left to bury them. Husbands, wives, sons, and daughters—all will be gone. For I will pour out their own wickedness on them.

¹⁷ "Now, Jeremiah, say this to them: 'Night and day my eyes overflow with tears. I cannot stop weeping, for my virgin daughter—my precious people—has been run through with a sword and lies mortally wounded on the ground.

¹⁸ If I go out into the fields, I see the bodies of people slaughtered by the enemy. If I walk the city streets, there I see people who have died of starvation. The prophets and priests continue with

their work, but they do not know what they are doing.'"

¹⁹ LORD, have you completely rejected Judah? Do you really hate Jerusalem? Why have you wounded us past all hope of healing? We hoped for peace, but no peace came. We hoped for a time of healing but found only terror.

²⁰ LORD, we confess our wickedness and that of our ancestors, too. We all have sinned against you.

²¹ For the sake of your own name, LORD, do not abandon us. Do not disgrace yourself and the throne of your glory. Do not break your covenant with us. Please don't forget us!

²² Can any of the foreign gods send us rain? Does it fall from the sky by itself? No, it comes from you, the LORD our God! Only you can do such things. So we will wait for you to help us.

15 ¹ Then the LORD said to me,
"Even if Moses and Samuel stood
before me pleading for these people, I
wouldn't help them. Away with them!
Get them out of my sight!

² And if they say to you, 'But where
can we go?' tell them, 'This is what the
LORD says: Those who are destined for
death, to death; those who are destined
for war, to war; those who are destined
for famine, to famine; those who are
destined for captivity, to captivity.'

³ "I will send four kinds of destroyers
against them," says the LORD. "I will
send the sword to kill, the dogs to drag
away, the vultures to devour, and the
wild animals to finish up what is left.

⁴ Because of the wicked things
Manasseh son of Hezekiah, king of
Judah, did in Jerusalem, I will make my
people an object of horror to all the
kingdoms of the earth.

⁵ "Who will feel sorry for you, Jerusalem? Who will weep for you? Who will even bother to ask how you are?"

⁶ You have forsaken me and turned your back on me," says the LORD. "Therefore, I will raise my clenched fists to destroy you. I am tired of always giving you another chance.

⁷ I will winnow you like grain at the gates of your cities and take away everything you hold dear. I will destroy my own people, because they refuse to turn back to me from all their evil ways.

⁸ "There will be more widows than the grains of sand along the seashore. At noontime I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of young men. I will cause anguish and terror to come upon them suddenly.

⁹ The mother of seven grows faint and gasps for breath; her sun has gone down while it is yet day. She sits childless now,

disgraced and humiliated. And those who are left, I will hand over to the enemy to be killed," says the LORD.

¹⁰ Then I said, "What sadness is mine, my mother. Oh, that I had died at birth! I am hated everywhere I go. I am neither a lender who has threatened to foreclose nor a borrower who refuses to pay—yet they all curse me."

¹¹ The LORD replied, "All will be well with you, Jeremiah. Your enemies will ask you to plead on their behalf in times of trouble and distress.

¹² Can a man break a bar of iron from the north, or a bar of bronze?

¹³ Because of all my people's sins against me, I will hand over their wealth and treasures as plunder to the enemy.

¹⁴ I will tell their enemies to take them as captives to a foreign land. For my anger blazes forth like fire, and it will consume them."

¹⁵ Then I said, "LORD, you know I am suffering for your sake. Punish my persecutors! Don't let them kill me! Be merciful to me and give them what they deserve!

¹⁶ Your words are what sustain me. They bring me great joy and are my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty.

¹⁷ I never joined the people in their merry feasts. I sat alone because your hand was on me. I burst with indignation at their sins.

¹⁸ Why then does my suffering continue? Why is my wound so incurable? Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook. It is like a spring that has gone dry."

¹⁹ The LORD replied, "If you return to me, I will restore you so you can continue to serve me. If you speak words that are worthy, you will be my spokesman. You

are to influence them; do not let them influence you!

²⁰ They will fight against you like an attacking army, but I will make you as secure as a fortified wall. They will not conquer you, for I will protect and deliver you. I, the LORD, have spoken!

²¹ Yes, I will certainly keep you safe from these wicked men. I will rescue you from their cruel hands."

16 ¹ The LORD gave me another message. He said,

² "Do not marry or have children in this place.

³ For this is what the LORD says about the children born here in this city and about their mothers and fathers:

⁴ They will die from terrible diseases. No one will mourn for them or bury them, and they will lie scattered on the ground like dung. They will die from war

and famine, and their bodies will be food for the vultures and wild animals.

⁵ "Do not go to their funerals to mourn and show sympathy for them," says the LORD, "for I have removed my protection and peace from them. I have taken away my unfailing love and my mercy.

⁶ Both the great and the lowly will die in this land. No one will bury them or mourn for them. Their friends will not cut themselves or shave their heads in sadness.

⁷ No one will offer a meal to comfort those who mourn for the dead—not even for the death of a mother or a father. No one will send a cup of wine to console them.

⁸ "And do not go to their feasts and parties. Do not eat and drink with them at all.

⁹ For the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: In your own lifetime, before

your very eyes, I will put an end to the happy singing and laughter in this land. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard.

¹⁰ "When you tell the people all these things, they will ask, 'Why has the LORD decreed such terrible things against us? What have we done to deserve such treatment? What is our sin against the LORD our God?'

¹¹ Tell them that this is the LORD's reply: It is because your ancestors were unfaithful to me. They worshiped other gods and served them. They abandoned me. They did not keep my law.

¹² And you are even worse than your ancestors! You stubbornly follow your own evil desires and refuse to listen to me.

¹³ So I will throw you out of this land and send you into a foreign land where you and your ancestors have never been.

There you can worship idols all you like—and I will grant you no favors!

¹⁴ "But the time is coming," says the LORD, "when people who are taking an oath will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.'

¹⁵ Instead, they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.' For I will bring them back to this land that I gave their ancestors.

¹⁶ "But now I am sending for many fishermen who will catch them," says the LORD. "I am sending for hunters who will search for them in the forests and caves.

¹⁷ I am watching them closely, and I see every sin. They cannot hope to hide from me.

¹⁸ I will punish them doubly for all their sins, because they have defiled my land with lifeless images of their detestable gods and filled my inheritance with their evil deeds."

¹⁹ LORD, you are my strength and fortress, my refuge in the day of trouble! Nations from around the world will come to you and say, "Our ancestors were foolish, for they worshiped worthless idols.

²⁰ Can people make their own god? The gods they make are not real gods at all!"

²¹ "So now I will show them my power and might," says the LORD. "At last they will know that I am the LORD."

17 ¹ The LORD says, "My people act as though their evil ways are laws to be obeyed, inscribed with a diamond point on their stony hearts, or with an iron chisel on the corners of their altars.

² Even their children go to worship at their sacred altars and Asherah poles, beneath every green tree and on every high hill.

³ So I will give all your wealth and treasures—together with your pagan shrines—as plunder to your enemies, for sin runs rampant in your land.

⁴ The wonderful inheritance I have reserved for you will slip out of your hands, and I will send you away as captives to a foreign land. For you have kindled my anger into a roaring fire that will burn forever."

⁵ This is what the LORD says: "Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans and turn their hearts away from the LORD.

⁶ They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, on the salty flats where no one lives.

⁷ "But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.

⁸ They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.

⁹ "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?

¹⁰ But I know! I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve."

¹¹ Like a bird that hatches eggs she has not laid, so are those who get their wealth by unjust means. Sooner or later they will lose their riches and, at the end of their lives, will become poor old fools.

¹² But we worship at your throne—
eternal, high, and glorious!

¹³ O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who
turn away from you will be disgraced
and shamed. They will be buried in a dry
and dusty grave, for they have forsaken
the LORD, the fountain of living water.

¹⁴ O LORD, you alone can heal me; you
alone can save. My praises are for you
alone!

¹⁵ People scoff at me and say, "What
is this 'message from the LORD' you
keep talking about? Why don't your
predictions come true?"

¹⁶ LORD, I have not abandoned my job
as a shepherd for your people. I have
not urged you to send disaster. It is your
message I have given them, not my own.

¹⁷ LORD, do not desert me now! You
alone are my hope in the day of disaster.

¹⁸ Bring shame and terror on all who persecute me, but give me peace. Yes, bring double destruction upon them!

¹⁹ Then the LORD said to me, "Go and stand in the gates of Jerusalem, first at the gate where the king goes out, and then at each of the other gates.

²⁰ Say to all the people, 'Listen to this message from the LORD, you kings of Judah and all you people of Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem.

²¹ This is what the LORD says: Listen to my warning and live! Stop carrying on your trade at Jerusalem's gates on the Sabbath day.

²² Do not do your work on the Sabbath, but make it a holy day. I gave this command to your ancestors,

²³ but they did not listen or obey. They stubbornly refused to pay attention and would not respond to discipline.

²⁴ "But if you obey me, says the LORD, and do not carry on your trade or work on the Sabbath day, and if you keep it holy,

²⁵ then this nation will continue forever. There will always be a descendant of David sitting on the throne here in Jerusalem. Kings and their officials will always ride among the people of Judah in chariots and on horses, and this city will remain forever.

²⁶ And from all around Jerusalem, from the towns of Judah and Benjamin, from the western foothills and the hill country and the Negev, the people will come with their burnt offerings and sacrifices. They will bring their grain offerings, incense, and thanksgiving offerings to the LORD's Temple.

²⁷ "But if you do not listen to me and refuse to keep the Sabbath holy, and if on the Sabbath day you bring loads

of merchandise through the gates of Jerusalem just as on other days, then I will set fire to these gates. The fire will spread to the palaces, and no one will be able to put out the roaring flames.'"

18¹ The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said,

² "Go down to the shop where clay pots and jars are made. I will speak to you while you are there."

³ So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel.

⁴ But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so the potter squashed the jar into a lump of clay and started again.

⁵ Then the LORD gave me this message:

⁶ "O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand.

⁷ If I announce that a certain nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed,

⁸ but then that nation renounces its evil ways, I will not destroy it as I had planned.

⁹ And if I announce that I will build up and plant a certain nation or kingdom, making it strong and great,

¹⁰ but then that nation turns to evil and refuses to obey me, I will not bless that nation as I had said I would.

¹¹ "Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all Judah and Jerusalem. Say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: I am planning disaster against you instead of good. So turn from your evil ways, each of you, and do what is right.'"

¹² But they replied, "Don't waste your breath. We will continue to live as we want to, following our own evil desires."

¹³ Then the LORD said, "Has anyone ever heard of such a thing, even among the pagan nations? My virgin Israel has done something too terrible to understand!

¹⁴ Does the snow ever melt high up in the mountains of Lebanon? Do the cold, flowing streams from the crags of Mount Hermon ever run dry?

¹⁵ These can be counted on, but not my people! For they have deserted me and turned to worthless idols. They have stumbled off the ancient highways of good, and they walk the muddy paths of sin.

¹⁶ Therefore, their land will become desolate, a monument to their stupidity. All who pass by will be astonished and shake their heads in amazement at its utter desolation.

¹⁷ I will scatter my people before their enemies as the east wind scatters dust.

And in all their trouble I will turn my back on them and refuse to notice their distress."

¹⁸ Then the people said, "Come on, let's find a way to stop Jeremiah. We have our own priests and wise men and prophets. We don't need him to teach the law and give us advice and prophecies. Let's spread rumors about him and ignore what he says."

¹⁹ LORD, help me! Listen to what they are planning to do to me!

²⁰ Should they repay evil for good? They have set a trap to kill me, though I pleaded for them and tried to protect them from your anger.

²¹ So let their children starve! Let the sword pour out their blood! Let their wives become widows without any children! Let their old men die in a plague, and let their young men be killed in battle!

²² Let screaming be heard from their homes as warriors come suddenly upon them. For they have dug a pit for me, and they have hidden traps along my path.

²³ LORD, you know all about their murderous plots against me. Don't forgive their crimes and blot out their sins. Let them die before you. Deal with them in your anger.

19 ¹ The LORD said to me, "Go and buy a clay jar. Then ask some of the leaders of the people and of the priests to follow you.

² Go out into the valley of the son of Hinnom by the entrance to the Potsherd Gate, and repeat to them the words that I give you.

³ Say to them, 'Listen to this message from the LORD, you kings of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem! This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I

will bring such a terrible disaster on this place that the ears of those who hear about it will ring!

⁴ "For Israel has forsaken me and turned this valley into a place of wickedness. The people burn incense to foreign gods—idols never before worshiped by this generation, by their ancestors, or by the kings of Judah. And they have filled this place with the blood of innocent children.

⁵ They have built pagan shrines to Baal, and there they burn their sons as sacrifices to Baal. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing!

⁶ So beware, for the time is coming, says the LORD, when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.

⁷ For I will upset the battle plans of Judah and Jerusalem and let invading armies slaughter them. The enemy will leave the dead bodies as food for the vultures and wild animals.

⁸ I will wipe Jerusalem from the face of the earth, making it a monument to their stupidity. All who pass by will be appalled and will gasp at the destruction they see there.

⁹ I will see to it that your enemies lay siege to the city until all the food is gone. Then those trapped inside will have to eat their own sons and daughters and friends. They will be driven to utter despair.'

¹⁰ "As these men watch, Jeremiah, smash the jar you brought with you.

¹¹ Then say to them, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: As this jar lies shattered, so I will shatter the people of Judah and Jerusalem beyond all hope

of repair. They will bury the bodies in Topheth until there is no more room.

¹² This is what I will do to this place and its people, says the LORD. I will cause this city to become defiled like Topheth.

¹³ Yes, all the houses in Jerusalem, including the palace of Judah's kings, will become like Topheth—all the houses where you burned incense on the rooftops to your star gods, and where drink offerings were poured out to your idols.'"

¹⁴ Then Jeremiah returned from Topheth where he had delivered this message, and he stopped in front of the Temple of the LORD. He said to the people there,

¹⁵ "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will bring disaster upon this city and its surrounding towns just as I promised, because you have stubbornly refused to listen to me."

20¹ Now Pashhur son of Immer, the priest in charge of the Temple of the LORD, heard what Jeremiah was saying.

² So he arrested Jeremiah the prophet and had him whipped and put in stocks at the Benjamin Gate of the LORD's Temple.

³ The next day, when Pashhur finally released him, Jeremiah said, "Pashhur, the LORD has changed your name. From now on you are to be called 'The Man Who Lives in Terror.'

⁴ For this is what the LORD says: I will send terror upon you and all your friends, and you will watch as they are slaughtered by the swords of the enemy. I will hand the people of Judah over to the king of Babylon. He will take them captive to Babylon or run them through with the sword.

⁵ And I will let your enemies plunder Jerusalem. All the famed treasures of the city—the precious jewels and gold and silver of your kings—will be carried off to Babylon.

⁶ As for you, Pashhur, you and all your household will go as captives to Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you promised that everything would be all right."

⁷ O LORD, you persuaded me, and I allowed myself to be persuaded. You are stronger than I am, and you overpowered me. Now I am mocked by everyone in the city.

⁸ Whenever I speak, the words come out in a violent outburst. "Violence and destruction!" I shout. So these messages from the LORD have made me a household joke.

⁹ And I can't stop! If I say I'll never mention the LORD or speak in his name,

his word burns in my heart like a fire.
It's like a fire in my bones! I am weary of
holding it in!

¹⁰ I have heard the many rumors about
me. They call me "The Man Who Lives
in Terror." And they say, "If you say
anything, we will report it." Even my old
friends are watching me, waiting for a
fatal slip. "He will trap himself," they say,
"and then we will get our revenge on
him."

¹¹ But the LORD stands beside me
like a great warrior. Before him they
will stumble. They cannot defeat me.
They will be shamed and thoroughly
humiliated. Their dishonor will never be
forgotten.

¹² O LORD Almighty! You know those
who are righteous, and you examine the
deepest thoughts of hearts and minds.
Let me see your vengeance against

them, for I have committed my cause to you.

¹³ Now I will sing out my thanks to the LORD! Praise the LORD! For though I was poor and needy, he delivered me from my oppressors.

¹⁴ Yet I curse the day I was born! May the day of my birth not be blessed.

¹⁵ I curse the messenger who told my father, "Good news—you have a son!"

¹⁶ Let him be destroyed like the cities of old that the LORD overthrew without mercy. Terrify him all day long with battle shouts,

¹⁷ for he did not kill me at birth. Oh, that I had died in my mother's womb, that her body had been my grave!

¹⁸ Why was I ever born? My entire life has been filled with trouble, sorrow, and shame.

21 ¹ The LORD spoke through Jeremiah when King Zedekiah

sent Pashhur son of Malkijah and Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, the priest, to speak with him. They begged Jeremiah,

² "Please ask the LORD to help us. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has begun his attack on Judah. Perhaps the LORD will be gracious and do a mighty miracle as he has done in the past. Perhaps he will force Nebuchadnezzar to withdraw his armies."

³ Jeremiah replied, "Go back to King Zedekiah and tell him,

⁴ 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I will make your weapons useless against the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are attacking you. Yes, I will bring your enemies right into the heart of this city.

⁵ I myself will fight against you with great power, for I am very angry. You have made me furious!

⁶ I will send a terrible plague upon this city, and both people and animals will die.

⁷ And then, says the LORD, even after King Zedekiah, his officials, and everyone else in the city have survived war, famine, and disease, I will hand them over to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He will slaughter them all without mercy, pity, or compassion.'

⁸ "Tell all the people, 'This is what the LORD says: Take your choice of life or death!

⁹ Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who go out and surrender to the Babylonians will live.

¹⁰ For I have decided to bring disaster and not good upon this city, says the LORD. It will be captured by the king of Babylon, and he will reduce it to ashes.'

¹¹ "Say to the royal family of Judah,
'Listen to this message from the LORD!

¹² This is what the LORD says to the
dynasty of David: Give justice to the
people you judge! Help those who have
been robbed; rescue them from their
oppressors. Do what is right, or my
anger will burn like an unquenchable fire
because of all your sins.

¹³ I will fight against this city of
Jerusalem that boasts, "We are safe
on our mountain! No one can touch us
here."

¹⁴ And I myself will punish you for your
sinfulness, says the LORD. I will light
a fire in your forests that will burn up
everything around you.'"

22 ¹ Then the LORD said to me, "Go
over and speak directly to the
king of Judah. Say to him,

² 'Listen to this message from the LORD,
you king of Judah, sitting on David's

throne. Let your officials and your people listen, too.

³ This is what the LORD says: Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Quit your evil deeds! Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans, and widows. Stop murdering the innocent!

⁴ If you obey me, there will always be a descendant of David sitting on the throne here in Jerusalem. The king will ride through the palace gates in chariots and on horses, with his parade of officials and subjects.

⁵ But if you refuse to pay attention to this warning, I swear by my own name, says the LORD, that this palace will become a pile of rubble.'"

⁶ Now this is what the LORD says concerning the royal palace: "You are as beloved to me as fruitful Gilead and

the green forests of Lebanon. But I will destroy you and leave you deserted, with no one living within your walls.

⁷ I will call for wreckers, who will bring out their tools to dismantle you. They will tear out all your fine cedar beams and throw them on the fire.

⁸ People from many nations will pass by the ruins of this city and say to one another, 'Why did the LORD destroy such a great city?'

⁹ And the answer will be, 'Because they violated their covenant with the LORD their God by worshiping other gods.'

¹⁰ Do not weep for the dead king or mourn his loss. Instead, weep for the captive king being led away! For he will never return to see his native land again.

¹¹ For this is what the LORD says about Jehoahaz, who succeeded his father, King Josiah, and was taken away as a captive: "He will never return.

¹² He will die in a distant land and never again see his own country."

¹³ And the LORD says, "Destruction is certain for Jehoiakim, who builds his palace with forced labor. By not paying wages, he builds injustice into its walls and oppression into its doorframes and ceilings.

¹⁴ He says, 'I will build a magnificent palace with huge rooms and many windows, paneled throughout with fragrant cedar and painted a lovely red.'

¹⁵ "But a beautiful palace does not make a great king! Why did your father, Josiah, reign so long? Because he was just and right in all his dealings. That is why God blessed him.

¹⁶ He made sure that justice and help were given to the poor and needy, and everything went well for him. Isn't that what it means to know me?" asks the LORD.

¹⁷ "But you! You are full of selfish greed and dishonesty! You murder the innocent, oppress the poor, and reign ruthlessly."

¹⁸ Therefore, this is the LORD's decree of punishment against King Jehoiakim, who succeeded his father, Josiah, on the throne: "His family will not weep for him when he dies. His subjects will not even care that he is dead.

¹⁹ He will be buried like a dead donkey—dragged out of Jerusalem and dumped outside the gate!

²⁰ Weep, for your allies are all gone. Search for them in Lebanon. Shout for them at Bashan. Search for them in the regions east of the river. See, they are all destroyed. Not one is left to help you.

²¹ "When you were prosperous, I warned you, but you replied, 'Don't bother me.' Since childhood you have

been that way—you simply will not listen!

²² And now your allies have all disappeared with a puff of wind. All your friends have been taken away as captives. Surely at last you will see your wickedness and be ashamed.

²³ It may be nice to live in a beautiful palace lined with lumber from the cedars of Lebanon, but soon you will cry and groan in anguish—anguish like that of a woman about to give birth.

²⁴ "And as surely as I live," says the LORD, "I will abandon you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Even if you were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off.

²⁵ I will hand you over to those who seek to kill you, of whom you are so desperately afraid—to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the mighty Babylonian army.

²⁶ I will expel you and your mother from this land, and you will die in a foreign country.

²⁷ You will never again return to the land of your desire.

²⁸ "Why is this man Jehoiachin like a discarded, broken dish? Why are he and his children to be exiled to distant lands?

²⁹ O earth, earth, earth! Listen to this message from the LORD!

³⁰ This is what the LORD says: Let the record show that this man Jehoiachin was childless, for none of his children will ever sit on the throne of David to rule in Judah. His life will amount to nothing."

23 ¹ "I will send disaster upon the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for," says the LORD.

² This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: "Instead of leading my flock to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them.

³ But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from wherever I have driven them. I will bring them back into their own fold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number.

⁴ Then I will appoint responsible shepherds to care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one of them will be lost or missing," says the LORD.

⁵ "For the time is coming," says the LORD, "when I will place a righteous Branch on King David's throne. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will

do what is just and right throughout the land.

⁶ And this is his name: 'The LORD Is Our Righteousness.' In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.

⁷ "In that day," says the LORD, "when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.'

⁸ Instead, they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.' Then they will live in their own land."

⁹ My heart is broken because of the false prophets, and I tremble uncontrollably. I stagger like a drunkard, like someone overcome by wine, because of the holy words the LORD has spoken against them.

¹⁰ For the land is full of adultery, and it lies under a curse. The land itself is in mourning—its pastures are dried up. For the prophets do evil and abuse their power.

¹¹ "The priests are like the prophets, all ungodly, wicked men. I have seen their despicable acts right here in my own Temple," says the LORD.

¹² "Therefore, their paths will be dark and slippery. They will be chased down dark and treacherous trails, where they will fall. For I will bring disaster upon them when their time of punishment comes. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹³ "I saw that the prophets of Samaria were terribly evil, for they prophesied by Baal and led my people of Israel into sin.

¹⁴ But now I see that the prophets of Jerusalem are even worse! They commit adultery, and they love dishonesty. They encourage those who are doing evil

instead of turning them away from their sins. These prophets are as wicked as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah once were."

¹⁵ Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty says concerning the prophets: "I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. For it is because of Jerusalem's prophets that wickedness fills this land.

¹⁶ This is my warning to my people," says the LORD Almighty. "Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you, filling you with futile hopes. They are making up everything they say. They do not speak for the LORD!

¹⁷ They keep saying to these rebels who despise my word, 'Don't worry! The LORD says you will have peace!' And to those who stubbornly follow their own evil desires, they say, 'No harm will come your way!'

¹⁸ "But can you name even one of these prophets who knows the LORD well enough to hear what he is saying? Has even one of them cared enough to listen?"

¹⁹ Look! The LORD's anger bursts out like a storm, a whirlwind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked.

²⁰ The anger of the LORD will not diminish until it has finished all his plans. In the days to come, you will understand all this very clearly.

²¹ "I have not sent these prophets, yet they claim to speak for me. I have given them no message, yet they prophesy.

²² If they had listened to me, they would have spoken my words and turned my people from their evil ways.

²³ Am I a God who is only in one place?" asks the LORD. "Do they think I cannot see what they are doing?"

²⁴ Can anyone hide from me? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" asks the LORD.

²⁵ "I have heard these prophets say, 'Listen to the dream I had from God last night.' And then they proceed to tell lies in my name.

²⁶ How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say.

²⁷ By telling these false dreams, they are trying to get my people to forget me, just as their ancestors did by worshiping the idols of Baal.

²⁸ Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between chaff and wheat!

²⁹ Does not my word burn like fire?" asks the LORD. "Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes rock to pieces?"

³⁰ "Therefore," says the LORD, "I stand against these prophets who get their messages from each other—

³¹ these smooth-tongued prophets who say, 'This prophecy is from the LORD!'

³² Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people," says the LORD.

³³ "Suppose one of the people or one of the prophets or priests asks you, 'What prophecy has the LORD burdened you with now?' You must reply, 'You are the burden! The LORD says he will abandon you!'

³⁴ If any prophet, priest, or anyone else says, 'I have a prophecy from the LORD,' I will punish that person along with his entire family.

³⁵ You should keep asking each other, 'What is the LORD's answer?' or 'What is the LORD saying?'

³⁶ But stop using this phrase, 'prophecy from the LORD.' For people are using it to give authority to their own ideas, turning upside down the words of our God, the living God, the LORD Almighty.

³⁷ "This is what you should say to the prophets: 'What is the LORD's answer?' or 'What is the LORD saying?'

³⁸ But suppose they respond, 'This is a prophecy from the LORD!' Then you should say, 'This is what the LORD says: Because you have used this phrase, "prophecy from the LORD," even though I warned you not to use it,

³⁹ I will forget you completely. I will expel you from my presence, along with this city that I gave to you and your ancestors.

⁴⁰ And I will make you an object of ridicule, and your name will be infamous throughout the ages.'"

24 ¹ After King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon exiled Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to Babylon along with the princes of Judah and all the skilled craftsmen, the LORD gave me this vision. I saw two baskets of figs placed in front of the LORD's Temple in Jerusalem.

² One basket was filled with fresh, ripe figs, while the other was filled with figs that were spoiled and could not be eaten.

³ Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I replied, "Figs, some very good and some very bad."

⁴ Then the LORD gave me this message:

⁵ "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The good figs represent the

exiles I sent from Judah to the land of the Babylonians.

⁶ I have sent them into captivity for their own good. I will see that they are well treated, and I will bring them back here again. I will build them up and not tear them down. I will plant them and not uproot them.

⁷ I will give them hearts that will recognize me as the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me wholeheartedly.

⁸ "But the rotten figs," the LORD said, "represent King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, all the people left in Jerusalem, and those who live in Egypt. I will treat them like spoiled figs, too rotten to eat.

⁹ I will make them an object of horror and evil to every nation on earth. They will be disgraced and mocked, taunted and cursed, wherever I send them.

¹⁰ I will send war, famine, and disease until they have vanished from the land of Israel, which I gave to them and their ancestors."

25 ¹ This message for all the people of Judah came to Jeremiah from the LORD during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign over Judah. This was the year when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began his reign.

² Jeremiah the prophet said to the people in Judah and Jerusalem,

³ "For the past twenty–three years—from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, until now—the LORD has been giving me his messages. I have faithfully passed them on to you, but you have not listened.

⁴ "Again and again, the LORD has sent you his prophets, but you have not listened or even tried to hear.

⁵ Each time the message was this: 'Turn from the evil road you are traveling and from the evil things you are doing. Only then will I let you live in this land that the LORD gave to you and your ancestors forever.

⁶ Do not make me angry by worshiping the idols you have made. Then I will not harm you.'

⁷ "But you would not listen to me," says the LORD. "You made me furious by worshiping your idols, bringing on yourselves all the disasters you now suffer.

⁸ And now the LORD Almighty says: Because you have not listened to me,

⁹ I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the other nations near you. I will completely

destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever.

¹⁰ I will take away your happy singing and laughter. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard. Your businesses will fail, and all your homes will stand silent and dark.

¹¹ This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighboring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

¹² "Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins, says the LORD. I will make the country of the Babylonians an everlasting wasteland.

¹³ I will bring upon them all the terrors I have promised in this book—all the penalties announced by Jeremiah against the nations.

¹⁴ Many nations and great kings will enslave the Babylonians, just as they enslaved my people. I will punish them in proportion to the suffering they cause my people."

¹⁵ Then the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me, "Take from my hand this cup filled to the brim with my anger, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink from it.

¹⁶ When they drink from it, they will stagger, crazed by the warfare I will send against them."

¹⁷ So I took the cup of anger from the LORD and made all the nations drink from it—every nation the LORD sent me to.

¹⁸ I went to Jerusalem and the other towns of Judah, and their kings and officials drank from the cup. From that day until this, they have been a desolate

ruin, an object of horror, contempt, and cursing.

¹⁹ I went to Egypt and spoke to Pharaoh, his officials, his princes, and his people.

They, too, drank from that terrible cup,

²⁰ along with all the foreigners living in that land. So did all the kings of the land of Uz and the kings of the Philistine cities of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and what remains of Ashdod.

²¹ Then I went to the nations of Edom, Moab, and Ammon,

²² and the kings of Tyre and Sidon, and the kings of the regions across the sea.

²³ I went to Dedan, Tema, and Buz, and to the people who live in distant places.

²⁴ I went to the kings of Arabia, the kings of the nomadic tribes of the desert,

²⁵ and to the kings of Zimri, Elam, and Media.

²⁶ And I went to the kings of the northern countries, far and near, one

after the other—all the kingdoms of the world. And finally, the king of Babylon himself drank from the cup of the LORD's anger.

²⁷ Then the LORD said to me, "Now tell them, 'The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink from this cup of my anger. Get drunk and vomit, and you will fall to rise no more, for I am sending terrible wars against you.'

²⁸ And if they refuse to accept the cup, tell them, 'The LORD Almighty says: You must drink from it. You cannot escape!

²⁹ I have begun to punish Jerusalem, the city where my own name is honored. Now should I let you go unpunished? No, you will not escape disaster. I will call for war against all the nations of the earth. I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!

³⁰ "Now prophesy all these things, and say to them, 'The LORD will roar loudly against his own land from his

holy dwelling in heaven. He will shout against everyone on the earth, like the harvesters do as they crush juice from the grapes.

³¹ His cry of judgment will reach the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring his case against all the nations. He will judge all the people of the earth, slaughtering the wicked with his sword. The LORD has spoken!"

³² This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Look! Disaster will fall upon nation after nation! A great whirlwind of fury is rising from the most distant corners of the earth!"

³³ In that day those the LORD has slaughtered will fill the earth from one end to the other. No one will mourn for them or gather up their bodies to bury them. They will be scattered like dung on the ground.

³⁴ Weep and moan, you evil shepherds!
Roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock!
The time of your slaughter has arrived;
you will fall and shatter like fragile
pottery.

³⁵ You will find no place to hide; there
will be no way to escape.

³⁶ Listen to the frantic cries of the
shepherds, to the leaders of the flock
shouting in despair, for the LORD is
spoiling their pastures.

³⁷ Peaceful meadows will be turned
into a wasteland by the LORD's fierce
anger.

³⁸ He has left his den like a lion seeking
its prey, and their land will be made
desolate by the sword of the enemy and
the LORD's fierce anger.

26 ¹ This message came to Jeremiah
from the LORD early in the reign
of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah.

² The LORD said, "Stand out in front of the Temple of the LORD, and make an announcement to the people who have come there to worship from all over Judah. Give them my entire message; include every word.

³ Perhaps they will listen and turn from their evil ways. Then I will be able to withhold the disaster I am ready to pour out on them because of their sins.

⁴ "Say to them, 'This is what the LORD says: If you will not listen to me and obey the law I have given you,

⁵ and if you will not listen to my servants, the prophets—for I sent them again and again to warn you, but you would not listen to them—

⁶ then I will destroy this Temple as I destroyed Shiloh, the place where the Tabernacle was located. And I will make Jerusalem an object of cursing in every nation on earth.'"

⁷ The priests, the prophets, and all the people listened to Jeremiah as he spoke in front of the LORD's Temple.

⁸ But when Jeremiah had finished his message, saying everything the LORD had told him to say, the priests and prophets and all the people at the Temple mobbed him. "Kill him!" they shouted.

⁹ "What right do you have to prophesy in the LORD's name that this Temple will be destroyed like Shiloh? What do you mean, saying that Jerusalem will be destroyed?" And all the people threatened him as he stood in front of the Temple.

¹⁰ When the officials of Judah heard what was happening, they rushed over from the palace and sat down at the New Gate of the Temple to hold court.

¹¹ The priests and prophets presented their accusations to the officials and

the people. "This man should die!" they said. "You have heard with your own ears what a traitor he is, for he has prophesied against this city."

¹² Then Jeremiah spoke in his own defense. "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this Temple and this city," he said. "The LORD gave me every word that I have spoken.

¹³ But if you stop your sinning and begin to obey the LORD your God, he will cancel this disaster that he has announced against you.

¹⁴ As for me, I am helpless and in your power—do with me as you think best.

¹⁵ But if you kill me, rest assured that you will be killing an innocent man! The responsibility for such a deed will lie on you, on this city, and on every person living in it. For it is absolutely true that the LORD sent me to speak every word you have heard."

¹⁶ Then the officials and the people said to the priests and prophets, "This man does not deserve the death sentence, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God."

¹⁷ Then some of the wise old men stood and spoke to the people there.

¹⁸ They said, "Think back to the days when Micah of Moresheth prophesied during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah. He told the people of Judah, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: Mount Zion will be plowed like an open field; Jerusalem will be reduced to rubble! A great forest will grow on the hilltop, where the Temple now stands.'

¹⁹ But did King Hezekiah and the people kill him for saying this? No, they turned from their sins and worshiped the LORD. They begged him to have mercy on them. Then the LORD held back the terrible disaster he had pronounced

against them. If we kill Jeremiah, who knows what will happen to us?"

²⁰ (At this time, Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim was also prophesying for the LORD. And he predicted the same terrible disaster against the city and nation as Jeremiah did.)

²¹ When King Jehoiakim and the army officers and officials heard what he was saying, the king sent someone to kill him. But Uriah heard about the plot and escaped to Egypt.

²² Then King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Acbor to Egypt along with several other men to capture Uriah.

²³ They took him prisoner and brought him back to King Jehoiakim. The king then killed Uriah with a sword and had him buried in an unmarked grave.)

²⁴ Ahikam son of Shaphan also stood with Jeremiah and persuaded the court

not to turn him over to the mob to be killed.

27 ¹ This message came to Jeremiah from the LORD early in the reign of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah.

² The LORD said to me, "Make a yoke, and fasten it on your neck with leather thongs.

³ Then send messages to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon through their ambassadors to King Zedekiah in Jerusalem.

⁴ Give them this message for their masters: 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says:

⁵ By my great power I have made the earth and all its people and every animal. I can give these things of mine to anyone I choose.

⁶ Now I will give your countries to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who is my

servant. I have put everything, even the wild animals, under his control.

⁷ All the nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until his time is up. But then many nations and great kings will conquer and rule over Babylon.

⁸ So you must submit to Babylon's king and serve him; put your neck under Babylon's yoke! I will punish any nation that refuses to be his slave, says the LORD. I will send war, famine, and disease upon that nation until Babylon has conquered it.

⁹ "Do not listen to your false prophets, fortune-tellers, interpreters of dreams, mediums, and sorcerers who say, "The king of Babylon will not conquer you."

¹⁰ They are all liars, and I will drive you from your land and send you far away to die.

¹¹ But the people of any nation that submits to the king of Babylon will be

allowed to stay in their own country to farm the land as usual. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

¹² Then I repeated this same message to King Zedekiah of Judah. "If you want to live, submit to the king of Babylon and his people," I said.

¹³ "Why do you insist on dying—you and your people? Why should you choose war, famine, and disease, which the LORD will bring against every nation that refuses to submit to Babylon's king?"

¹⁴ Do not listen to the false prophets who keep telling you, 'The king of Babylon will not conquer you.' They are liars.

¹⁵ This is what the LORD says: I have not sent these prophets! They are telling you lies in my name, so I will drive you from this land. You will all die—you and all these prophets, too."

¹⁶ Then I spoke to the priests and the people and said, "This is what the LORD says: Do not listen to your prophets who claim that soon the gold utensils taken from my Temple will be returned from Babylon. It is all a lie!

¹⁷ Do not listen to them. Surrender to the king of Babylon, and you will live. Why should this whole city be destroyed?

¹⁸ If they really are the LORD's prophets, let them pray to the LORD Almighty about the gold utensils that are still left in the LORD's Temple and in the king's palace and in the palaces of Jerusalem. Let them pray that these remaining articles will not be carried away with you to Babylon!

¹⁹ "For this is what the LORD Almighty says about the bronze pillars in front of the Temple, the bronze Sea in the Temple

courtyard, the bronze water carts, and all the other ceremonial articles.

²⁰ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon left them here when he exiled Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to Babylon, along with all the other important people of Judah and Jerusalem.

²¹ Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says about the precious things kept in the Temple and in the palace of Judah's king:

²² They will all be carried away to Babylon and will stay there until I send for them, says the LORD. But someday I will bring them back to Jerusalem again."

28 ¹ One day in late summer of that same year—the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah—Hananiah son of Azzur, a prophet from Gibeon, addressed me publicly in the Temple while all the priests and people listened. He said,

² "The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will remove the yoke of the king of Babylon from your necks.

³ Within two years, I will bring back all the Temple treasures that King Nebuchadnezzar carried off to Babylon.

⁴ And I will bring back Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the other captives that were taken to Babylon. I will surely break the yoke that the king of Babylon has put on your necks. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

⁵ Jeremiah responded to Hananiah as they stood in front of all the priests and people at the Temple.

⁶ He said, "Amen! May your prophecies come true! I hope the LORD does everything you say. I hope he does bring back from Babylon the treasures of this Temple and all our loved ones.

⁷ But listen now to the solemn words I speak to you in the presence of all these people.

⁸ The ancient prophets who preceded you and me spoke against many nations, always warning of war, famine, and disease.

⁹ So a prophet who predicts peace must carry the burden of proof. Only when his predictions come true can it be known that he is really from the LORD."

¹⁰ Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it.

¹¹ And Hananiah said again to the crowd that had gathered, "The LORD has promised that within two years he will break the yoke of oppression from all the nations now subject to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon." At that, Jeremiah left the Temple area.

¹² Soon afterward the LORD gave this message to Jeremiah:

¹³ "Go and tell Hananiah, 'This is what the LORD says: You have broken a wooden yoke, but you have replaced it with a yoke of iron.

¹⁴ The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I have put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these nations, forcing them into slavery under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I have put everything, even the wild animals, under his control.'"

¹⁵ Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, but the people believe your lies.

¹⁶ Therefore, the LORD says you must die. Your life will end this very year because you have rebelled against the LORD."

¹⁷ Two months later, Hananiah died.

29 ¹ Jeremiah wrote a letter from Jerusalem to the elders, priests, prophets, and all the people who

had been exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.

² This was after King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah, and all the craftsmen had been deported from Jerusalem.

³ He sent the letter with Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, when they went to Babylon as King Zedekiah's ambassadors to Nebuchadnezzar. This is what Jeremiah's letter said:

⁴ The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, sends this message to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem:

⁵ "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food you produce.

⁶ Marry, and have children. Then find spouses for them, and have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away!

⁷ And work for the peace and prosperity of Babylon. Pray to the LORD for that city where you are held captive, for if Babylon has peace, so will you."

⁸ The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says, "Do not let the prophets and mediums who are there in Babylon trick you. Do not listen to their dreams

⁹ because they prophesy lies in my name. I have not sent them," says the LORD.

¹⁰ "The truth is that you will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again.

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

¹² In those days when you pray, I will listen.

¹³ If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me.

¹⁴ I will be found by you," says the LORD. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and bring you home again to your own land."

¹⁵ You may claim that the LORD has raised up prophets for you in Babylon.

¹⁶ But this is what the LORD says about the king who sits on David's throne and all those still living here in Jerusalem—your relatives who were not exiled to Babylon.

¹⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I will send war, famine, and disease upon them and make them like rotting figs—too bad to eat.

¹⁸ Yes, I will pursue them with war, famine, and disease, and I will scatter them around the world. In every nation where I send them, I will make them an

object of damnation, horror, contempt, and mockery.

¹⁹ For they refuse to listen to me, though I have spoken to them repeatedly through my prophets. And you who are in exile have not listened either," says the LORD.

²⁰ Therefore, listen to this message from the LORD, all you captives there in Babylon.

²¹ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says about your prophets—Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah—who are telling you lies in my name: "I will turn them over to Nebuchadnezzar for a public execution.

²² Their terrible fate will become proverbial, so that whenever the Judean exiles want to curse someone they will say, 'May the LORD make you like

Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon burned alive!’

²³ For these men have done terrible things among my people. They have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives and have lied in my name. I am a witness to this," says the LORD.

²⁴ The LORD sent this message to Shemaiah the Nehelamite in Babylon:

²⁵ "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You wrote a letter on your own authority to Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, the priest, and you sent copies to the other priests and people in Jerusalem. You said to Zephaniah,

²⁶ ‘The LORD has appointed you to replace Jehoiada as the priest in charge of the house of the LORD. You are responsible to put anyone who claims to be a prophet in the stocks and neck irons.

²⁷ So why have you done nothing to stop Jeremiah from Anathoth, who pretends to be a prophet among you?

²⁸ Jeremiah sent a letter here to Babylon, predicting that our captivity will be a long one. He said we should build homes and plan to stay for many years. He said we should plant fruit trees, because we will be here to eat the fruit for many years to come.'"

²⁹ But when Zephaniah the priest received Shemaiah's letter, he took it to Jeremiah and read it to him.

³⁰ Then the LORD gave this message to Jeremiah:

³¹ "Send an open letter to all the exiles in Babylon. Tell them, 'This is what the LORD says concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Since he has prophesied to you when I did not send him and has tricked you into believing his lies,

³² I will punish him and his family. None of his descendants will see the good things I will do for my people, for he has taught you to rebel against me. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

30 ¹ The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said,

² "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Write down for the record everything I have said to you, Jeremiah.

³ For the time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people of Israel and Judah. I will bring them home to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and they will possess it and live here again. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

⁴ This is the message the LORD gave concerning Israel and Judah:

⁵ "This is what the LORD says: I have heard the people crying; there is only fear and trembling.

⁶ Now let me ask you a question: Do men give birth to babies? Then why do they stand there, ashen-faced, hands pressed against their sides like women about to give birth?

⁷ In all history there has never been such a time of terror. It will be a time of trouble for my people Israel. Yet in the end, they will be saved!

⁸ "For in that day, says the LORD Almighty, I will break the yoke from their necks and snap their chains. Foreigners will no longer be their masters.

⁹ For my people will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

¹⁰ "So do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel, says the LORD. For I will bring you home again from distant lands, and your children will return from their exile. Israel will return and will have peace and quiet in their

own land, and no one will make them afraid.

¹¹ For I am with you and will save you, says the LORD. I will completely destroy the nations where I have scattered you, but I will not destroy you. But I must discipline you; I cannot let you go unpunished.

¹² "This is what the LORD says: Yours is an incurable bruise, a terrible wound.

¹³ There is no one to help you or bind up your injury. You are beyond the help of any medicine.

¹⁴ All your allies have left you and do not care about you anymore. I have wounded you cruelly, as though I were your enemy. For your sins are many, and your guilt is great.

¹⁵ Why do you protest your punishment—this wound that has no cure? I have had to punish you

because your sins are many and your guilt is great.

¹⁶ "But in that coming day, all who destroy you will be destroyed, and all your enemies will be sent into exile. Those who plunder you will be plundered, and those who attack you will be attacked.

¹⁷ I will give you back your health and heal your wounds, says the LORD. "Now you are called an outcast—'Jerusalem for whom nobody cares.'

¹⁸ But the LORD says this: When I bring you home again from your captivity and restore your fortunes, Jerusalem will be rebuilt on her ruins. The palace will be reconstructed as it was before.

¹⁹ There will be joy and songs of thanksgiving, and I will multiply my people and make of them a great and honored nation.

²⁰ Their children will prosper as they did long ago. I will establish them as a nation before me, and I will punish anyone who hurts them.

²¹ They will have their own ruler again, and he will not be a foreigner. I will invite him to approach me, says the LORD, for who would dare to come unless invited?

²² You will be my people, and I will be your God."

²³ Look! The LORD's anger bursts out like a storm, a driving wind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked.

²⁴ The fierce anger of the LORD will not diminish until it has finished all his plans. In the days to come, you will understand all this.

31 ¹ "In that day," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people.

² I will care for the survivors as they travel through the wilderness. I will

again come to give rest to the people of Israel."

³ Long ago the LORD said to Israel: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.

⁴ I will rebuild you, my virgin Israel. You will again be happy and dance merrily with tambourines.

⁵ Again you will plant your vineyards on the mountains of Samaria and eat from your own gardens there.

⁶ The day will come when watchmen will shout from the hill country of Ephraim, 'Come, let us go up to Jerusalem to worship the LORD our God.'"

⁷ Now this is what the LORD says: "Sing with joy for Israel! Shout for the greatest of nations! Shout out with praise and joy: 'Save your people, O LORD, the remnant of Israel!'

⁸ For I will bring them from the north and from the distant corners of the earth. I will not forget the blind and lame, the expectant mothers and women about to give birth. A great company will return!

⁹ Tears of joy will stream down their faces, and I will lead them home with great care. They will walk beside quiet streams and not stumble. For I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my oldest child.

¹⁰ "Listen to this message from the LORD, you nations of the world; proclaim it in distant coastlands: The LORD, who scattered his people, will gather them together and watch over them as a shepherd does his flock.

¹¹ For the LORD has redeemed Israel from those too strong for them.

¹² They will come home and sing songs of joy on the heights of Jerusalem. They

will be radiant because of the many gifts the LORD has given them—the good crops of wheat, wine, and oil, and the healthy flocks and herds. Their life will be like a watered garden, and all their sorrows will be gone.

¹³ The young women will dance for joy, and the men—old and young—will join in the celebration. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and exchange their sorrow for rejoicing.

¹⁴ I will supply the priests with an abundance of offerings. I will satisfy my people with my bounty. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

¹⁵ This is what the LORD says: "A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah—mourning and weeping unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted—for her children are dead."

¹⁶ But now the LORD says, "Do not weep any longer, for I will reward you.

Your children will come back to you from the distant land of the enemy.

¹⁷ There is hope for your future," says the LORD. "Your children will come again to their own land.

¹⁸ I have heard Israel saying, 'You disciplined me severely, but I deserved it. I was like a calf that needed to be trained for the yoke and plow. Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the LORD my God.

¹⁹ I turned away from God, but then I was sorry. I kicked myself for my stupidity! I was thoroughly ashamed of all I did in my younger days.'

²⁰ "Is not Israel still my son, my darling child?" asks the LORD. "I had to punish him, but I still love him. I long for him and surely will have mercy on him.

²¹ "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Mark well the path by which you came.

Come back again, my virgin Israel; return to your cities here.

²² How long will you wander, my wayward daughter? For the LORD will cause something new and different to happen—Israel will embrace her God."

²³ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "When I bring them back again, the people of Judah and its cities will again say, 'The LORD bless you—O righteous home, O holy mountain!'

²⁴ And city dwellers and farmers and shepherds alike will live together in peace and happiness.

²⁵ For I have given rest to the weary and joy to the sorrowing."

²⁶ At this, I woke up and looked around. My sleep had been very sweet.

²⁷ "The time will come," says the LORD, "when I will greatly increase the

population and multiply the number of cattle here in Israel and Judah.

²⁸ In the past I uprooted and tore down this nation. I overthrew it, destroyed it, and brought disaster upon it. But in the future I will plant it and build it up," says the LORD.

²⁹ "The people will no longer quote this proverb: 'The parents eat sour grapes, but their children's mouths pucker at the taste.'

³⁰ All people will die for their own sins—those who eat the sour grapes will be the ones whose mouths will pucker.

³¹ "The day will come," says the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah.

³² This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke

that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the LORD.

³³ "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the LORD. "I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴ And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their family, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will already know me," says the LORD. "And I will forgive their wickedness and will never again remember their sins."

³⁵ It is the LORD who provides the sun to light the day and the moon and stars to light the night. It is he who stirs the sea into roaring waves. His name is the LORD Almighty, and this is what he says:

³⁶ "I am as likely to reject my people Israel as I am to do away with the laws of nature!

³⁷ Just as the heavens cannot be measured and the foundation of the earth cannot be explored, so I will not consider casting them away forever for their sins. I, the LORD, have spoken!

³⁸ "The time is coming," says the LORD, "when all Jerusalem will be rebuilt for me, from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

³⁹ A measuring line will be stretched out over the hill of Gareb and across to Goah.

⁴⁰ And the entire area—including the graveyard and ash dump in the valley, and all the fields out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the Horse Gate—will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be captured or destroyed."

32 ¹ The following message came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah. This was also the eighteenth year of the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar.

² Jerusalem was under siege from the Babylonian army, and Jeremiah was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace.

³ King Zedekiah had put him there because he continued to give this prophecy: "This is what the LORD says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon.

⁴ King Zedekiah will be captured by the Babylonians and taken to the king of Babylon to be judged and sentenced.

⁵ I will take Zedekiah to Babylon and will deal with him there. If you fight against the Babylonians, you will never succeed."

⁶ At that time the LORD sent me a message. He said,

⁷ "Your cousin Hanamel son of Shallum will come and say to you, 'Buy my field at Anathoth. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else.'"

⁸ Then, just as the LORD had said he would, Hanamel came and visited me in the prison. He said, "Buy my field at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else, so buy it for yourself." Then I knew for sure that the message I had heard was from the LORD.

⁹ So I bought the field at Anathoth, paying Hanamel seventeen pieces of silver for it.

¹⁰ I signed and sealed the deed of purchase before witnesses, weighed out the silver, and paid him.

¹¹ Then I took the sealed deed and an unsealed copy of the deed, which contained the terms and conditions of the purchase,

¹² and I handed them to Baruch son of Neriah and grandson of Mahseiah. I did all this in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, the witnesses who had signed the deed, and all the men of Judah who were there.

¹³ Then I said to Baruch as they all listened,

¹⁴ "The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Take both this sealed deed and the unsealed copy, and put them into a pottery jar to preserve them for a long time.

¹⁵ For the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Someday people will again own property here in this land and will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields."

¹⁶ Then after I had given the papers to Baruch, I prayed to the LORD:

¹⁷ "O Sovereign LORD! You have made the heavens and earth by your great power. Nothing is too hard for you!

¹⁸ You are loving and kind to thousands, though children suffer for their parents' sins. You are the great and powerful God, the LORD Almighty.

¹⁹ You have all wisdom and do great and mighty miracles. You are very aware of the conduct of all people, and you reward them according to their deeds.

²⁰ You performed miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt—things still remembered to this day! And you have continued to do great miracles in Israel and all around the world. You have made your name very great, as it is today.

²¹ "You brought Israel out of Egypt with mighty signs and wonders, with great power and overwhelming terror.

²² You gave the people of Israel this land that you had promised their ancestors long before—a land flowing with milk and honey.

²³ Our ancestors came and conquered it and lived in it, but they refused to obey you or follow your law. They have hardly done one thing you told them to! That is why you have sent this terrible disaster upon them.

²⁴ "See how the siege ramps have been built against the city walls! Because of war, famine, and disease, the city has been handed over to the Babylonians, who will conquer it. Everything has happened just as you said it would.

²⁵ And yet, O Sovereign LORD, you have told me to buy the field—paying good money for it before these witnesses—

even though the city will soon belong to the Babylonians."

²⁶ Then this message came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

²⁷ "I am the LORD, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?"

²⁸ I will hand this city over to the Babylonians and to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he will capture it.

²⁹ The Babylonians outside the walls will come in and set fire to the city. They will burn down all these houses, where the people caused my fury to rise by offering incense to Baal on the rooftops and by pouring out drink offerings to other gods.

³⁰ Israel and Judah have done nothing but wrong since their earliest days. They have infuriated me with all their evil deeds," says the LORD.

³¹ "From the time this city was built until now, it has done nothing but anger me, so I am determined to get rid of it.

³² "The sins of Israel and Judah—the sins of the people of Jerusalem, the kings, the officials, the priests, and the prophets—stir up my anger.

³³ My people have turned their backs on me and have refused to return. Day after day, year after year, I taught them right from wrong, but they would not listen or obey.

³⁴ They have set up their abominable idols right in my own Temple, defiling it.

³⁵ They have built pagan shrines to Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and there they sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing. What an

incredible evil, causing Judah to sin so greatly!

³⁶ "Now I want to say something more about this city. You have been saying, 'It will fall to the king of Babylon through war, famine, and disease.' But this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says:

³⁷ I will surely bring my people back again from all the countries where I will scatter them in my fury. I will bring them back to this very city and let them live in peace and safety.

³⁸ They will be my people, and I will be their God.

³⁹ And I will give them one heart and mind to worship me forever, for their own good and for the good of all their descendants.

⁴⁰ "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, promising not to stop doing good for them. I will put a

desire in their hearts to worship me, and they will never leave me.

⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing good to them and will faithfully and wholeheartedly replant them in this land.

⁴² Just as I have sent all these calamities upon them, so I will do all the good I have promised them. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁴³ "Fields will again be bought and sold in this land about which you now say, 'It has been ravaged by the Babylonians, a land where people and animals have all disappeared.'

⁴⁴ Yes, fields will once again be bought and sold—deeds signed and sealed and witnessed—in the land of Benjamin and here in Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the hill country, in the foothills of Judah and in the Negev, too. For someday I will restore prosperity to them. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

33 ¹ While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the LORD gave him this second message:

² "The LORD, the Maker of the heavens and earth—the LORD is his name—says this:

³ Ask me and I will tell you some remarkable secrets about what is going to happen here.

⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Though you have torn down the houses of this city and even the king's palace to get materials to strengthen the walls against the siege weapons of the enemy,

⁵ the Babylonians will still enter. The men of this city are already as good as dead, for I have determined to destroy them in my terrible anger. I have abandoned them because of all their wickedness.

⁶ "Nevertheless, the time will come when I will heal Jerusalem's damage and give her prosperity and peace.

⁷ I will restore the fortunes of Judah and Israel and rebuild their cities.

⁸ I will cleanse away their sins against me, and I will forgive all their sins of rebellion.

⁹ Then this city will bring me joy, glory, and honor before all the nations of the earth! The people of the world will see the good I do for my people and will tremble with awe!

¹⁰ "This is what the LORD says: You say, 'This land has been ravaged, and the people and animals have all disappeared.' Yet in the empty streets of Jerusalem and Judah's other towns, there will be heard once more

¹¹ the sounds of joy and laughter. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will be heard again, along with

the joyous songs of people bringing thanksgiving offerings to the LORD. They will sing, 'Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good. His faithful love endures forever!' For I will restore the prosperity of this land to what it was in the past, says the LORD.

¹² "This is what the LORD Almighty says: This land—though it is now desolate and the people and animals have all disappeared—will once more see shepherds leading sheep and lambs.

¹³ Once again their flocks will prosper in the towns of the hill country, the foothills of Judah, the Negev, the land of Benjamin, the vicinity of Jerusalem, and all the towns of Judah. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹⁴ "The day will come, says the LORD, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good I have promised them.

¹⁵ At that time I will bring to the throne of David a righteous descendant, and he will do what is just and right throughout the land.

¹⁶ In that day Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And their motto will be 'The LORD is our righteousness!'

¹⁷ For this is what the LORD says: David will forever have a descendant sitting on the throne of Israel.

¹⁸ And there will always be Levitical priests to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings and sacrifices to me."

¹⁹ Then this message came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

²⁰ "If you can break my covenant with the day and the night so that they do not come on their usual schedule,

²¹ only then will my covenant with David, my servant, be broken. Only then will he no longer have a descendant to

reign on his throne. The same is true for my covenant with the Levitical priests who minister before me.

²² And as the stars cannot be counted and the sand on the seashores cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David, my servant, and the Levites who minister before me."

²³ The LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said,

²⁴ "Have you heard what people are saying?—'The LORD chose Judah and Israel and then abandoned them!' They are sneering and saying that Israel is not worthy to be counted as a nation.

²⁵ But this is the LORD's reply: I would no more reject my people than I would change my laws of night and day, of earth and sky.

²⁶ I will never abandon the descendants of Jacob or David, my servant, or change the plan that David's descendants will

rule the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Instead, I will restore them to their land and have mercy on them."

34 ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all the armies from the kingdoms he ruled, and he fought against Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. At that time this message came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

² "Go to King Zedekiah of Judah, and tell him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will burn it.

³ You will not escape his grasp but will be taken into captivity. You will stand before the king of Babylon to be judged and sentenced. Then you will be exiled to Babylon.'

⁴ "But listen to this promise from the LORD, O Zedekiah, king of Judah. This

is what the LORD says: 'You will not be killed in war

⁵ but will die peacefully among your people. They will burn incense in your memory, just as they did for your ancestors. They will weep for you and say, "Alas, our king is dead!" This I have decreed, says the LORD.'

⁶ So Jeremiah the prophet delivered the message to King Zedekiah of Judah.

⁷ At this time the Babylonian army was besieging Jerusalem, Lachish, and Azekah—the only cities of Judah with their walls still standing.

⁸ This message came to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah made a covenant with the people, proclaiming freedom for the slaves.

⁹ He had ordered all the people to free their Hebrew slaves—both men and women. No one was to keep a fellow Judean in bondage.

¹⁰ The officials and all the people had obeyed the king's command,

¹¹ but later they changed their minds. They took back the people they had freed, making them slaves again.

¹² So the LORD gave them this message through Jeremiah:

¹³ "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I made a covenant with your ancestors long ago when I rescued them from their slavery in Egypt.

¹⁴ I told them that every Hebrew slave must be freed after serving six years. But this was never done.

¹⁵ Recently you repented and did what was right, following my command. You freed your slaves and made a solemn covenant with me in my Temple.

¹⁶ But now you have shrugged off your oath and defiled my name by taking back the men and women you had freed, making them slaves once again.

¹⁷ "Therefore, this is what the LORD says: Since you have not obeyed me by setting your countrymen free, I will set you free to be destroyed by war, famine, and disease. You will be considered a disgrace by all the nations of the earth.

¹⁸ Because you have refused the terms of our covenant, I will cut you apart just as you cut apart the calf when you walked between its halves to solemnize your vows.

¹⁹ Yes, I will cut you apart, whether you are officials of Judah or Jerusalem, court officials, priests, or common people—for you have broken your oath.

²⁰ I will give you to your enemies, and they will kill you. Your bodies will be food for the vultures and wild animals.

²¹ I will hand over King Zedekiah of Judah and his officials to the army of the king of Babylon. And though Babylon's king has left this city for a while,

²² I will call the Babylonian armies back again. They will fight against this city and will capture and burn it. I will see to it that all the towns of Judah are destroyed and left completely empty."

35 ¹ This is the message the LORD gave Jeremiah when Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king of Judah:

² "Go to the settlement where the families of the Recabites live, and invite them to the LORD's Temple. Take them into one of the inner rooms, and offer them some wine."

³ So I went to see Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah and grandson of Habazziniah and all his brothers and sons—representing all the Recabite families.

⁴ I took them to the Temple, and we went into the room assigned to the sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah, a man of God. This room was located next to the one used by the palace officials, directly

above the room of Maaseiah son of Shallum, the Temple gatekeeper.

⁵ I set cups and jugs of wine before them and invited them to have a drink,

⁶ but they refused. "No," they said. "We don't drink wine, because Jehonadab son of Recab, our ancestor, gave us this command: 'You and your descendants must never drink wine.'

⁷ And do not build houses or plant crops or vineyards, but always live in tents. If you follow these commands, you will live long, good lives in the land.'

⁸ So we have obeyed him in all these things. We have never had a drink of wine since then, nor have our wives, our sons, or our daughters.

⁹ We haven't built houses or owned vineyards or farms or planted crops.

¹⁰ We have lived in tents and have fully obeyed all the commands of Jehonadab, our ancestor.

¹¹ But when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon arrived in this country, we were afraid of the Babylonian and Aramean armies. So we decided to move to Jerusalem. That is why we are here."

¹² Then the LORD gave this message to Jeremiah:

¹³ "The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and say to the people in Judah and Jerusalem, 'Come and learn a lesson about how to obey me.

¹⁴ The Recabites do not drink wine because their ancestor Jehonadab told them not to. But I have spoken to you again and again, and you refuse to listen or obey.

¹⁵ I have sent you prophet after prophet to tell you to turn from your wicked ways and to stop worshiping other gods, so that you might live in peace here in the land I gave to you and your ancestors. But you would not listen to me or obey.

¹⁶ The families of Recab have obeyed their ancestor completely, but you have refused to listen to me.'

¹⁷ "Therefore, the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Because you refuse to listen or answer when I call, I will send upon Judah and Jerusalem all the disasters I have threatened."

¹⁸ Then Jeremiah turned to the Recabites and said, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You have obeyed your ancestor Jehonadab in every respect, following all his instructions.

¹⁹ Because of this, Jehonadab son of Recab will always have descendants who serve me. I, the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, have spoken!"

36 ¹ During the fourth year that Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king in Judah, the LORD gave this message to Jeremiah:

² "Get a scroll, and write down all my messages against Israel, Judah, and the other nations. Begin with the first message back in the days of Josiah, and write down every message you have given, right up to the present time.

³ Perhaps the people of Judah will repent if they see in writing all the terrible things I have planned for them. Then I will be able to forgive their sins and wrongdoings."

⁴ So Jeremiah sent for Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote down all the prophecies that the LORD had given him.

⁵ Then Jeremiah said to Baruch, "I am a prisoner here and unable to go to the Temple.

⁶ So you go to the Temple on the next day of fasting, and read the messages from the LORD that are on this scroll. On

that day people will be there from all over Judah.

⁷ Perhaps even yet they will turn from their evil ways and ask the LORD's forgiveness before it is too late. For the LORD's terrible anger has been pronounced against them."

⁸ Baruch did as Jeremiah told him and read these messages from the LORD to the people at the Temple.

⁹ This happened on the day of sacred fasting held in late autumn, during the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah. People from all over Judah came to attend the services at the Temple on that day.

¹⁰ Baruch read Jeremiah's words to all the people from the Temple room of Gemariah son of Shaphan. This room was just off the upper courtyard of the Temple, near the New Gate entrance.

¹¹ When Micaiah son of Gemariah and grandson of Shaphan heard the messages from the LORD,

¹² he went down to the secretary's room in the palace where the administrative officials were meeting. Elishama the secretary was there, along with Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Acbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the others with official responsibilities.

¹³ When Micaiah told them about the messages Baruch was reading to the people,

¹⁴ the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, grandson of Shelemiah, and great-grandson of Cushi, to ask Baruch to come and read the messages to them, too. So Baruch took the scroll and went to them.

¹⁵ "Sit down and read the scroll to us," the officials said, and Baruch did as they requested.

¹⁶ By the time Baruch had finished reading, they were badly frightened. "We must tell the king what we have heard," they said.

¹⁷ "But first, tell us how you got these messages. Did they come directly from Jeremiah?"

¹⁸ So Baruch explained, "Jeremiah dictated them to me word by word, and I wrote down his words with ink on this scroll."

¹⁹ "You and Jeremiah should both hide," the officials told Baruch. "Don't tell anyone where you are!"

²⁰ Then the officials left the scroll for safekeeping in the room of Elishama the secretary and went to tell the king.

²¹ The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought it from Elishama's room

and read it to the king as all his officials stood by.

²² It was late autumn, and the king was in a winterized part of the palace, sitting in front of a fire to keep warm.

²³ Whenever Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king took his knife and cut off that section of the scroll. He then threw it into the fire, section by section, until the whole scroll was burned up.

²⁴ Neither the king nor his officials showed any signs of fear or repentance at what they heard.

²⁵ Even when Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah begged the king not to burn the scroll, he wouldn't listen.

²⁶ Then the king commanded his son Jerahmeel, Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah. But the LORD had hidden them.

²⁷ After the king had burned Jeremiah's scroll, the LORD gave Jeremiah another message. He said,

²⁸ "Get another scroll, and write everything again just as you did on the scroll King Jehoiakim burned.

²⁹ Then say to the king, 'This is what the LORD says: You burned the scroll because it said the king of Babylon would destroy this land and everything in it.

³⁰ Now this is what the LORD says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: He will have no heirs to sit on the throne of David. His dead body will be thrown out to lie unburied—exposed to hot days and frosty nights.

³¹ I will punish him and his family and his officials because of their sins. I will pour out on them and on all the people of Judah and Jerusalem all the disasters I

have promised, for they would not listen to my warnings.’”

³² Then Jeremiah took another scroll and dictated again to his secretary Baruch. He wrote everything that had been on the scroll King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. Only this time, he added much more!

37 ¹ Zedekiah son of Josiah succeeded Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim as the king of Judah. He was appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

² But neither King Zedekiah nor his officials nor the people who were left in the land listened to what the LORD said through Jeremiah.

³ Nevertheless, King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, to ask Jeremiah, "Please pray to the LORD our God for us."

⁴ Jeremiah had not yet been imprisoned, so he could come and go as he pleased.

⁵ At this time the army of Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt appeared at the southern border of Judah. When the Babylonian army heard about it, they withdrew from their siege of Jerusalem.

⁶ Then the LORD gave this message to Jeremiah:

⁷ "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to ask me what is going to happen, that Pharaoh's army is about to return to Egypt, though he came here to help you.

⁸ Then the Babylonians will come back and capture this city and burn it to the ground.

⁹ The LORD says: Do not fool yourselves that the Babylonians are gone for good. They aren't!

¹⁰ Even if you were to destroy the entire Babylonian army, leaving only a handful of wounded survivors, they would still stagger from their tents and burn this city to the ground!"

¹¹ When the Babylonian army left Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's approaching army,

¹² Jeremiah started to leave the city on his way to the land of Benjamin, to see the property he had bought.

¹³ But as he was walking through the Benjamin Gate, a sentry arrested him and said, "You are defecting to the Babylonians!" The sentry making the arrest was Irijah son of Shelemiah and grandson of Hananiah.

¹⁴ "That's not true!" Jeremiah protested. "I had no intention of doing any such thing." But Irijah wouldn't listen, and he took Jeremiah before the officials.

¹⁵ They were furious with Jeremiah and had him flogged and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary. Jonathan's house had been converted into a prison.

¹⁶ Jeremiah was put into a dungeon cell, where he remained for many days.

¹⁷ Later King Zedekiah secretly requested that Jeremiah come to the palace, where the king asked him, "Do you have any messages from the LORD?" "Yes, I do!" said Jeremiah. "You will be defeated by the king of Babylon."

¹⁸ Then Jeremiah asked the king, "What crime have I committed? What have I done against you, your officials, or the people that I should be imprisoned like this?"

¹⁹ Where are your prophets now who told you the king of Babylon would not attack you?

²⁰ Listen, my lord the king, I beg you. Don't send me back to the dungeon in the house of Jonathan the secretary, for I will die there."

²¹ So King Zedekiah commanded that Jeremiah not be returned to the dungeon. Instead, he was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace. The king also commanded that Jeremiah be given a loaf of fresh bread every day as long as there was any left in the city. So Jeremiah was put in the palace prison.

38 ¹ Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah heard what Jeremiah had been telling the people. He was saying,

² "This is what the LORD says: Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live.

³ The LORD also says: The city of Jerusalem will surely be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it."

⁴ So these officials went to the king and said, "Sir, this man must die! That kind of talk will undermine the morale of the few fighting men we have left, as well as that of all the people, too. This man is a traitor!"

⁵ So King Zedekiah agreed. "All right," he said. "Do as you like. I will do nothing to stop you."

⁶ So the officials took Jeremiah from his cell and lowered him by ropes into an empty cistern in the prison yard. It belonged to Malkijah, a member of the royal family. There was no water in the cistern, but there was a thick layer of mud at the bottom, and Jeremiah sank down into it.

⁷ But Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, an important palace official, heard that Jeremiah was in the cistern. At that time the king was holding court at the Benjamin Gate,

⁸ so Ebed-melech rushed from the palace to speak with him.

⁹ "My lord the king," he said, "these men have done a very evil thing in putting Jeremiah the prophet into the cistern. He will soon die of hunger, for almost all the bread in the city is gone."

¹⁰ So the king told Ebed-melech, "Take along thirty of my men, and pull Jeremiah out of the cistern before he dies."

¹¹ So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to a room in the palace beneath the treasury, where he found some old rags and discarded clothing. He carried these to the cistern and lowered them to Jeremiah on a rope.

¹² Ebed–melech called down to Jeremiah, "Put these rags under your armpits to protect you from the ropes." Then when Jeremiah was ready,

¹³ they pulled him out. So Jeremiah was returned to the courtyard of the guard—the palace prison—where he remained.

¹⁴ One day King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah to meet him at the third entrance of the LORD's Temple. "I want to ask you something," the king said. "And don't try to hide the truth."

¹⁵ Jeremiah said, "If I tell you the truth, you will kill me. And if I give you advice, you won't listen to me anyway."

¹⁶ So King Zedekiah secretly promised him, "As surely as the LORD our Creator lives, I will not kill you or hand you over to the men who want you dead."

¹⁷ Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "The LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel,

says: If you surrender to Babylon, you and your family will live, and the city will not be burned.

¹⁸ But if you refuse to surrender, you will not escape! This city will be handed over to the Babylonians, and they will burn it to the ground."

¹⁹ "But I am afraid to surrender," the king said, "for the Babylonians will hand me over to the Judeans who have defected to them. And who knows what they will do to me?"

²⁰ Jeremiah replied, "You won't be handed over to them if you choose to obey the LORD. Your life will be spared, and all will go well for you.

²¹ But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has revealed to me:

²² All the women left in your palace will be brought out and given to the officers of the Babylonian army. Then the women will taunt you, saying, 'What fine

friends you have! They have betrayed and misled you. When your feet sank in the mud, they left you to your fate!’

²³ All your wives and children will be led out to the Babylonians, and you will not escape. You will be seized by the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned."

²⁴ Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Don't tell anyone you told me this, or you will die!

²⁵ My officials may hear that I spoke to you. Then they may say to you, 'Tell us what you and the king were talking about. If you don't tell us, we will kill you.'

²⁶ If this happens, just tell them you begged me not to send you back to Jonathan's dungeon, for fear you would die there."

²⁷ Sure enough, it wasn't long before the king's officials came to Jeremiah and asked him why the king had called

for him. But Jeremiah followed the king's instructions, and they left without finding out the truth. No one had overheard the conversation between Jeremiah and the king.

²⁸ And Jeremiah remained a prisoner in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

39 ¹ It was in January during the ninth year of King Zedekiah's reign that King Nebuchadnezzar and his army returned to besiege Jerusalem.

² Two and a half years later, on July 18, the Babylonians broke through the wall, and the city fell.

³ All the officers of the Babylonian army came in and sat in triumph at the Middle Gate: Nergal–sharezer of Samgar, and Nebo–sarsekim, a chief officer, and Nergal–sharezer, the king's adviser, and many others.

⁴ King Zedekiah and his royal guard saw the Babylonians in the city gate, so they fled when the darkness of night arrived. They went out through a gate between the two walls behind the king's garden and headed toward the Jordan Valley.

⁵ But the Babylonians chased the king and caught him on the plains of Jericho. They took him to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who was at Riblah in the land of Hamath. There the king of Babylon pronounced judgment upon Zedekiah.

⁶ He made Zedekiah watch as they killed his sons and all the nobles of Judah.

⁷ Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in chains, and sent him away to exile in Babylon.

⁸ Meanwhile, the Babylonians burned Jerusalem, including the palace, and tore down the walls of the city.

⁹ Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, sent to Babylon the remnant of the population as well as those who had defected to him.

¹⁰ But Nebuzaradan left a few of the poorest people in Judah, and he assigned them fields and vineyards to care for.

¹¹ King Nebuchadnezzar had told Nebuzaradan to find Jeremiah.

¹² "See that he isn't hurt," he had said. "Look after him well, and give him anything he wants."

¹³ So Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, and Nebushazban, a chief officer, and Nergal–sharezer, the king's adviser, and the other officers of Babylon's king

¹⁴ sent messengers to bring Jeremiah out of the prison. They put him under the care of Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan, who was to take him back to his home. So Jeremiah stayed in Judah among his own people.

¹⁵ The LORD had given the following message to Jeremiah while he was still in prison:

¹⁶ "Say to Ebed–melech the Ethiopian, 'The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will do to this city everything I have threatened. I will send disaster, not prosperity. You will see its destruction,

¹⁷ but I will rescue you from those you fear so much.

¹⁸ Because you trusted me, I will preserve your life and keep you safe. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

40 ¹ The LORD gave a message to Jeremiah after Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, had released him at Ramah. He had found Jeremiah bound in chains among the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being sent to exile in Babylon.

² The captain of the guard called for Jeremiah and said, "The LORD your God has brought this disaster on this land, ³ just as he said he would. For these people have sinned against the LORD and disobeyed him. That is why it happened.

⁴ Now I am going to take off your chains and let you go. If you want to come with me to Babylon, you are welcome. I will see that you are well cared for. But if you don't want to come, you may stay here. The whole land is before you—go wherever you like.

⁵ If you decide to stay, then return to Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan. He has been appointed governor of Judah by the king of Babylon. Stay there with the people he rules. But it's up to you; go wherever you like." Then Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah some food and money and let him go.

⁶ So Jeremiah returned to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and lived in Judah with the few who were still left in the land.

⁷ The leaders of the Judean guerrilla bands in the countryside heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam as governor over the poor people who were left behind in Judah, and that he hadn't exiled everyone to Babylon.

⁸ So they came to see Gedaliah at Mizpah. These are the names of the leaders who came: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan, sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and all their men.

⁹ Gedaliah assured them that it would be safe for them to surrender to the Babylonians. "Stay here, and serve the

king of Babylon," he said, "and all will go well for you.

¹⁰ As for me, I will stay at Mizpah to represent you before the Babylonians who come to meet with us. Settle in any town you wish, and live off the land. Harvest the grapes and summer fruits and olives, and store them away."

¹¹ When the Judeans in Moab, Ammon, Edom, and the other nearby countries heard that the king of Babylon had left a few people in Judah and that Gedaliah was the governor,

¹² they began to return to Judah from the places to which they had fled. They stopped at Mizpah to discuss their plans with Gedaliah and then went out into the Judean countryside to gather a great harvest of grapes and other crops.

¹³ Soon after this, Johanan son of Kareah and the other guerrilla leaders came to Gedaliah at Mizpah.

¹⁴ They said to him, "Did you know that Baalis, king of Ammon, has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to assassinate you?" But Gedaliah refused to believe them.

¹⁵ Later Johanan had a private conference with Gedaliah and volunteered to kill Ishmael secretly. "Why should we let him come and murder you?" Johanan asked. "What will happen then to the Judeans who have returned? Why should the few of us who are still left be scattered and lost?"

¹⁶ But Gedaliah said to Johanan, "I forbid you to do any such thing, for you are lying about Ishmael."

41 ¹ But in midautumn, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and grandson of Elishama, who was a member of the royal family, arrived in Mizpah accompanied by ten men. Gedaliah invited them to dinner. While they were eating,

² Ishmael and his ten men suddenly drew their swords and killed Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor.

³ Then they went out and slaughtered all the Judean officials and Babylonian soldiers who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah.

⁴ The next day, before anyone had heard about Gedaliah's murder,

⁵ eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. They had come to worship at the Temple of the LORD. They had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes, and cut themselves, and had brought along grain offerings and incense.

⁶ Ishmael left Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. When he reached them, he said, "Oh, come and see what has happened to Gedaliah!"

⁷ But as soon as they were all inside the town, Ishmael and his men killed all but ten of them and threw their bodies into a cistern.

⁸ The other ten had talked Ishmael into letting them go by promising to bring him their stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey that they had hidden away.

⁹ The cistern where Ishmael dumped the bodies of the men he murdered was the large one made by King Asa when he fortified Mizpah to protect himself against King Baasha of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with corpses.

¹⁰ Ishmael made captives of the king's daughters and the other people who had been left under Gedaliah's care in Mizpah by Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard. Taking them with him, he started back toward the land of Ammon.

¹¹ But when Johanan son of Kareah and the rest of the guerrilla leaders heard what Ishmael had done,

¹² they took all their men and set out to stop him. They caught up with him at the pool near Gibeon.

¹³ The people Ishmael had captured shouted for joy when they saw Johanan and his men.

¹⁴ And all the captives from Mizpah escaped and began to help Johanan.

¹⁵ Meanwhile, Ishmael and eight of his men escaped from Johanan into the land of Ammon.

¹⁶ Then Johanan son of Kareah and his officers led away all the people they had rescued—warriors, women, children, and palace officials.

¹⁷ They took them all to the village of Geruth–kimham near Bethlehem, where they prepared to leave for Egypt.

¹⁸ They were afraid of what the Babylonians would do when they heard that Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, the governor appointed by the Babylonian king.

42 ¹ Then all the army officers, including Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest, approached

² Jeremiah the prophet. They said, "Please pray to the LORD your God for us. As you know, we are only a tiny remnant compared to what we were before.

³ Beg the LORD your God to show us what to do and where to go."

⁴ "All right," Jeremiah replied. "I will pray to the LORD your God, and I will tell you everything he says. I will hide nothing from you."

⁵ Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD your God be a faithful witness against us if we refuse to obey whatever he tells us to do!

⁶ Whether we like it or not, we will obey the LORD our God to whom we send you with our plea. For if we obey him, everything will turn out well for us."

⁷ Ten days later, the LORD gave his reply to Jeremiah.

⁸ So he called for Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers, and for all the people, from the least to the greatest.

⁹ He said to them, "You sent me to the LORD, the God of Israel, with your request, and this is his reply:

¹⁰ 'Stay here in this land. If you do, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you. For I am sorry for all the punishment I have had to bring upon you.

¹¹ Do not fear the king of Babylon anymore, says the LORD. For I am with you and will save you and rescue you from his power.

¹² I will be merciful to you by making him kind, so he will let you stay here in your land.'

¹³ "But if you refuse to obey the LORD your God and say, 'We will not stay here,'

¹⁴ and if you insist on going to live in Egypt where you think you will be free from war, famine, and alarms,

¹⁵ then this is what the LORD says to the remnant of Judah. The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'If you insist on going to Egypt,

¹⁶ the war and famine you fear will follow close behind you, and you will die there.

¹⁷ That is the fate awaiting every one of you who insists on going to live in Egypt. Yes, you will die from war, famine, and

disease. None of you will escape from the disaster I will bring upon you there.'

¹⁸ "For the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Just as my anger and fury were poured out on the people of Jerusalem, so they will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. You will become an object of damnation, horror, cursing, and mockery. And you will never see your homeland again.'

¹⁹ "Listen, you remnant of Judah. The LORD has told you: 'Do not go to Egypt!' Don't forget this warning I have given you today.

²⁰ For you were deceitful when you sent me to pray to the LORD your God for you, saying, 'Just tell us what the LORD our God says, and we will do it!'

²¹ And today I have told you exactly what he said, but you will not obey the LORD your God any better now than you have in the past.

²² So you can be sure that you will die from war, famine, and disease in Egypt, where you insist on going."

43 ¹ When Jeremiah had finished giving this message from the LORD their God to all the people,

² Azariah son of Hoshai and Johanan son of Kareah and all the other proud men said to Jeremiah, "You lie! The LORD our God hasn't forbidden us to go to Egypt!

³ Baruch son of Neriah has convinced you to say this, so we will stay here and be killed by the Babylonians or be carried off into exile."

⁴ So Johanan and all the army officers and all the people refused to obey the LORD's command to stay in Judah.

⁵ Johanan and his officers took with them all the people who had returned from the nearby countries to which they had fled.

⁶ In the crowd were men, women, and children, the king's daughters, and all those whom Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, had left with Gedaliah. Also included were the prophet Jeremiah and Baruch.

⁷ The people refused to obey the LORD and went to Egypt, going as far as the city of Tahpanhes.

⁸ Then at Tahpanhes, the LORD gave another message to Jeremiah. He said,

⁹ "While the people of Judah are watching, bury large rocks between the pavement stones at the entrance of Pharaoh's palace here in Tahpanhes.

¹⁰ Then say to the people of Judah, 'The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will surely bring my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, here to Egypt. I will set his throne on these stones that I have hidden. He will spread his royal canopy over them.'

¹¹ And when he comes, he will destroy the land of Egypt. He will bring death to those destined for death; he will bring captivity to those destined for captivity; he will bring the sword against those destined for the sword.

¹² He will set fire to the temples of Egypt's gods, burning all their idols and carrying away the people as captives. He will pick clean the land of Egypt as a shepherd picks fleas from his cloak. And he himself will leave unharmed.

¹³ He will break down the sacred pillars standing in the temple of the sun in Egypt, and he will burn down the temples of Egypt's gods."

44 ¹ This is the message Jeremiah received concerning the Judeans living in northern Egypt in the cities of Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis, and throughout southern Egypt as well:

² "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You saw what I did to Jerusalem and to all the towns of Judah. They now lie in ruins, and no one lives in them.

³ Because of all their wickedness, my anger rose high against them. They burned incense and worshiped other gods—gods that neither they nor you nor any of your ancestors have ever known.

⁴ "Again and again I sent my servants, the prophets, to plead with them, 'Don't do these horrible things that I hate so much.'

⁵ But my people would not listen or turn back from their wicked ways. They kept right on burning incense to these gods.

⁶ And so my fury boiled over and fell like fire on the towns of Judah and into

the streets of Jerusalem, and now they are a desolate ruin.

⁷ "And now the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, asks you: Why are you destroying yourselves? For not one of you will survive—not a man, woman, or child among you who has come here from Judah, not even the babies in your arms.

⁸ Why arouse my anger by burning incense to the idols you have made here in Egypt? You will only destroy yourselves and make yourselves an object of cursing and mockery for all the nations of the earth.

⁹ Have you forgotten the sins of your ancestors, the sins of the kings and queens of Judah, and the sins you and your wives committed in Judah and Jerusalem?

¹⁰ To this very hour you have shown no remorse or reverence. No one has

chosen to follow my law and the decrees I gave to you and your ancestors before you.

¹¹ "Therefore, the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I have made up my mind to destroy every one of you!

¹² I will take this remnant of Judah that insisted on coming here to Egypt, and I will consume them. They will fall here in Egypt, killed by war and famine. All will die, from the least to the greatest. They will be an object of damnation, horror, cursing, and mockery.

¹³ I will punish them in Egypt just as I punished them in Jerusalem, by war, famine, and disease.

¹⁴ Of those who fled to Egypt with dreams of returning home to Judah, only a handful will escape."

¹⁵ Then all the women present and all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to idols—a great crowd

of all the Judeans living in Pathros, the southern region of Egypt—answered Jeremiah,

¹⁶ "We will not listen to your messages from the LORD!

¹⁷ We will do whatever we want. We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and sacrifice to her just as much as we like—just as we and our ancestors did before us, and as our kings and princes have always done in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For in those days we had plenty to eat, and we were well off and had no troubles!

¹⁸ But ever since we quit burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and stopped worshiping her, we have been in great trouble and have suffered the effects of war and famine."

¹⁹ "And," the women added, "do you suppose that we were worshiping the Queen of Heaven, pouring out drink

offerings to her, and making cakes marked with her image, without our husbands knowing it and helping us? Of course not!"

²⁰ Then Jeremiah said to all of them, men and women alike, who had given him that answer,

²¹ "Do you think the LORD did not know that you and your ancestors, your kings and officials, and all the people were burning incense to idols in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?"

²² It was because the LORD could no longer bear all the evil things you were doing that he made your land an object of cursing—a desolate ruin without a single inhabitant—as it is today.

²³ The very reason all these terrible things have happened to you is because you have burned incense to idols and sinned against the LORD, refusing to

obey him and follow his instructions, laws, and stipulations."

²⁴ Then Jeremiah said to them all, including the women, "Listen to this message from the LORD, all you citizens of Judah who live in Egypt.

²⁵ The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You and your wives have said that you will never give up your devotion and sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven, and you have proved it by your actions. Then go ahead and carry out your promises and vows to her!

²⁶ "But listen to this message from the LORD, all you Judeans now living in Egypt: I have sworn by my great name, says the LORD, that my name will no longer be spoken by any of the Judeans in the land of Egypt. None of you may invoke my name or use this oath: 'As surely as the Sovereign LORD lives!'

²⁷ For I will watch over you to bring you disaster and not good. You will suffer war and famine until all of you are dead.

²⁸ "Only a small number will escape death and return to Judah from Egypt. Then all those who came to Egypt will find out whose words are true, mine or theirs!

²⁹ And this is the proof I give you, says the LORD, that all I have threatened will happen to you and that I will punish you here:

³⁰ I will turn Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt, over to his enemies who want to kill him, just as I turned King Zedekiah of Judah over to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

45 ¹ The prophet Jeremiah gave a message to Baruch son of Neriah in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, after Baruch

had written down everything Jeremiah had dictated to him. He said,

² "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch:

³ You have said, 'I am overwhelmed with trouble! Haven't I had enough pain already? And now the LORD has added more! I am weary of my own sighing and can find no rest.'

⁴ "Baruch, this is what the LORD says: I will destroy this nation that I built. I will uproot what I planted.

⁵ Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don't do it! But don't be discouraged. I will bring great disaster upon all these people, but I will protect you wherever you go. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

46 ¹ The following messages were given to Jeremiah the prophet from the LORD concerning foreign nations.

² This message concerning Egypt was given in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, the king of Judah, on the occasion of the battle of Carchemish when Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, and his army were defeated beside the Euphrates River by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

³ "Buckle on your armor and advance into battle!

⁴ Harness the horses, and prepare to mount them. Put on your helmets, sharpen your spears, and prepare your armor.

⁵ But look! The Egyptian army flees in terror. The bravest of its fighting men run without a backward glance. They are terrorized at every turn, says the LORD.

⁶ The swiftest cannot flee; the mightiest warriors cannot escape. By the Euphrates River to the north they stumble and fall.

⁷ "Who is this, rising like the Nile River at floodtime, overflowing all the land?

⁸ It is the Egyptian army, boasting that it will cover the earth like a flood, destroying every foe.

⁹ Then come, you horses and chariots and mighty warriors of Egypt! Come, all you allies from Ethiopia, Libya, and Lydia who are skilled with the shield and bow!

¹⁰ For this is the day of the Lord, the LORD Almighty, a day of vengeance on his enemies. The sword will devour until it is satisfied, yes, drunk with your blood! The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will receive a sacrifice today in the north country beside the Euphrates River.

¹¹ Go up to Gilead to get ointment, O virgin daughter of Egypt! But your many medicines will bring you no healing.

¹² The nations have heard of your shame. The earth is filled with your cries of despair. Your mightiest warriors

will stumble across each other and fall together."

¹³ Then the LORD gave the prophet Jeremiah this message about King Nebuchadnezzar's plans to attack Egypt.

¹⁴ "Shout it out in Egypt! Publish it in the cities of Migdol, Memphis, and Tahpanhes! Mobilize for battle, for the sword of destruction will devour everyone around you.

¹⁵ Why have your warriors fled in terror? They cannot stand because the LORD has driven them away.

¹⁶ They stumble and fall over each other and say among themselves, 'Come, let's go back to our homeland where we were born. Let's get away from the sword of the enemy!'

¹⁷ There they will say, 'Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is a loudmouth who missed his opportunity!'

¹⁸ "As surely as I live," says the King, whose name is the LORD Almighty, "one is coming against Egypt who is as tall as Mount Tabor or Mount Carmel by the sea!

¹⁹ Pack up! Get ready to leave for exile, you citizens of Egypt! The city of Memphis will be destroyed, without a single person living there.

²⁰ Egypt is as sleek as a young cow, but a gadfly from the north is on its way!

²¹ Egypt's famed mercenaries have become like fattened calves. They turn and run, for it is a day of great disaster for Egypt, a time of great punishment.

²² Silent as a serpent gliding away, Egypt flees. The invading army marches in; they come against her with axes like woodsmen.

²³ They will cut down her people like trees," says the LORD, "for they are more numerous than grasshoppers.

²⁴ Egypt will be humiliated; she will be handed over to men from the north."

²⁵ The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "I will punish Amon, the god of Thebes, and all the other gods of Egypt. I will punish its rulers and Pharaoh, too, and all who trust in him.

²⁶ I will hand them over to those who want them killed—to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his army. But afterward the land will recover from the ravages of war. I, the LORD, have spoken!

²⁷ "But do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel. For I will bring you home again from distant lands, and your children will return from their exile. Israel will return and will have peace and quiet, and nothing will make them afraid.

²⁸ Fear not, Jacob, my servant," says the LORD, "for I am with you. I will

destroy the nations to which I have exiled you, but I will not destroy you. But I must discipline you; I cannot let you go unpunished."

47 ¹ This is the LORD's message to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the Philistines of Gaza, before it was captured by the Egyptian army.

² This is what the LORD says: "A flood is coming from the north to overflow the land. It will destroy the land and everything in it—cities and people alike. People will scream in terror, and everyone in the land will weep.

³ Hear the clatter of hooves and the rumble of wheels as the chariots rush by. Terrified fathers run madly, without a backward glance at their helpless children.

⁴ "The time has come for the Philistines to be destroyed, along with their allies from Tyre and Sidon. Yes, the LORD

is destroying the Philistines, those colonists from Crete.

⁵ The city of Gaza will be demolished; Ashkelon will lie in ruins. You remnant of the Mediterranean plain, how long will you lament and mourn?

⁶ "Now, O sword of the LORD, when will you be at rest again? Go back into your sheath; rest and be still!

⁷ But how can it be still when the LORD has sent it on an errand? For the city of Ashkelon and the people living along the sea must be destroyed."

48 ¹ This message was given concerning Moab. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Destruction is certain for the city of Nebo; it will soon lie in ruins. The city of Kiriathaim will be humiliated and captured; the fortress will be humiliated and broken down.

² No one will ever brag about Moab again, for there is a plot against her life. In Heshbon plans have been completed to destroy her. 'Come,' they say, 'we will cut her off from being a nation.' The city of Madmen, too, will be silenced; the sword will follow you there.

³ And then the roar of battle will surge against Horonaim,

⁴ for all Moab is being destroyed. Her little ones will cry out.

⁵ Her refugees will climb the hills of Luhith, weeping bitterly, while cries of terror rise from Horonaim below.

⁶ Flee for your lives! Hide in the wilderness!

⁷ Because you have trusted in your wealth and skill, you will be taken captive. Your god Chemosh, with his priests and princes, will be exiled to distant lands!

⁸ "All the towns will be destroyed, both on the plateaus and in the valleys, for the LORD has spoken.

⁹ Oh, that Moab had wings so she could fly away, for her cities will be left empty, with no one living in them.

¹⁰ Cursed be those who refuse to do the work the LORD has given them, who hold back their swords from shedding blood!

¹¹ "From her earliest history, Moab has lived in peace. She is like wine that has been allowed to settle. She has not been poured from flask to flask, and she is now fragrant and smooth.

¹² But the time is coming soon," says the LORD, "when I will send troublemakers to pour her from her jar. They will pour her out, then shatter the jar!

¹³ At last Moab will be ashamed of her idol Chemosh, as Israel was ashamed of her gold calf at Bethel.

¹⁴ "You used to boast, 'We are heroes, mighty men of war.'

¹⁵ But now Moab and her towns will be destroyed. Her most promising youth are doomed to slaughter," says the King, whose name is the LORD Almighty.

¹⁶ "Calamity is coming fast to Moab; it threatens ominously.

¹⁷ "You friends of Moab, weep for her and cry! See how the strong scepter is broken, how the beautiful staff is shattered!

¹⁸ Come down from your glory and sit in the dust, you people of Dibon, for those who destroy Moab will shatter Dibon, too. They will tear down all your towers.

¹⁹ The people of Aroer stand anxiously beside the road to watch. They shout to those who flee from Moab, 'What has happened there?'

²⁰ "And the reply comes back, 'Moab lies in ruins; weep and wail! Tell it by

the banks of the Arnon River: Moab has been destroyed!

²¹ All the cities of the plateau lie in ruins, too. Judgment has been poured out on them all—on Holon and Jahaz and Mephaath,

²² and on Dibon and Nebo and Beth–diblathaim,

²³ and on Kiriathaim and Beth–gamul and Beth–meon,

²⁴ and on Kerioth and Bozrah—all the cities of Moab, far and near.

²⁵ "The strength of Moab has ended. Her horns have been cut off, and her arms have been broken," says the LORD.

²⁶ "Let her stagger and fall like a drunkard, for she has rebelled against the LORD. Moab will wallow in her own vomit, ridiculed by all.

²⁷ Did you not make Israel the object of your ridicule? Was she caught in the

company of thieves that you should despise her as you do?

²⁸ "You people of Moab, flee from your cities and towns! Live in the caves like doves that nest in the clefts of the rocks.

²⁹ We have heard of the pride of Moab, for it is very great. We know of her loftiness, her arrogance, and her haughty heart.

³⁰ I know about her insolence," says the LORD, "but her boasts are false; they accomplish nothing.

³¹ Yes, I wail for Moab; my heart is broken for the men of Kir-hareseth.

³² "You people of Sibmah, rich in vineyards, I will weep for you even more than I did for Jazer. Your spreading vines once reached as far as the Dead Sea, but the destroyer has stripped you bare! He has harvested your grapes and summer fruits.

³³ Joy and gladness are gone from fruitful Moab. The presses yield no wine. No one treads the grapes with shouts of joy. There is shouting, yes, but not of joy.

³⁴ Instead, their awful cries of terror can be heard from Heshbon clear across to Elealeh and Jahaz; from Zoar all the way to Horonaim and Eglath–shelishiyah. Even the waters of Nimrim are dried up now.

³⁵ "I will put an end to Moab," says the LORD, "for they offer sacrifices at the pagan shrines and burn incense to their false gods.

³⁶ My heart moans like a flute for Moab and Kir–hareth, for all their wealth has disappeared.

³⁷ They shave their heads and beards in mourning. They slash their hands and put on clothes made of sackcloth.

³⁸ Crying and sorrow will be in every Moabite home and on every street.

For I have smashed Moab like an old, unwanted bottle.

³⁹ How it is broken! Hear the wailing! See the shame of Moab! She has become an object of ridicule, an example of ruin to all her neighbors.

⁴⁰ "An eagle swoops down on the land of Moab," says the LORD.

⁴¹ "Her cities will fall; her strongholds will be seized. Even the mightiest warriors will be as frightened as a woman about to give birth.

⁴² Moab will no longer be a nation, for she has boasted against the LORD.

⁴³ "Terror and traps and snares will be your lot, O Moab," says the LORD.

⁴⁴ "Those who flee in terror will fall into a trap, and those who escape the trap will step into a snare. I will see to it that you do not get away, for the time of your judgment has come," says the LORD.

⁴⁵ "The people flee as far as Heshbon but are unable to go on. For a fire comes from Heshbon, King Sihon's ancestral home, to devour the entire land with all its rebellious people.

⁴⁶ "O Moab, your destruction is sure! The people of the god Chemosh are destroyed! Your sons and daughters have been taken away as captives.

⁴⁷ But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Moab," says the LORD. This is the end of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Moab.

49 ¹ This message was given concerning the Ammonites. This is what the LORD says: "What are you doing? Are there no descendants of Israel to inherit the land of Gad? Why are you, who worship Molech, living in its towns?

² I will punish you for this," says the LORD, "by destroying your city of

Rabbah. It will become a desolate heap, and the neighboring towns will be burned. Then Israel will come and take back the land you took from her," says the LORD.

³ "Cry out, O Heshbon, for the town of Ai is destroyed. Weep, O people of Rabbah! Put on your clothes of mourning. Weep and wail, hiding in the hedges, for your god Molech will be exiled along with his princes and priests.

⁴ You are proud of your fertile valleys, but they will soon be ruined. You rebellious daughter, you trusted in your wealth and thought no one could ever harm you.

⁵ But look! I will bring terror upon you," says the Lord, the LORD Almighty. "Your neighbors will chase you from your land, and no one will help your exiles as they flee.

⁶ But afterward I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites," says the LORD.

⁷ This message was given concerning Edom. This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Where are all the wise men of Teman? Is there no one left to give wise counsel?"

⁸ Turn and flee! Hide in deep caves, you people of Dedan! For when I bring disaster on Edom, I will punish you, too!

⁹ Those who harvest grapes always leave a few for the poor. If thieves came at night, even they would not take everything.

¹⁰ But I will strip bare the land of Edom, and there will be no place left to hide. Its children, its brothers, and its neighbors—all will be destroyed—and Edom itself will be no more.

¹¹ But I will preserve the orphans who remain among you. Your widows, too, will be able to depend on me for help."

¹² And this is what the LORD says: "If the innocent must suffer, how much more must you! You will not go unpunished! You must drink this cup of judgment!

¹³ For I have sworn by my own name," says the LORD, "that Bozrah will become an object of horror and a heap of rubble; it will be mocked and cursed. All its towns and villages will be desolate forever."

¹⁴ I have heard a message from the LORD that an ambassador was sent to the nations to say, "Form a coalition against Edom, and prepare for battle!"

¹⁵ This is what the LORD says: "I will cut you down to size among the nations, Edom. You will be despised by all.

¹⁶ You are proud that you inspire fear in others. And you are proud because you

live in a rock fortress and hide high in the mountains. But don't fool yourselves! Though you live among the peaks with the eagles, I will bring you crashing down," says the LORD.

¹⁷ "Edom will be an object of horror. All who pass by will be appalled and will gasp at the destruction they see there.

¹⁸ It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns," says the LORD. "No one will live there anymore.

¹⁹ I will come like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan, leaping on the sheep in the pasture. I will chase Edom from its land, and I will appoint the leader of my choice. For who is like me, and who can challenge me? What ruler can oppose my will?"

²⁰ Listen to the LORD's plans for Edom and the people of Teman. Even the little

children will be dragged off, and their homes will be empty.

²¹ The earth will shake with the noise of Edom's fall, and its cry of despair will be heard all the way to the Red Sea.

²² The enemy will come as swiftly as an eagle, and he will spread his wings against Bozrah. Even the mightiest warriors will be as frightened as a woman about to give birth.

²³ This message was given concerning Damascus. This is what the LORD says: "The towns of Hamath and Arpad are struck with fear, for they have heard the news of their destruction. Their hearts are troubled like a wild sea in a raging storm.

²⁴ Damascus has become feeble, and all her people turn to flee. Fear, anguish, and pain have gripped her as they do a woman giving birth.

²⁵ That famous city, a city of joy, will be forsaken!

²⁶ Her young men will fall in the streets and die. Her warriors will all be killed," says the LORD Almighty.

²⁷ "And I will start a fire at the edge of Damascus that will burn up the palaces of Ben-hadad."

²⁸ This message was given concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, which were attacked by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. This is what the LORD says: "Advance against Kedar! Blot out the warriors from the East!

²⁹ Their flocks and tents will be captured, and their household goods and camels will be taken away. Everywhere shouts of panic will be heard: 'We are terrorized at every turn!'

³⁰ Flee for your lives," says the LORD. "Hide yourselves in deep caves, you people of Hazor, for King

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has plotted against you and is preparing to destroy you.

³¹ "Go up and attack those self-sufficient nomadic tribes," says the LORD. "They live alone in the desert without walls or gates.

³² Their camels and cattle will all be yours. I will scatter to the winds these people who live in distant places. I will bring calamity upon them from every direction," says the LORD.

³³ "Hazor will be inhabited by jackals, and it will be desolate forever. No one will live there anymore."

³⁴ This message concerning Elam came to the prophet Jeremiah from the LORD at the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah.

³⁵ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "I will destroy the archers of Elam—the best of their marksmen.

³⁶ I will bring enemies from all directions, and I will scatter the people of Elam to the four winds. They will be exiled to countries around the world.

³⁷ I myself will go with Elam's enemies to shatter it. My fierce anger will bring great disaster upon the people of Elam," says the LORD. "Their enemies will chase them with the sword until I have destroyed them completely.

³⁸ I will set my throne in Elam," says the LORD, "and I will destroy its king and princes.

³⁹ But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Elam," says the LORD.

50 ¹ The LORD gave Jeremiah the prophet this message concerning Babylon and the land of the Babylonians.

² This is what the LORD says: "Tell the whole world, and keep nothing back! Raise a signal flag so everyone will know that Babylon will fall! Her images and

idols will be shattered. Her gods Bel and Marduk will be utterly disgraced.

³ For a nation will attack her from the north and bring such destruction that no one will live in her again. Everything will be gone; both people and animals will flee.

⁴ "Then the people of Israel and Judah will join together," says the LORD, "weeping and seeking the LORD their God.

⁵ They will ask the way to Jerusalem and will start back home again. They will bind themselves to the LORD with an eternal covenant that will never again be broken.

⁶ "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray and turned them loose in the mountains. They have lost their way and cannot remember how to get back to the fold.

⁷ All who found them devoured them. Their enemies said, 'We are allowed to attack them freely, for they have sinned against the LORD, their place of rest, the hope of their ancestors.'

⁸ "But now, flee from Babylon! Leave the land of the Babylonians. Lead my people home again.

⁹ For look, I am raising up an army of great nations from the north. I will bring them against Babylon to attack her, and she will be captured. The enemies' arrows will go straight to the mark; they will not miss!

¹⁰ Babylonia will be plundered until the attackers are gluttoned with plunder," says the LORD.

¹¹ "You rejoice and are glad, you plunderers of my chosen people. You frisk about like a calf in a meadow and neigh like a stallion.

¹² But your homeland will be overwhelmed with shame and disgrace. You will become the least of nations—a wilderness, a dry and desolate land.

¹³ Because of the LORD's anger, Babylon will become a deserted wasteland. All who pass by will be horrified and will gasp at the destruction they see there.

¹⁴ "Yes, prepare to attack Babylon, all you nations round about. Let your archers shoot at her. Spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the LORD.

¹⁵ Shout against her from every side. Look! She surrenders! Her walls have fallen. The LORD has taken vengeance, so do not spare her. Do to her as she has done to others!

¹⁶ Lead from Babylon all those who plant crops; send all the harvesters away. Let the captives escape the sword of the enemy and rush back to their own lands.

¹⁷ "The Israelites are like sheep that have been scattered by lions. First the king of Assyria ate them up. Then King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon cracked their bones."

¹⁸ Therefore, the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Now I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I punished the king of Assyria.

¹⁹ And I will bring Israel home again to her own land, to feed in the fields of Carmel and Bashan, and to be satisfied once more on the hill country of Ephraim and Gilead.

²⁰ In those days," says the LORD, "no sin will be found in Israel or in Judah, for I will forgive the remnant I preserve.

²¹ "Go up, my warriors, against the land of Merathaim and against the people of Pekod. Yes, march against Babylon, the land of rebels, a land that I will judge! Pursue, kill, and completely destroy

them, as I have commanded you," says the LORD.

²² "Let the battle cry be heard in the land, a shout of great destruction.

²³ Babylon, the mightiest hammer in all the earth, lies broken and shattered. Babylon is desolate among the nations!

²⁴ Listen, Babylon, for I have set a trap for you. You are caught, for you have fought against the LORD.

²⁵ "The LORD has opened his armory and brought out weapons to vent his fury against his enemies. The terror that falls upon the Babylonians will be the work of the Sovereign LORD Almighty.

²⁶ Yes, come against her from distant lands. Break open her granaries. Crush her walls and houses into heaps of rubble. Destroy her completely, and leave nothing!

²⁷ Even destroy her cattle—it will be terrible for them, too! Slaughter them

all! For the time has come for Babylon to be devastated.

²⁸ Listen to the people who have escaped from Babylon, as they declare in Jerusalem how the LORD our God has taken vengeance against those who destroyed his Temple.

²⁹ "Send out a call for archers to come to Babylon. Surround the city so none can escape. Do to her as she has done to others, for she has defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

³⁰ Her young men will fall in the streets and die. Her warriors will all be killed," says the LORD.

³¹ "See, I am your enemy, O proud people," says the Lord, the LORD Almighty. "Your day of reckoning has arrived.

³² O land of pride, you will stumble and fall, and no one will raise you up. For I

will light a fire in the cities of Babylon that will burn everything around them."

³³ And now the LORD Almighty says this: "The people of Israel and Judah have been wronged. Their captors hold them and refuse to let them go.

³⁴ But the one who redeems them is strong. His name is the LORD Almighty. He will defend them and give them rest again in Israel. But the people of Babylon—there will be no rest for them!

³⁵ "The sword of destruction will strike the Babylonians," says the LORD. "It will strike the people of Babylon—her princes and wise men, too.

³⁶ And when it strikes her wise counselors, they will become fools! When it strikes her mightiest warriors, panic will seize them!

³⁷ When it strikes her horses and chariots, her allies from other lands will become as weak as women. When

it strikes her treasures, they all will be plundered.

³⁸ It will even strike her water supply, causing it to dry up. And why? Because the whole land is filled with idols, and the people are madly in love with them.

³⁹ "Soon this city of Babylon will be inhabited by ostriches and jackals. It will be a home for the wild animals of the desert. Never again will people live there; it will lie desolate forever.

⁴⁰ I will destroy it just as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns," says the LORD. "No one will live there anymore.

⁴¹ "Look! A great army is marching from the north! A great nation and many kings are rising against you from far-off lands.

⁴² They are fully armed for slaughter. They are cruel and show no mercy. As they ride forward, the noise of their army is like a roaring sea. They are

marching in battle formation to destroy you, Babylon.

⁴³ The king of Babylon has received reports about the enemy, and he is weak with fright. Fear and pain have gripped him, like that of a woman about to give birth.

⁴⁴ "I will come like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan, leaping on the sheep in the pasture. I will chase Babylon from its land, and I will appoint the leader of my choice. For who is like me, and who can challenge me? What ruler can oppose my will?"

⁴⁵ Listen to the LORD's plans against Babylon and the land of the Babylonians. Even little children will be dragged off, and their homes will be empty.

⁴⁶ The earth will shake with the noise of Babylon's fall, and her cry of despair will be heard around the world.

51 ¹ This is what the LORD says: "I will stir up a destroyer against Babylon and the people of Babylonia.

² Foreigners will come and winnow her, blowing her away as chaff. They will come from every side to rise against her in her day of trouble.

³ Don't let the archers put on their armor or draw their bows. No one will be spared! Young and old alike will be completely destroyed.

⁴ They will fall dead in the land of the Babylonians, slashed to death in her streets.

⁵ For the LORD Almighty has not forsaken Israel and Judah. He is still their God, even though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel."

⁶ Flee from Babylon! Save yourselves! Don't get trapped in her punishment! It is the LORD's time for vengeance; he will fully repay her.

⁷ Babylon has been like a golden cup in the LORD's hands, a cup from which he made the whole earth drink and go mad.

⁸ But now suddenly, Babylon, too, has fallen. Weep for her, and give her medicine. Perhaps she can yet be healed.

⁹ We would have helped her if we could, but nothing can save her now. Let her go; abandon her. Return now to your own land, for her judgment will be so great it cannot be measured.

¹⁰ The LORD has vindicated us. Come, let us announce in Jerusalem everything the LORD our God has done.

¹¹ Sharpen the arrows! Lift up the shields! For the LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes to march against Babylon and destroy her. This is his vengeance against those who desecrated his Temple.

¹² Raise the battle flag against Babylon! Reinforce the guard and station the

watchmen. Prepare an ambush, for the LORD will fulfill all his plans against Babylon.

¹³ You are a city rich with water, a great center of commerce, but your end has come. The thread of your life is cut.

¹⁴ The LORD Almighty has taken this vow and has sworn to it by his own name: "Your cities will be filled with enemies, like fields filled with locusts, and they will lift their shouts of triumph over you."

¹⁵ He made the earth by his power, and he preserves it by his wisdom. He has stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

¹⁶ When he speaks, there is thunder in the heavens. He causes the clouds to rise over the earth. He sends the lightning with the rain and releases the wind from his storehouses.

¹⁷ Compared to him, all people are foolish and have no knowledge at all! They make idols, but the idols will disgrace their makers, for they are frauds. They have no life or power in them.

¹⁸ Idols are worthless; they are lies! The time is coming when they will all be destroyed.

¹⁹ But the God of Israel is no idol! He is the Creator of everything that exists, including his people, his own special possession. The LORD Almighty is his name!

²⁰ "You are my battle—ax and sword," says the LORD. "With you I will shatter nations and destroy many kingdoms.

²¹ With you I will shatter armies, destroying the horse and rider, the chariot and charioteer.

²² With you I will shatter men and women, old people and children, young men and maidens.

²³ With you I will shatter shepherds and flocks, farmers and oxen, captains and rulers.

²⁴ "As you watch, I will repay Babylon and the people of Babylonia for all the wrong they have done to my people in Jerusalem," says the LORD.

²⁵ "Look, O mighty mountain, destroyer of the earth! I am your enemy," says the LORD. "I will raise my fist against you, to roll you down from the heights. When I am finished, you will be nothing but a heap of rubble.

²⁶ You will be desolate forever. Even your stones will never again be used for building. You will be completely wiped out," says the LORD.

²⁷ Signal many nations to mobilize for war against Babylon. Sound the battle

cry! Bring out the armies of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. Appoint a leader, and bring a multitude of horses!

²⁸ Bring against her the armies of the kings of the Medes and their generals, and the armies of all the countries they rule.

²⁹ Babylon trembles and writhes in pain, for everything the LORD has planned against her stands unchanged. Babylon will be left desolate without a single inhabitant.

³⁰ Her mightiest warriors no longer fight. They stay in their barracks. Their courage is gone. They have become as fearful as women. The invaders have burned the houses and broken down the city gates.

³¹ Messengers from every side come running to the king to tell him all is lost!

³² All the escape routes are blocked. The fortifications are burning, and the army is in panic.

³³ For the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Babylon is like wheat on a threshing floor, about to be trampled. In just a little while her harvest will begin."

³⁴ "King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has eaten and crushed us and emptied out our strength. He has swallowed us like a great monster and filled his belly with our riches. He has thrown us out of our own country.

³⁵ May Babylon be repaid for all the violence she did to us," say the people of Jerusalem. "May the people of Babylonia be paid in full for all the blood they spilled," says Jerusalem.

³⁶ The LORD says to Jerusalem, "I will be your lawyer to plead your case, and I will avenge you. I will dry up her river, her water supply,

³⁷ and Babylon will become a heap of rubble, haunted by jackals. It will be an object of horror and contempt, without a single person living there.

³⁸ "In their drunken feasts, the people of Babylon roar like lions.

³⁹ And while they lie inflamed with all their wine, I will prepare a different kind of feast for them. I will make them drink until they fall asleep, never again to waken," says the LORD.

⁴⁰ "I will bring them like lambs to the slaughter, like rams and goats to be sacrificed.

⁴¹ "How Babylon is fallen—great Babylon, praised throughout the earth! The world can scarcely believe its eyes at her fall!

⁴² The sea has risen over Babylon; she is covered by its waves.

⁴³ Her cities now lie in ruins; she is a dry wilderness where no one lives or even passes by.

⁴⁴ And I will punish Bel, the god of Babylon, and pull from his mouth what he has taken. The nations will no longer come and worship him. The wall of Babylon has fallen.

⁴⁵ "Listen, my people, flee from Babylon. Save yourselves! Run from the LORD's fierce anger.

⁴⁶ But do not panic when you hear the first rumor of approaching forces. For rumors will keep coming year by year. Then there will be a time of violence as the leaders fight against each other.

⁴⁷ For the time is surely coming when I will punish this great city and all her idols. Her whole land will be disgraced, and her dead will lie in the streets.

⁴⁸ The heavens and earth will rejoice, for out of the north will come destroying armies against Babylon," says the LORD.

⁴⁹ "Just as Babylon killed the people of Israel and others throughout the world, so must her people be killed.

⁵⁰ Go, you who escaped the sword! Do not stand and watch—flee while you can! Remember the LORD, even though you are in a far-off land, and think about your home in Jerusalem."

⁵¹ "We are ashamed," the people say. "We are insulted and disgraced because the LORD's Temple has been defiled by foreigners."

⁵² "Yes," says the LORD, "but the time is coming when Babylon's idols will be destroyed. The groans of her wounded people will be heard throughout the land.

⁵³ Though Babylon reaches as high as the heavens, and though she increases

her strength immeasurably, I will send enemies to plunder her," says the LORD.

⁵⁴ Listen! Hear the cry of Babylon, the sound of great destruction from the land of the Babylonians.

⁵⁵ For the LORD is destroying Babylon. He will silence her. Waves of enemies pound against her; the noise of battle rings through the city.

⁵⁶ Destroying armies come against Babylon. Her mighty men are captured, and their weapons break in their hands. For the LORD is a God who gives just punishment, and he is giving Babylon all she deserves.

⁵⁷ "I will make drunk her officials, wise men, rulers, captains, and warriors," says the King, whose name is the LORD Almighty. "They will fall asleep and never wake up again!"

⁵⁸ This is what the LORD Almighty says: "The wide walls of Babylon will be

leveled to the ground, and her high gates will be burned. The builders from many lands have worked in vain, for their work will be destroyed by fire!"

⁵⁹ The prophet Jeremiah gave this message to Zedekiah's staff officer, Seraiah son of Neriah and grandson of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with King Zedekiah of Judah. This was during the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign.

⁶⁰ Jeremiah had recorded on a scroll all the terrible disasters that would soon come upon Babylon.

⁶¹ He said to Seraiah, "When you get to Babylon, read aloud everything on this scroll.

⁶² Then say, 'LORD, you have said that you will destroy Babylon so that neither people nor animals will remain here. She will lie empty and abandoned forever.'

⁶³ Then, when you have finished reading the scroll, tie it to a stone, and throw it into the Euphrates River.

⁶⁴ Then say, 'In this same way Babylon and her people will sink, never again to rise, because of the disasters I will bring upon her.'" This is the end of Jeremiah's messages.

52 ¹ Zedekiah was twenty–one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah.

² But Zedekiah did what was evil in the LORD's sight, just as Jehoiakim had done.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Jerusalem was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah's reign.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ But the Babylonians chased after them and caught King Zedekiah on the

plains of Jericho, for by then his men had all abandoned him.

⁹ They brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, where sentence was passed against him.

¹⁰ There at Riblah, the king of Babylon made Zedekiah watch as all his sons were killed; they also killed all the other leaders of Judah.

¹¹ Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in bronze chains, and led him away to Babylon. Zedekiah remained there in prison for the rest of his life.

¹² On August 17 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Then the captain of the guard supervised the entire Babylonian army as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁵ Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, then took as exiles some of the poorest of the people and those who remained in the city, along with the rest of the craftsmen and the troops who had declared their allegiance to the king of Babylon.

¹⁶ But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the poorest people to stay behind in Judah to care for the vineyards and fields.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ They also took all the pots, shovels, lamp snuffers, basins, dishes, and all the other bronze utensils used for making sacrifices at the Temple.

¹⁹ Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, also took the small bowls, firepans, basins, pots, lampstands, dishes, bowls used for drink offerings, and all the other utensils made of pure gold or silver.

²⁰ The bronze from the two pillars, the water carts, and the Sea with the twelve bulls beneath it was too great to be measured. These things had been made for the LORD's Temple in the days of King Solomon.

²¹ Each of the pillars was 27 feet tall and 18 feet in circumference. They were hollow, with walls 3 inches thick.

²² 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.

²³ There were ninety–six pomegranates on the sides, and a total of one hundred on the network around the top.

²⁴ The captain of the guard took with him as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, his assistant Zephaniah, and the three chief gatekeepers.

²⁵ And of the people still hiding in the city, he took an officer of the Judean army, seven of the king’s personal advisers, the army commander’s chief secretary, who was in charge of recruitment, and sixty other citizens.

²⁶ Nebuzaradan the commander took them all to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ The number of captives taken to Babylon in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign was 3,023.

²⁹ Then in Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year he took 832 more.

³⁰ In his twenty-third year he sent Nebuzaradan, his captain of the guard, who took 745 more—a total of 4,600 captives in all.

³¹ 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 March 31 of that year.

³² He spoke pleasantly to Jehoiachin and gave him preferential treatment over all the other exiled kings in Babylon.

³³ 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.

³⁴ The Babylonian king also gave him a regular allowance to cover his living expenses until the day of his death.

Lamentations

1 ¹ Jerusalem's streets, once bustling with people, are now silent. Like a widow broken with grief, she sits alone in her mourning. Once the queen of nations, she is now a slave.

² She sobs through the night; tears stream down her cheeks. Among all her lovers, there is no one left to help her. All her friends have betrayed her; they are now her enemies.

³ Judah has been led away into captivity, afflicted and enslaved. She lives among foreign nations and has no place of rest. Her enemies have chased her down, and she has nowhere to turn.

⁴ The roads to Jerusalem are in mourning, no longer filled with crowds on their way to celebrate the Temple

festivals. The city gates are silent, her priests groan, her young women are crying—how bitterly Jerusalem weeps!

⁵ Her oppressors have become her masters, and her enemies prosper, for the LORD has punished Jerusalem for her many sins. Her children have been captured and taken away to distant lands.

⁶ All the beauty and majesty of Jerusalem are gone. Her princes are like starving deer searching for pasture, too weak to run from the pursuing enemy.

⁷ And now in the midst of her sadness and wandering, Jerusalem remembers her ancient splendor. But then she fell to her enemy, and there was no one to help her. Her enemy struck her down and laughed as she fell.

⁸ Jerusalem has sinned greatly, so she has been tossed away like a filthy rag. All who once honored her now despise her,

for they have seen her stripped naked and humiliated. All she can do is groan and hide her face.

⁹ She defiled herself with immorality with no thought of the punishment that would follow. Now she lies in the gutter with no one to lift her out. "LORD, see my deep misery," she cries. "The enemy has triumphed."

¹⁰ The enemy has plundered her completely, taking everything precious that she owns. She has seen foreigners violate her sacred Temple, the place the LORD had forbidden them to enter.

¹¹ Her people groan as they search for bread. They have sold their treasures for food to stay alive. "O LORD, look," she mourns, "and see how I am despised.

¹² "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see if there is any suffering like mine, which the LORD

brought on me in the day of his fierce anger.

¹³ "He has sent fire from heaven that burns in my bones. He has placed a trap in my path and turned me back. He has made me desolate, racked with sickness all day long.

¹⁴ "He wove my sins into ropes to hitch me to a yoke of captivity. The Lord sapped my strength and gave me to my enemies; I am helpless in their hands.

¹⁵ "The Lord has treated my mighty men with contempt. At his command a great army has come to crush my young warriors. The Lord has trampled his beloved city as grapes are trampled in a winepress.

¹⁶ "For all these things I weep; tears flow down my cheeks. No one is here to comfort me; any who might encourage me are far away. My children have no

future, for the enemy has conquered us."

¹⁷ Jerusalem pleads for help, but no one comforts her. Regarding his people, the LORD has said, "Let their neighbors be their enemies! Let them be thrown away like a filthy rag!"

¹⁸ "And the LORD is right," she groans, "for I rebelled against him. Listen, people everywhere; look upon my anguish and despair, for my sons and daughters have been taken captive to distant lands.

¹⁹ "I begged my allies for help, but they betrayed me. My priests and leaders starved to death in the city, even as they searched for food to save their lives.

²⁰ "LORD, see my anguish! My heart is broken and my soul despairs, for I have rebelled against you. In the streets the sword kills, and at home there is only death.

²¹ "Others heard my groans, but no one turned to comfort me. When my enemies heard of my troubles, they were happy to see what you had done. Oh, bring the day you promised, when you will destroy them as you have destroyed me.

²² "Look at all their evil deeds, LORD. Punish them, as you have punished me for all my sins. My groans are many, and my heart is faint."

2¹ The Lord in his anger has cast a dark shadow over Jerusalem. The fairest of Israel's cities lies in the dust, thrown down from the heights of heaven. In his day of awesome fury, the Lord has shown no mercy even to his Temple.

² Without mercy the Lord has destroyed every home in Israel. In his anger he has broken down the fortress walls of Jerusalem. He has brought to dust the kingdom and all its rulers.

³ All the strength of Israel vanishes beneath his fury. The Lord has withdrawn his protection as the enemy attacks. He consumes the whole land of Israel like a raging fire.

⁴ He bends his bow against his people as though he were their enemy. His strength is used against them to kill their finest youth. His fury is poured out like fire on beautiful Jerusalem.

⁵ Yes, the Lord has vanquished Israel like an enemy. He has destroyed her forts and palaces. He has brought unending sorrow and tears to Jerusalem.

⁶ He has broken down his Temple as though it were merely a garden shelter. The LORD has blotted out all memory of the holy festivals and Sabbath days. Kings and priests fall together before his anger.

⁷ The Lord has rejected his own altar; he despises his own sanctuary. He has given

Jerusalem's palaces to her enemies. They shout in the LORD's Temple as though it were a day of celebration.

⁸ The LORD was determined to destroy the walls of Jerusalem. He made careful plans for their destruction, then he went ahead and did it. Therefore, the ramparts and walls have fallen down before him.

⁹ Jerusalem's gates have sunk into the ground. All their locks and bars are destroyed, for he has smashed them. Her kings and princes have been exiled to distant lands; the law is no more. Her prophets receive no more visions from the LORD.

¹⁰ The leaders of Jerusalem sit on the ground in silence, clothed in sackcloth. They throw dust on their heads in sorrow and despair. The young women of Jerusalem hang their heads in shame.

¹¹ I have cried until the tears no longer come. My heart is broken, my spirit poured out, as I see what has happened to my people. Little children and tiny babies are fainting and dying in the streets.

¹² "Mama, we want food," they cry, and then collapse in their mothers' arms. Their lives ebb away like the life of a warrior wounded in battle.

¹³ In all the world has there ever been such sorrow? O daughter of Jerusalem, to what can I compare your anguish? O virgin daughter of Zion, how can I comfort you? For your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?

¹⁴ Your "prophets" have said so many foolish things, false to the core. They did not try to hold you back from exile by pointing out your sins. Instead, they painted false pictures, filling you with false hope.

¹⁵ All who pass by jeer at you. They scoff and insult Jerusalem, saying, "Is this the city called 'Most Beautiful in All the World' and 'Joy of All the Earth'?"

¹⁶ All your enemies deride you. They scoff and grind their teeth and say, "We have destroyed her at last! Long have we awaited this day, and it is finally here!"

¹⁷ But it is the LORD who did it just as he warned. He has fulfilled the promises of disaster he made long ago. He has destroyed Jerusalem without mercy and caused her enemies to rejoice over her and boast of their power.

¹⁸ Cry aloud before the Lord, O walls of Jerusalem! Let your tears flow like a river. Give yourselves no rest from weeping day or night.

¹⁹ Rise during the night and cry out. Pour out your hearts like water to the Lord. Lift up your hands to him in prayer.

Plead for your children as they faint with hunger in the streets.

²⁰ "O LORD, think about this!" Jerusalem cries. "You are doing this to your own people! Should mothers eat their little children, those they once bounced on their knees? Should priests and prophets die within the Lord's Temple?"

²¹ "See them lying in the streets— young and old, boys and girls, killed by the swords of the enemy. You have killed them in your anger, slaughtering them without mercy.

²² "You have invited terrors from all around as though you were calling them to a day of feasting. In the day of the LORD's anger, no one has escaped or survived. The enemy has killed all the children I bore and raised."

3 ¹ I am the one who has seen the afflictions that come from the rod of the LORD's anger.

² He has brought me into deep darkness, shutting out all light.

³ He has turned against me. Day and night his hand is heavy upon me.

⁴ He has made my skin and flesh grow old. He has broken my bones.

⁵ He has attacked me and surrounded me with anguish and distress.

⁶ He has buried me in a dark place, like a person long dead.

⁷ He has walled me in, and I cannot escape. He has bound me in heavy chains.

⁸ And though I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayers.

⁹ He has blocked my path with a high stone wall. He has twisted the road before me with many detours.

¹⁰ He hid like a bear or a lion, waiting to attack me.

¹¹ He dragged me off the path and tore me with his claws, leaving me helpless and desolate.

¹² He bent his bow and aimed it squarely at me.

¹³ He shot his arrows deep into my heart.

¹⁴ My own people laugh at me. All day long they sing their mocking songs.

¹⁵ He has filled me with bitterness. He has given me a cup of deep sorrow to drink.

¹⁶ He has made me grind my teeth on gravel. He has rolled me in the dust.

¹⁷ Peace has been stripped away, and I have forgotten what prosperity is.

¹⁸ I cry out, "My splendor is gone! Everything I had hoped for from the LORD is lost!"

¹⁹ The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words.

²⁰ I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.

²¹ Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:

²² The unfailing love of the LORD never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction.

²³ Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day.

²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!"

²⁵ The LORD is wonderfully good to those who wait for him and seek him.

²⁶ So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.

²⁷ And it is good for the young to submit to the yoke of his discipline.

²⁸ Let them sit alone in silence beneath the LORD's demands.

²⁹ Let them lie face down in the dust; then at last there is hope for them.

³⁰ Let them turn the other cheek to those who strike them. Let them accept the insults of their enemies.

³¹ For the Lord does not abandon anyone forever.

³² Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion according to the greatness of his unfailing love.

³³ For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow.

³⁴ But the leaders of his people trampled prisoners underfoot.

³⁵ They deprived people of their God-given rights in defiance of the Most High.

³⁶ They perverted justice in the courts. Do they think the Lord didn't see it?

³⁷ Can anything happen without the Lord's permission?

³⁸ Is it not the Most High who helps one and harms another?

³⁹ Then why should we, mere humans, complain when we are punished for our sins?

⁴⁰ Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn again in repentance to the LORD.

⁴¹ Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven and say,

⁴² "We have sinned and rebelled, and you have not forgiven us.

⁴³ "You have engulfed us with your anger, chased us down, and slaughtered us without mercy.

⁴⁴ You have hidden yourself in a cloud so our prayers cannot reach you.

⁴⁵ You have discarded us as refuse and garbage among the nations.

⁴⁶ "All our enemies have spoken out against us.

⁴⁷ We are filled with fear, for we are trapped, desolate, and ruined."

48 Streams of tears flow from my eyes because of the destruction of my people!

49 My tears flow down endlessly. They will not stop

50 until the LORD looks down from heaven and sees.

51 My heart is breaking over the fate of all the women of Jerusalem.

52 My enemies, whom I have never harmed, chased me like a bird.

53 They threw me into a pit and dropped stones on me.

54 The water flowed above my head, and I cried out, "This is the end!"

55 But I called on your name, LORD, from deep within the well,

56 and you heard me! You listened to my pleading; you heard my weeping!

57 Yes, you came at my despairing cry and told me, "Do not fear."

58 Lord, you are my lawyer! Plead my case! For you have redeemed my life.

⁵⁹ You have seen the wrong they have done to me, LORD. Be my judge, and prove me right.

⁶⁰ You have seen the plots my enemies have laid against me.

⁶¹ LORD, you have heard the vile names they call me. You know all about the plans they have made—

⁶² the plots my enemies whisper and mutter against me all day long.

⁶³ Look at them! In all their activities, they constantly mock me with their songs.

⁶⁴ Pay them back, LORD, for all the evil they have done.

⁶⁵ Give them hard and stubborn hearts, and then let your curse fall upon them!

⁶⁶ Chase them down in your anger, destroying them from beneath the LORD's heavens.

4 ¹ How the gold has lost its luster!
Even the finest gold has become dull.

The sacred gemstones lie scattered in the streets!

² See how the precious children of Jerusalem, worth their weight in gold, are now treated like pots of clay.

³ Even the jackals feed their young, but not my people Israel. They ignore their children's cries, like the ostriches of the desert.

⁴ The parched tongues of their little ones stick with thirst to the roofs of their mouths. The children cry for bread, but no one has any to give them.

⁵ The people who once ate only the richest foods now beg in the streets for anything they can get. Those who once lived in palaces now search the garbage pits for food.

⁶ The guilt of my people is greater than that of Sodom, where utter disaster struck in a moment with no one to help them.

⁷ Our princes were once glowing with health; they were as clean as snow and as elegant as jewels.

⁸ But now their faces are blacker than soot. No one even recognizes them. Their skin sticks to their bones; it is as dry and hard as wood.

⁹ Those killed by the sword are far better off than those who die of hunger, wasting away for want of food.

¹⁰ Tenderhearted women have cooked their own children and eaten them in order to survive the siege.

¹¹ But now the anger of the LORD is satisfied. His fiercest anger has now been poured out. He started a fire in Jerusalem that burned the city to its foundations.

¹² Not a king in all the earth—no one in all the world—would have believed an enemy could march through the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³ Yet it happened because of the sins of her prophets and priests, who defiled the city by shedding innocent blood.

¹⁴ They wandered blindly through the streets, so defiled by blood that no one dared to touch them.

¹⁵ "Get away!" the people shouted at them. "You are defiled! Don't touch us!" So they fled to distant lands and wandered there among foreign nations, but none would let them stay.

¹⁶ The LORD himself has scattered them, and he no longer helps them. The priests and leaders are no longer honored and respected.

¹⁷ We looked in vain for our allies to come and save us, but we were looking to nations that could offer no help at all.

¹⁸ We couldn't go into the streets without danger to our lives. Our end was near; our days were numbered. We were doomed!

¹⁹ Our enemies were swifter than the eagles. If we fled to the mountains, they found us. If we hid in the wilderness, they were waiting for us there.

²⁰ Our king, the LORD's anointed, the very life of our nation, was caught in their snares. We had foolishly boasted that under his protection we could hold our own against any nation on earth!

²¹ Are you rejoicing in the land of Uz, O people of Edom? But you, too, must drink from the cup of the LORD's anger. You, too, will be stripped naked in your drunkenness.

²² O Jerusalem, your punishment will end; you will soon return from exile. But Edom, your punishment is just beginning; soon your many sins will be revealed.

5 ¹ LORD, remember everything that has happened to us. See all the sorrows we bear!

² Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.

³ We are orphaned and fatherless. Our mothers are widowed.

⁴ We have to pay for water to drink, and even firewood is expensive.

⁵ Those who pursue us are at our heels; we are exhausted but are given no rest.

⁶ We submitted to Egypt and Assyria to get enough food to survive.

⁷ It was our ancestors who sinned, but they died before the hand of judgment fell. We have suffered the punishment they deserved!

⁸ Slaves have now become our masters; there is no one left to rescue us.

⁹ We must hunt for food in the wilderness at the risk of our lives.

¹⁰ Because of the famine, our skin has been blackened as though baked in an oven.

¹¹ Our enemies rape the women and young girls in Jerusalem and throughout the towns of Judah.

¹² Our princes are being hanged by their thumbs, and the old men are treated with contempt.

¹³ The young men are led away to work at millstones, and the children stagger under heavy loads of wood.

¹⁴ The old men no longer sit in the city gates; the young men no longer dance and sing.

¹⁵ The joy of our hearts has ended; our dancing has turned to mourning.

¹⁶ The garlands have fallen from our heads. Disaster has fallen upon us because we have sinned.

¹⁷ Our hearts are sick and weary, and our eyes grow dim with tears.

¹⁸ For Jerusalem is empty and desolate, a place haunted by jackals.

¹⁹ But LORD, you remain the same forever! Your throne continues from generation to generation.

²⁰ Why do you continue to forget us? Why have you forsaken us for so long?

²¹ Restore us, O LORD, and bring us back to you again! Give us back the joys we once had!

²² Or have you utterly rejected us? Are you angry with us still?

Ezekiel

1 ¹ On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar River in Babylon, the heavens were opened to me, and I saw visions of God.

² This happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity.

³ The LORD gave a message to me, Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, there beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians, and I felt the hand of the LORD take hold of me.

⁴ As I looked, I saw a great storm coming toward me from the north, driving before it a huge cloud that flashed with lightning and shone with brilliant light. The fire inside the cloud glowed like gleaming amber.

⁵ From the center of the cloud came four living beings that looked human,
⁶ except that each had four faces and two pairs of wings.

⁷ Their legs were straight like human legs, but their feet were split like calves' feet and shone like burnished bronze.

⁸ Beneath each of their wings I could see human hands.

⁹ The wings of each living being touched the wings of the two beings beside it. The living beings were able to fly in any direction without turning around.

¹⁰ Each had a human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back.

¹¹ Each had two pairs of outstretched wings—one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of it, and the other pair covered its body.

¹² They went in whatever direction the spirit chose, and they moved straight forward in all directions without having to turn around.

¹³ The living beings looked like bright coals of fire or brilliant torches, and it looked as though lightning was flashing back and forth among them.

¹⁴ And the living beings darted to and fro like flashes of lightning.

¹⁵ As I looked at these beings, I saw four wheels on the ground beneath them, one wheel belonging to each.

¹⁶ The wheels sparkled as if made of chrysolite. All four wheels looked the same; each wheel had a second wheel turning crosswise within it.

¹⁷ The beings could move forward in any of the four directions they faced, without turning as they moved.

¹⁸ The rims of the four wheels were awesomely tall, and they were covered with eyes all around the edges.

¹⁹ When the four living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. When they flew upward, the wheels went up, too.

²⁰ The spirit of the four living beings was in the wheels. So wherever the spirit went, the wheels and the living beings went, too.

²¹ When the living beings moved, the wheels moved. When the living beings stopped, the wheels stopped. When the living beings flew into the air, the wheels rose up. For the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

²² There was a surface spread out above them like the sky. It sparkled like crystal.

²³ Beneath this surface the wings of each living being stretched out to touch

the others' wings, and each had two wings covering its body.

²⁴ As they flew their wings roared like waves crashing against the shore, or like the voice of the Almighty, or like the shouting of a mighty army. When they stopped, they let down their wings.

²⁵ As they stood with their wings lowered, a voice spoke from beyond the crystal surface above them.

²⁶ Above the surface over their heads was what looked like a throne made of blue sapphire. And high above this throne was a figure whose appearance was like that of a man.

²⁷ From his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire. And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor.

²⁸ All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining through the clouds. This was the way the glory of the

LORD appeared to me. When I saw it, I fell face down in the dust, and I heard someone's voice speaking to me.

2¹ "Stand up, son of man," said the voice. "I want to speak with you."

² The Spirit came into me as he spoke and set me on my feet. I listened carefully to his words.

³ "Son of man," he said, "I am sending you to the nation of Israel, a nation that is rebelling against me. Their ancestors have rebelled against me from the beginning, and they are still in revolt to this very day.

⁴ They are a hard-hearted and stubborn people. But I am sending you to say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says!'

⁵ And whether they listen or not—for remember, they are rebels—at least they will know they have had a prophet among them.

⁶ "Son of man, do not fear them. Don't be afraid even though their threats are sharp as thorns and barbed like briars, and they sting like scorpions. Do not be dismayed by their dark scowls. For remember, they are rebels!

⁷ You must give them my messages whether they listen or not. But they won't listen, for they are completely rebellious!

⁸ Son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not join them in being a rebel. Open your mouth, and eat what I give you."

⁹ Then I looked and saw a hand reaching out to me, and it held a scroll.

¹⁰ He unrolled it, and I saw that both sides were covered with funeral songs, other words of sorrow, and pronouncements of doom.

3 ¹ The voice said to me, "Son of man, eat what I am giving you—eat this

scroll! Then go and give its message to the people of Israel."

² So I opened my mouth, and he fed me the scroll.

³ "Eat it all," he said. And when I ate it, it tasted as sweet as honey.

⁴ Then he said, "Son of man, go to the people of Israel with my messages.

⁵ I am not sending you to some foreign people whose language you cannot understand.

⁶ No, I am not sending you to people with strange and difficult speech. If I did, they would listen!

⁷ I am sending you to the people of Israel, but they won't listen to you any more than they listen to me! For the whole lot of them are hard-hearted and stubborn.

⁸ But look, I have made you as hard and stubborn as they are.

⁹ I have made you as hard as rock! So don't be afraid of them or fear their angry looks, even though they are such rebels."

¹⁰ Then he added, "Son of man, let all my words sink deep into your own heart first. Listen to them carefully for yourself.

¹¹ Then go to your people in exile and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says!' Do this whether they listen to you or not."

¹² Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a loud rumbling sound behind me. (May the glory of the LORD be praised in his place!)

¹³ It was the sound of the wings of the living beings as they brushed against each other and the rumbling of their wheels beneath them.

¹⁴ The Spirit lifted me up and took me away. I went in bitterness and turmoil, but the LORD's hold on me was strong.

¹⁵ Then I came to the colony of Judean exiles in Tel-abib, beside the Kebar River. I sat there among them for seven days, overwhelmed.

¹⁶ At the end of the seven days, the LORD gave me a message. He said,

¹⁷ "Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for Israel. Whenever you receive a message from me, pass it on to the people immediately.

¹⁸ If I warn the wicked, saying, 'You are under the penalty of death,' but you fail to deliver the warning, they will die in their sins. And I will hold you responsible, demanding your blood for theirs.

¹⁹ If you warn them and they keep on sinning and refuse to repent, they will die in their sins. But you will have saved your life because you did what you were told to do.

²⁰ If good people turn bad and don't listen to my warning, they will die. If you did not warn them of the consequences, then they will die in their sins. Their previous good deeds won't help them, and I will hold you responsible, demanding your blood for theirs.

²¹ But if you warn them and they repent, they will live, and you will have saved your own life, too."

²² Then the LORD took hold of me, and he said to me, "Go out into the valley, and I will talk to you there."

²³ So I got up and went, and there I saw the glory of the LORD, just as I had seen it in my first vision by the Kebar River. And I fell face down in the dust.

²⁴ Then the Spirit came into me and set me on my feet. He talked to me and said, "Go, shut yourself up in your house.

²⁵ There you will be bound with ropes so you cannot go out among the people.

²⁶ And I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so you won't be able to pray for them, for they are rebellious.

²⁷ But whenever I give you a message, I will loosen your tongue and let you speak. Then you will say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says!' Some of them will listen, but some will ignore you, for they are rebels.

4¹ "And now, son of man, take a large brick and set it down in front of you. Then draw a map of the city of Jerusalem on it.

² Build siege ramps against the city walls. Surround it with enemy camps and battering rams.

³ Then take an iron griddle and place it between you and the city. Turn toward it and demonstrate how the enemy will attack Jerusalem. This will be a warning to the people of Israel.

⁴ "Now lie on your left side and place the sins of Israel on yourself. You are to bear their sins for the number of days you lie there on your side.

⁵ You will bear Israel's sins for 390 days—one day for each year of their sin.

⁶ After that, turn over and lie on your right side for 40 days—one day for each year of Judah's sin.

⁷ "Meanwhile, continue your demonstration of the siege of Jerusalem. Lie there with your arm bared and prophesy her destruction.

⁸ I will tie you up with ropes so you won't be able to turn from side to side until the days of your siege have been completed.

⁹ "Now go and get some wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt, and mix them together in a storage jar. Use this food to make bread for yourself during

the 390 days you will be lying on your side.

¹⁰ Ration this out to yourself, eight ounces of food for each day, and eat it at set times.

¹¹ Then measure out a jar of water for each day, and drink it at set times.

¹² Each day prepare your bread as you would barley cakes. While all the people are watching, bake it over a fire using dried human dung as fuel and then eat the bread.

¹³ For this is what the LORD says: Israel will eat defiled bread in the Gentile lands, where I will banish them!"

¹⁴ Then I said, "O Sovereign LORD, must I be defiled by using human dung? For I have never been defiled before. From the time I was a child until now I have never eaten any animal that died of sickness or that I found dead. And I have

never eaten any of the animals that our laws forbid."

¹⁵ "All right," the LORD said. "You may bake your bread with cow dung instead of human dung."

¹⁶ Then he told me, "Son of man, I will cause food to be very scarce in Jerusalem. It will be weighed out with great care and eaten fearfully. The water will be portioned out drop by drop, and the people will drink it with dismay.

¹⁷ Food and water will be so scarce that the people will look at one another in terror, and they will waste away under their punishment.

5 ¹ "Son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a razor to shave your head and beard. Use a scale to weigh the hair into three equal parts.

² Place a third of it at the center of your map of Jerusalem. After acting out the siege, burn it there. Scatter another

third across your map and slash at it with a sword. Scatter the last third to the wind, for I will scatter my people with the sword.

³ Keep just a bit of the hair and tie it up in your robe.

⁴ Then take a few of these hairs out and throw them into the fire, burning them up. A fire will then spread from this remnant and destroy all of Israel.

⁵ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is an illustration of what will happen to Jerusalem. I placed her at the center of the nations,

⁶ but she has rebelled against my regulations and has been even more wicked than the surrounding nations. She has refused to obey the laws I gave her to follow.

⁷ So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Since you have refused to obey my

laws and regulations and have behaved even worse than your neighbors,

⁸ I myself, the Sovereign LORD, am now your enemy. I will punish you publicly while all the nations watch.

⁹ Because of your detestable idols, I will punish you more severely than I have punished anyone before or ever will again.

¹⁰ Parents will eat their own children, and children will eat their parents. And I will punish you by scattering the few who survive to the far reaches of the earth.

¹¹ "As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I will cut you off completely. I will show you no pity at all because you have defiled my Temple with idols and vile practices.

¹² A third of your people will die in the city from famine and disease. A third of them will be slaughtered by the enemy

outside the city walls. And I will scatter a third to the winds and chase them with my sword.

¹³ Then at last my anger will be spent, and I will be satisfied. And when my fury against them has subsided, all Israel will know that I, the LORD, have spoken to them in my jealous anger.

¹⁴ "So I will turn you into a ruin, a mockery in the eyes of the surrounding nations and to everyone who travels by.

¹⁵ You will become an object of mockery and taunting and horror. You will be a warning to all the nations around you. They will see what happens when the LORD turns against a nation in furious rebuke. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹⁶ "I will shower you with the deadly arrows of famine to destroy you. The famine will become more and more severe until every crumb of food is gone.

¹⁷ And along with the famine, wild animals will attack you, robbing you of your children. Disease and war will stalk your land, and I will bring the sword of the enemy against you. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

6 ¹ Again a message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, look over toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them.

³ Give the mountains of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says to the mountains and hills and to the ravines and valleys: I am about to bring war upon you, and I will destroy your pagan shrines.

⁴ All your altars will be demolished, and your incense altars will be smashed. I will kill your people in front of your idols.

⁵ I will lay your corpses in front of your idols and scatter your bones around your altars.

⁶ Wherever you live there will be desolation. I will destroy your pagan shrines, your altars, your idols, your incense altars, and all the other religious objects you have made.

⁷ Then when the place is littered with corpses, you will know that I am the LORD.

⁸ "But I will let a few of my people escape destruction, and they will be scattered among the nations of the world.

⁹ Then when they are exiled among the nations, they will remember me. They will recognize how grieved I am by their unfaithful hearts and lustful eyes that long for other gods. Then at last they will hate themselves for all their wickedness.

¹⁰ They will know that I alone am the LORD and that I was serious when I predicted that all this would happen to them.

¹¹ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Clap your hands in horror, and stamp your feet. Cry out, 'Alas!' because of all the evil that the people of Israel have done. Now they are going to die from war and famine and disease.

¹² Disease will strike down those who are far away in exile. War will destroy those who are nearby. And anyone who survives will be killed by famine. So at last I will spend my fury on them.

¹³ When their dead lie scattered among their idols and altars, on every hill and mountain and under every green tree and great oak where they offered incense to their gods, then they will know that I alone am the LORD.

¹⁴ I will crush them and make their cities desolate from the wilderness in the south to Riblah in the north. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

7 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to Israel: The end is here! Wherever you look—east, west, north, or south—your land is finished.

³ No hope remains, for I will unleash my anger against you. I will call you to account for all your disgusting behavior.

⁴ I will turn my eyes away and show no pity, repaying you in full for all your evil. Then you will know that I am the LORD!

⁵ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: With one blow after another I will bring total disaster!

⁶ The end has come! It has finally arrived! Your final doom is waiting!

⁷ O people of Israel, the day of your destruction is dawning. The time has come; the day of trouble is near. It will ring with shouts of anguish, not shouts of joy.

⁸ Soon I will pour out my fury to complete your punishment for all your disgusting behavior.

⁹ I will neither spare nor pity you. I will repay you for all your detestable practices. Then you will know that it is I, the LORD, who is striking the blow.

¹⁰ "The day of judgment is here; your destruction awaits! The people's wickedness and pride have reached a climax.

¹¹ Their violence will fall back on them as punishment for their wickedness. None of these proud and wicked people will survive. All their wealth will be swept away.

¹² Yes, the time has come; the day is here! There is no reason for buyers to rejoice over the bargains they find or for sellers to grieve over their losses, for all of them will fall under my terrible anger.

¹³ And if any merchants should survive, they will never return to their business. For what God has said applies to everyone—it will not be changed! Not one person whose life is twisted by sin will recover.

¹⁴ "The trumpets call Israel's army to mobilize, but no one listens, for my fury is against them all.

¹⁵ Any who leave the city walls will be killed by enemy swords. Those who stay inside will die of famine and disease.

¹⁶ The few who survive and escape to the mountains will moan like doves, weeping for their sins.

¹⁷ Everyone's hands will be feeble; their knees will be as weak as water.

¹⁸ They will dress themselves in sackcloth; horror and shame will cover them. They will shave their heads in sorrow and remorse.

¹⁹ "They will throw away their money, tossing it out like worthless trash. It won't buy their deliverance in that day of the LORD's anger. It will neither satisfy nor feed them, for their love of money made them stumble into sin.

²⁰ They were proud of their gold jewelry and used it to make vile and detestable idols. That is why I will make all their wealth disgusting to them.

²¹ I will give it as plunder to foreigners from the most wicked of nations, and they will defile it.

²² I will hide my eyes as these robbers invade my treasured land and corrupt it.

²³ "Prepare chains for my people, for the land is bloodied by terrible crimes. Jerusalem is filled with violence.

²⁴ I will bring the most ruthless of nations to occupy their homes. I will break down their proud fortresses and defile their sanctuaries.

²⁵ Terror and trembling will overcome my people. They will look for peace but will not find it.

²⁶ Calamity will follow calamity; rumor will follow rumor. They will look in vain for a vision from the prophets. They will receive no teaching from the priests and no counsel from the leaders.

²⁷ The king and the prince will stand helpless, weeping in despair, and the people's hands will tremble with fear. I will bring against them the evil they have done to others, and they will receive the punishment they so richly deserve. Then they will know that I am the LORD!"

8 ¹ Then on September 17, during the sixth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, while the leaders of Judah

were in my home, the Sovereign LORD took hold of me.

² I saw a figure that appeared to be a man. From the waist down he looked like a burning flame. From the waist up he looked like gleaming amber.

³ He put out what seemed to be a hand and took me by the hair. Then the Spirit lifted me up into the sky and transported me in a vision of God to Jerusalem. I was taken to the north gate of the inner courtyard of the Temple, where there is a large idol that has made the LORD very angry.

⁴ Suddenly, the glory of the God of Israel was there, just as I had seen it before in the valley.

⁵ Then the LORD said to me, "Son of man, look toward the north." So I looked, and there to the north, beside the entrance to the gate of the altar,

stood the idol that had made the LORD so angry.

⁶ "Son of man," he said, "do you see what they are doing? Do you see the great sins the people of Israel are doing to drive me from my Temple? But come, and you will see even greater sins than these!"

⁷ Then he brought me to the door of the Temple courtyard, where I could see an opening in the wall.

⁸ He said to me, "Now, son of man, dig into the wall." So I dug into the wall and uncovered a door to a hidden room.

⁹ "Go in," he said, "and see the unspeakable wickedness going on in there!"

¹⁰ So I went in and saw the walls engraved with all kinds of snakes, lizards, and hideous creatures. I also saw the various idols worshiped by the people of Israel.

¹¹ Seventy leaders of Israel were standing there with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan in the middle. Each of them held an incense burner, so there was a thick cloud of incense above their heads.

¹² Then the LORD said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the leaders of Israel are doing with their idols in dark rooms? They are saying, 'The LORD doesn't see us; he has deserted our land!'"

¹³ Then he added, "Come, and I will show you greater sins than these!"

¹⁴ He brought me to the north gate of the LORD's Temple, and some women were sitting there, weeping for the god Tammuz.

¹⁵ "Have you seen this?" he asked. "But I will show you even greater sins than these!"

¹⁶ Then he brought me into the inner courtyard of the LORD's Temple. At

the entrance, between the foyer and the bronze altar, about twenty-five men were standing with their backs to the LORD's Temple. They were facing eastward, worshiping the sun!

¹⁷ "Have you seen this, son of man?" he asked. "Is it nothing to the people of Judah that they commit these terrible sins, leading the whole nation into violence, thumbing their noses at me, and rousing my fury against them?"

¹⁸ Therefore, I will deal with them in fury. I will neither pity nor spare them. And though they scream for mercy, I will not listen."

9 ¹ Then the LORD thundered, "Bring on the men appointed to punish the city! Tell them to bring their weapons with them!"

² Six men soon appeared from the upper gate that faces north, each carrying a battle club in his hand. One of

them was dressed in linen and carried a writer's case strapped to his side. They all went into the Temple courtyard and stood beside the bronze altar.

³ Then the glory of the God of Israel rose up from between the cherubim, where it had rested, and moved to the entrance of the Temple. And the LORD called to the man dressed in linen who was carrying the writer's case.

⁴ He said to him, "Walk through the streets of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of all those who weep and sigh because of the sins they see around them."

⁵ Then I heard the LORD say to the other men, "Follow him through the city and kill everyone whose forehead is not marked. Show no mercy; have no pity!

⁶ Kill them all—old and young, girls and women and little children. But do not touch anyone with the mark. Begin your

task right here at the Temple." So they began by killing the seventy leaders.

⁷ "Defile the Temple!" the LORD commanded. "Fill its courtyards with the bodies of those you kill! Go!" So they went throughout the city and did as they were told.

⁸ While they were carrying out their orders, I was all alone. I fell face down in the dust and cried out, "O Sovereign LORD! Will your fury against Jerusalem wipe out everyone left in Israel?"

⁹ Then he said to me, "The sins of the people of Israel and Judah are very great. The entire land is full of murder; the city is filled with injustice. They are saying, 'The LORD doesn't see it! The LORD has forsaken the land!'

¹⁰ So I will not spare them or have any pity on them. I will fully repay them for all they have done."

¹¹ Then the man in linen clothing, who carried the writer's case, reported back and said, "I have finished the work you gave me to do."

10 ¹ As I looked, I saw what appeared to be a throne of blue sapphire above the crystal surface over the heads of the cherubim.

² Then the LORD spoke to the man in linen clothing and said, "Go in between the whirling wheels beneath the cherubim, and take a handful of glowing coals and scatter them over the city." He did this as I watched.

³ The cherubim were standing at the south end of the Temple when the man went in, and the cloud of glory filled the inner courtyard.

⁴ Then the glory of the LORD rose up from above the cherubim and went over to the door of the Temple. The Temple was filled with this cloud of glory, and

the Temple courtyard glowed brightly with the glory of the LORD.

⁵ The moving wings of the cherubim sounded like the voice of God Almighty and could be heard clearly in the outer courtyard.

⁶ The LORD said to the man in linen clothing, "Go between the cherubim and take some burning coals from between the wheels." So the man went in and stood beside one of the wheels.

⁷ Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand and took some live coals from the fire burning among them. He put the coals into the hands of the man in linen clothing, and the man took them and went out.

⁸ (All the cherubim had what looked like human hands hidden beneath their wings.)

⁹ Each of the four cherubim had a wheel beside him, and the wheels sparkled like chrysolite.

¹⁰ All four wheels looked the same; each wheel had a second wheel turning crosswise within it.

¹¹ The cherubim could move forward in any of the four directions they faced, without turning as they moved. They went straight in the direction in which their heads were turned, never turning aside.

¹² Both the cherubim and the wheels were covered with eyes. The cherubim had eyes all over their bodies, including their hands, their backs, and their wings.

¹³ I heard someone refer to the wheels as "the whirling wheels."

¹⁴ Each of the four cherubim had four faces—the first was the face of an ox, the second was a human face, the third

was the face of a lion, and the fourth was the face of an eagle.

¹⁵ Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the same living beings I had seen beside the Kebar River.

¹⁶ When the cherubim moved, the wheels moved with them. When they rose into the air, the wheels stayed beside them, going with them as they flew.

¹⁷ When the cherubim stood still, the wheels also stopped, for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

¹⁸ Then the glory of the LORD moved from the door of the Temple and hovered above the cherubim.

¹⁹ And as I watched, the cherubim flew with their wheels to the east gate of the LORD's Temple. And the glory of the God of Israel hovered above them.

²⁰ These were the same living beings I had seen beneath the God of Israel

when I was by the Kebar River. I knew they were cherubim,

²¹ for each had four faces and four wings and what looked like human hands under their wings.

²² Their faces, too, were just like the faces of the beings I had seen at the Kebar, and they traveled straight ahead, just as the others had.

11 ¹ Then the Spirit lifted me and brought me over to the east gateway of the LORD's Temple, where I saw twenty–five prominent men of the city. Among them were Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, who were leaders among the people.

² Then the Spirit said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who are responsible for the wicked counsel being given in this city.

³ They say to the people, 'Is it not a good time to build houses? Our city is

like an iron pot. Inside it we will be like meat—safe from all harm.'

⁴ Therefore, son of man, prophesy against them loudly and clearly."

⁵ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say, "This is what the LORD says to the people of Israel: Is that what you are saying? Yes, I know it is, for I know every thought that comes into your minds.

⁶ You have murdered endlessly and filled your streets with the dead.

⁷ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: This city is an iron pot, but the victims of your injustice are the pieces of meat. And you are not safe, for I will soon drag you from the city.

⁸ I will expose you to the war you so greatly fear, says the Sovereign LORD.

⁹ I will drive you out of Jerusalem and hand you over to foreigners who will carry out my judgments against you.

¹⁰ You will be slaughtered all the way to the borders of Israel, and then you will know that I am the LORD.

¹¹ No, this city will not be an iron pot for you, and you will not be the meat, safe inside. I will judge you even to the borders of Israel,

¹² and you will know that I am the LORD. For you have refused to obey me; instead, you have copied the sins of the nations around you."

¹³ While I was still speaking, Pelatiah son of Benaiah suddenly died. Then I fell face down in the dust and cried out, "O Sovereign LORD, are you going to kill everyone in Israel?"

¹⁴ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁵ "Son of man, the people still left in Jerusalem are talking about their relatives in exile, saying, 'They are far

away from the LORD, so now he has given their land to us!’

¹⁶ Therefore, give the exiles this message from the Sovereign LORD: Although I have scattered you in the countries of the world, I will be a sanctuary to you during your time in exile.

¹⁷ I, the Sovereign LORD, will gather you back from the nations where you are scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel once again.

¹⁸ "When the people return to their homeland, they will remove every trace of their detestable idol worship.

¹⁹ And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their hearts of stone and give them tender hearts instead,

²⁰ so they will obey my laws and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God.

²¹ But as for those who long for idols, I will repay them fully for their sins, says the Sovereign LORD."

²² Then the cherubim lifted their wings and rose into the air with their wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered above them.

²³ Then the glory of the LORD went up from the city and stopped above the mountain to the east.

²⁴ Afterward the Spirit of God carried me back again to Babylonia, to the Judeans in exile there. And so ended the vision of my visit to Jerusalem.

²⁵ And I told the exiles everything the LORD had shown me.

12 ¹ Again a message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, you live among rebels who could see the truth if they wanted to, but they don't want to. They could

hear me if they would listen, but they won't listen because they are rebellious.

³ So now put on a demonstration to show them what it will be like to go off into exile. Pack whatever you can carry on your back and leave your home to go on a journey. Make your preparations in broad daylight so the people can see you, for perhaps they will even yet consider what this means, even though they are such rebels.

⁴ Bring your baggage outside during the day so they can watch you. Then as they are watching, leave your house in the evening, just as captives do when they begin a long march to distant lands.

⁵ Dig a hole through the wall while they are watching and carry your possessions out through it.

⁶ As they watch, lift your pack to your shoulders and walk away into the night. Cover your face and don't look around.

All of these actions will be a sign for the people of Israel."

⁷ So I did as I was told. In broad daylight I brought my pack outside, filled with the things I might carry into exile. Then in the evening while the people looked on, I dug through the wall with my hands and went out into the darkness with my pack on my shoulder.

⁸ The next morning this message came to me from the LORD:

⁹ "Son of man, these rebels, the people of Israel, have asked you what all this means.

¹⁰ Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: These actions contain a message for Zedekiah in Jerusalem and for all the people of Israel.'

¹¹ Then explain that your actions are a demonstration of what will soon happen

to them, for they will be driven from their homes and sent away into exile.

¹² "Even Zedekiah will leave Jerusalem at night through a hole in the wall, taking only what he can carry with him. He will cover his face, and his eyes will never see his homeland again.

¹³ Then I will spread out my net and capture him in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Babylonians, though he will never see it, and he will die there.

¹⁴ I will scatter his servants and guards to the four winds and send the sword after them.

¹⁵ And when I scatter them among the nations, they will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁶ But I will spare a few of them from death by war, famine, or disease, so they can confess to their captors about how

wicked they have been. Then they will know that I am the LORD!"

¹⁷ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁸ "Son of man, tremble as you eat your food. Drink your water with fear, as if it were your last.

¹⁹ Give the people this message from the Sovereign LORD concerning those living in Israel and Jerusalem: They will eat their food with trembling and sip their tiny portions of water in utter despair, because their land will be stripped bare on account of their violence.

²⁰ The cities will be destroyed and the farmland deserted. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

²¹ Again a message came to me from the LORD:

²² "Son of man, what is that proverb they quote in Israel: 'Time passes, making a liar of every prophet'?"

²³ Give the people this message from the Sovereign LORD: I will put an end to this proverb, and you will soon stop quoting it. Now give them this new proverb to replace the old one: 'The time has come for every prophecy to be fulfilled!'

²⁴ "Then you will see what becomes of all the false visions and misleading predictions about peace in Israel.

²⁵ For I am the LORD! What I threaten always happens. There will be no more delays, you rebels of Israel! I will fulfill my threat of destruction in your own lifetime, says the Sovereign LORD."

²⁶ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

²⁷ "Son of man, the people of Israel are saying, 'His visions won't come true for a long, long time.'

²⁸ Therefore, give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: No more delay! I will now do everything I have threatened! I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

13 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, speak against the false prophets of Israel who are inventing their own prophecies. Tell them to listen to the word of the LORD.

³ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Destruction is certain for the false prophets who are following their own imaginations and have seen nothing at all!

⁴ "O people of Israel, these prophets of yours are like jackals digging around in the ruins.

⁵ They have done nothing to strengthen the breaks in the walls around the nation. They have not helped it to stand firm in battle on the day of the LORD.

⁶ Instead, they have lied and said, 'My message is from the LORD,' even though the LORD never sent them. And yet they expect him to fulfill their prophecies!

⁷ Can your visions be anything but false if you claim, 'This message is from the LORD,' when I have not even spoken to you?

⁸ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because what you say is false and your visions are a lie, I will stand against you, says the Sovereign LORD.

⁹ I will raise my fist against all the lying prophets, and they will be banished from the community of Israel. I will blot their names from Israel's record books, and they will never again see their own

land. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD!

¹⁰ "These evil prophets deceive my people by saying, 'All is peaceful!' when there is no peace at all! It's as if the people have built a flimsy wall, and these prophets are trying to hold it together by covering it with whitewash!

¹¹ Tell these whitewashers that their wall will soon fall down. A heavy rainstorm will undermine it; great hailstones and mighty winds will knock it down.

¹² And when the wall falls, the people will cry out, 'Where is the whitewash you applied?'

¹³ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will sweep away your whitewashed wall with a storm of indignation, with a great flood of anger, and with hailstones of fury.

¹⁴ I will break down your wall right to the foundation, and when it falls, it will crush you. Then you will know that I am the LORD!

¹⁵ At last my anger against the wall and those who covered it with whitewash will be satisfied. Then I will say to you: 'The wall and those who whitewashed it are both gone.

¹⁶ They were lying prophets who claimed peace would come to Jerusalem when there was no peace. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!'

¹⁷ "Now, son of man, also speak out against the women who prophesy from their own imaginations.

¹⁸ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Destruction is certain for you women who are ensnaring the souls of my people, both young and old alike. You tie magic charms on their wrists and furnish them with magic veils. Do you think

you can trap others without bringing destruction on yourselves?

¹⁹ You turn my people away from me for a few handfuls of barley or a piece of bread. By lying to my people who love to listen to lies, you kill those who should not die, and you promise life to those who should not live.

²⁰ "And so the Sovereign LORD says: I am against all your magic charms, which you use to ensnare my people like birds. I will tear them from your arms, setting my people free like birds set free from a cage.

²¹ I will tear off the magic veils and save my people from your grasp. They will no longer be your victims. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

²² You have discouraged the righteous with your lies, when I didn't want them to suffer grief. And you have encouraged

the wicked by promising them life, even though they continue in their sins.

²³ But you will no longer talk of seeing visions that you never saw, nor will you practice your magic. For I will rescue my people from your grasp. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

14 ¹ Then some of the leaders of Israel visited me, and while they were there,

² this message came to me from the LORD:

³ "Son of man, these leaders have set up idols in their hearts. They have embraced things that lead them into sin. Why should I let them ask me anything?

⁴ Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: I, the LORD, will punish the people of Israel who set up idols in their hearts so they fall into sin and then come to a prophet asking for help.

⁵ I will do this to capture the minds and hearts of all my people who have turned from me to worship their detestable idols.

⁶ "Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and stop all your loathsome practices.

⁷ I, the LORD, will punish all those, both Israelites and foreigners, who reject me and set up idols in their hearts so they fall into sin, and who then come to a prophet asking for my advice.

⁸ I will turn against such people and make a terrible example of them, destroying them. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁹ And if a prophet is deceived and gives a message anyway, it is because I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet. I will stand against such prophets and cut them off from the community of Israel.

¹⁰ False prophets and hypocrites—
—evil people who claim to want my
advice—will all be punished for their
sins.

¹¹ In this way, the people of Israel will
learn not to stray from me, polluting
themselves with sin. They will be my
people, and I will be their God, says the
Sovereign LORD."

¹² Then this message came to me from
the LORD:

¹³ "Son of man, suppose the people of
a country were to sin against me, and I
lifted my fist to crush them, cutting off
their food supply and sending a famine
to destroy both people and animals
alike.

¹⁴ Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were
there, their righteousness would save
no one but themselves, declares the
Sovereign LORD.

¹⁵ "Or suppose I were to send an invasion of dangerous wild animals to devastate the land and kill the people.

¹⁶ Even if these three men were there, the Sovereign LORD swears that it would do no good—it wouldn't save the people from destruction. Those three alone would be saved, but the land would be devastated.

¹⁷ "Or suppose I were to bring war against the land, and I told enemy armies to come and destroy everything.

¹⁸ Even if these three men were in the land, the Sovereign LORD swears that they could not save the people. They alone would be saved.

¹⁹ "Or suppose I were to pour out my fury by sending an epidemic of disease into the land, and the plague killed people and animals alike.

²⁰ Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were living there, the Sovereign LORD swears

that they could not save the people. They alone would be saved by their righteousness.

²¹ "Now this is what the Sovereign LORD says: How terrible it will be when all four of these fearsome punishments fall upon Jerusalem—war, famine, beasts, and plague—destroying all her people and animals.

²² Yet there will be survivors, and they will come here to join you as exiles in Babylon. You will see with your own eyes how wicked they are, and then you will feel better about what I have done to Jerusalem.

²³ When you meet them and see their behavior, you will agree that these things are not being done to Israel without cause, says the Sovereign LORD."

15 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, how does a grapevine compare to a tree? Is a vine's wood as useful as the wood of a tree?

³ Can its wood be used for making things, like pegs to hang up pots and pans?

⁴ No, it can only be used for fuel, and even as fuel, it burns too quickly.

⁵ Vine branches are useless both before and after being put into the fire!

⁶ "And this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The people of Jerusalem are like grapevines growing among the trees of the forest. Since they are useless, I have set them aside to be burned!

⁷ And I will see to it that if they escape from one fire, they will fall into another. When this happens, you will know that I am the LORD.

⁸ And I will make the land desolate because my people have been unfaithful to me, says the Sovereign LORD."

16 ¹ Then another message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her loathsome sins.

³ Give her this message from the Sovereign LORD: You are nothing but a Canaanite! Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite!

⁴ When you were born, no one cared about you. Your umbilical cord was left uncut, and you were never washed, rubbed with salt, and dressed in warm clothing.

⁵ No one had the slightest interest in you; no one pitied you or cared for you. On the day you were born, you were dumped in a field and left to die, unwanted.

⁶ "But I came by and saw you there, helplessly kicking about in your own blood. As you lay there, I said, 'Live!'

⁷ And I helped you to thrive like a plant in the field. You grew up and became a beautiful jewel. Your breasts became full, and your hair grew, though you were still naked.

⁸ And when I passed by and saw you again, you were old enough to be married. So I wrapped my cloak around you to cover your nakedness and declared my marriage vows. I made a covenant with you, says the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine.

⁹ "Then I bathed you and washed off your blood, and I rubbed fragrant oils into your skin.

¹⁰ I gave you expensive clothing of linen and silk, beautifully embroidered, and sandals made of fine leather.

¹¹ I gave you lovely jewelry, bracelets, and beautiful necklaces,

¹² a ring for your nose and earrings for your ears, and a lovely crown for your head.

¹³ And so you were made beautiful with gold and silver. Your clothes were made of fine linen and were beautifully embroidered. You ate the finest foods—fine flour, honey, and olive oil—and became more beautiful than ever. You looked like a queen, and so you were!

¹⁴ Your fame soon spread throughout the world on account of your beauty, because the splendor I bestowed on you perfected your beauty, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁵ "But you thought you could get along without me, so you trusted instead in your fame and beauty. You gave yourself as a prostitute to every man who came along. Your beauty was theirs for the asking!

¹⁶ You used the lovely things I gave you to make shrines for idols, where you carried out your acts of prostitution. Unbelievable! How could such a thing ever happen?

¹⁷ You took the very jewels and gold and silver ornaments I had given you and made statues of men and worshiped them, which is adultery against me.

¹⁸ You used the beautifully embroidered clothes I gave you to cover your idols. Then you used my oil and incense to worship them.

¹⁹ Imagine it! You set before them as a lovely sacrifice the fine flour and oil and honey I had given you, says the Sovereign LORD.

²⁰ "Then you took your sons and daughters—the children you had borne to me—and sacrificed them to your gods. Was it not enough that you should be a prostitute?

²¹ Must you also slaughter my children by sacrificing them to idols?

²² In all your years of adultery and loathsome sin, you have not once thought of the days long ago when you lay naked in a field, kicking about in your own blood.

²³ "Your destruction is certain, says the Sovereign LORD. In addition to all your other wickedness,

²⁴ you built a pagan shrine and put altars to idols in every town square.

²⁵ On every street corner you defiled your beauty, offering your body to every passerby in an endless stream of prostitution.

²⁶ Then you added lustful Egypt to your lovers, fanning the flames of my anger with your increasing promiscuity.

²⁷ That is why I struck you with my fist and reduced your boundaries. I handed you over to your enemies, the

Philistines, and even they were shocked by your lewd conduct!

²⁸ You have prostituted yourselves with the Assyrians, too. It seems you can never find enough new lovers! And after your prostitution there, you still were not satisfied.

²⁹ You added to your lovers by embracing that great merchant land of Babylonia —but you still weren't satisfied!

³⁰ "What a sick heart you have, says the Sovereign LORD, to do such things as these, acting like a shameless prostitute.

³¹ You build your pagan shrines on every street corner and your altars to idols in every square. You have been worse than a prostitute, so eager for sin that you have not even demanded payment for your love!

³² Yes, you are an adulterous wife who takes in strangers instead of her own husband.

³³ Prostitutes charge for their services—but not you! You give gifts to your lovers, bribing them to come to you.

³⁴ So you are the opposite of other prostitutes. No one pays you; instead, you pay them!

³⁵ "Therefore, you prostitute, listen to this message from the LORD!

³⁶ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you have exposed yourself in prostitution to all your lovers, and because you have worshiped detestable idols, and because you have slaughtered your children as sacrifices to your gods,

³⁷ this is what I am going to do. I will gather together all your allies—these lovers of yours with whom you have sinned, both those you loved and those

you hated—and I will strip you naked in front of them so they can stare at you.

³⁸ I will punish you for your murder and adultery. I will cover you with blood in my jealous fury.

³⁹ Then I will give you to your lovers—these many nations—and they will destroy you. They will knock down your pagan shrines and the altars to your idols. They will strip you and take your beautiful jewels, leaving you completely naked and ashamed.

⁴⁰ They will band together in a mob to stone you and run you through with swords.

⁴¹ They will burn your homes and punish you in front of many women. I will see to it that you stop your prostitution and end your payments to your many lovers.

⁴² "Then at last my fury against you will be spent, and my jealous anger will

subside. I will be calm and will not be angry with you anymore.

⁴³ But first, because you have not remembered your youth but have angered me by doing all these evil things, I will fully repay you for all of your sins, says the Sovereign LORD. For to all your disgusting sins, you have added these lewd acts.

⁴⁴ Everyone who makes up proverbs will say of you, 'Like mother, like daughter.'

⁴⁵ For your mother loathed her husband and her children, and so do you. And you are exactly like your sisters, for they despised their husbands and their children. Truly your mother must have been a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

⁴⁶ "Your older sister was Samaria, who lived with her daughters in the north. Your younger sister was Sodom, who lived with her daughters in the south.

⁴⁷ But you have not merely sinned as they did—no, that was nothing to you. In a very short time you far surpassed them!

⁴⁸ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, Sodom and her daughters were never as wicked as you and your daughters.

⁴⁹ Sodom's sins were pride, laziness, and gluttony, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door.

⁵⁰ She was proud and did loathsome things, so I wiped her out, as you have seen.

⁵¹ "Even Samaria did not commit half your sins. You have done far more loathsome things than your sisters ever did. They seem righteous compared to you!

⁵² You should be deeply ashamed because your sins are so terrible. In

comparison, you make your sisters seem innocent!

⁵³ "But someday I will restore the fortunes of Sodom and Samaria, and I will restore you, too.

⁵⁴ Then you will be truly ashamed of everything you have done, for your sins make them feel good in comparison.

⁵⁵ Yes, your sisters, Sodom and Samaria, and all their people will be restored, and at that time you also will be restored.

⁵⁶ In your proud days you held Sodom in contempt.

⁵⁷ But now your greater wickedness has been exposed to all the world, and you are the one who is scorned—by Edom and all her neighbors and by Philistia.

⁵⁸ This is your punishment for all your disgusting sins, says the LORD.

⁵⁹ "Now this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will give you what you

deserve, for you have taken your solemn vows lightly by breaking your covenant.

⁶⁰ Yet I will keep the covenant I made with you when you were young, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

⁶¹ Then you will remember with shame all the evil you have done. I will make your sisters, Samaria and Sodom, to be your daughters, even though they are not part of our covenant.

⁶² And I will reaffirm my covenant with you, and you will know that I am the LORD.

⁶³ You will remember your sins and cover your mouth in silence and shame when I forgive you of all that you have done, says the Sovereign LORD."

17 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, tell this story to the people of Israel.

³ Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: A great eagle with broad wings full of many-colored feathers came to Lebanon. He took hold of the highest branch of a cedar tree

⁴ and plucked off its topmost shoot. Then he carried it away to a city filled with merchants, where he planted it.

⁵ "Then he planted one of its seedlings in fertile ground beside a broad river, where it would grow as quickly as a willow tree.

⁶ It took root there and grew into a low, spreading vine. Its branches turned up toward the eagle, and its roots grew down beneath it. It soon produced strong branches and luxuriant leaves.

⁷ But then another great eagle with broad wings and full plumage came along. So the vine sent its roots and branches out toward him for water.

⁸ The vine did this even though it was already planted in good soil and had plenty of water so it could grow into a splendid vine and produce rich leaves and luscious fruit.

⁹ "So now the Sovereign LORD asks: Should I let this vine grow and prosper? No! I will pull it out, roots and all! I will cut off its fruit and let its leaves wither and die. I will pull it out easily enough—it won't take a strong arm or a large army to do it.

¹⁰ Then when the vine is transplanted, will it thrive? No, it will wither away completely when the east wind blows against it. It will die in the same good soil where it had grown so well."

¹¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

¹² "Say to these rebels of Israel: Don't you understand the meaning of this riddle of the eagles? I will tell you,

says the Sovereign LORD. The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took away her king and princes, and brought them to Babylon.

¹³ He made a treaty with a member of the royal family and made him take an oath of loyalty. He also exiled Israel's most influential leaders,

¹⁴ so Israel would not become strong again and revolt. Only by keeping her treaty with Babylon could Israel maintain her national identity.

¹⁵ "Nevertheless, this man of Israel's royal family rebelled against Babylon, sending ambassadors to Egypt to request a great army and many horses. Can Israel break her sworn treaties like that and get away with it?

¹⁶ No! For as surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, the king of Israel will die in Babylon, the land of the king who

put him in power and whose treaty he despised and broke.

¹⁷ Pharaoh and all his mighty army will fail to help Israel when the king of Babylon lays siege to Jerusalem again and destroys the lives of many.

¹⁸ For the king of Israel broke his treaty after swearing to obey; therefore, he will not escape.

¹⁹ "So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As surely as I live, I will punish him for breaking my covenant and despising the solemn oath he made in my name.

²⁰ I will throw my net over him and capture him in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon and deal with him there for this treason against me.

²¹ And all the best warriors of Israel will be killed in battle, and those remaining in the city will be scattered to the four winds. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken these words.

²² "And the Sovereign LORD says: I will take a tender shoot from the top of a tall cedar, and I will plant it on the top of Israel's highest mountain.

²³ It will become a noble cedar, sending forth its branches and producing seed. Birds of every sort will nest in it, finding shelter beneath its branches.

²⁴ And all the trees will know that it is I, the LORD, who cuts down the tall tree and helps the short tree to grow tall. It is I who makes the green tree wither and gives new life to the dead tree. I, the LORD, have spoken! I will do what I have said."

18 ¹ Then another message came to me from the LORD:

² "Why do you quote this proverb in the land of Israel: 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, but their children's mouths pucker at the taste'?"

³ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you will not say this proverb anymore in Israel.

⁴ For all people are mine to judge—both parents and children alike. And this is my rule: The person who sins will be the one who dies.

⁵ "Suppose a certain man is just and does what is lawful and right,

⁶ and he has not feasted in the mountains before Israel's idols or worshiped them. And suppose he does not commit adultery or have intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period.

⁷ Suppose he is a merciful creditor, not keeping the items given in pledge by poor debtors, and does not rob the poor but instead gives food to the hungry and provides clothes for people in need.

⁸ And suppose he grants loans without interest, stays away from injustice, is honest and fair when judging others,
⁹ and faithfully obeys my laws and regulations. Anyone who does these things is just and will surely live, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁰ "But suppose that man has a son who grows up to be a robber or murderer and refuses to do what is right.

¹¹ And suppose that son does all the evil things his father would never do—worships idols on the mountains, commits adultery,

¹² oppresses the poor and helpless, steals from debtors by refusing to let them redeem what they have given in pledge, worships idols and takes part in loathsome practices,

¹³ and lends money at interest. Should such a sinful person live? No! He must die and must take full blame.

¹⁴ "But suppose that sinful son, in turn, has a son who sees his father's wickedness but decides against that kind of life.

¹⁵ Suppose this son refuses to worship idols on the mountains, does not commit adultery,

¹⁶ and does not exploit the poor, but instead is fair to debtors and does not rob them. And suppose this son feeds the hungry, provides clothes for the needy,

¹⁷ helps the poor, does not lend money at interest, and obeys all my regulations and laws. Such a person will not die because of his father's sins; he will surely live.

¹⁸ But the father will die for the many sins he committed—for being cruel and robbing close relatives, doing what was clearly wrong among his people.

¹⁹ "‘What?’ you ask. ‘Doesn’t the child pay for the parent’s sins?’ No! For if the child does what is right and keeps my laws, that child will surely live.

²⁰ The one who sins is the one who dies. The child will not be punished for the parent’s sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child’s sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own goodness, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.

²¹ But if wicked people turn away from all their sins and begin to obey my laws and do what is just and right, they will surely live and not die.

²² All their past sins will be forgotten, and they will live because of the righteous things they have done.

²³ "Do you think, asks the Sovereign LORD, that I like to see wicked people die? Of course not! I only want them to turn from their wicked ways and live.

²⁴ However, if righteous people turn to sinful ways and start acting like other sinners, should they be allowed to live? No, of course not! All their previous goodness will be forgotten, and they will die for their sins.

²⁵ "Yet you say, 'The Lord isn't being just!' Listen to me, O people of Israel. Am I the one who is unjust, or is it you?"

²⁶ When righteous people turn from being good and start doing sinful things, they will die for it. Yes, they will die because of their sinful deeds.

²⁷ And if wicked people turn away from their wickedness, obey the law, and do what is just and right, they will save their lives.

²⁸ They will live, because after thinking it over, they decided to turn from their sins. Such people will not die.

²⁹ And yet the people of Israel keep saying, ‘The Lord is unjust!’ O people of Israel, it is you who are unjust, not I.

³⁰ "Therefore, I will judge each of you, O people of Israel, according to your actions, says the Sovereign LORD. Turn from your sins! Don't let them destroy you!

³¹ Put all your rebellion behind you, and get for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O people of Israel?

³² I don't want you to die, says the Sovereign LORD. Turn back and live!

19 ¹ "Sing this funeral song for the princes of Israel:

² ‘What is your mother? A lioness among lions! She lay down among the young lions and reared her cubs.

³ She raised one of her cubs to become a strong young lion. He learned to catch

and devour prey, and he became a man-eater.

⁴ Then the nations heard about him, and he was trapped in their pit. They led him away in chains to the land of Egypt.

⁵ 'When the mother lion saw that all her hopes for him were gone, she took another of her cubs and taught him to be a strong lion.

⁶ He prowled among the other lions and became a leader among them. He learned to catch and devour prey, and he, too, became a man-eater.

⁷ He demolished fortresses in nearby nations and destroyed their towns and cities. Their farms were desolated, and their crops were destroyed. Everyone in the land trembled in fear when they heard him roar.

⁸ Then the armies of the nations attacked him, surrounding him from every direction. They spread out their

nets for him and captured him in their pit.

⁹ With hooks, they dragged him into a cage and brought him before the king of Babylon. They held him in captivity, so his voice could never again be heard on the mountains of Israel.

¹⁰ 'Your mother was like a vine planted by the water's edge. It had lush, green foliage because of the abundant water.

¹¹ Its branches became very strong, strong enough to be a ruler's scepter. It soon became very tall, towering above all the others. It stood out because of its height and because of its many lush branches.

¹² But the vine was uprooted in fury and thrown down to the ground. The desert wind dried up its fruit and tore off its branches. Its stem was destroyed by fire.

¹³ Now the vine is growing in the wilderness, where the ground is hard and dry.

¹⁴ A fire has come from its branches and devoured its fruit. None of the remaining limbs is strong enough to be a ruler's scepter.' This is a funeral song, and it is now time for the funeral."

20 ¹ On August 14, during the seventh year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, some of the leaders of Israel came to request a message from the LORD. They sat down in front of me to wait for his reply.

² Then this message came to me from the LORD:

³ "Son of man, give the leaders of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD: How dare you come to ask for my help? As surely as I live, I will tell you nothing. This is the word of the Sovereign LORD!

⁴ "Son of man, bring judgment against them and condemn them. Make them realize how loathsome the actions of their ancestors really were.

⁵ Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: When I chose Israel and revealed myself to her in Egypt, I swore that I, the LORD, would be her God.

⁶ I promised that I would bring her and her descendants out of Egypt to a land I had discovered and explored for them—a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the best of all lands anywhere.

⁷ Then I said to them, 'Each of you, get rid of your idols. Do not defile yourselves with the Egyptian gods, for I am the LORD your God.'

⁸ "But they rebelled against me and would not listen. They did not get rid of their idols or forsake the gods of Egypt. Then I threatened to pour out my fury

on them to satisfy my anger while they were still in Egypt.

⁹ But I didn't do it, for I acted to protect the honor of my name. That way the surrounding nations wouldn't be able to laugh at Israel's God, who had promised to deliver his people.

¹⁰ So I brought my people out of Egypt and led them into the wilderness.

¹¹ There I gave them my laws so they could live by keeping them. Yes, all those who keep them will live!

¹² And I gave them my Sabbath days of rest as a sign between them and me. It was to remind them that I, the LORD, had set them apart to be holy, making them my special people.

¹³ "But the people of Israel rebelled against me, and they refused to obey my laws there in the wilderness. They wouldn't obey my instructions even though obedience would have given

them life. And they also violated my Sabbath days. So I threatened to pour out my fury on them, and I made plans to utterly consume them in the desert.

¹⁴ But again I held back in order to protect the honor of my name. That way the nations who saw me lead my people out of Egypt wouldn't be able to claim I destroyed them because I couldn't take care of them.

¹⁵ But I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful place on earth.

¹⁶ I told them this because they had rejected my laws, ignored my will for them, and violated my Sabbath days. Their hearts were given to their idols.

¹⁷ Nevertheless, I pitied them and held back from destroying them in the wilderness.

¹⁸ "Then I warned their children and told them not to follow in their parents' footsteps, defiling themselves with their idols.

¹⁹ 'I am the LORD your God,' I told them. 'Follow my laws, pay attention to my instructions,

²⁰ and keep my Sabbath days holy, for they are a sign to remind you that I am the LORD your God.'

²¹ "But their children, too, rebelled against me. They refused to keep my laws and follow my instructions, even though obeying them would have given them life. And they also violated my Sabbath days. So again I threatened to pour out my fury on them in the wilderness.

²² Nevertheless, I withdrew my judgment against them to protect the honor of my name among the nations

who had seen my power in bringing them out of Egypt.

²³ But I took a solemn oath against them while they were in the wilderness. I vowed I would scatter them among all the nations

²⁴ because they did not obey my laws. They scorned my instructions by violating my Sabbath days and longing for the idols of their ancestors.

²⁵ I gave them over to worthless customs and laws that would not lead to life.

²⁶ I let them pollute themselves with the very gifts I had given them, and I allowed them to give their firstborn children as offerings to their gods—so I might devastate them and show them that I alone am the LORD.

²⁷ "Therefore, son of man, give the people of Israel this message from

the Sovereign LORD: Your ancestors continued to blaspheme and betray me, ²⁸ for when I brought them into the land I had promised them, they offered sacrifices and incense on every high hill and under every green tree they saw! They roused my fury as they offered up sacrifices to their gods. They brought their perfumes and incense and poured out their drink offerings to them!

²⁹ I said to them, 'What is this high place where you are going?' (This idol shrine has been called Bamah—'high place'—ever since.)

³⁰ "Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD: Do you plan to pollute yourselves just as your ancestors did? Do you intend to keep prostituting yourselves by worshiping detestable idols?

³¹ For when you offer gifts to them and give your little children to be burned

as sacrifices, you continue to pollute yourselves to this day. Should I listen to you or help you, O people of Israel? As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I will not give you a message even though you have come to me requesting one.

³² "You say, 'We want to be like the nations all around us, who serve idols of wood and stone.' But what you have in mind will never happen.

³³ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I will rule you with an iron fist in great anger and with awesome power.

³⁴ With might and fury I will bring you out from the lands where you are scattered.

³⁵ I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations, and there I will judge you face to face.

³⁶ I will judge you there just as I did your ancestors in the wilderness after

bringing them out of Egypt, says the Sovereign LORD.

³⁷ I will count you carefully and hold you to the terms of the covenant.

³⁸ I will purge you of all those who rebel and sin against me. I will bring them out of the countries where they are in exile, but they will never enter the land of Israel. And when that happens, you will know that I am the LORD.

³⁹ "As for you, O people of Israel, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: If you insist, go right ahead and worship your idols, but then don't turn around and bring gifts to me. Such desecration of my holy name must stop!

⁴⁰ For on my holy mountain, says the Sovereign LORD, the people of Israel will someday worship me, and I will accept them. There I will require that you bring me all your offerings and choice gifts and sacrifices.

⁴¹ When I bring you home from exile, you will be as pleasing to me as an offering of perfumed incense. And I will display my holiness in you as all the nations watch.

⁴² Then when I have brought you home to the land I promised your ancestors, you will know that I am the LORD.

⁴³ You will look back at all your sins and hate yourselves because of the evil you have done.

⁴⁴ You will know that I am the LORD, O people of Israel, when I have honored my name by treating you mercifully in spite of your wickedness, says the Sovereign LORD."

⁴⁵ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

⁴⁶ "Son of man, look toward the south and speak out against it; prophesy against the fields of the Negev.

⁴⁷ Give the southern wilderness this message from the Sovereign LORD: Hear the word of the LORD! I will set you on fire, O forest, and every tree will be burned—green and dry trees alike. The terrible flames will not be quenched; they will scorch everything from south to north.

⁴⁸ And all the world will see that I, the LORD, have set this fire. It will not be put out."

⁴⁹ Then I said, "O Sovereign LORD, they are saying of me, 'He only talks in riddles!'"

21 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, look toward Jerusalem and prophesy against Israel and her sanctuaries.

³ Give her this message from the LORD: I am your enemy, O Israel, and I am about to unsheath my sword to destroy

your people—the righteous and the wicked alike.

⁴ Yes, I will not spare even the righteous! I will make a clean sweep throughout the land from south to north.

⁵ All the world will know that I am the LORD. My sword is in my hand, and it will not return to its sheath until its work is finished.

⁶ "Son of man, groan before the people! Groan before them with bitter anguish and a broken heart.

⁷ When they ask you why, tell them, 'I groan because of the terrifying news I have heard. When it comes true, the boldest heart will melt with fear; all strength will disappear. Every spirit will faint; strong knees will tremble and become as weak as water. And the Sovereign LORD says: It is coming! It's on its way!'"

⁸ Then the LORD said to me,

⁹ "Son of man, give the people this message from the LORD: A sword is being sharpened and polished.

¹⁰ It is being prepared for terrible slaughter; it will flash like lightning! Now will you laugh? Those far stronger than you have fallen beneath its power!

¹¹ Yes, the sword is now being sharpened and polished; it is being prepared for the executioner!

¹² "Son of man, cry out and wail; pound your thighs in anguish, for that sword will slaughter my people and their leaders—everyone will die!

¹³ It will put them all to the test! So now the Sovereign LORD asks: What chance do they have?

¹⁴ "Son of man, prophesy to them and clap your hands vigorously. Then take the sword and brandish it twice, even three times, to symbolize the great massacre they will face!

¹⁵ Let their hearts melt with terror, for the sword glitters at every gate. It flashes like lightning; it is polished for slaughter!

¹⁶ O sword, slash to the right, and slash to the left, wherever you will, wherever you want.

¹⁷ I, too, will clap my hands, and I will satisfy my fury. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

¹⁸ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁹ "Son of man, make a map and trace two routes on it for the sword of Babylon's king to follow. Put a signpost on the road that comes out of Babylon where the road forks into two—

²⁰ one road going to Ammon and its capital, Rabbah, and the other to Judah and fortified Jerusalem.

²¹ The king of Babylon now stands at the fork, uncertain whether to attack Jerusalem or Rabbah. He will call his

magicians to use divination. They will cast lots by shaking arrows from the quiver. They will inspect the livers of their animal sacrifices.

²² Then they will decide to turn toward Jerusalem! With battering rams they will go against the gates, shouting for the kill. They will put up siege towers and build ramps against the walls to reach the top.

²³ The people of Jerusalem will think it is a mistake, because of their treaty with the Babylonians. But the king of Babylon will remind the people of their rebellion. Then he will attack and capture them.

²⁴ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Again and again your guilt cries out against you, for you are not ashamed of your sin. You don't even try to hide it! Wherever you go, whatever you do, all your actions are filled with sin. So now the time of your punishment has come!

²⁵ "O you corrupt and wicked prince of Israel, your final day of reckoning is here!

²⁶ Take off your jeweled crown, says the Sovereign LORD. The old order changes—now the lowly are exalted, and the mighty are brought low.

²⁷ Destruction! Destruction! I will surely destroy the kingdom. And it will not be restored until the one appears who has the right to judge it. Then I will hand it over to him.

²⁸ "And now, son of man, prophesy concerning the Ammonites and their mockery. Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: My sword is drawn for your slaughter; it is sharpened to destroy, flashing like lightning!

²⁹ Your magicians and false prophets have given false visions and told lies about the sword. And now it will fall with even greater force on the wicked

for whom the day of final reckoning has come.

³⁰ Should I return my sword to its sheath before I deal with you? No, I will destroy you in your own country, the land of your birth.

³¹ I will pour out my fury on you and blow on you with the fire of my anger. I will hand you over to cruel men who are skilled in destruction.

³² You are fuel for the fire, and your blood will be spilled in your own land. You will be utterly wiped out, your memory lost to history. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

22 ¹ Now this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, are you ready to judge Jerusalem? Are you ready to judge this city of murderers? Denounce her terrible deeds in public,

³ and give her this message from the Sovereign LORD: O city of murderers, doomed and damned—city of idols, filthy and foul—

⁴ you are guilty of both murder and idolatry. Your day of destruction has come! You have reached the end of your years. I will make you an object of mockery throughout the world.

⁵ O infamous city, filled with confusion, you will be mocked by people both far and near.

⁶ "Every leader in Israel who lives within your walls is bent on murder.

⁷ Fathers and mothers are contemptuously ignored. Resident foreigners are forced to pay for protection. Orphans and widows are wronged and oppressed.

⁸ Inside your walls you despise my holy things and violate my Sabbath days of rest.

⁹ People accuse others falsely and send them to their death. You are filled with idol worshipers and people who take part in lewd activities.

¹⁰ Men sleep with their fathers' wives and have intercourse with women who are menstruating.

¹¹ Within your walls live men who commit adultery with their neighbors' wives, who defile their daughters-in-law or who rape their own sisters.

¹² There are hired murderers, loan racketeers, and extortioners everywhere! They never even think of me and my commands, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹³ "But now I clap my hands in indignation over your dishonest gain and bloodshed.

¹⁴ How strong and courageous will you be in my day of reckoning? I, the LORD, have spoken! I will do what I have said.

¹⁵ I will scatter you among the nations and purge you of your wickedness.

¹⁶ And when you have been dishonored among the nations, you will know that I am the LORD."

¹⁷ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁸ "Son of man, the people of Israel are the worthless slag that remains after silver is smelted. They are the dross that is left over—a useless mixture of copper, tin, iron, and lead.

¹⁹ So give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: Because you are all worthless slag, I will bring you to my crucible in Jerusalem.

²⁰ I will melt you down in the heat of my fury, just as copper, tin, iron, and lead are melted down in a furnace.

²¹ I will gather you together and blow the fire of my anger upon you,

²² and you will melt like silver in fierce heat. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out my fury on you."

²³ Again a message came to me from the LORD:

²⁴ "Son of man, give the people of Israel this message: In the day of my indignation, you will become like an uncleared wilderness or a desert without rain.

²⁵ Your princes plot conspiracies just as lions stalk their prey. They devour innocent people, seizing treasures and extorting wealth. They increase the number of widows in the land.

²⁶ Your priests have violated my laws and defiled my holy things. To them there is no difference between what is holy and what is not. And they do not teach my people the difference between what is ceremonially clean and unclean. They disregard my Sabbath days so that

my holy name is greatly dishonored among them.

²⁷ Your leaders are like wolves, who tear apart their victims. They actually destroy people's lives for profit!

²⁸ And your prophets announce false visions and speak false messages. They say, 'My message is from the Sovereign LORD,' when the LORD hasn't spoken a single word to them. They repair cracked walls with whitewash!

²⁹ Even common people oppress the poor, rob the needy, and deprive foreigners of justice.

³⁰ "I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one.

³¹ So now I will pour out my fury on them, consuming them in the fire

of my anger. I will heap on them the full penalty for all their sins, says the Sovereign LORD."

23 ¹ This message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, once there were two sisters who were daughters of the same mother.

³ They became prostitutes in Egypt. Even as young girls, they allowed themselves to be fondled and caressed.

⁴ The older girl was named Oholah, and her sister was Oholibah. I married them, and they bore me sons and daughters. I am speaking of Samaria and Jerusalem, for Oholah is Samaria and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

⁵ "Then Oholah lusted after other lovers instead of me, and she gave her love to the Assyrians, her neighbors.

⁶ They were all attractive young men, captains and commanders dressed in

handsome blue, dashing about on their horses.

⁷ And so she prostituted herself with the most desirable men of Assyria, worshiping their idols and defiling herself.

⁸ For when she left Egypt, she did not leave her spirit of prostitution behind. She was still as lewd as in her youth, when the Egyptians satisfied their lusts with her and robbed her of her virginity.

⁹ And so I handed her over to her Assyrian lovers, whom she desired so much.

¹⁰ They stripped her and killed her and took away her children as their slaves. Her name was known to every woman in the land as a sinner who had received what she deserved.

¹¹ "Yet even though Oholibah saw what had happened to Oholah, her sister, she followed right in her footsteps. And she

was even more depraved, abandoning herself to her lust and prostitution.

¹² She fawned over her Assyrian neighbors, those handsome young men on fine horses, those captains and commanders in handsome uniforms—all of them desirable.

¹³ I saw the way she was going, defiling herself just like her older sister.

¹⁴ "Then she carried her prostitution even further. She fell in love with pictures that were painted on a wall—pictures of Babylonian military officers, outfitted in striking red uniforms.

¹⁵ Handsome belts encircled their waists, and flowing turbans crowned their heads. They were dressed like chariot officers from the land of Babylonia.

¹⁶ When she saw these paintings, she longed to give herself to them, so she

sent messengers to Babylonia to invite them to come to her.

¹⁷ So they came and committed adultery with her, defiling her in the bed of love. But later, she became disgusted with them and broke off their relationship.

¹⁸ "So I became disgusted with Oholibah, just as I was with her sister, because she flaunted herself before them and gave herself to satisfy their lusts.

¹⁹ But that didn't bother her. She turned to even greater prostitution, remembering her youth when she was a prostitute in Egypt.

²⁰ She lusted after lovers whose attentions were gross and bestial.

²¹ And so, Oholibah, you celebrated your former days as a young girl in Egypt, when you first allowed yourself to be fondled and caressed.

²² "Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will send your lovers against you—those very nations from which you turned away in disgust.

²³ For the Babylonians will come with all the Chaldeans from Pekod and Shoa and Koa. And all the Assyrians will come with them—handsome young captains, commanders, chariot officers, and other high-ranking officers, riding their horses.

²⁴ They will all come against you from the north with chariots, wagons, and a great army fully prepared for attack. They will take up positions on every side, surrounding you with men armed for battle. And I will hand you over to them so they can do with you as they please.

²⁵ I will turn my jealous anger against you, and they will deal furiously with you. They will cut off your nose and ears, and any survivors will then be slaughtered by the sword. Your children

will be taken away as captives, and everything that is left will be burned.

²⁶ They will strip you of your beautiful clothes and jewels.

²⁷ In this way, I will put a stop to the lewdness and prostitution you brought from Egypt. You will never again cast longing eyes on those things or fondly remember your time in Egypt.

²⁸ "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will surely hand you over to your enemies, to those you loathe.

²⁹ They will deal with you in hatred and rob you of all you own, leaving you naked and bare. The shame of your prostitution will be exposed to all the world.

³⁰ You brought all this on yourself by prostituting yourself to other nations, defiling yourself with all their idols.

³¹ Because you have followed in your sister's footsteps, I will punish you with the same terrors that destroyed her.

³² "Yes, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: You will drink from the same cup of terror as your sister—a cup that is large and deep. And all the world will mock and scorn you in your desolation.

³³ You will reel like a drunkard beneath the awful blows of sorrow and distress, just as your sister Samaria did.

³⁴ In deep anguish you will drain that cup of terror to the very bottom. Then you will smash it to pieces and beat your breast in anguish. For I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!

³⁵ And because you have forgotten me and turned your back on me, says the Sovereign LORD, you must bear the consequences of all your lewdness and prostitution."

³⁶ The LORD said to me, "Son of man, you must accuse Oholah and Oholibah of all their awful deeds.

³⁷ They have committed both adultery and murder—adultery by worshiping idols and murder by burning their children as sacrifices on their altars.

³⁸ Then after doing these terrible things, they defiled my Temple and violated my Sabbath day!

³⁹ On the very day that they murdered their children in front of their idols, they boldly came into my Temple to worship! They came in and defiled my house!

⁴⁰ "You sisters sent messengers to distant lands to get men. Then when they arrived, you bathed yourselves, painted your eyelids, and put on your finest jewels for them.

⁴¹ You sat with them on a beautifully embroidered couch and put my incense

and my oil on a table that was spread before you.

⁴² From your room came the sound of many men carousing. They were lustful men and drunkards from the wilderness, who put bracelets on your wrists and beautiful crowns on your heads.

⁴³ Then I said, 'If they really want to sleep with worn-out, old prostitutes like these, let them!'

⁴⁴ And that is what they did. They slept with Oholah and Oholibah, these shameless prostitutes, with all the zest of lustful young men.

⁴⁵ But righteous people will judge these sister cities for what they really are—adulteresses and murderers. They will sentence them to all the punishment they deserve.

⁴⁶ "Now this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Bring an army against them

and hand them over to be terrorized and plundered.

⁴⁷ For their enemies will stone them and kill them with swords. They will butcher their sons and daughters and burn their homes.

⁴⁸ In this way, I will put an end to lewdness and idolatry in the land, and my judgment will be a warning to others not to follow their wicked example.

⁴⁹ You will be fully repaid for all your prostitution—your worship of idols. Yes, you will suffer the full penalty! Then you will know that I am the Sovereign LORD."

24 ¹ On January 15, during the ninth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, write down today's date, because on this very day the king of Babylon is beginning his attack against Jerusalem.

³ Then show these rebels an illustration; give them a message from the Sovereign LORD. Put a pot of water on the fire to boil.

⁴ Fill it with choice meat—the rump and the shoulder and all the most tender cuts.

⁵ Use only the best sheep from the flock and heap fuel on the fire beneath the pot. Bring the pot to a boil, and cook the bones along with the meat.

⁶ "Now this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Destruction is certain for Jerusalem, the city of murderers! She is a pot filled with corruption. So take the meat out chunk by chunk in whatever order it comes,

⁷ for her wickedness is evident to all. She murders boldly, leaving blood on the rocks for all to see. She doesn't even try to cover it!

⁸ So I will splash her blood on a rock as an open expression of my anger and vengeance against her.

⁹ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Destruction is certain for Jerusalem, the city of murderers! I myself will pile up the fuel beneath her.

¹⁰ Yes, heap on the wood! Let the fire roar to make the pot boil. Cook the meat well with many spices. Then empty the pot and burn the bones.

¹¹ Now set the empty pot on the coals to scorch away the filth and corruption.

¹² But it's hopeless; the corruption remains. So throw it into the fire!

¹³ It is the filth and corruption of your lewdness and idolatry. And now, because I tried to cleanse you but you refused, you will remain filthy until my fury against you has been satisfied.

¹⁴ I, the LORD, have spoken! The time has come and I won't hold back; I will

not change my mind. You will be judged on the basis of all your wicked actions, says the Sovereign LORD."

¹⁵ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁶ "Son of man, I am going to take away your dearest treasure. Suddenly she will die. Yet you must not show any sorrow. Do not weep; let there be no tears.

¹⁷ You may sigh but only quietly. Let there be no wailing at her grave. Do not uncover your head or take off your sandals. Do not perform the rituals of mourning or accept any food brought to you by consoling friends."

¹⁸ So I proclaimed this to the people the next morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did everything I had been told to do.

¹⁹ Then the people asked, "What does all this mean? What are you trying to tell us?"

²⁰ So I said to them, "A message came to me from the LORD,

²¹ and I was told to give this message to the people of Israel. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will desecrate my Temple, the source of your security and pride. Your sons and daughters in Judea will be slaughtered by the sword.

²² Then you will do as Ezekiel has done. You will not mourn in public or console yourselves by eating the food brought to you by sympathetic friends.

²³ Your heads must remain covered, and your sandals must not be taken off. You will not mourn or weep, but you will waste away because of your sins. You will mourn privately for all the evil you have done.

²⁴ Ezekiel is an example for you to follow; you will do as he has done. And when that time comes, you will know that I am the LORD."

²⁵ Then the LORD said to me, "Son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold—their joy and glory, their heart's desire, their dearest treasure—I will also take away their sons and daughters.

²⁶ And on that day a refugee from Jerusalem will come to you in Babylon and tell you what has happened.

²⁷ And when he arrives, your voice will suddenly return so you can talk to him, and you will be a symbol for these people. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

25 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, look toward the land of Ammon and prophesy against its people.

³ Give the Ammonites this message from the Sovereign LORD: Hear the word of the Sovereign LORD! Because you scoffed when my Temple was

desecrated, mocked Israel in her desolation, and laughed at Judah as she went away into exile,

⁴ I will allow nomads from the eastern deserts to overrun your country. They will set up their camps among you and pitch their tents on your land. They will harvest all your fruit and steal your livestock.

⁵ And I will turn the city of Rabbah into a pasture for camels, and all the land of the Ammonites into an enclosure for sheep. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁶ "And the Sovereign LORD says: Because you clapped and stamped and cheered with glee at the destruction of my people,

⁷ I will lift up my fist against you. I will give you as plunder to many nations. I will cut you off from being a nation and

destroy you completely. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁸ "And the Sovereign LORD says: Because the people of Moab have said that Judah is just like all the other nations,

⁹ I will open up their eastern flank and wipe out their glorious frontier cities—Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim.

¹⁰ And I will hand Moab over to nomads from the eastern deserts, just as I handed over Ammon. Yes, the Ammonites will no longer be counted among the nations.

¹¹ And in the same way, I will bring my judgment down on the Moabites. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

¹² "And the Sovereign LORD says: The people of Edom have sinned greatly by avenging themselves against the people of Judah.

¹³ Therefore, says the Sovereign LORD, I will raise my fist of judgment against Edom. I will wipe out their people, cattle, and flocks with the sword. I will make a wasteland of everything from Teman to Dedan.

¹⁴ By the hand of my people of Israel, I will accomplish this. They will carry out my furious vengeance, and Edom will know it is from me. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!

¹⁵ "And the Sovereign LORD says: The people of Philistia have acted against Judah out of revenge and long-standing contempt.

¹⁶ Therefore, says the Sovereign LORD, I will raise my fist of judgment against the land of the Philistines. I will wipe out the Kerethites and utterly destroy the people who live by the sea.

¹⁷ I will execute terrible vengeance against them to rebuke them for what

they have done. And when I have inflicted my revenge, then they will know that I am the LORD."

26 ¹ On February 3, during the twelfth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, Tyre has rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem, saying, 'Ha! She who controlled the rich trade routes to the east has been broken, and I am the heir! Because she has been destroyed, I will become wealthy!'

³ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am your enemy, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the waves of the sea crashing against your shoreline.

⁴ They will destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down its towers. I will scrape away its soil and make it a bare rock!

⁵ The island of Tyre will become uninhabited. It will be a place for fishermen to spread their nets, for I have spoken, says the Sovereign LORD. Tyre will become the prey of many nations,

⁶ and its mainland villages will be destroyed by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

⁷ "For the Sovereign LORD says: I will bring King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon—the king of kings from the north—against Tyre with his cavalry, chariots, and great army.

⁸ First he will destroy your mainland villages. Then he will attack you by building a siege wall, constructing a ramp, and raising a roof of shields against you.

⁹ He will pound your walls with battering rams and demolish your towers with sledgehammers.

¹⁰ The hooves of his cavalry will choke the city with dust, and your walls will shake as the horses gallop through your broken gates, pulling chariots behind them.

¹¹ His horsemen will trample every street in the city. They will butcher your people, and your famous pillars will topple.

¹² "They will plunder all your riches and merchandise and break down your walls. They will destroy your lovely homes and dump your stones and timbers and even your dust into the sea.

¹³ I will stop the music of your songs. No more will the sound of harps be heard among your people.

¹⁴ I will make your island a bare rock, a place for fishermen to spread their nets. You will never be rebuilt, for I, the LORD, have spoken! This is the word of the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁵ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Tyre: The whole coastline will tremble at the sound of your fall, as the screams of the wounded echo in the continuing slaughter.

¹⁶ All the seaport rulers will step down from their thrones and take off their royal robes and beautiful clothing. They will sit on the ground trembling with horror at what they have seen.

¹⁷ Then they will wail for you, singing this funeral song: 'O famous island city, once ruler of the sea, how you have been destroyed! Your people, with their naval power, once spread fear around the world.

¹⁸ Now the coastlands tremble at your fall. The islands are dismayed as you pass away.'

¹⁹ "For the Sovereign LORD says: I will make Tyre an uninhabited ruin. You will sink beneath the terrible waves of

enemy attack. Great seas will swallow you.

²⁰ I will send you to the pit to lie there with those who descended there long ago. Your city will lie in ruins, buried beneath the earth, like those in the pit who have entered the world of the dead. Never again will you be given a position of respect here in the land of the living.

²¹ I will bring you to a terrible end, and you will be no more. You will be looked for, but you will never be found. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

27 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, sing a funeral song for Tyre,

³ that mighty gateway to the sea, the trading center of the world. Give Tyre this message from the Sovereign LORD: You claimed, O Tyre, to be perfect in beauty.

⁴ You extended your boundaries into the sea. Your builders made you glorious!

⁵ You were like a great ship built of the finest cypress from Senir. They took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you.

⁶ They carved oars for you from the oaks of Bashan. They made your deck of pine wood, brought from the southern coasts of Cyprus. Then they inlaid it with ivory.

⁷ Your sails were made of Egypt's finest linen, and they flew as a banner above you. You stood beneath blue and purple awnings made bright with dyes from the coasts of Elishah.

⁸ "Your oarsmen came from Sidon and Arvad; your helmsmen were skilled men from Tyre itself.

⁹ Wise old craftsmen from Gebal did all the caulking. Ships came with goods from every land to barter for your trade.

¹⁰ Men from distant Persia, Lydia, and Libya served in your great army. They hung their shields and helmets on your walls, giving you great honor.

¹¹ Men from Arvad and from Helech stood on your walls as sentinels. Your towers were manned by men from Gammad. Their shields hung on your walls, perfecting your splendor.

¹² "Tarshish was your agent, trading your wares in exchange for silver, iron, tin, and lead.

¹³ Merchants from Greece, Tubal, and Meshech brought slaves and bronze dishes.

¹⁴ From Togarmah came riding horses, chariot horses, and mules. All these things were exchanged for your manufactured goods.

¹⁵ Merchants came to you from Dedan. Numerous coastlands were your captive

markets; they brought payment in ivory tusks and ebony wood.

¹⁶ "Aram sent merchants to buy your wares. They traded turquoise, purple dyes, embroidery, fine linen, and jewelry of coral and rubies.

¹⁷ Judah and Israel traded for your wares, offering wheat from Minnith, early figs, honey, oil, and balm.

¹⁸ Damascus traded for your rich variety of goods, bringing wine from Helbon and white wool from Zahar.

¹⁹ Greeks from Uzal came to trade for your merchandise. Wrought iron, cassia, and calamus were bartered for your wares.

²⁰ Dedan traded their expensive saddle blankets with you.

²¹ "The Arabians and the princes of Kedar brought lambs and rams and goats in trade for your goods.

²² The merchants of Sheba and Raamah came with all kinds of spices, jewels, and gold in exchange for your wares.

²³ Haran, Canneh, Eden, Sheba, Asshur, and Kilmad came with their merchandise, too.

²⁴ They brought choice fabrics to trade—blue cloth, embroidery, and many-colored carpets bound with cords and made secure.

²⁵ The ships of Tarshish were your ocean caravans. Your island warehouse was filled to the brim!

²⁶ "But look! Your oarsmen are rowing your ship of state into a hurricane! Your mighty vessel flounders in the heavy eastern gale. You are shipwrecked in the heart of the sea!

²⁷ Everything is lost—your riches and wares, your sailors and helmsmen, your ship builders, merchants, and warriors.

On that day of vast ruin, everyone on board sinks into the depths of the sea.

²⁸ "Your cities by the sea tremble as your helmsmen cry out in terror.

²⁹ All the oarsmen abandon their ships; the sailors and helmsmen come to stand on the shore.

³⁰ They weep bitterly as they throw dust on their heads and roll in ashes.

³¹ They shave their heads in grief because of you and dress themselves in sackcloth. They weep for you with bitter anguish and deep mourning.

³² As they wail and mourn, they sing this sad funeral song: 'Was there ever such a city as Tyre, now silent at the bottom of the sea?

³³ The merchandise you traded satisfied the needs of many nations. Kings at the ends of the earth were enriched by your trade.

³⁴ Now you are a wrecked ship, broken at the bottom of the sea. All your merchandise and your crew have passed away with you.

³⁵ All who live along the coastlands are appalled at your terrible fate. Their kings are filled with horror and look on with twisted faces.

³⁶ The merchants of the nations shake their heads at the sight of you, for you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'"

28 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, give the prince of Tyre this message from the Sovereign LORD: In your great pride you claim, 'I am a god! I sit on a divine throne in the heart of the sea.' But you are only a man and not a god, though you boast that you are like a god.

³ You regard yourself as wiser than Daniel and think no secret is hidden from you.

⁴ With your wisdom and understanding you have amassed great wealth—gold and silver for your treasuries.

⁵ Yes, your wisdom has made you very rich, and your riches have made you very proud.

⁶ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you think you are as wise as a god,

⁷ I will bring against you an enemy army, the terror of the nations. They will suddenly draw their swords against your marvelous wisdom and defile your splendor!

⁸ They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die there on your island home in the heart of the sea, pierced with many wounds.

⁹ Will you then boast, 'I am a god!' to those who kill you? To them you will be no god but merely a man!

¹⁰ You will die like an outcast at the hands of foreigners. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

¹¹ Then this further message came to me from the LORD:

¹² "Son of man, weep for the king of Tyre. Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD: You were the perfection of wisdom and beauty.

¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God. Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone —red carnelian, chrysolite, white moonstone, beryl, onyx, jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald—all beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you on the day you were created.

¹⁴ I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire.

¹⁵ "You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you.

¹⁶ Your great wealth filled you with violence, and you sinned. So I banished you from the mountain of God. I expelled you, O mighty guardian, from your place among the stones of fire.

¹⁷ Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth and exposed you to the curious gaze of kings.

¹⁸ You defiled your sanctuaries with your many sins and your dishonest trade. So I brought fire from within you, and it consumed you. I let it burn you to

ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching.

¹⁹ All who knew you are appalled at your fate. You have come to a terrible end, and you are no more."

²⁰ Then another message came to me from the LORD:

²¹ "Son of man, look toward the city of Sidon and prophesy against it.

²² Give the people of Sidon this message from the Sovereign LORD: I am your enemy, O Sidon, and I will reveal my glory by what happens to you. When I bring judgment against you and reveal my holiness among you, everyone watching will know that I am the LORD.

²³ I will send a plague against you, and blood will be spilled in your streets. The attack will come from every direction, and your people will lie slaughtered within your walls. Then everyone will know that I am the LORD.

²⁴ No longer will Israel's scornful neighbors prick and tear at her like thorns and briars. For then they will know that I am the Sovereign LORD.

²⁵ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The people of Israel will again live in their own land, the land I gave my servant Jacob. For I will gather them from the distant lands where I have scattered them. I will reveal to the nations of the world my holiness among my people.

²⁶ They will live safely in Israel and build their homes and plant their vineyards. And when I punish the neighboring nations that treated them with contempt, they will know that I am the LORD their God."

29 ¹ On January 7, during the tenth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, turn toward Egypt and prophesy against Pharaoh the king and all the people of Egypt.

³ Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: I am your enemy, O Pharaoh, king of Egypt—you great monster, lurking in the streams of the Nile. For you have said, 'The Nile River is mine; I made it for myself!'

⁴ I will put hooks in your jaws and drag you out on the land with fish sticking to your scales.

⁵ I will leave you and all your fish stranded in the desert to die. You will lie unburied on the open ground, for I have given you as food to the wild animals and birds.

⁶ "All the people of Egypt will discover that I am the LORD, for you collapsed like a reed when Israel looked to you for help.

⁷ Israel leaned on you, but like a cracked staff, you splintered and stabbed her in the armpit. When she put her weight on you, you gave way, and her back was thrown out of joint.

⁸ So now the Sovereign LORD says: I will bring an army against you, O Egypt, and destroy both people and animals.

⁹ The land of Egypt will become a desolate wasteland, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD. "Because you said, 'The Nile River is mine; I made it,'

¹⁰ I am now the enemy of both you and your river. I will utterly destroy the land of Egypt, from Migdol to Aswan, as far south as the border of Ethiopia.

¹¹ For forty years not a soul will pass that way, neither people nor animals. It will be completely uninhabited.

¹² I will make Egypt desolate, and it will be surrounded by other desolate

nations. Its cities will be empty and desolate for forty years, surrounded by other desolate cities. I will scatter the Egyptians to distant lands.

¹³ "But the Sovereign LORD also says: At the end of the forty years I will bring the Egyptians home again from the nations to which they have been scattered.

¹⁴ I will restore the prosperity of Egypt and bring its people back to the land of Pathros in southern Egypt from which they came. But Egypt will remain an unimportant, minor kingdom.

¹⁵ It will be the lowliest of all the nations, never again great enough to rise above its neighbors.

¹⁶ "Then Israel will no longer be tempted to trust in Egypt for help. Egypt's shattered condition will remind Israel of how sinful she was to trust Egypt in earlier days. Then Israel will

know that I alone am the Sovereign LORD."

¹⁷ On April 26, during the twenty-seventh year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁸ "Son of man, the army of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon fought so hard against Tyre that the warriors' heads were rubbed bare and their shoulders were raw and blistered. Yet Nebuchadnezzar and his army won no plunder to compensate them for all their work.

¹⁹ Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He will carry off their wealth, plundering everything they have to pay his army.

²⁰ Yes, I have given him the land of Egypt as a reward for his work, says

the Sovereign LORD, because he was working for me when he destroyed Tyre.

²¹ "And the day will come when I will cause the ancient glory of Israel to revive, and then at last your words will be respected. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

30 ¹ This is another message that came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, prophesy and give this message from the Sovereign LORD:
Weep,

³ for the terrible day is almost here—the day of the LORD! It is a day of clouds and gloom, a day of despair for the nations!

⁴ A sword will come against Egypt, and those who are slaughtered will cover the ground. Their wealth will be carried away and their foundations destroyed. The land of Ethiopia will be ravished.

⁵ Ethiopia, Libya, Lydia, and Arabia, with all their other allies, will be destroyed in that war.

⁶ "For this is what the LORD says: All of Egypt's allies will fall, and the pride of their power will end. From Migdol to Aswan they will be slaughtered by the sword, says the Sovereign LORD.

⁷ Egypt will be desolate, surrounded by desolate nations, and its cities will be in ruins, surrounded by other ruined cities.

⁸ And the people of Egypt will know that I am the LORD when I have set Egypt on fire and destroyed all their allies.

⁹ At that time I will send swift messengers in ships to terrify the complacent Ethiopians. Great panic will come upon them on that day of Egypt's certain destruction.

¹⁰ "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Through King Nebuchadnezzar of

Babylon, I will destroy the hordes of Egypt.

¹¹ He and his armies—ruthless among the nations—have been sent to demolish the land. They will make war against Egypt until slaughtered Egyptians cover the ground.

¹² I will dry up the Nile River and hand the land over to wicked men. I will destroy the land of Egypt and everything in it, using foreigners to do it. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹³ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will smash the idols of Egypt and the images at Memphis. There will be no rulers left in Egypt; anarchy will prevail throughout the land!

¹⁴ I will destroy Pathros, Zoan, and Thebes, and they will lie in ruins, burned up by my anger.

¹⁵ I will pour out my fury on Pelusium, the strongest fortress of Egypt, and I will stamp out the people of Thebes.

¹⁶ Yes, I will set fire to all Egypt! Pelusium will be racked with pain; Thebes will be torn apart; Memphis will live in constant terror.

¹⁷ The young men of Heliopolis and Bubastis will die in battle, and the women will be taken away as slaves.

¹⁸ When I come to break the proud strength of Egypt, it will be a dark day for Tahpanhes, too. A dark cloud will cover Tahpanhes, and its daughters will be led away as captives.

¹⁹ And so I will greatly punish Egypt, and they will know that I am the LORD."

²⁰ On April 29, during the eleventh year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

²¹ "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. His arm

has not been put in a cast so that it may heal. Neither has it been bound up with a splint to make it strong enough to hold a sword.

²² Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am the enemy of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt! I will break both of his arms—the good arm along with the broken one—and I will make his sword clatter to the ground.

²³ I will scatter the Egyptians to many lands throughout the world.

²⁴ I will strengthen the arms of Babylon's king and put my sword in his hand. But I will break the arms of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he will lie there mortally wounded, groaning in pain.

²⁵ I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, while the arms of Pharaoh fall useless to his sides. And when I put my sword in the hand of Babylon's king

and he brings it against the land of Egypt, Egypt will know that I am the LORD.

²⁶ I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

31 ¹ On June 21, during the eleventh year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, give this message to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and all his people: To whom would you compare your greatness?

³ You are as Assyria was—a great and mighty nation. Assyria, too, was once like a cedar of Lebanon, full of thick branches that cast deep forest shade with its top high among the clouds.

⁴ Deep springs watered it and helped it to grow tall and luxuriant. The water was so abundant that there was enough for all the trees nearby.

⁵ This great tree towered above all the other trees around it. It prospered and grew long thick branches because of all the water at its roots.

⁶ The birds nested in its branches, and in its shade all the wild animals gave birth to their young. All the great nations of the world lived in its shadow.

⁷ It was strong and beautiful, for its roots went deep into abundant water.

⁸ This tree became taller than any of the other cedars in the garden of God. No cypress had branches equal to it; no plane tree had boughs to compare. No tree in the garden of God came close to it in beauty.

⁹ Because of the magnificence I gave this tree, it was the envy of all the other trees of Eden, the garden of God.

¹⁰ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because it became proud and

arrogant, and because it set itself so high above the others, reaching to the clouds,

¹¹ I handed it over to a mighty nation that destroyed it as its wickedness deserved. I myself discarded it.

¹² A foreign army—the terror of the nations—cut it down and left it fallen on the ground. Its branches were scattered across the mountains and valleys and ravines of the land. All those who lived beneath its shadow went away and left it lying there.

¹³ The birds roosted on its fallen trunk, and the wild animals lay among its branches.

¹⁴ Let no other nation proudly exult in its own prosperity, though it be higher than the clouds, for all are doomed. They will land in the pit along with all the proud people of the world.

¹⁵ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When Assyria went down into the

grave, I made the deep places mourn, and I restrained the mighty waters. I clothed Lebanon in black and caused the trees of the field to wilt.

¹⁶ I made the nations shake with fear at the sound of its fall, for I sent it down to the grave with all the others like it. And all the other proud trees of Eden, the most beautiful and the best of Lebanon, the ones whose roots went deep into the water, were relieved to find it there with them in the pit.

¹⁷ Its allies, too, were all destroyed and had passed away. They had gone down to the grave—all those nations that had lived in its shade.

¹⁸ "O Egypt, to which of the trees of Eden will you compare your strength and glory? You, too, will be brought down to the pit with all these other nations. You will lie there among the outcasts who have died by the sword. This will be

the fate of Pharaoh and all his teeming hordes. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

32 ¹ On March 3, during the twelfth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, mourn for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and give him this message: You think of yourself as a strong young lion among the nations, but you are really just a sea monster, heaving around in your own rivers, stirring up mud with your feet.

³ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will send many people to catch you in my net and haul you out of the water.

⁴ I will leave you stranded on the land to die. All the birds of the heavens will land on you, and the wild animals of the whole earth will gorge themselves on you.

⁵ I will cover the hills with your flesh and fill the valleys with your bones.

⁶ I will drench the earth with your gushing blood all the way to the mountains, filling the ravines to the brim.

⁷ When I blot you out, I will veil the heavens and darken the stars. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give you its light.

⁸ Yes, I will bring darkness everywhere across your land. Even the brightest stars will become dark above you. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!

⁹ "And when I bring your shattered remains to distant nations that you have never seen, I will disturb many hearts.

¹⁰ Yes, I will bring terror to many lands, and their kings will be terrified because of all I do to you. They will shudder in fear for their lives as I brandish my sword before them on the day of your fall.

¹¹ "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: The sword of the king of Babylon will come against you.

¹² I will destroy you with the swords of mighty warriors—the terror of the nations. They will shatter the pride of Egypt, and all its hordes will be destroyed.

¹³ I will destroy all your flocks and herds that graze beside the streams. Never again will people or animals disturb those waters with their feet.

¹⁴ Then I will let the waters of Egypt become calm again, and they will flow as smoothly as olive oil, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁵ And when I destroy Egypt and wipe out everything you have and strike down all your people, then you will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁶ Yes, this is the funeral song they will sing for Egypt. Let all the nations mourn

for Egypt and its hordes. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

¹⁷ On March 17, during the twelfth year, another message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁸ "Son of man, weep for the hordes of Egypt and for the other mighty nations. For I will send them down to the world below in company with those who descend to the pit.

¹⁹ Say to them, 'O Egypt, are you lovelier than the other nations? No! So go down to the pit and lie there among the outcasts.'

²⁰ The Egyptians will fall with the many who have died by the sword, for the sword is drawn against them. Egypt will be dragged away to its judgment.

²¹ Down in the grave mighty leaders will mockingly welcome Egypt and its allies, saying, 'They have come down; they lie

among the outcasts, all victims of the sword.'

²² "Assyria lies there surrounded by the graves of all its people, those who were slaughtered by the sword.

²³ Their graves are in the depths of the pit, and they are surrounded by their allies. These mighty men who once struck terror in the hearts of people everywhere are now dead at the hands of their enemies.

²⁴ "Elam lies there buried with its hordes who descended as outcasts to the world below. They terrorized the nations while they lived, but now they lie in the pit and share the humiliation of those who have gone to the world of the dead.

²⁵ They have a resting place among the slaughtered, surrounded by the graves of all their people. Yes, they terrorized the nations while they lived, but now

they lie in shame in the pit, all of them outcasts, slaughtered by the sword.

²⁶ "Meshech and Tubal are there, surrounded by the graves of all their hordes. They once struck terror into the hearts of all people. But now they are outcasts, all victims of the sword.

²⁷ They are not buried in honor like the fallen heroes of the outcasts, who went down to the grave with their weapons—their shields covering their bodies, and their swords beneath their heads. They brought terror to everyone while they were still alive.

²⁸ "You too, Egypt, will lie crushed and broken among the outcasts, all victims of the sword.

²⁹ "Edom is there with its kings and princes. Mighty as they were, they also lie among those killed by the sword, with the outcasts who have gone down to the pit.

³⁰ All the princes of the north and the Sidonians are there, all victims of the sword. Once a terror, they now lie there in shame. They lie there as outcasts with all the other dead who have descended to the pit.

³¹ "When Pharaoh arrives, he will be relieved to find that he is not alone in having his entire army killed, says the Sovereign LORD.

³² For I have caused my terror to fall upon all the living. And Pharaoh and his hordes will lie there among the outcasts who have died by the sword. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

33 ¹ Once again a message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, give your people this message: When I bring an army against a country, the people of that land choose a watchman.

³ When the watchman sees the enemy coming, he blows the alarm to warn the people.

⁴ Then if those who hear the alarm refuse to take action—well, it is their own fault if they die.

⁵ They heard the warning but wouldn't listen, so the responsibility is theirs. If they had listened to the warning, they could have saved their lives.

⁶ But if the watchman sees the enemy coming and doesn't sound the alarm to warn the people, he is responsible for their deaths. They will die in their sins, but I will hold the watchman accountable.

⁷ "Now, son of man, I am making you a watchman for the people of Israel. Therefore, listen to what I say and warn them for me.

⁸ If I announce that some wicked people are sure to die and you fail to warn them

about changing their ways, then they will die in their sins, but I will hold you responsible for their deaths.

⁹ But if you warn them to repent and they don't repent, they will die in their sins, but you will not be held responsible.

¹⁰ "Son of man, give the people of Israel this message: You are saying, 'Our sins are heavy upon us; we are wasting away! How can we survive?'

¹¹ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live. Turn! Turn from your wickedness, O people of Israel! Why should you die?

¹² "Son of man, give your people this message: The good works of righteous people will not save them if they turn to sin, nor will the sins of evil people destroy them if they repent and turn from their sins.

¹³ When I tell righteous people that they will live, but then they sin, expecting their past righteousness to save them, then none of their good deeds will be remembered. I will destroy them for their sins.

¹⁴ And suppose I tell some wicked people that they will surely die, but then they turn from their sins and do what is just and right.

¹⁵ For instance, they might give back a borrower's pledge, return what they have stolen, and obey my life-giving laws, no longer doing what is evil. If they do this, then they will surely live and not die.

¹⁶ None of their past sins will be brought up again, for they have done what is just and right, and they will surely live.

¹⁷ "Your people are saying, 'The Lord is not just,' but it is they who are not just.

¹⁸ For again I say, when righteous people turn to evil, they will die.

¹⁹ But if wicked people turn from their wickedness and do what is just and right, they will live.

²⁰ O people of Israel, you are saying, 'The Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to your deeds."

²¹ On January 8, during the twelfth year of our captivity, a man who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has fallen!"

²² The previous evening the LORD had taken hold of me and opened my mouth, so I would be able to speak when this man arrived the next morning.

²³ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

²⁴ "Son of man, the scattered remnants of Judah living among the ruined cities keep saying, 'Abraham was only one man, and yet he gained possession of

the entire land! We are many; surely the land should be given to us as a possession.'

²⁵ Now give these people this message from the Sovereign LORD: You eat meat with blood in it, you worship idols, and you murder the innocent. Do you really think the land should be yours?

²⁶ Murderers! Idolaters! Adulterers! Should the land belong to you?

²⁷ "Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: As surely as I live, those living in the ruins will die by the sword. Those living in the open fields will be eaten by wild animals. Those hiding in the forts and caves will die of disease.

²⁸ I will destroy the land and demolish her pride. Her arrogant power will come to an end. The mountains of Israel will be so ruined that no one will even travel through them.

²⁹ When I have ruined the land because of their disgusting sins, then they will know that I am the LORD.

³⁰ "Son of man, your people are whispering behind your back. They talk about you in their houses and whisper about you at the doors, saying, 'Come on, let's have some fun! Let's go hear the prophet tell us what the LORD is saying!'

³¹ So they come pretending to be sincere and sit before you listening. But they have no intention of doing what I tell them. They express love with their mouths, but their hearts seek only after money.

³² You are very entertaining to them, like someone who sings love songs with a beautiful voice or plays fine music on an instrument. They hear what you say, but they don't do it!

³³ But when all these terrible things happen to them—as they certainly

will—then they will know a prophet has been among them."

34 ¹ Then this message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: Destruction is certain for you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep?

³ You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve.

⁴ You have not taken care of the weak. You have not tended the sick or bound up the broken bones. You have not gone looking for those who have wandered away and are lost. Instead, you have ruled them with force and cruelty.

⁵ So my sheep have been scattered without a shepherd. They are easy prey for any wild animal.

⁶ They have wandered through the mountains and hills, across the face of the earth, yet no one has gone to search for them.

⁷ "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

⁸ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you abandoned my flock and left them to be attacked by every wild animal. Though you were my shepherds, you didn't search for my sheep when they were lost. You took care of yourselves and left the sheep to starve.

⁹ Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD.

¹⁰ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I now consider these shepherds my enemies, and I will hold them

responsible for what has happened to my flock. I will take away their right to feed the flock, along with their right to feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths; the sheep will no longer be their prey.

¹¹ "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search and find my sheep.

¹² I will be like a shepherd looking for his scattered flock. I will find my sheep and rescue them from all the places to which they were scattered on that dark and cloudy day.

¹³ I will bring them back home to their own land of Israel from among the peoples and nations. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel and by the rivers in all the places where people live.

¹⁴ Yes, I will give them good pastureland on the high hills of Israel. There they will

lie down in pleasant places and feed in lush mountain pastures.

¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and cause them to lie down in peace, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁶ I will search for my lost ones who strayed away, and I will bring them safely home again. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. But I will destroy those who are fat and powerful. I will feed them, yes—feed them justice!

¹⁷ "And as for you, my flock, my people, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, separating the sheep from the goats.

¹⁸ Is it not enough for you to keep the best of the pastures for yourselves? Must you also trample down the rest? Is it not enough for you to take the best water for yourselves? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?

¹⁹ All that is left for my flock to eat is what you have trampled down. All they have to drink is water that you have fouled.

²⁰ "Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will surely judge between the fat sheep and the scrawny sheep.

²¹ For you fat sheep push and butt and crowd my sick and hungry flock until they are scattered to distant lands.

²² So I will rescue my flock, and they will no longer be abused and destroyed. And I will judge between one sheep and another.

²³ And I will set one shepherd over them, even my servant David. He will feed them and be a shepherd to them.

²⁴ And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David will be a prince among my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!

²⁵ "I will make a covenant of peace with them and drive away the dangerous animals from the land. Then my people will be able to camp safely in the wildest places and sleep in the woods without fear.

²⁶ I will cause my people and their homes around my holy hill to be a blessing. And I will send showers, showers of blessings, which will come just when they are needed.

²⁷ The orchards and fields of my people will yield bumper crops, and everyone will live in safety. When I have broken their chains of slavery and rescued them from those who enslaved them, then they will know that I am the LORD.

²⁸ They will no longer be prey for other nations, and wild animals will no longer attack them. They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid.

²⁹ "And I will give them a land famous for its crops, so my people will never again go hungry or be shamed by the scorn of foreign nations.

³⁰ In this way, they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them. And they will know that they, the people of Israel, are my people, says the Sovereign LORD.

³¹ You are my flock, the sheep of my pasture. You are my people, and I am your God, says the Sovereign LORD."

35 ¹ Again a message came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, turn toward Mount Seir, and prophesy against its people.

³ Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: I am your enemy, O Mount Seir, and I will raise my fist against you to destroy you completely.

⁴ I will demolish your cities and make you desolate, and then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁵ Your continual hatred for the people of Israel led you to butcher them when they were helpless, when I had already punished them for all their sins.

⁶ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, since you show no distaste for blood, I will give you a bloodbath of your own. Your turn has come!

⁷ I will make Mount Seir utterly desolate, killing off all who try to escape and any who return.

⁸ I will fill your mountains with the dead. Your hills, your valleys, and your streams will be filled with people slaughtered by the sword.

⁹ I will make you desolate forever. Your cities will never be rebuilt. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁰ "For you said, 'The lands of Israel and Judah will be ours. We will take possession of them. What do we care that the LORD is there!'

¹¹ Therefore, as surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, I will pay back your angry deeds with mine. I will punish you for all your acts of anger, envy, and hatred. And I will bring honor to my name by what I do to you.

¹² Then you will know that I, the LORD, have heard every contemptuous word you spoke against the mountains of Israel. For you said, 'They have been destroyed; they have been given to us as food to eat!'

¹³ In saying that, you boasted proudly against me, and I have heard it all!

¹⁴ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The whole world will rejoice when I make you desolate.

¹⁵ You rejoiced at the desolation of Israel's inheritance. Now I will rejoice at yours! You will be wiped out, you people of Mount Seir and all who live in Edom! Then you will know that I am the LORD!

36 ¹ "Son of man, prophesy to Israel's mountains. Give them this message: O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD!

² This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Your enemies have taunted you, saying, 'Aha! Now the ancient heights belong to us!'

³ Therefore, son of man, give the mountains of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD: Your enemies have attacked you from all directions, and now you are possessed by many nations. You are the object of much mocking and slander.

⁴ Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign LORD. He speaks to the hills and mountains, ravines and valleys, and to ruined wastes and long-deserted cities that have been destroyed and mocked by foreign nations everywhere.

⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My jealous anger is on fire against these nations, especially Edom, because they have shown utter contempt for me by gleefully taking my land for themselves as plunder.

⁶ "Therefore, prophesy to the hills and mountains, the ravines and valleys of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: I am full of fury because you have suffered shame before the surrounding nations.

⁷ Therefore, says the Sovereign LORD, I have raised my hand and sworn an oath that those nations will soon have their turn at suffering shame.

⁸ But the mountains of Israel will produce heavy crops of fruit to prepare for my people's return—and they will be coming home again soon!

⁹ See, I am concerned for you, and I will come to help you. Your ground will be tilled and your crops planted.

¹⁰ I will greatly increase the population of Israel, and the ruined cities will be rebuilt and filled with people.

¹¹ Not only the people, but your flocks and herds will also greatly multiply. O mountains of Israel, I will bring people to live on you once again. I will make you even more prosperous than you were before. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

¹² I will cause my people to walk on you once again, and you will be their inheritance. You will never again devour their children.

¹³ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Now the other nations taunt you, saying, 'Israel is a land that devours her own people!'

¹⁴ But you will never again devour your people or bereave your nation, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁵ I will not allow those foreign nations to sneer at you, and you will no longer be shamed by them or cause your nation to fall, says the Sovereign LORD."

¹⁶ Then this further message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁷ "Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their evil deeds. To me their conduct was as filthy as a bloody rag.

¹⁸ They polluted the land with murder and by worshiping idols, so I poured out my fury on them.

¹⁹ I scattered them to many lands to punish them for the evil way they had lived.

²⁰ But when they were scattered among the nations, they brought dishonor to my holy name. For the nations said,

‘These are the people of the LORD, and he couldn’t keep them safe in his own land!’

²¹ Then I was concerned for my holy name, which had been dishonored by my people throughout the world.

²² "Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD: I am bringing you back again but not because you deserve it. I am doing it to protect my holy name, which you dishonored while you were scattered among the nations.

²³ I will show how holy my great name is—the name you dishonored among the nations. And when I reveal my holiness through you before their very eyes, says the Sovereign LORD, then the nations will know that I am the LORD.

²⁴ For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land.

²⁵ "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols.

²⁶ And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart.

²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command.

²⁸ "And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God.

²⁹ I will cleanse you of your filthy behavior. I will give you good crops, and I will abolish famine in the land.

³⁰ I will give you great harvests from your fruit trees and fields, and never again will the surrounding nations be able to scoff at your land for its famines.

³¹ Then you will remember your past sins and hate yourselves for all the evil things you did.

³² But remember, says the Sovereign LORD, I am not doing this because you deserve it. O my people of Israel, you should be utterly ashamed of all you have done!

³³ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: When I cleanse you from your sins, I will bring people to live in your cities, and the ruins will be rebuilt.

³⁴ The fields that used to lie empty and desolate—a shock to all who passed by—will again be farmed.

³⁵ And when I bring you back, people will say, 'This godforsaken land is now like Eden's garden! The ruined cities now have strong walls, and they are filled with people!'

³⁶ Then the nations all around—all those still left—will know that I, the

LORD, rebuilt the ruins and planted lush crops in the wilderness. For I, the LORD, have promised this, and I will do it.

³⁷ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am ready to hear Israel's prayers for these blessings, and I am ready to grant them their requests.

³⁸ I will multiply them like the sacred flocks that fill Jerusalem's streets at the time of her festivals. The ruined cities will be crowded with people once more, and everyone will know that I am the LORD."

37 ¹ The LORD took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the LORD to a valley filled with bones.

² He led me around among the old, dry bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground.

³ Then he asked me, "Son of man, can these bones become living people

again?" "O Sovereign LORD," I replied, "you alone know the answer to that."

⁴ Then he said to me, "Speak to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the LORD!

⁵ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Look! I am going to breathe into you and make you live again!

⁶ I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

⁷ So I spoke these words, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as they had been before.

⁸ Then as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them.

⁹ Then he said to me, "Speak to the winds and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so that they may live again.'"

¹⁰ So I spoke as he commanded me, and the wind entered the bodies, and they began to breathe. They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army of them.

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying, 'We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone.'

¹² Now give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

¹³ When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁴ I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live and return home to your own land. Then you will know that I am the LORD. You will see that I have done everything just as I promised. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

¹⁵ Again a message came to me from the LORD:

¹⁶ "Son of man, take a stick and carve on it these words: 'This stick represents Judah and its allied tribes.' Then take another stick and carve these words on it: 'This stick represents the northern tribes of Israel.'

¹⁷ Now hold them together in your hand as one stick.

¹⁸ When your people ask you what your actions mean,

¹⁹ say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the northern tribes and join them to Judah. I will make them one stick in my hand.'

²⁰ Then hold out the sticks you have inscribed, so the people can see them.

²¹ And give them this message from the Sovereign LORD: I will gather the people of Israel from among the nations. I will bring them home to their own land from the places where they have been scattered.

²² I will unify them into one nation in the land. One king will rule them all; no longer will they be divided into two nations.

²³ They will stop polluting themselves with their detestable idols and other sins, for I will save them from their sinful backsliding. I will cleanse them. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God.

²⁴ "My servant David will be their king, and they will have only one shepherd. They will obey my regulations and keep my laws.

²⁵ They will live in the land of Israel where their ancestors lived, the land I gave my servant Jacob. They and their children and their grandchildren after them will live there forever, generation after generation. And my servant David will be their prince forever.

²⁶ And I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I will give them their land and multiply them, and I will put my Temple among them forever.

²⁷ I will make my home among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

²⁸ And since my Temple will remain among them forever, the nations will know that I, the LORD, have set Israel apart for myself to be holy."

38 ¹ This is another message that came to me from the LORD:

² "Son of man, prophesy against Gog of the land of Magog, the prince who rules over the nations of Meshech and Tubal.

³ Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD: Gog, I am your enemy!

⁴ I will turn you around and put hooks into your jaws to lead you out to your destruction. I will mobilize your troops and cavalry and make you a vast and mighty horde, all fully armed.

⁵ Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya will join you, too, with all their weapons.

⁶ Gomer and all its hordes will also join you, along with the armies of Beth-togarmah from the distant north and many others.

⁷ "Get ready; be prepared! Keep all the armies around you mobilized, and take command of them.

⁸ A long time from now you will be called into action. In the distant future you will swoop down on the land of

Israel, which will be lying in peace after her recovery from war and after the return of her people from many lands.

⁹ You and all your allies—a vast and awesome horde—will roll down on them like a storm and cover the land like a cloud.

¹⁰ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: At that time evil thoughts will come to your mind, and you will devise a wicked scheme.

¹¹ You will say, 'Israel is an unprotected land filled with unwalled villages! I will march against her and destroy these people who live in such confidence!

¹² I will go to those once-desolate cities that are again filled with people who have returned from exile in many nations. I will capture vast amounts of plunder and take many slaves, for the people are rich with cattle now, and they

think the whole world revolves around them!’

¹³ But Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish will ask, ‘Who are you to rob them of silver and gold? Who are you to drive away their cattle and seize their goods and make them poor?’

¹⁴ "Therefore, son of man, prophesy against Gog. Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD: When my people are living in peace in their land, then you will rouse yourself.

¹⁵ You will come from your homeland in the distant north with your vast cavalry and your mighty army,

¹⁶ and you will cover the land like a cloud. This will happen in the distant future. I will bring you against my land as everyone watches, and my holiness will be displayed by what happens to you. Then all the nations will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁷ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: You are the one I was talking about long ago, when I announced through Israel's prophets that in future days I would bring you against my people.

¹⁸ But when Gog invades the land of Israel, says the Sovereign LORD, my fury will rise!

¹⁹ For in my jealousy and blazing anger, I promise a mighty shaking in the land of Israel on that day.

²⁰ All living things—all the fish, birds, animals, and people—will quake in terror at my presence. Mountains will be thrown down; cliffs will crumble; walls will fall to the earth.

²¹ I will summon the sword against you throughout Israel, says the Sovereign LORD. Your men will turn against each other in mortal combat.

²² I will punish you and your hordes with disease and bloodshed; I will send

torrential rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulfur!

²³ Thus will I show my greatness and holiness, and I will make myself known to all the nations of the world. Then they will know that I am the LORD!

39 ¹ "Son of man, prophesy against Gog. Give him this message from the Sovereign LORD: I am your enemy, O Gog, ruler of the nations of Meshech and Tubal.

² I will turn you and drive you toward the mountains of Israel, bringing you from the distant north.

³ I will knock your weapons from your hands and leave you helpless.

⁴ You and all your vast hordes will die on the mountains. I will give you as food to the vultures and wild animals.

⁵ You will fall in the open fields, for I have spoken, says the Sovereign LORD.

⁶ And I will rain down fire on Magog and on all your allies who live safely on the coasts. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

⁷ "Thus, I will make known my holy name among my people of Israel. I will not let it be desecrated anymore. And the nations, too, will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

⁸ That day of judgment will come, says the Sovereign LORD. Everything will happen just as I have declared it.

⁹ "Then the people in the towns of Israel will go out and pick up your small and large shields, bows and arrows, javelins and spears, and they will use them for fuel. There will be enough to last them seven years!

¹⁰ They will need nothing else for their fires. They won't need to cut wood from the fields or forests, for these weapons will give them all they need. They will

take plunder from those who planned to plunder them, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹¹ "And I will make a vast graveyard for Gog and his hordes in the Valley of the Travelers, east of the Dead Sea. The path of those who travel there will be blocked by this burial ground, and they will change the name of the place to the Valley of Gog's Hordes.

¹² It will take seven months for the people of Israel to cleanse the land by burying the bodies.

¹³ Everyone in Israel will help, for it will be a glorious victory for Israel when I demonstrate my glory on that day, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁴ At the end of the seven months, special crews will be appointed to search the land for any skeletons and to bury them, so the land will be made clean again.

¹⁵ Whenever some bones are found, a marker will be set up beside them so the burial crews will see them and take them to be buried in the Valley of Gog's Hordes.

¹⁶ (There will be a town there named Hamonah—which means 'horde.')

And so the land will finally be cleansed.

¹⁷ "And now, son of man, call all the birds and wild animals, says the Sovereign LORD. Say to them: Gather together for my great sacrificial feast. Come from far and near to the mountains of Israel, and there eat the flesh and drink the blood!

¹⁸ Eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of princes as though they were rams, lambs, goats, and fat young bulls of Bashan!

¹⁹ Gorge yourselves with flesh until you are glutted; drink blood until you are

drunk. This is the sacrificial feast I have prepared for you.

²⁰ Feast at my banquet table—feast on horses, riders, and valiant warriors, says the Sovereign LORD.

²¹ "Thus, I will demonstrate my glory among the nations. Everyone will see the punishment I have inflicted on them and the power I have demonstrated.

²² And from that time on the people of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God.

²³ The nations will then know why Israel was sent away to exile—it was punishment for sin, for they acted in treachery against their God. Therefore, I turned my back on them and let their enemies destroy them.

²⁴ I turned my face away and punished them in proportion to the vileness of their sins.

²⁵ "So now the Sovereign LORD says: I will end the captivity of my people; I will have mercy on Israel, for I am jealous for my holy reputation!

²⁶ They will accept responsibility for their past shame and treachery against me after they come home to live in peace and safety in their own land. And then no one will bother them or make them afraid.

²⁷ When I bring them home from the lands of their enemies, my holiness will be displayed to the nations.

²⁸ Then my people will know that I am the LORD their God—responsible for sending them away to exile and responsible for bringing them home. I will leave none of my people behind.

²⁹ And I will never again turn my back on them, for I will pour out my Spirit upon them, says the Sovereign LORD."

40 ¹ On April 28, during the twenty-fifth year of our captivity—fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem—the LORD took hold of me.

² In a vision of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain. From there I could see what appeared to be a city across from me toward the south.

³ As he brought me nearer, I saw a man whose face shone like bronze standing beside a gateway entrance. He was holding in his hand a measuring tape and a measuring rod.

⁴ He said to me, "Son of man, watch and listen. Pay close attention to everything I show you. You have been brought here so I can show you many things. Then you will return to the people of Israel and tell them everything you have seen."

⁵ I could see a wall completely surrounding the Temple area. The man

took a measuring rod that was $10 \frac{1}{2}$ feet long and measured the wall, and the wall was $10 \frac{1}{2}$ feet thick and $10 \frac{1}{2}$ feet high.

⁶ Then he went over to the gateway that goes through the eastern wall. He climbed the steps and measured the threshold of the gateway; it was $10 \frac{1}{2}$ feet deep.

⁷ There were guard alcoves on each side built into the gateway passage. Each of these alcoves was $10 \frac{1}{2}$ feet square, with a distance between them of $8 \frac{3}{4}$ feet along the passage wall. The gateway's inner threshold, which led to the foyer at the inner end of the gateway passage, was $10 \frac{1}{2}$ feet deep.

⁸ He also measured the foyer of the gateway

⁹ and found it to be 14 feet deep, with supporting columns $3 \frac{1}{2}$ feet thick. This foyer was at the inner end of the

gateway structure, facing toward the Temple.

¹⁰ There were three guard alcoves on each side of the gateway passage. Each had the same measurements, and the dividing walls separating them were also identical.

¹¹ The man measured the gateway entrance, which was 17 1/2 feet wide at the opening and 22 3/4 feet wide in the gateway passage.

¹² In front of each of the guard alcoves was a 21-inch curb. The alcoves themselves were 10 1/2 feet square.

¹³ Then he measured the entire width of the gateway, measuring the distance between the back walls of facing guard alcoves; this distance was 43 3/4 feet.

¹⁴ He measured the dividing walls all along the inside of the gateway up to the gateway's foyer; this distance was 105 feet.

¹⁵ The full length of the gateway passage was 87 1/2 feet from one end to the other.

¹⁶ There were recessed windows that narrowed inward through the walls of the guard alcoves and their dividing walls. There were also windows in the foyer structure. The surfaces of the dividing walls were decorated with carved palm trees.

¹⁷ Then the man brought me through the gateway into the outer courtyard of the Temple. A stone pavement ran along the walls of the courtyard, and thirty rooms were built against the walls, opening onto the pavement.

¹⁸ This pavement flanked the gates and extended out from the walls into the courtyard the same distance as the gateway entrance. This was the lower pavement.

¹⁹ Then the man measured across the Temple's outer courtyard between the outer and inner gateways; the distance was 175 feet.

²⁰ There was a gateway on the north just like the one on the east, and the man measured it.

²¹ Here, too, there were three guard alcoves on each side, with dividing walls and a foyer. All the measurements matched those of the east gateway. The gateway passage was 87 1/2 feet long and 43 3/4 feet wide between the back walls of facing guard alcoves.

²² The windows, the foyer, and the palm tree decorations were identical to those in the east gateway. There were seven steps leading up to the gateway entrance, and the foyer was at the inner end of the gateway passage.

²³ Here on the north side, just as on the east, there was another gateway

leading to the Temple's inner courtyard directly opposite this outer gateway. The distance between the two gateways was 175 feet.

²⁴ Then the man took me around to the south gateway and measured its various parts, and he found they were exactly the same as in the others.

²⁵ It had windows along the walls as the others did, and there was a foyer where the gateway passage opened into the outer courtyard. And like the others, the gateway passage was 87 1/2 feet long and 43 3/4 feet wide between the back walls of facing guard alcoves.

²⁶ This gateway also had a stairway of seven steps leading up to it, and there were palm tree decorations along the dividing walls.

²⁷ And here again, directly opposite the outer gateway, was another gateway that led into the inner courtyard. The

distance between the two gateways was 175 feet.

²⁸ Then the man took me to the south gateway leading into the inner courtyard. He measured it and found that it had the same measurements as the other gateways.

²⁹ Its guard alcoves, dividing walls, and foyer were the same size as those in the others. It also had windows along its walls and in the foyer structure. And like the others, the gateway passage was 87 1/2 feet long and 43 3/4 feet wide.

³⁰ (The foyers of the gateways leading into the inner courtyard were 8 3/4 feet deep and 43 3/4 feet wide.)

³¹ The foyer of the south gateway faced into the outer courtyard. It had palm tree decorations on its columns, and there were eight steps leading to its entrance.

³² Then he took me to the east gateway leading to the inner courtyard. He measured it and found that it had the same measurements as the other gateways.

³³ Its guard alcoves, dividing walls, and foyer were the same size as those of the others, and there were windows along the walls and in the foyer structure. The gateway passage measured $87 \frac{1}{2}$ feet long and $43 \frac{3}{4}$ feet wide.

³⁴ Its foyer faced into the outer courtyard. It had palm tree decorations on its columns, and there were eight steps leading to its entrance.

³⁵ Then he took me around to the north gateway leading to the inner courtyard. He measured it and found that it had the same measurements as the other gateways.

³⁶ The guard alcoves, dividing walls, and foyer of this gateway had the same

measurements as in the others and the same window arrangements. The gateway passage measured $87 \frac{1}{2}$ feet long and $43 \frac{3}{4}$ feet wide.

³⁷ Its foyer faced into the outer courtyard, and it had palm tree decorations on the columns. There were eight steps leading to its entrance.

³⁸ A door led from the foyer of the inner gateway on the north side into a side room where the meat for sacrifices was washed before being taken to the altar.

³⁹ On each side of this foyer were two tables, where the sacrificial animals were slaughtered for the burnt offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings.

⁴⁰ Outside the foyer, on each side of the stairs going up to the north entrance, there were two more tables.

⁴¹ So there were eight tables in all, four inside and four outside, where the sacrifices were cut up and prepared.

⁴² There were also four tables of hewn stone for preparation of the burnt offerings, each 31 1/2 inches square and 21 inches high. On these tables were placed the butchering knives and other implements and the sacrificial animals.

⁴³ There were hooks, each three inches long, fastened to the foyer walls and set on the tables where the sacrificial meat was to be laid.

⁴⁴ Inside the inner courtyard there were two one-room buildings for the singers, one beside the north gateway, facing south, and the other beside the south gateway, facing north.

⁴⁵ And the man said to me, "The building beside the north inner gate is for the priests who supervise the Temple maintenance.

⁴⁶ The building beside the south inner gate is for the priests in charge of the altar—the descendants of Zadok—for

they alone of all the Levites may approach the LORD to minister to him."

⁴⁷ Then the man measured the inner courtyard and found it to be 175 feet square. The altar stood there in the courtyard in front of the Temple.

⁴⁸ Then he brought me to the foyer of the Temple. He measured its supporting columns and found them to be $8 \frac{3}{4}$ feet square. The entrance was $24 \frac{1}{2}$ feet wide with walls $5 \frac{1}{4}$ feet thick.

⁴⁹ The depth of the foyer was 35 feet and the width was $19 \frac{1}{4}$ feet. There were ten steps leading up to it, with a column on each side.

41 ¹ After that, the man brought me into the Holy Place, the large main room of the Temple, and he measured the columns that framed its doorway. They were $10 \frac{1}{2}$ feet square.

² The entrance was $17 \frac{1}{2}$ feet wide, and the walls on each side were $8 \frac{3}{4}$

feet wide. The Holy Place itself was 70 feet long and 35 feet wide.

³ Then he went into the inner room at the end of the Holy Place. He measured the columns at the entrance and found them to be 3 1/2 feet thick. The entrance was 10 1/2 feet wide, and the walls on each side of the entrance extended 12 1/4 feet to the corners of the inner room.

⁴ The inner room was 35 feet square. "This," he told me, "is the Most Holy Place."

⁵ Then he measured the wall of the Temple and found that it was 10 1/2 feet thick. There was a row of rooms along the outside wall; each room was 7 feet wide.

⁶ These rooms were built in three levels, one above the other, with thirty rooms on each level. The supports for these rooms rested on ledges in the Temple

wall, but the supports did not extend into the wall.

⁷ Each level was wider than the one below it, corresponding to the narrowing of the Temple wall as it rose higher. A stairway led up from the bottom level through the middle level to the top level.

⁸ I noticed that the Temple was built on a terrace, which provided a foundation for the side rooms. This terrace was 10 1/2 feet high.

⁹ The outer wall of the Temple's side rooms was 8 3/4 feet thick. This left an open area between these side rooms

¹⁰ and the row of rooms along the outer wall of the inner courtyard. This open area measured 35 feet in width, and it went all the way around the Temple.

¹¹ Two doors opened from the side rooms into the terrace yard, which was 8 3/4 feet wide. One door faced north and the other south.

¹² A large building stood on the west, facing the Temple courtyard. It was 122 1/2 feet wide and 157 1/2 feet long, and its walls were 8 3/4 feet thick.

¹³ Then the man measured the Temple, and he found it to be 175 feet long. The courtyard around the building, including its walls, was an additional 175 feet in length.

¹⁴ The inner courtyard to the east of the Temple was also 175 feet wide.

¹⁵ The building to the west, including its two walls, was also 175 feet wide. The Holy Place, the Most Holy Place, and the foyer of the Temple were all paneled with wood,

¹⁶ as were the frames of the recessed windows. The inner walls of the Temple were paneled with wood above and below the windows.

¹⁷ The space above the door leading into the Most Holy Place was also paneled.

¹⁸ All the walls were decorated with carvings of cherubim, each with two faces, and there was a palm tree carving between each of the cherubim.

¹⁹ One face—that of a man—looked toward the palm tree on one side. The other face—that of a young lion—looked toward the palm tree on the other side. The figures were carved all along the inside of the Temple,

²⁰ from the floor to the top of the walls, including the outer wall of the Holy Place.

²¹ There were square columns at the entrance to the Holy Place, and the ones at the entrance of the Most Holy Place were similar.

²² There was an altar made of wood, 3 1/2 feet square and 5 1/4 feet high.

Its corners, base, and sides were all made of wood. "This," the man told me, "is the table that stands in the LORD's presence."

²³ Both the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place had double doorways,

²⁴ each with two swinging doors.

²⁵ The doors leading into the Holy Place were decorated with carved cherubim and palm trees just as on the walls. And there was a wooden canopy over the front of the Temple's foyer.

²⁶ On both sides of the foyer there were recessed windows decorated with carved palm trees.

42 ¹ Then the man led me out of the Temple courtyard by way of the north gateway. We entered the outer courtyard and came to a group of rooms against the north wall of the inner courtyard.

² This group of structures, whose entrance opened toward the north, was 175 feet long and 87 1/2 feet wide.

³ One block of rooms overlooked the 35-foot width of the inner courtyard. Another block of rooms looked out onto the pavement of the outer courtyard. The two blocks were built three levels high and stood across from each other.

⁴ Between the two blocks of rooms ran a walkway 17 1/2 feet wide. It extended the entire 175 feet of the complex, and all the doors faced toward the north.

⁵ Each of the two upper levels of rooms was narrower than the one beneath it because the upper levels had to allow space for walkways in front of them.

⁶ Since there were three levels and they did not have supporting columns as in the courtyards, each of the upper levels was set back from the level beneath it.

⁷ There was an outer wall that separated the rooms from the outer courtyard; it was 87 1/2 feet long.

⁸ This wall added length to the outer block of rooms, which extended for only 87 1/2 feet, while the inner block—the rooms toward the Temple—extended for 175 feet.

⁹ There was an entrance from the outer courtyard to these rooms from the east.

¹⁰ On the south side of the Temple there were two blocks of rooms just south of the inner courtyard between the Temple and the outer courtyard. These rooms were arranged just like the rooms on the north.

¹¹ There was a walkway between the two blocks of rooms just like the complex on the north side of the Temple. This complex of rooms was the same length and width as the other one, and it had

the same entrances and doors. The dimensions of each were identical.

¹² So there was an entrance in the wall facing the doors of the inner block of rooms, and another on the east at the end of the interior walkway.

¹³ Then the man told me, "These rooms that overlook the Temple from the north and south are holy. It is there that the priests who offer sacrifices to the LORD will eat the most holy offerings. And they will use these rooms to store the grain offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings because these rooms are holy.

¹⁴ When the priests leave the Holy Place, they must not go directly to the outer courtyard. They must first take off the clothes they wore while ministering because these clothes are holy. They must put on other clothes before entering the parts of the building complex open to the public."

¹⁵ When the man had finished taking these measurements, he led me out through the east gateway to measure the entire Temple area.

¹⁶ He measured the east side; it was 875 feet long.

¹⁷ He also measured the north side and got the same measurement.

¹⁸ The south side was the same length,

¹⁹ and so was the west side.

²⁰ So the area was 875 feet on each side with a wall all around it to separate the holy places from the common.

43 ¹ After this, the man brought me back around to the east gateway.

² Suddenly, the glory of the God of Israel appeared from the east. The sound of his coming was like the roar of rushing waters, and the whole landscape shone with his glory.

³ This vision was just like the others I had seen, first by the Kebar River

and then when he came to destroy Jerusalem. And I fell down before him with my face in the dust.

⁴ And the glory of the LORD came into the Temple through the east gateway.

⁵ Then the Spirit took me up and brought me into the inner courtyard, and the glory of the LORD filled the Temple.

⁶ And I heard someone speaking to me from within the Temple. (The man who had been measuring was still standing beside me.)

⁷ And the LORD said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place where I will rest my feet. I will remain here forever, living among the people of Israel. They and their kings will not defile my holy name any longer by their adulterous worship of other gods or by raising monuments in honor of their dead kings.

⁸ They put their idol altars right next to mine with only a wall between them and me. They defiled my holy name by such wickedness, so I consumed them in my anger.

⁹ Now let them put away their idols and the sacred pillars erected to honor their kings, and I will live among them forever.

¹⁰ "Son of man, describe to the people of Israel the Temple I have shown you. Tell them its appearance and its plan so they will be ashamed of all their sins.

¹¹ And if they are ashamed of what they have done, describe to them all the specifications of its construction—including its entrances and doors—and everything else about it. Write down all these specifications and directions as they watch so they will be sure to remember them.

¹² And this is the basic law of the Temple: absolute holiness! The entire

top of the hill where the Temple is built is holy. Yes, this is the primary law of the Temple.

¹³ "These are the measurements of the altar: There is a gutter all around the altar 21 inches wide and 21 inches deep, with a curb 9 inches wide around its edge. And this is the height of the altar:

¹⁴ From the gutter the altar rises 3 1/2 feet to a ledge that surrounds the altar; this lower ledge is 21 inches wide. From the lower ledge the altar rises 7 feet to the upper ledge; this upper ledge is also 21 inches wide.

¹⁵ The top of the altar, the hearth, rises still 7 feet higher, with a horn rising up from each of the four corners.

¹⁶ The top of the altar is square, measuring 21 feet by 21 feet.

¹⁷ The upper ledge also forms a square, measuring 24 1/2 feet on each side, with a 21-inch gutter and a 10 1/2-inch curb

all around the edge. There are steps going up the east side of the altar."

¹⁸ Then he said to me, "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: These will be the regulations for the burning of offerings and the sprinkling of blood when the altar is built.

¹⁹ At that time, the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who minister before me, are to be given a young bull for a sin offering, says the Sovereign LORD.

²⁰ You will take some of its blood and smear it on the four horns of the altar, the four corners of the upper ledge, and the curb that runs around that ledge. This will cleanse and make atonement for the altar.

²¹ Then take the young bull for the sin offering and burn it at the appointed place outside the Temple area.

²² "On the second day, sacrifice as a sin offering a young male goat that has no

physical defects. Then cleanse and make atonement for the altar again, just as you did with the young bull.

²³ When you have finished the cleansing ceremony, offer another young bull that has no defects and a perfect ram from the flock.

²⁴ You are to present them to the LORD, and the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and offer them as a burnt offering to the LORD.

²⁵ "Every day for seven days a male goat, a young bull, and a ram from the flock will be sacrificed as a sin offering. None of these animals may have physical defects of any kind.

²⁶ Do this each day for seven days to cleanse and make atonement for the altar, thus setting it apart for holy use.

²⁷ On the eighth day, and on each day afterward, the priests will sacrifice on the altar the burnt offerings and peace

offerings of the people. Then I will accept you, says the Sovereign LORD."

44 ¹ Then the man brought me back to the east gateway in the outer wall, but it was closed.

² And the LORD said to me, "This gate must remain closed; it will never again be opened. No man will ever pass through it, for the LORD, the God of Israel, entered here. Thus, it must always remain shut.

³ Only the prince himself may sit inside this gateway to feast in the LORD's presence. But he may come and go only through the gateway's foyer."

⁴ Then the man brought me through the north gateway to the front of the Temple. I looked and saw that the glory of the LORD filled the Temple of the LORD, and I fell to the ground with my face in the dust.

⁵ And the LORD said to me, "Son of man, take careful notice; use your eyes and ears. Listen to everything I tell you about the regulations concerning the LORD's Temple. Take careful note of who may be admitted to the Temple and who is to be excluded from it.

⁶ And give these rebels, the people of Israel, this message from the Sovereign LORD: O people of Israel, enough of your disgusting sins!

⁷ You have brought uncircumcised foreigners into my sanctuary—people who have no heart for God. In this way, you profaned my Temple even as you offered me my food, the fat and blood of sacrifices. Thus, in addition to all your other disgusting sins, you have broken my covenant.

⁸ You have not kept the laws I gave you concerning these sacred rituals, for you

have hired foreigners to take charge of my sanctuary.

⁹ "So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: No foreigners, including those who live among the people of Israel, will enter my sanctuary if they have not been circumcised and do not love the LORD.

¹⁰ And the men of the tribe of Levi who abandoned me when Israel strayed away from me to worship idols must bear the consequences of their unfaithfulness.

¹¹ They may still be Temple guards and gatemen, and they may still slaughter the animals brought for burnt offerings and be present to help the people.

¹² But they encouraged my people to worship other gods, causing Israel to fall into deep sin. So I have raised my hand and taken an oath that they must bear the consequences for their sins, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹³ They may not approach me to minister as priests. They may not touch any of my holy things or the holy offerings, for they must bear the shame of all the sins they have committed.

¹⁴ They are to serve as the Temple caretakers and are relegated to doing maintenance work and helping the people in a general way.

¹⁵ "However, the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok continued to minister faithfully in the Temple when Israel abandoned me for idols. These men will serve as my ministers. They will stand in my presence and offer the fat and blood of the sacrifices, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁶ They are the ones who will enter my sanctuary and approach my table to serve me. They are the ones who will fulfill all my requirements.

¹⁷ When they enter the gateway to the inner courtyard, they must wear only linen clothing. They must wear no wool while on duty in the inner courtyard or in the Temple itself.

¹⁸ They must wear linen turbans and linen undergarments. They must not wear anything that would cause them to perspire.

¹⁹ When they return to the outer courtyard where the people are, they must take off the clothes they wear while ministering to me. They must leave them in the sacred rooms and put on other clothes so they do not harm the people by transmitting holiness to them through this clothing.

²⁰ "They must neither let their hair grow too long nor shave it off completely. Instead, they must trim it regularly.

²¹ The priests must never drink wine before entering the inner courtyard.

²² They may choose their wives only from among the virgins of Israel or the widows of the priests. They may not marry other widows or divorced women.

²³ They will teach my people the difference between what is holy and what is common, what is ceremonially clean and unclean.

²⁴ "They will serve as judges to resolve any disagreements among my people. Their decisions must be based on my regulations. And the priests themselves must obey my instructions and laws at all the sacred festivals, and they will see to it that the Sabbath is set apart as a holy day.

²⁵ A priest must never defile himself by being in the presence of a dead person unless it is his father, mother, child, brother, or unmarried sister. In such cases it is permitted.

²⁶ But such a priest can only return to his Temple duties after being ritually cleansed and then waiting for seven days.

²⁷ The first day he returns to work and enters the inner courtyard and the sanctuary, he must offer a sin offering for himself, says the Sovereign LORD.

²⁸ "As to property, the priests will not have any, for I alone am their inheritance.

²⁹ Their food will come from the gifts and sacrifices brought to the Temple by the people—the grain offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings. Whatever anyone sets apart for the LORD will belong to the priests.

³⁰ The first of the ripe fruits and all the gifts brought to the LORD will go to the priests. The first samples of each grain harvest and the first of your flour must

also be given to the priests so the LORD will bless your homes.

³¹ The priests may never eat meat from any bird or animal that dies a natural death or that dies after being attacked by another animal.

45 ¹ "When you divide the land among the tribes of Israel, you must set aside a section of it for the LORD as his holy portion. This piece of land will be $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles long and $6 \frac{2}{3}$ miles wide. The entire area will be holy ground.

² A section of this land, measuring 875 feet by 875 feet, will be set aside for the Temple. An additional strip of land $87 \frac{1}{2}$ feet wide is to be left empty all around it.

³ Within the larger sacred area, measure out a portion of land $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles long and $3 \frac{1}{3}$ miles wide. Within

it the sanctuary of the Most Holy Place will be located.

⁴ This area will be a holy land, set aside for the priests who minister to the LORD in the sanctuary. They will use it for their homes, and my Temple will be located within it.

⁵ The strip of sacred land next to it, also $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles long and $3 \frac{1}{3}$ miles wide, will be a living area for the Levites who work at the Temple. It will be their possession and a place for their towns.

⁶ "Adjacent to the larger sacred area will be a section of land $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles long and $1 \frac{2}{3}$ miles wide. This will be set aside to be a city where anyone in Israel can come and live.

⁷ "Two special sections of land will be set apart for the prince. One section will share a border with the east side of the sacred lands and city, and the second section will share a border on

the west side. Then the far eastern and western borders of the prince's lands will line up with the eastern and western boundaries of the tribal areas.

⁸ These sections of land will be the prince's allotment. "My princes will no longer oppress and rob my people; they will assign the rest of the land to the people, giving an allotment to each tribe.

⁹ For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Enough, you princes of Israel! Stop all your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Quit robbing and cheating my people out of their land! Stop expelling them from their homes!

¹⁰ You must use only honest weights and scales, honest dry volume measures, and honest liquid volume measures.

¹¹ The homer will be your standard unit for measuring volume. The ephah and

the bath will each measure one–tenth of a homer.

¹² The standard unit for weight will be the silver shekel. One shekel consists of twenty gerahs, and sixty shekels are equal to one mina.

¹³ "This is the tax you must give to the prince: one bushel of wheat or barley for every sixty you harvest,

¹⁴ one percent of your olive oil,

¹⁵ and one sheep for every two hundred in your flocks in Israel. These will be the grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings that will make atonement for the people who bring them, says the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁶ All the people of Israel must join the prince in bringing their offerings.

¹⁷ The prince will be required to provide offerings that are given at the religious festivals, the new moon celebrations, the Sabbath days, and all other similar

occasions. He will provide the sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, and peace offerings to make reconciliation for the people of Israel.

¹⁸ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In early spring, on the first day of each new year, sacrifice a young bull with no physical defects to purify the Temple.

¹⁹ The priest will take some of the blood of this sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the Temple, the four corners of the upper ledge on the altar, and the gateposts at the entrance to the inner courtyard.

²⁰ Do this also on the seventh day of the new year for anyone who has sinned through error or ignorance. In that way, you will make atonement for the Temple.

²¹ "On the fourteenth day of the new year, you must celebrate the Passover.

This festival will last for seven days. Only bread without yeast may be eaten during that time.

²² On the day of Passover the prince will provide a young bull as a sin offering for himself and the people of Israel.

²³ On each of the seven days of the feast he will prepare a burnt offering to the LORD. This daily offering will consist of seven young bulls and seven rams without any defects. A male goat will also be given each day for a sin offering.

²⁴ The prince will provide a half bushel of flour as a grain offering and a gallon of olive oil with each young bull and ram.

²⁵ "During the seven days of the Festival of Shelters, which occurs every year in early autumn, the prince will provide these same sacrifices for the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the grain offering, along with the required olive oil.

46 ¹ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The east gateway of the inner wall will be closed during the six workdays each week, but it will be open on Sabbath days and the days of new moon celebrations.

² The prince will enter the foyer of the gateway from the outside. Then he will stand by the gatepost while the priest offers his burnt offering and peace offering. He will worship inside the gateway passage and then go back out the way he came. The gateway will not be closed until evening.

³ The common people will worship the LORD in front of this gateway on Sabbath days and the days of new moon celebrations.

⁴ "Each Sabbath day the prince will present to the LORD a burnt offering of six lambs and one ram, all with no physical defects.

⁵ He will present a grain offering of a half bushel of flour to go with the ram and whatever amount of flour he chooses to go with each lamb. He is to offer one gallon of olive oil for each half bushel of flour.

⁶ At the new moon celebrations, he will bring one young bull, six lambs, and one ram, all with no physical defects.

⁷ With the young bull he must bring a half bushel of flour for a grain offering. With the ram he must bring another half bushel of flour. And with each lamb he is to bring whatever amount of flour that he decides to give. With each half bushel of flour he must offer one gallon of olive oil.

⁸ "The prince must enter the gateway through the foyer, and he must leave the same way he came.

⁹ But when the people come in through the north gateway to worship the LORD

during the religious festivals, they must leave by the south gateway. And those who entered through the south gateway must leave by the north gateway. They must never leave by the same gateway they came in; they must always use the opposite gateway.

¹⁰ The prince will enter and leave with the people on these occasions.

¹¹ "So at the special feasts and sacred festivals, the grain offering will be a half bushel of flour with each young bull, another half bushel of flour with each ram, and as much flour as the prince chooses to give with each lamb. One gallon of oil is to be given with each half bushel of flour.

¹² Whenever the prince offers a voluntary burnt offering or peace offering to the LORD, the east gateway to the inner courtyard will be opened for him to enter, and he will offer his

sacrifices just as he does on Sabbath days. Then he will turn and leave the way he entered, and the gateway will be shut behind him.

¹³ "Each morning a year-old lamb with no physical defects must be sacrificed as a burnt offering to the LORD.

¹⁴ With the lamb, a grain offering must also be given to the LORD—about two and a half quarts of flour with a third of a gallon of olive oil to moisten the flour. This will be a permanent law for you.

¹⁵ The lamb, the grain offering, and the olive oil must be given as a daily sacrifice every morning without fail.

¹⁶ "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: If the prince gives a gift of land to one of his sons, it will belong to him and his descendants forever.

¹⁷ But if he gives a gift of land to one of his servants, the servant may keep it only until the Year of Jubilee, which

comes every fiftieth year. At that time the servant will be set free, and the land will return to the prince. Only the gifts given to the prince's sons will be permanent.

¹⁸ And the prince may never take anyone's property by force. If he gives property to his sons, it must be from his own land, for I do not want any of my people unjustly evicted from their property."

¹⁹ Then the man brought me through the entrance beside the gateway and led me to the sacred rooms assigned to the priests, which faced toward the north. He showed me a place at the extreme west end of these rooms.

²⁰ He explained, "This is where the priests will cook the meat from the guilt offerings and sin offerings and bake the flour from the grain offerings into bread. They will do it here to avoid carrying the

sacrifices through the outer courtyard and harming the people by transmitting holiness to them."

²¹ Then he brought me back to the outer courtyard and led me to each of its four corners. In each corner I saw an enclosure.

²² Each of these enclosures was 70 feet long and 52 1/2 feet wide, surrounded by walls.

²³ Along the inside of these walls was a ledge of stone with fireplaces under the ledge all the way around.

²⁴ The man said to me, "These are the kitchens to be used by the Temple assistants to boil the sacrifices offered by the people."

47 ¹ Then the man brought me back to the entrance of the Temple. There I saw a stream flowing eastward from beneath the Temple threshold. This

stream then passed to the right of the altar on its south side.

² The man brought me outside the wall through the north gateway and led me around to the eastern entrance. There I could see the stream flowing out through the south side of the east gateway.

³ Measuring as he went, he led me along the stream for 1,750 feet and told me to go across. At that point the water was up to my ankles.

⁴ He measured off another 1,750 feet and told me to go across again. This time the water was up to my knees. After another 1,750 feet, it was up to my waist.

⁵ Then he measured another 1,750 feet, and the river was too deep to cross without swimming.

⁶ He told me to keep in mind what I had seen; then he led me back along the riverbank.

⁷ Suddenly, to my surprise, many trees were now growing on both sides of the river!

⁸ Then he said to me, "This river flows east through the desert into the Jordan Valley, where it enters the Dead Sea. The waters of this stream will heal the salty waters of the Dead Sea and make them fresh and pure.

⁹ Everything that touches the water of this river will live. Fish will abound in the Dead Sea, for its waters will be healed. Wherever this water flows, everything will live.

¹⁰ Fishermen will stand along the shores of the Dead Sea, fishing all the way from En-ge-di to En-eglaim. The shores will be covered with nets drying in the sun. Fish

of every kind will fill the Dead Sea, just as they fill the Mediterranean!

¹¹ But the marshes and swamps will not be purified; they will be sources of salt.

¹² All kinds of fruit trees will grow along both sides of the river. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, without fail! For they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing."

¹³ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "Follow these instructions for dividing the land for the twelve tribes of Israel: The tribe of Joseph will be given two shares of land.

¹⁴ Otherwise each tribe will receive an equal share. I swore that I would give this land to your ancestors, and it will now come to you as your inheritance.

¹⁵ "The northern border will run from the Mediterranean toward Hethlon, then on through Lebo–hamath to Zedad;

¹⁶ then it will run to Berothah and Sibraim, which are on the border between Damascus and Hamath, and finally to Hazer–hatticon, on the border of Hauran.

¹⁷ So the northern border will run from the Mediterranean to Hazar–enan, on the border between Hamath to the north and Damascus to the south.

¹⁸ "The eastern border starts at a point between Hauran and Damascus and runs southward along the Jordan River between Israel and Gilead, past the Dead Sea and as far south as Tamar. This will be the eastern border.

¹⁹ "The southern border will go west from Tamar to the waters of Meribah at Kadesh and then follow the course of the

brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean.
This will be the southern border.

²⁰ "On the west side the Mediterranean itself will be your border from the southern border to the point where the northern border begins, opposite Lebo–hamath.

²¹ "Divide the land within these boundaries among the tribes of Israel.

²² Distribute the land as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners who have joined you and are raising their families among you. They will be just like native–born Israelites to you, and they will receive an inheritance among the tribes.

²³ All these immigrants are to be given land within the territory of the tribe with whom they now live. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!

48 ¹ "Here is the list of the tribes of Israel and the territory each is to

receive. The territory of Dan is in the extreme north. Its boundary line follows the Hethlon road to Lebo–hamath and then runs on to Hazar–enan on the border of Damascus, with Hamath to the north. Dan’s territory extends all the way across the land of Israel from east to west.

² Asher’s territory lies south of Dan’s and also extends from east to west.

³ Naphtali’s land lies south of Asher’s, also extending from east to west.

⁴ Then comes Manasseh south of Naphtali, and its territory also extends from east to west.

⁵ South of Manasseh is Ephraim,

⁶ and then Reuben,

⁷ and then Judah, all of whose boundaries extend from east to west.

⁸ "South of Judah is the land set aside for a special purpose. It will be $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles wide and will extend as far east

and west as the tribal territories, with the Temple at the center.

⁹ "The area set aside for the LORD's Temple will be 8 1/3 miles long and 6 2/3 miles wide.

¹⁰ For the priests there will be a strip of land measuring 8 1/3 miles long by 3 1/3 miles wide, with the LORD's Temple at the center.

¹¹ This area is set aside for the ordained priests, the descendants of Zadok who obeyed me and did not go astray when the people of Israel and the rest of the Levites did.

¹² It will be their special portion when the land is distributed, the most sacred land of all. Next to the priests' territory will lie the land where the other Levites will live.

¹³ The land allotted to the Levites will be the same size and shape as that belonging to the priests—8 1/3 miles

long and $3 \frac{1}{3}$ miles wide. Together these portions of land will measure $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles long by $6 \frac{2}{3}$ miles wide.

¹⁴ None of this special land will ever be sold or traded or used by others, for it belongs to the LORD; it is set apart as holy.

¹⁵ "An additional strip of land $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles long by $1 \frac{2}{3}$ miles wide, south of the sacred Temple area, will be allotted for public use—homes, pasturelands, and common lands, with a city at the center.

¹⁶ The city will measure $1 \frac{1}{2}$ miles on each side.

¹⁷ Open lands will surround the city for 150 yards in every direction.

¹⁸ Outside the city there will be a farming area that stretches $3 \frac{1}{3}$ miles to the east and $3 \frac{1}{3}$ miles to the west along the border of the sacred area.

This farmland will produce food for the people working in the city.

¹⁹ Those who come from the various tribes to work in the city may farm it.

²⁰ This entire area—including the sacred lands and the city—is a square that measures $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles on each side.

²¹ "The areas that remain, to the east and to the west of the sacred lands and the city, will belong to the prince. Each of these areas will be $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles wide, extending in opposite directions to the eastern and western borders of Israel.

²² So the prince's land will include everything between the territories allotted to Judah and Benjamin, except for the areas set aside for the sacred lands and the city.

²³ "These are the territories allotted to the rest of the tribes. Benjamin's territory lies just south of the prince's

lands, and it extends across the entire land of Israel from east to west.

²⁴ South of Benjamin's territory lies that of Simeon, also extending across the land from east to west.

²⁵ Next is the territory of Issachar with the same eastern and western boundaries.

²⁶ Then comes the territory of Zebulun, which also extends across the land from east to west.

²⁷ The territory of Gad is just south of Zebulun with the same borders to the east and west.

²⁸ The southern border of Gad runs from Tamar to the waters of Meribah at Kadesh and then follows the brook of Egypt to the Mediterranean.

²⁹ These are the allotments that will be set aside for each tribe's inheritance, says the Sovereign LORD.

³⁰ "These will be the exits to the city: On the north wall, which is 1 1/2 miles long,

³¹ there will be three gates, each one named after a tribe of Israel. The first will be named for Reuben, the second for Judah, and the third for Levi.

³² On the east wall, also 1 1/2 miles long, the gates will be named for Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan.

³³ The south wall, also 1 1/2 miles long, will have gates named for Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun.

³⁴ And on the west wall, also 1 1/2 miles long, the gates will be named for Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.

³⁵ "The distance around the entire city will be six miles. And from that day the name of the city will be 'The LORD Is There.'"

Daniel

1 ¹ During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it with his armies.

² The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah. When Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, he took with him some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God and placed them in the treasure-house of his god in the land of Babylonia.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, who was in charge of the palace officials, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.

⁴ "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good sense, and have the poise needed to serve in the royal palace. Teach these young men the language and literature of the Babylonians."

⁵ The king assigned them a daily ration of the best food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for a three-year period, and then some of them would be made his advisers in the royal court.

⁶ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah.

⁷ The chief official renamed them with these Babylonian names: Daniel was called Belteshazzar. Hananiah was called

Shadrach. Mishael was called Meshach. Azariah was called Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief official for permission to eat other things instead.

⁹ Now God had given the chief official great respect for Daniel.

¹⁰ But he was alarmed by Daniel's suggestion. "My lord the king has ordered that you eat this food and wine," he said. "If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded for neglecting my duties."

¹¹ Daniel talked it over with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief official to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

¹² "Test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said.

¹³ "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's rich food. Then you can decide whether or not to let us continue eating our diet."

¹⁴ So the attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king.

¹⁶ So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the rich foods and wines.

¹⁷ God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for learning the literature and science of the time. And God gave Daniel special ability in understanding the meanings of visions and dreams.

¹⁸ When the three-year training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief official brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹ The king talked with each of them, and none of them impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they were appointed to his regular staff of advisers.

²⁰ In all matters requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, the king found the advice of these young men to be ten times better than that of all the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

²¹ Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus's reign.

2¹ One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed him so much that he couldn't sleep.

² He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king,

³ he said, "I have had a dream that troubles me. Tell me what I dreamed, for I must know what it means."

⁴ Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "Long live the king! Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

⁵ But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be demolished into heaps of rubble!

⁶ But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!"

⁷ They said again, "Please, Your Majesty. Tell us the dream, and we will tell you what it means."

⁸ The king replied, "I can see through your trick! You are trying to stall for time because you know I am serious about what I said.

⁹ If you don't tell me the dream, you will be condemned. You have conspired to tell me lies in hopes that something will change. But tell me the dream, and then I will know that you can tell me what it means."

¹⁰ The astrologers replied to the king, "There isn't a man alive who can tell Your Majesty his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer!

¹¹ This is an impossible thing the king requires. No one except the gods can tell

you your dream, and they do not live among people."

¹² The king was furious when he heard this, and he sent out orders to execute all the wise men of Babylon.

¹³ And because of the king's decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

¹⁴ When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion.

¹⁵ He asked Arioch, "Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?" So Arioch told him all that had happened.

¹⁶ Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time so he could tell the king what the dream meant.

¹⁷ Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened.

¹⁸ He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon.

¹⁹ That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven,

²⁰ saying, "Praise the name of God forever and ever, for he alone has all wisdom and power.

²¹ He determines the course of world events; he removes kings and sets others on the throne. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars.

²² He reveals deep and mysterious things and knows what lies hidden in darkness, though he himself is surrounded by light.

²³ I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors, for you have given me wisdom and strength. You have told me what we

asked of you and revealed to us what the king demanded."

²⁴ Then Daniel went in to see Arioch, who had been ordered to execute the wise men of Babylon. Daniel said to him, "Don't kill the wise men. Take me to the king, and I will tell him the meaning of his dream."

²⁵ Then Arioch quickly took Daniel to the king and said, "I have found one of the captives from Judah who will tell Your Majesty the meaning of your dream!"

²⁶ The king said to Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar), "Is this true? Can you tell me what my dream was and what it means?"

²⁷ Daniel replied, "There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can tell the king such things.

²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed.

²⁹ "While Your Majesty was sleeping, you dreamed about coming events. The revealer of mysteries has shown you what is going to happen.

³⁰ And it is not because I am wiser than any living person that I know the secret of your dream, but because God wanted you to understand what you were thinking about.

³¹ "Your Majesty, in your vision you saw in front of you a huge and powerful statue of a man, shining brilliantly, frightening and awesome.

³² The head of the statue was made of fine gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs were of bronze,

³³ its legs were of iron, and its feet were a combination of iron and clay.

³⁴ But as you watched, a rock was cut from a mountain by supernatural means. It struck the feet of iron and clay, smashing them to bits.

³⁵ The whole statue collapsed into a heap of iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold. The pieces were crushed as small as chaff on a threshing floor, and the wind blew them all away without a trace. But the rock that knocked the statue down became a great mountain that covered the whole earth.

³⁶ "That was the dream; now I will tell Your Majesty what it means.

³⁷ Your Majesty, you are a king over many kings. The God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor.

³⁸ He has made you the ruler over all the inhabited world and has put

even the animals and birds under your control. You are the head of gold.

³⁹ "But after your kingdom comes to an end, another great kingdom, inferior to yours, will rise to take your place. After that kingdom has fallen, yet a third great kingdom, represented by the bronze belly and thighs, will rise to rule the world.

⁴⁰ Following that kingdom, there will be a fourth great kingdom, as strong as iron. That kingdom will smash and crush all previous empires, just as iron smashes and crushes everything it strikes.

⁴¹ The feet and toes you saw that were a combination of iron and clay show that this kingdom will be divided.

⁴² Some parts of it will be as strong as iron, and others as weak as clay.

⁴³ This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming

alliances with each other through intermarriage. But this will not succeed, just as iron and clay do not mix.

⁴⁴ "During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed; no one will ever conquer it. It will shatter all these kingdoms into nothingness, but it will stand forever.

⁴⁵ That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain by supernatural means, crushing to dust the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. "The great God has shown Your Majesty what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain."

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar bowed to the ground before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him.

⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is the God of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret."

⁴⁸ Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men.

⁴⁹ At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king's court.

3 ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

² Then he sent messages to the princes, prefects, governors, advisers, counselors, judges, magistrates, and all

the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up.

³ When all these officials had arrived and were standing before the image King Nebuchadnezzar had set up,

⁴ a herald shouted out, "People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command!

⁵ When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue.

⁶ Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace."

⁷ So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸ But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews.

⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "Long live the king!

¹⁰ You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the musical instruments.

¹¹ That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace.

¹² But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They have defied Your Majesty by refusing to serve your gods or to worship the gold statue you have set up."

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be brought before him. When they were brought in,

¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up?"

¹⁵ I will give you one more chance. If you bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments, all will be well. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. What god will be able to rescue you from my power then?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you.

¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty.

¹⁸ But even if he doesn't, Your Majesty can be sure that we will never serve your

gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

¹⁹ Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual.

²⁰ Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.

²¹ So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully clothed.

²² And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames leaped out and killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in!

²³ So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell down into the roaring flames.

²⁴ But suddenly, as he was watching, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes," they said, "we did indeed, Your Majesty."

²⁵ "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire. They aren't even hurt by the flames! And the fourth looks like a divine being!"

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire.

²⁷ Then the princes, prefects, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them.

Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke!

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

²⁹ Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be crushed into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!"

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

4 ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: "Peace and prosperity to you!

² "I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me.

³ How great are his signs, how powerful his wonders! His kingdom will last forever, his rule through all generations.

⁴ "I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living in my palace in comfort and prosperity.

⁵ But one night I had a dream that greatly frightened me; I saw visions that terrified me as I lay in my bed.

⁶ So I issued an order calling in all the wise men of Babylon, so they could tell me what my dream meant.

⁷ When all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers came in, I told them the dream, but they could not tell me what it meant.

⁸ At last Daniel came in before me, and I told him the dream. (He was named Belteshazzar after my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

⁹ "I said to him, 'O Belteshazzar, master magician, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too great for you to solve. Now tell me what my dream means.

¹⁰ "'While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth.

¹¹ The tree grew very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see.

¹² It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree.

¹³ "Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven.

¹⁴ The messenger shouted, "Cut down the tree; lop off its branches! Shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit! Chase the animals from its shade and the birds from its branches.

¹⁵ But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Now let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live like an animal among the plants of the fields.

¹⁶ For seven periods of time, let him have the mind of an animal instead of a human.

¹⁷ For this has been decreed by the messengers; it is commanded by the holy ones. The purpose of this decree is that the whole world may understand that the Most High rules over the

kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses—even to the lowliest of humans."

¹⁸ "'O Belteshazzar, that was the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now tell me what it means, for no one else can help me. All the wisest men of my kingdom have failed me. But you can tell me because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.'

¹⁹ "Upon hearing this, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) was overcome for a time, aghast at the meaning of the dream. Finally, the king said to him, 'Belteshazzar, don't be alarmed by the dream and what it means.' "Belteshazzar replied, 'Oh, how I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you!

²⁰ You saw a tree growing very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see.

²¹ It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches.

²² That tree, Your Majesty, is you. For you have grown strong and great; your greatness reaches up to heaven, and your rule to the ends of the earth.

²³ "Then you saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, "Cut down the tree and destroy it. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven. Let him eat grass with the animals of the field for seven periods of time."

²⁴ "“This is what the dream means, Your Majesty, and what the Most High has declared will happen to you.

²⁵ You will be driven from human society, and you will live in the fields with the wild animals. You will eat grass like a cow, and you will be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.

²⁶ But the stump and the roots were left in the ground. This means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.

²⁷ "“O King Nebuchadnezzar, please listen to me. Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past by being merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper.’

²⁸ "But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar.

²⁹ Twelve months later, he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon.

³⁰ As he looked out across the city, he said, 'Just look at this great city of Babylon! I, by my own mighty power, have built this beautiful city as my royal residence and as an expression of my royal splendor.'

³¹ "While he was still speaking these words, a voice called down from heaven, 'O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom.

³² You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the

kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.'

³³ "That very same hour the prophecy was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws.

³⁴ "After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal.

³⁵ All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He has the power to do as he pleases among the angels of heaven and with those who live on earth. No one can stop him or challenge him, saying, 'What do you mean by doing these things?'

³⁶ "When my sanity returned to me, so did my honor and glory and kingdom. My advisers and officers sought me out, and I was reestablished as head of my kingdom, with even greater honor than before.

³⁷ "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble those who are proud."

5 ¹ A number of years later, King Belshazzar gave a great feast for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them.

² While Belshazzar was drinking, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver cups that his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, so that he and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.

³ So they brought these gold cups taken from the Temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them.

⁴ They drank toasts from them to honor their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

⁵ At that very moment they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote,

⁶ and his face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him.

⁷ The king shouted for the enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers to be brought before him. He said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me what it means will be dressed in purple robes of

royal honor and will wear a gold chain around his neck. He will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom!"

⁸ But when all the king's wise men came in, none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant.

⁹ So the king grew even more alarmed, and his face turned ashen white. His nobles, too, were shaken.

¹⁰ But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said to Belshazzar, "Long live the king! Don't be so pale and afraid about this.

¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom as though he himself were a god. Your predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar, made him chief over all the magicians, enchanters,

astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon.

¹² This man Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, has a sharp mind and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means."

¹³ So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king asked him, "Are you Daniel, who was exiled from Judah by my predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar?"

¹⁴ I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods within you and that you are filled with insight, understanding, and wisdom.

¹⁵ My wise men and enchanters have tried to read this writing on the wall, but they cannot.

¹⁶ I am told that you can give interpretations and solve difficult

problems. If you can read these words and tell me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will wear a gold chain around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

¹⁷ Daniel answered the king, "Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means.

¹⁸ Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹ He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace.

²⁰ But when his heart and mind were hardened with pride, he was brought

down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.

²¹ He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of an animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.

²² "You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself.

²³ For you have defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have

not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!

²⁴ So God has sent this hand to write a message.

²⁵ "This is the message that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.

²⁶ This is what these words mean: Mene means 'numbered'—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.

²⁷ Tekel means 'weighed'—you have been weighed on the balances and have failed the test.

²⁸ Parsin means 'divided'—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

²⁹ Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed.

³¹ And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty–two.

6 ¹ Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a prince to rule over each province.

² The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the princes and to watch out for the king's interests.

³ Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and princes. Because of his great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.

⁴ Then the other administrators and princes began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling his affairs, but they couldn't find anything to

criticize. He was faithful and honest and always responsible.

⁵ So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the requirements of his religion."

⁶ So the administrators and princes went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius!

⁷ We administrators, prefects, princes, advisers, and other officials have unanimously agreed that Your Majesty should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to Your Majesty—will be thrown to the lions.

⁸ And let Your Majesty issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."

⁹ So King Darius signed the law.

¹⁰ But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.

¹¹ The officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help.

¹² So they went back to the king and reminded him about his law. "Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to Your Majesty—will be thrown to the lions?" "Yes," the king replied, "that decision stands; it is a law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked."

¹³ Then they told the king, "That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah,

is paying no attention to you or your law. He still prays to his God three times a day."

¹⁴ Hearing this, the king was very angry with himself for signing the law, and he tried to find a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.

¹⁵ In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty knows that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed."

¹⁶ So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you worship continually, rescue you."

¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the

seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel from the lions.

¹⁸ Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn't sleep at all that night.

¹⁹ Very early the next morning, the king hurried out to the lions' den.

²⁰ When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you worship continually, able to rescue you from the lions?"

²¹ Daniel answered, "Long live the king!

²² My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."

²³ The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not

a scratch was found on him because he had trusted in his God.

²⁴ Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.

²⁵ Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: "Peace and prosperity to you!

²⁶ "I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God, and he will endure forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his rule will never end.

²⁷ He rescues and saves his people; he performs miraculous signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth. He has

rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

7 ¹ Earlier, during the first year of King Belshazzar's reign in Babylon, Daniel had a dream and saw visions as he lay in his bed. He wrote the dream down, and this is what he saw.

² In my vision that night, I, Daniel, saw a great storm churning the surface of a great sea, with strong winds blowing from every direction.

³ Then four huge beasts came up out of the water, each different from the others.

⁴ The first beast was like a lion with eagles' wings. As I watched, its wings were pulled off, and it was left standing with its two hind feet on the ground, like

a human being. And a human mind was given to it.

⁵ Then I saw a second beast, and it looked like a bear. It was rearing up on one side, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And I heard a voice saying to it, "Get up! Devour many people!"

⁶ Then the third of these strange beasts appeared, and it looked like a leopard. It had four wings like birds' wings on its back, and it had four heads. Great authority was given to this beast.

⁷ Then in my vision that night, I saw a fourth beast, terrifying, dreadful, and very strong. It devoured and crushed its victims with huge iron teeth and trampled what was left beneath its feet. It was different from any of the other beasts, and it had ten horns.

⁸ As I was looking at the horns, suddenly another small horn appeared among

them. Three of the first horns were wrenched out, roots and all, to make room for it. This little horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth that was boasting arrogantly.

⁹ I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire,

¹⁰ and a river of fire flowed from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him, and a hundred million stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened.

¹¹ I continued to watch because I could hear the little horn's boastful speech. I kept watching until the fourth beast was killed and its body was destroyed by fire.

¹² As for the other three beasts, their authority was taken from them, but they were allowed to live for a while longer.

¹³ As my vision continued that night, I saw someone who looked like a man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence.

¹⁴ He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

¹⁵ I, Daniel, was troubled by all I had seen, and my visions terrified me.

¹⁶ So I approached one of those standing beside the throne and asked him what it all meant. He explained it to me like this:

¹⁷ "These four huge beasts represent four kingdoms that will arise from the earth.

¹⁸ But in the end, the holy people of the Most High will be given the kingdom, and they will rule forever and ever."

¹⁹ Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, the one so different from the others and so terrifying. It devoured and crushed its victims with iron teeth and bronze claws, and it trampled what was left beneath its feet.

²⁰ I also asked about the ten horns on the fourth beast's head and the little horn that came up afterward and destroyed three of the other horns. This was the horn that seemed greater than the others and had human eyes and a mouth that was boasting arrogantly.

²¹ As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and was defeating them,

²² until the Ancient One came and judged in favor of the holy people of the

Most High. Then the time arrived for the holy people to take over the kingdom.

²³ Then he said to me, "This fourth beast is the fourth world power that will rule the earth. It will be different from all the others. It will devour the whole world, trampling everything in its path.

²⁴ Its ten horns are ten kings that will rule that empire. Then another king will arise, different from the other ten, who will subdue three of them.

²⁵ He will defy the Most High and wear down the holy people of the Most High. He will try to change their sacred festivals and laws, and they will be placed under his control for a time, times, and half a time.

²⁶ "But then the court will pass judgment, and all his power will be taken away and completely destroyed.

²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under

heaven will be given to the holy people of the Most High. They will rule forever, and all rulers will serve and obey them."

²⁸ That was the end of the vision. I, Daniel, was terrified by my thoughts and my face was pale with fear, but I kept these things to myself.

8 ¹ During the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel, saw another vision, following the one that had already appeared to me.

² This time I was at the fortress of Susa, in the province of Elam, standing beside the Ulai River.

³ As I looked up, I saw in front of me a ram with two long horns standing beside the river. One of the horns was longer than the other, even though it had begun to grow later than the shorter one.

⁴ The ram butted everything out of its way to the west, to the north, and to the south, and no one could stand against

it or help its victims. It did as it pleased and became very great.

⁵ While I was watching, suddenly a male goat appeared from the west, crossing the land so swiftly that it didn't even touch the ground. This goat, which had one very large horn between its eyes,

⁶ headed toward the two-horned ram that I had seen standing beside the river.

⁷ The goat charged furiously at the ram and struck it, breaking off both its horns. Now the ram was helpless, and the goat knocked it down and trampled it. There was no one who could rescue the ram from the goat's power.

⁸ The goat became very powerful. But at the height of its power, its large horn was broken off. In the large horn's place grew four prominent horns pointing in the four directions of the earth.

⁹ From one of the prominent horns came a small horn whose power grew

very great. It extended toward the south and the east and toward the glorious land of Israel.

¹⁰ His power reached to the heavens where it attacked the heavenly armies, throwing some of the heavenly beings and stars to the ground and trampling them.

¹¹ He even challenged the Commander of heaven's armies by canceling the daily sacrifices offered to him and by destroying his Temple.

¹² But the army of heaven was restrained from destroying him for this sin. As a result, sacrilege was committed against the Temple ceremonies, and truth was overthrown. The horn succeeded in everything it did.

¹³ Then I heard two of the holy ones talking to each other. One of them said, "How long will the events of this vision last? How long will the rebellion

that causes desecration stop the daily sacrifices? How long will the Temple and heaven's armies be trampled on?"

¹⁴ The other replied, "It will take twenty-three hundred evenings and mornings; then the Temple will be restored."

¹⁵ As I, Daniel, was trying to understand the meaning of this vision, someone who looked like a man suddenly stood in front of me.

¹⁶ And I heard a human voice calling out from the Ulai River, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of his vision."

¹⁷ As Gabriel approached the place where I was standing, I became so terrified that I fell to the ground. "Son of man," he said, "you must understand that the events you have seen in your vision relate to the time of the end."

¹⁸ While he was speaking, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

But Gabriel roused me with a touch and helped me to my feet.

¹⁹ Then he said, "I am here to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath. What you have seen pertains to the very end of time.

²⁰ The two-horned ram represents the kings of Media and Persia.

²¹ The shaggy male goat represents the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes represents the first king of the Greek Empire.

²² The four prominent horns that replaced the one large horn show that the Greek Empire will break into four sections with four kings, none of them as great as the first.

²³ "At the end of their rule, when their sin is at its height, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power.

²⁴ He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a

shocking amount of destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people.

²⁵ He will be a master of deception, defeating many by catching them off guard. Without warning he will destroy them. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human power.

²⁶ "This vision about the twenty–three hundred evenings and mornings is true. But none of these things will happen for a long time, so do not tell anyone about them yet."

²⁷ Then I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for several days. Afterward I got up and performed my duties for the king, but I was greatly troubled by the vision and could not understand it.

9 ¹ It was the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, the son of

Ahasuerus, who became king of the Babylonians.

² During the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, was studying the writings of the prophets. I learned from the word of the LORD, as recorded by Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years.

³ So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting. I wore rough sackcloth and sprinkled myself with ashes.

⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and keep your commands.

⁵ But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations.

⁶ We have refused to listen to your servants the prophets, who spoke your messages to our kings and princes and ancestors and to all the people of the land.

⁷ "Lord, you are in the right; but our faces are covered with shame, just as you see us now. This is true of us all, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you.

⁸ O LORD, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you.

⁹ But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.

¹⁰ We have not obeyed the LORD our God, for we have not followed the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.

¹¹ All Israel has disobeyed your law and turned away, refusing to listen to your voice. "So now the solemn curses and judgments written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out against us because of our sin.

¹² You have done exactly what you warned you would do against us and our rulers. Never in all history has there been a disaster like the one that happened in Jerusalem.

¹³ Every curse written against us in the law of Moses has come true. All the troubles he predicted have taken place. But we have refused to seek mercy from the LORD our God by turning from our sins and recognizing his truth.

¹⁴ The LORD has brought against us the disaster he prepared, for we did not obey him, and the LORD our God is just in everything he does.

¹⁵ "O Lord our God, you brought lasting honor to your name by rescuing your people from Egypt in a great display of power. But we have sinned and are full of wickedness.

¹⁶ In view of all your faithful mercies, Lord, please turn your furious anger away from your city of Jerusalem, your holy mountain. All the neighboring nations mock Jerusalem and your people because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors.

¹⁷ "O our God, hear your servant's prayer! Listen as I plead. For your own sake, Lord, smile again on your desolate sanctuary.

¹⁸ "O my God, listen to me and hear my request. Open your eyes and see our wretchedness. See how your city lies in ruins—for everyone knows that it is yours. We do not ask because we

deserve help, but because you are so merciful.

¹⁹ "O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, O my God, do not delay, for your people and your city bear your name."

²⁰ I went on praying and confessing my sin and the sins of my people, pleading with the LORD my God for Jerusalem, his holy mountain.

²¹ As I was praying, Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came swiftly to me at the time of the evening sacrifice.

²² He explained to me, "Daniel, I have come here to give you insight and understanding.

²³ The moment you began praying, a command was given. I am here to tell you what it was, for God loves you very much. Now listen, so you can understand the meaning of your vision.

²⁴ "A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed for your people and your holy city to put down rebellion, to bring an end to sin, to atone for guilt, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to confirm the prophetic vision, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

²⁵ Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses, despite the perilous times.

²⁶ "After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end.

²⁷ He will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. Then as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the end that has been decreed is poured out on this defiler."

10 ¹ In the third year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) had another vision. It concerned events certain to happen in the future—times of war and great hardship—and Daniel understood what the vision meant.

² When this vision came to me, I, Daniel, had been in mourning for three weeks.

³ All that time I had eaten no rich food or meat, had drunk no wine, and had used no fragrant oils.

⁴ On April 23, as I was standing beside the great Tigris River,

⁵ I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist.

⁶ His body looked like a dazzling gem. From his face came flashes like lightning, and his eyes were like flaming torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice was like the roaring of a vast multitude of people.

⁷ I, Daniel, am the only one who saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing, but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide.

⁸ So I was left there all alone to watch this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak.

⁹ When I heard him speak, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

¹⁰ Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees.

¹¹ And the man said to me, "O Daniel, greatly loved of God, listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling with fear.

¹² Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer.

¹³ But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia.

¹⁴ Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come."

¹⁵ While he was speaking to me, I looked down at the ground, unable to say a word.

¹⁶ Then the one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing in front of me, "I am terrified by the vision I have seen, my lord, and I am very weak.

¹⁷ How can someone like me, your servant, talk to you, my lord? My strength is gone, and I can hardly breathe."

¹⁸ Then the one who looked like a man touched me again, and I felt my strength returning.

¹⁹ "Don't be afraid," he said, "for you are deeply loved by God. Be at peace; take heart and be strong!" As he spoke

these words, I suddenly felt stronger and said to him, "Now you may speak, my lord, for you have strengthened me."

²⁰ He replied, "Do you know why I have come? Soon I must return to fight against the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia, and then against the spirit prince of the kingdom of Greece.

²¹ But before I do that, I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (There is no one to help me against these spirit princes except Michael, your spirit prince.

11 ¹ I have been standing beside Michael as his support and defense since the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede.)

² "Now then, I will reveal the truth to you. Three more Persian kings will reign, to be succeeded by a fourth, far richer than the others. Using his wealth for political advantage, he will stir up

everyone to war against the kingdom of Greece.

³ "Then a mighty king will rise to power who will rule a vast kingdom and accomplish everything he sets out to do.

⁴ But at the height of his power, his kingdom will be broken apart and divided into four parts. It will not be ruled by the king's descendants, nor will the kingdom hold the authority it once had. For his empire will be uprooted and given to others.

⁵ "The king of the south will increase in power, but one of this king's own officials will become more powerful than he and will rule his kingdom with great strength.

⁶ "Some years later, an alliance will be formed between the king of the north and the king of the south. The daughter of the king of the south will be given in marriage to the king of the north to

secure the alliance, but she will lose her influence over him, and so will her father. She will be given up along with her supporters.

⁷ But when one of her relatives becomes king of the south, he will raise an army and enter the fortress of the king of the north and defeat him.

⁸ When he returns again to Egypt, he will carry back their idols with him, along with priceless gold and silver dishes. For some years afterward he will leave the king of the north alone.

⁹ "Later the king of the north will invade the realm of the king of the south but will soon return to his own land.

¹⁰ However, the sons of the king of the north will assemble a mighty army that will advance like a flood and carry the battle as far as the enemy's fortress.

¹¹ Then the king of the south, in great anger, will rally against the vast forces

assembled by the king of the north and will defeat them.

¹² After the enemy army is swept away, the king of the south will be filled with pride and will have many thousands of his enemies killed. But his success will be short lived.

¹³ "A few years later, the king of the north will return with a fully equipped army far greater than the one he lost.

¹⁴ At that time there will be a general uprising against the king of the south. Lawless ones among your own people will join them in order to fulfill the vision, but they will not succeed.

¹⁵ Then the king of the north will come and lay siege to a fortified city and capture it. The best troops of the south will not be able to stand in the face of the onslaught.

¹⁶ "The king of the north will march onward unopposed; none will be able to

stop him. He will pause in the glorious land of Israel, intent on destroying it.

¹⁷ He will make plans to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will form an alliance with the king of the south. He will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom from within, but his plan will fail.

¹⁸ "After this, he will turn his attention to the coastal cities and conquer many. But a commander from another land will put an end to his insolence and will cause him to retreat in shame.

¹⁹ He will take refuge in his own fortresses but will stumble and fall, and he will be seen no more.

²⁰ "His successor will be remembered as the king who sent a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor, but after a very brief reign, he will die, though neither in battle nor open conflict.

²¹ "The next to come to power will be a despicable man who is not directly in line for royal succession. But he will slip in when least expected and take over the kingdom by flattery and intrigue.

²² Before him great armies will be swept away, including a covenant prince.

²³ By making deceitful promises, he will make various alliances. With a mere handful of followers, he will become strong.

²⁴ Without warning he will enter the richest areas of the land and do something that none of his predecessors ever did—distribute among his followers the plunder and wealth of the rich. He will plot the overthrow of strongholds, but this will last for only a short while.

²⁵ "Then he will stir up his courage and raise a great army against the king of the south. The king of the south will go

to battle with a mighty army, but to no avail, for plots against him will succeed.

²⁶ Those of his own household will bring his downfall. His army will be swept away, and many will be killed.

²⁷ Seeking nothing but each other's harm, these kings will plot against each other at the conference table, attempting to deceive each other. But it will make no difference, for an end will still come at the appointed time.

²⁸ "The king of the north will then return home with great riches. On the way he will set himself against the people of the holy covenant, doing much damage before continuing his journey.

²⁹ "Then at the appointed time he will once again invade the south, but this time the result will be different.

³⁰ For warships from western coastlands will scare him off, and he will withdraw and return home. But he will vent his

anger against the people of the holy covenant and reward those who forsake the covenant.

³¹ His army will take over the Temple fortress, polluting the sanctuary, putting a stop to the daily sacrifices, and setting up the sacrilegious object that causes desecration.

³² He will flatter those who have violated the covenant and win them over to his side. But the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him.

³³ "Those who are wise will give instruction to many. But for a time many of these teachers will die by fire and sword, or they will be jailed and robbed.

³⁴ While all these persecutions are going on, a little help will arrive, though many who join them will not be sincere.

³⁵ And some who are wise will fall victim to persecution. In this way, they

will be refined and cleansed and made pure until the time of the end, for the appointed time is still to come.

³⁶ "The king will do as he pleases, exalting himself and claiming to be greater than every god there is, even blaspheming the God of gods. He will succeed—until the time of wrath is completed. For what has been determined will surely take place.

³⁷ He will have no regard for the gods of his ancestors, or for the god beloved of women, or for any other god, for he will boast that he is greater than them all.

³⁸ Instead of these, he will worship the god of fortresses—a god his ancestors never knew—and lavish on him gold, silver, precious stones, and costly gifts.

³⁹ Claiming this foreign god's help, he will attack the strongest fortresses. He will honor those who submit to him, appointing them to positions of

authority and dividing the land among them as their reward.

⁴⁰ "Then at the time of the end, the king of the south will attack him, and the king of the north will storm out against him with chariots, cavalry, and a vast navy. He will invade various lands and sweep through them like a flood.

⁴¹ He will enter the glorious land of Israel, and many nations will fall, but Moab, Edom, and the best part of Ammon will escape.

⁴² He will conquer many countries, and Egypt will not escape.

⁴³ He will gain control over the gold, silver, and treasures of Egypt, and the Libyans and Ethiopians will be his servants.

⁴⁴ "But then news from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in great anger to destroy many as he goes.

⁴⁵ He will halt between the glorious holy mountain and the sea and will pitch his royal tents there, but while he is there, his time will suddenly run out, and there will be no one to help him.

12 ¹ "At that time Michael, the archangel who stands guard over your nation, will arise. Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence. But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued.

² Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

³ Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like stars forever.

⁴ But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end. Many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase."

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked and saw two others standing on opposite banks of the river.

⁶ One of them asked the man dressed in linen, who was now standing above the river, "How long will it be until these shocking events happen?"

⁷ The man dressed in linen, who was standing above the river, raised both his hands toward heaven and took this solemn oath by the one who lives forever: "It will go on for a time, times, and half a time. When the shattering of the holy people has finally come to an end, all these things will have happened."

⁸ I heard what he said, but I did not understand what he meant. So I asked, "How will all this finally end, my lord?"

⁹ But he said, "Go now, Daniel, for what I have said is for the time of the end.

¹⁰ Many will be purified, cleansed, and refined by these trials. But the wicked will continue in their wickedness, and none of them will understand. Only those who are wise will know what it means.

¹¹ "From the time the daily sacrifice is taken away and the sacrilegious object that causes desecration is set up to be worshiped, there will be 1,290 days.

¹² And blessed are those who wait and remain until the end of the 1,335 days!

¹³ "As for you, go your way until the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days, you will rise again to receive the inheritance set aside for you."

Hosea

1 ¹ The LORD gave these messages to Hosea son of Beeri during the years when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah, and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel.

² When the LORD first began speaking to Israel through Hosea, he said to him, "Go and marry a prostitute, so some of her children will be born to you from other men. This will illustrate the way my people have been untrue to me, openly committing adultery against the LORD by worshiping other gods."

³ So Hosea married Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she became pregnant and gave Hosea a son.

⁴ And the LORD said, "Name the child Jezreel, for I am about to punish King Jehu's dynasty to avenge the murders he committed at Jezreel.

⁵ In fact, I will put an end to Israel's independence by breaking its military power in the Jezreel Valley."

⁶ Soon Gomer became pregnant again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to Hosea, "Name your daughter Lo-ruhamah—'Not loved'—for I will no longer show love to the people of Israel or forgive them.

⁷ But I, the LORD their God, will show love to the people of Judah. I will personally free them from their enemies without any help from weapons or armies."

⁸ After Gomer had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she again became pregnant and gave birth to a second son.

⁹ And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi—'Not my people'—for Israel is not my people, and I am not their God.

¹⁰ Yet the time will come when Israel will prosper and become a great nation. In that day its people will be like the sands of the seashore—too many to count! Then, at the place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' it will be said, 'You are children of the living God.'

¹¹ Then the people of Judah and Israel will unite under one leader, and they will return from exile together. What a day that will be—the day of Jezreel—when God will again plant his people in his land.

2 ¹ In that day you will call your brothers Ammi—'My people.' And you will call your sisters Ruhamah—'The ones I love.'

² "But now, call Israel to account, for she is no longer my wife, and I am no longer her husband. Tell her to take off her garish makeup and suggestive clothing and to stop playing the prostitute.

³ If she doesn't, I will strip her as naked as she was on the day she was born. I will leave her to die of thirst, as in a desert or a dry and barren wilderness.

⁴ And I will not love her children as I would my own because they are not my children! They were conceived in adultery.

⁵ For their mother is a shameless prostitute and became pregnant in a shameful way. She said, 'I'll run after other lovers and sell myself to them for food and drink, for clothing of wool and linen, and for olive oil.'

⁶ "But I will fence her in with thornbushes. I will block the road to make her lose her way.

⁷ When she runs after her lovers, she won't be able to catch up with them. She will search for them but not find them. Then she will think, 'I might as well return to my husband because I was better off with him than I am now.'

⁸ She doesn't realize that it was I who gave her everything she has—the grain, the wine, the olive oil. Even the gold and silver she used in worshiping the god Baal were gifts from me!

⁹ "But now I will take back the wine and ripened grain I generously provided each harvest season. I will take away the linen and wool clothing I gave her to cover her nakedness.

¹⁰ I will strip her naked in public, while all her lovers look on. No one will be able to rescue her from my hands.

¹¹ I will put an end to her annual festivals, her new moon celebrations,

and her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals.

¹² I will destroy her vineyards and orchards, things she claims her lovers gave her. I will let them grow into tangled thickets, where only wild animals will eat the fruit.

¹³ I will punish her for all the times she deserted me, when she burned incense to her images of Baal, put on her earrings and jewels, and went out looking for her lovers," says the LORD.

¹⁴ "But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her out into the desert and speak tenderly to her there.

¹⁵ I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope. She will give herself to me there, as she did long ago when she was young, when I freed her from her captivity in Egypt.

¹⁶ "In that coming day," says the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband' instead of 'my master.'"

¹⁷ O Israel, I will cause you to forget your images of Baal; even their names will no longer be spoken.

¹⁸ At that time I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and the birds and the animals that scurry along the ground so that they will not harm you. I will remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, so you can live unafraid in peace and safety.

¹⁹ I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion.

²⁰ I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as LORD.

²¹ "In that day," says the LORD, "I will answer the pleading of the sky for

clouds, which will pour down water on the earth in answer to its cries for rain.

²² Then the earth will answer the thirsty cries of the grain, the grapes, and the olive trees for moisture. And the whole grand chorus will sing together, ‘Jezreel’—‘God plants!’

²³ "At that time I will plant a crop of Israelites and raise them for myself! I will show love to those I called ‘Not loved.’ And to those I called ‘Not my people,’ I will say, ‘Now you are my people.’ Then they will reply, ‘You are our God!’"

3 ¹ Then the LORD said to me, "Go and get your wife again. Bring her back to you and love her, even though she loves adultery. For the LORD still loves Israel even though the people have turned to other gods, offering them choice gifts."

² So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and about five bushels of barley and a measure of wine.

³ Then I said to her, "You must live in my house for many days and stop your prostitution. During this time, you will not have sexual intercourse with anyone, not even with me."

⁴ This illustrates that Israel will be a long time without a king or prince, and without sacrifices, temple, priests, or even idols!

⁵ But afterward the people will return to the LORD their God and to David's descendant, their king. They will come trembling in awe to the LORD, and they will receive his good gifts in the last days.

4 ¹ Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel! The LORD has filed a lawsuit against you, saying: "There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land.

² You curse and lie and kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence

everywhere, with one murder after another.

³ That is why your land is not producing. It is filled with sadness, and all living things are becoming sick and dying. Even the animals, birds, and fish have begun to disappear.

⁴ "Don't point your finger at someone else and try to pass the blame! Look, you priests, my complaint is with you!

⁵ As a sentence for your crimes, you will stumble in broad daylight, just as you might at night, and so will your false prophets. And I will destroy your mother, Israel.

⁶ My people are being destroyed because they don't know me. It is all your fault, you priests, for you yourselves refuse to know me. Now I refuse to recognize you as my priests. Since you have forgotten the laws of your God, I will forget to bless your children.

⁷ The more priests there are, the more they sin against me. They have exchanged the glory of God for the disgrace of idols.

⁸ "The priests get fed when the people sin and bring their sin offerings to them. So the priests are glad when the people sin!

⁹ 'Like priests, like people'—since the priests are wicked, the people are wicked, too. So now I will punish both priests and people for all their wicked deeds.

¹⁰ They will eat and still be hungry. Though they do a big business as prostitutes, they will have no children, for they have deserted the LORD to worship other gods.

¹¹ "Alcohol and prostitution have robbed my people of their brains.

¹² They are asking a piece of wood to tell them what to do! They think a stick

can tell them the future! Longing after idols has made them foolish. They have played the prostitute, serving other gods and deserting their God.

¹³ They offer sacrifices to idols on the tops of mountains. They go up into the hills to burn incense in the pleasant shade of oaks, poplars, and other trees. "That is why your daughters turn to prostitution, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.

¹⁴ Why should I punish them? For you men are doing the same thing, sinning with whores and shrine prostitutes. O foolish people! You will be destroyed, for you refuse to understand.

¹⁵ "Though Israel is a prostitute, may Judah avoid such guilt. O Judah, do not join with those who worship me insincerely at Gilgal and at Beth-aven. Their worship is mere pretense as they take oaths in the LORD's name.

¹⁶ Israel is as stubborn as a heifer, so the LORD will put her out to pasture. She will stand alone and unprotected, like a helpless lamb in an open field.

¹⁷ Leave her alone because she is married to idolatry.

¹⁸ The men of Israel finish up their drinking bouts and off they go to find some prostitutes. Their love for shame is greater than their love for honor.

¹⁹ So a mighty wind will sweep them away. They will die in shame because they offer sacrifices to idols.

5 ¹ "Hear this, you priests and all of Israel's leaders! Listen, all you men of the royal family! These words of judgment are for you: You are doomed! For you have led the people into a snare by worshiping the idols at Mizpah and Tabor.

² You have dug a deep pit to trap them at Acacia. But never forget—I will settle with all of you for what you have done.

³ I know what you are like, O Israel! You have left me as a prostitute leaves her husband; you are utterly defiled.

⁴ Your deeds won't let you return to your God. You are a prostitute through and through, and you cannot know the LORD.

⁵ "The arrogance of Israel testifies against her; she will stumble under her load of guilt. Judah, too, will fall with her.

⁶ Then at last, they will come with their flocks and herds to offer sacrifices to the LORD. But it will be too late! They will not find him, because he has withdrawn from them, and they are now alone.

⁷ For they have betrayed the honor of the LORD, bearing children that aren't his. Now their false religion will devour them, along with their wealth.

⁸ "Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah!
Sound the alarm in Ramah! Raise the
battle cry in Beth-aven! Lead on into
battle, O warriors of Benjamin!

⁹ One thing is certain, Israel: When
your day of punishment comes, you will
become a heap of rubble.

¹⁰ "The leaders of Judah have become
as bad as thieves. So I will pour my anger
down on them like a waterfall.

¹¹ The people of Israel will be crushed
and broken by my judgment because
they are determined to worship idols.

¹² I will destroy Israel as a moth
consumes wool. I will sap Judah's
strength as dry rot weakens wood.

¹³ "When Israel and Judah saw how
sick they were, Israel turned to Assyria,
to the great king there, but he could
neither help nor cure them.

¹⁴ I will tear at Israel and Judah as a lion
rips apart its prey. I will carry them off,

and there will be no one left to rescue them.

¹⁵ Then I will return to my place until they admit their guilt and look to me for help. For as soon as trouble comes, they will search for me."

6 ¹ "Come, let us return to the LORD! He has torn us in pieces; now he will heal us. He has injured us; now he will bandage our wounds.

² In just a short time, he will restore us so we can live in his presence.

³ Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know him! Then he will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring."

⁴ "O Israel and Judah, what should I do with you?" asks the LORD. "For your love vanishes like the morning mist and disappears like dew in the sunlight.

⁵ I sent my prophets to cut you to pieces. I have slaughtered you with my words, threatening you with death. My judgment will strike you as surely as day follows night.

⁶ I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices. I want you to know God; that's more important than burnt offerings.

⁷ "But like Adam, you broke my covenant and rebelled against me.

⁸ Gilead is a city of sinners, tracked with footprints of blood.

⁹ Its citizens are bands of robbers, lying in ambush for their victims. Gangs of priests murder travelers along the road to Shechem and practice every kind of sin.

¹⁰ Yes, I have seen a horrible thing in Israel: My people have defiled themselves by chasing after other gods!

¹¹ "O Judah, a harvest of punishment is also waiting for you, though I wanted so much to restore the fortunes of my people!

7 ¹ "I wanted to heal Israel, but its sins were far too great. Samaria is filled with liars, thieves, and bandits!

² Its people don't realize I am watching them. Their sinful deeds are all around them; I see them all!

³ The people make the king glad with their wickedness. The princes laugh about the people's many lies.

⁴ They are all adulterers, always aflame with lust. They are like an oven that is kept hot even while the baker is still kneading the dough.

⁵ "On royal holidays, the princes get drunk. The king makes a fool of himself and drinks with those who are making fun of him.

⁶ Their hearts blaze like a furnace with intrigue. Their plot smolders through the night, and in the morning it flames forth like a raging fire.

⁷ They kill their kings one after another, and no one cries out to me for help.

⁸ "My people of Israel mingle with godless foreigners, picking up their evil ways. Now they have become as worthless as a half-baked cake!

⁹ Worshiping foreign gods has sapped their strength, but they don't even know it. Israel is like an old man with graying hair, unaware of how weak and old he has become.

¹⁰ His arrogance testifies against him, yet he doesn't return to the LORD his God or even try to find him.

¹¹ "The people of Israel have become like silly, witless doves, first calling to Egypt, then flying to Assyria.

¹² But as they fly about, I will throw my net over them and bring them down like a bird from the sky. I will punish them for all their evil ways.

¹³ "How terrible it will be for my people who have deserted me! Let them die, for they have rebelled against me. I wanted to redeem them, but they have only spoken lies about me.

¹⁴ They do not cry out to me with sincere hearts. Instead, they sit on their couches and wail. They cut themselves, begging foreign gods for crops and prosperity.

¹⁵ "I trained them and made them strong, yet now they plot evil against me.

¹⁶ They look everywhere except to heaven, to the Most High. They are like a crooked bow that always misses its target. Their leaders will be killed by their enemies because of their insolence

toward me. Then the people of Egypt will laugh at them.

8¹ "Sound the alarm! The enemy descends like an eagle on the people of the LORD, for they have broken my covenant and revolted against my law.

² Now Israel pleads with me, 'Help us, for you are our God!'

³ But it is too late! The people of Israel have rejected what is good, and now their enemies will chase after them.

⁴ The people have appointed kings and princes, but not with my consent. By making idols for themselves from their silver and gold, they have brought about their own destruction.

⁵ "O Samaria, I reject this calf—this idol you have made. My fury burns against you. How long will you be incapable of innocence?

⁶ This calf you worship was crafted by your own hands! It is not God! Therefore, it must be smashed to bits.

⁷ "They have planted the wind and will harvest the whirlwind. The stalks of wheat wither, producing no grain. And if there is any grain, foreigners will eat it.

⁸ The people of Israel have been swallowed up; they lie among the nations like an old pot that no one wants.

⁹ Like a wild donkey looking for a mate, they have gone up to Assyria. The people of Israel have sold themselves to many lovers.

¹⁰ But though they have sold themselves to many lands, I will now gather them together. Then they will writhe under the burden of the great king!

¹¹ "Israel has built many altars to take away sin, but these very altars became places for sinning!

¹² Even though I gave them all my laws, they act as if those laws don't apply to them.

¹³ The people of Israel love their rituals of sacrifice, but to me their sacrifices are all meaningless! I will call my people to account for their sins, and I will punish them. They will go back down to Egypt.

¹⁴ "Israel has built great palaces, and Judah has fortified its cities. But they have both forgotten their Maker. Therefore, I will send down fire on their palaces and burn their fortresses."

9 ¹ O people of Israel, do not rejoice as others do. For you have been unfaithful to your God, hiring yourselves out like prostitutes, offering sacrifices to other gods on every threshing floor.

² So now your harvests will be too small to feed you. The grapes you gather will not quench your thirst.

³ You may no longer stay here in this land of the LORD. You will be carried off to Egypt and Assyria, where you will live on food that is ceremonially unclean.

⁴ There, far from home, you will not be allowed to pour out wine as a sacrifice to the LORD. None of the sacrifices you offer there will please him. Such sacrifices will be unclean, just as food touched by a person in mourning is unclean. All who present such sacrifices will be defiled. They may eat this food to feed themselves, but they may not offer it to the LORD.

⁵ What then will you do on festival days? What will you do on days of feasting in the LORD's presence?

⁶ Even if you escape destruction from Assyria, you will be conquered by Egypt.

Memphis will bury you. Briers will take over your treasures of silver; brambles will fill your homes.

⁷ The time of Israel's punishment has come; the day of payment is almost here. Soon Israel will know this all too well. "The prophets are crazy!" the people shout. "The inspired men are mad!" So they taunt, for the nation is burdened with sin and shows only hatred for those who love God.

⁸ The prophet is a watchman for my God over Israel, yet traps are laid in front of him wherever he goes. He faces hostility even in the house of God.

⁹ The things my people do are as depraved as what they did in Gibeah long ago. God will not forget. He will surely punish them for their sins.

¹⁰ The LORD says, "O Israel, when I first found you, it was like finding fresh grapes in the desert! When I saw

your ancestors, it was like seeing the first ripe figs of the season! But then they deserted me for Baal-peor, giving themselves to that shameful idol. Soon they became as vile as the god they worshiped.

¹¹ The glory of Israel will fly away like a bird, for your children will die at birth or perish in the womb or never even be conceived.

¹² Even if your children do survive to grow up, I will take them from you. It will be a terrible day when I turn away and leave you alone.

¹³ I have watched Israel become as beautiful and pleasant as Tyre. But now Israel will bring out her children to be slaughtered."

¹⁴ O LORD, what should I request for your people? I will ask for wombs that don't give birth and breasts that give no milk.

¹⁵ The LORD says, "All their wickedness began at Gilgal; there I began to hate them. I will drive them from my land because of their evil actions. I will love them no more because all their leaders are rebels.

¹⁶ The people of Israel are stricken. Their roots are dried up; they will bear no more fruit. And if they give birth, I will slaughter their beloved children."

¹⁷ My God will reject the people of Israel because they will not listen or obey. They will be wanderers, homeless among the nations.

10 ¹ How prosperous Israel is—a luxuriant vine loaded with fruit! But the more wealth the people got, the more they poured it on the altars of their foreign gods. The richer the harvests they brought in, the more beautiful the statues and idols they built.

² The hearts of the people are fickle; they are guilty and must be punished. The LORD will break down their foreign altars and smash their many idols.

³ Then they will say, "We have no king because we didn't fear the LORD. But what's the difference? What could a king do for us anyway?"

⁴ They spout empty words and make promises they don't intend to keep. So perverted justice springs up among them like poisonous weeds in a farmer's field.

⁵ The people of Samaria tremble for their calf idol at Beth-aven. The people mourn over it, and the priests wail for it, because its glory will be stripped away.

⁶ This idol they love so much will be carted away with them when they go as captives to Assyria, a gift to the great king there. Israel will be laughed at and

shamed because its people have trusted in this idol.

⁷ Samaria will be cut off, and its king will disappear like a chip of wood on an ocean wave.

⁸ And the pagan shrines of Aven, the place of Israel's sin, will crumble. Thorns and thistles will grow up around them. They will beg the mountains to bury them and the hills to fall on them.

⁹ The LORD says, "O Israel, ever since that awful night in Gibeah, there has been only sin and more sin! You have made no progress whatsoever. Was it not right that the wicked men of Gibeah were attacked?"

¹⁰ Now I will attack you, too, for your rebellion and disobedience. I will call out the armies of the nations to punish you for your multiplied sins.

¹¹ "Israel is like a trained heifer accustomed to treading out the grain—

—an easy job that she loves. Now I will put a heavy yoke on her tender neck. I will drive her in front of the plow. Israel and Judah must now break up the hard ground; their days of ease are gone.

¹² I said, ‘Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of my love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you.’

¹³ "But you have cultivated wickedness and raised a thriving crop of sins. You have eaten the fruit of lies—trusting in your military might, believing that great armies could make your nation safe!

¹⁴ Now the terrors of war will rise among your people. All your fortifications will fall, just as they did when Shalman destroyed Beth–arbel. Even mothers and children were dashed to death there.

¹⁵ You will share that fate, Bethel, because of your great wickedness. When the day of judgment dawns, the king of Israel will be completely destroyed.

11 ¹ "When Israel was a child, I loved him as a son, and I called my son out of Egypt.

² But the more I called to him, the more he rebelled, offering sacrifices to the images of Baal and burning incense to idols.

³ It was I who taught Israel how to walk, leading him along by the hand. But he doesn't know or even care that it was I who took care of him.

⁴ I led Israel along with my ropes of kindness and love. I lifted the yoke from his neck, and I myself stooped to feed him.

⁵ "But since my people refuse to return to me, they will go back to Egypt and will be forced to serve Assyria.

⁶ War will swirl through their cities; their enemies will crash through their gates and destroy them, trapping them in their own evil plans.

⁷ For my people are determined to desert me. They call me the Most High, but they don't truly honor me.

⁸ "Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows.

⁹ No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy.

¹⁰ "For someday the people will follow the LORD. I will roar like a lion, and my people will return trembling from the west.

¹¹ Like a flock of birds, they will come from Egypt. Flying like doves, they will return from Assyria. And I will bring them home again," says the LORD.

¹² Israel surrounds me with lies and deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

12 ¹ The people of Israel feed on the wind; they chase after the east wind all day long. They multiply lies and violence; they make alliances with Assyria and cut deals with the Egyptians.

² Now the LORD is bringing a lawsuit against Judah. He is about to punish Jacob for all his deceitful ways.

³ Before Jacob was born, he struggled with his brother; when he became a man, he even fought with God.

⁴ Yes, he wrestled with the angel and won. He wept and pleaded for a blessing from him. There at Bethel he met God face to face, and God spoke to him—

⁵ the LORD God Almighty, the LORD is his name!

⁶ So now, come back to your God! Act on the principles of love and justice, and always live in confident dependence on your God.

⁷ But no, the people are like crafty merchants selling from dishonest scales—they love to cheat.

⁸ Israel boasts, "I am rich, and I've gotten it all by myself! No one can say I got it by cheating! My record is spotless!"

⁹ "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from your slavery in Egypt. And I will make you live in tents again, as you do each year when you celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁰ I sent my prophets to warn you with many visions and parables."

¹¹ But Gilead is filled with sinners who worship idols. And in Gilgal, too, they

sacrifice bulls; their altars are lined up like the heaps of stone along the edges of a plowed field.

¹² Jacob fled to the land of Aram and earned a wife by tending sheep.

¹³ Then the LORD led Jacob's descendants, the Israelites, out of Egypt by a prophet, who guided and protected them.

¹⁴ But the people of Israel have bitterly provoked the LORD, so their Lord will now sentence them to death in payment for their sins.

13 ¹ In the past when the tribe of Ephraim spoke, the people shook with fear because the other Israelite tribes looked up to them. But the people of Ephraim sinned by worshiping Baal and thus sealed their destruction.

² Now they keep on sinning by making silver idols to worship—images shaped

skillfully with human hands. "Sacrifice to these," they cry, "and kiss the calf idols!"

³ Therefore, they will disappear like the morning mist, like dew in the morning sun, like chaff blown by the wind, like smoke from a chimney.

⁴ "I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from your slavery in Egypt. You have no God but me, for there is no other savior.

⁵ I took care of you in the wilderness, in that dry and thirsty land.

⁶ But when you had eaten and were satisfied, then you became proud and forgot me.

⁷ So now I will attack you like a lion, or like a leopard that lurks along the road.

⁸ I will rip you to pieces like a bear whose cubs have been taken away. I will tear you apart and devour you like a hungry lion.

⁹ "You are about to be destroyed, O Israel, though I am your helper.

¹⁰ Where now is your king? Why don't you call on him for help? Where are all the leaders of the land? You asked for them, now let them save you!

¹¹ In my anger I gave you kings, and in my fury I took them away.

¹² "The sins of Ephraim have been collected and stored away for punishment.

¹³ The people have been offered new birth, but they are like a child who resists being born. How stubborn they are! How foolish!

¹⁴ Should I ransom them from the grave? Should I redeem them from death? O death, bring forth your terrors! O grave, bring forth your plagues! For I will not relent!

¹⁵ Ephraim was the most fruitful of all his brothers, but the east wind—a blast

from the LORD—will arise in the desert. It will blow hard against the people of Ephraim, drying up their land. All their flowing springs and wells will disappear. Every precious thing they have will be plundered and carried away.

¹⁶ The people of Samaria must bear the consequences of their guilt because they rebelled against their God. They will be killed by an invading army, their little ones dashed to death against the ground, their pregnant women ripped open by swords."

14 ¹ Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for your sins have brought you down.

² Bring your petitions, and return to the LORD. Say to him, "Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you the sacrifice of praise.

³ Assyria cannot save us, nor can our strength in battle. Never again will we

call the idols we have made 'our gods.' No, in you alone do the orphans find mercy."

⁴ The LORD says, "Then I will heal you of your idolatry and faithlessness, and my love will know no bounds, for my anger will be gone forever!

⁵ I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon.

⁶ Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon.

⁷ My people will return again to the safety of their land. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon.

⁸ "O Israel, stay away from idols! I am the one who looks after you and cares for you. I am like a tree that is always

green, giving my fruit to you all through the year."

⁹ Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those who are discerning listen carefully. The paths of the LORD are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But sinners stumble and fall along the way.

Joel

1 ¹ The LORD gave this message to Joel son of Pethuel.

² Hear this, you leaders of the people! Everyone listen! In all your history, has anything like this ever happened before?

³ Tell your children about it in the years to come. Pass the awful story down from generation to generation.

⁴ After the cutting locusts finished eating the crops, the swarming locusts took what was left! After them came the hopping locusts, and then the stripping locusts, too!

⁵ Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! All the grapes are ruined, and all your new wine is gone!

⁶ A vast army of locusts has invaded my land. It is a terrible army, too numerous

to count! Its teeth are as sharp as the teeth of lions!

⁷ They have destroyed my grapevines and fig trees, stripping their bark and leaving the branches white and bare.

⁸ Weep with sorrow, as a virgin weeps when her fianc, has died.

⁹ There is no grain or wine to offer at the Temple of the LORD. The priests are mourning because there are no offerings. Listen to the weeping of these ministers of the LORD!

¹⁰ The fields are ruined and empty of crops. The grain, the wine, and the olive oil are gone.

¹¹ Despair, all you farmers! Wail, all you vine growers! Weep, because the wheat and barley—yes, all the field crops—are ruined.

¹² The grapevines and the fig trees have all withered. The pomegranate trees, palm trees, and apple trees—yes, all the

fruit trees—have dried up. All joy has dried up with them.

¹³ Dress yourselves in sackcloth, you priests! Wail, you who serve before the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth, you ministers of my God! There is no grain or wine to offer at the Temple of your God.

¹⁴ Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Bring the leaders and all the people into the Temple of the LORD your God, and cry out to him there.

¹⁵ The day of the LORD is on the way, the day when destruction comes from the Almighty. How terrible that day will be!

¹⁶ We watch as our food disappears before our very eyes. There are no joyful celebrations in the house of our God.

¹⁷ The seeds die in the parched ground, and the grain crops fail. The barns and granaries stand empty and abandoned.

¹⁸ How the animals moan with hunger! The cattle wander about confused because there is no pasture for them. The sheep bleat in misery.

¹⁹ LORD, help us! The fire has consumed the pastures and burned up all the trees.

²⁰ Even the wild animals cry out to you because they have no water to drink. The streams have dried up, and fire has consumed the pastures.

2 ¹ Blow the trumpet in Jerusalem! Sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the LORD is upon us.

² It is a day of darkness and gloom, a day of thick clouds and deep blackness. Suddenly, like dawn spreading across the mountains, a mighty army appears! How great and powerful they are! The likes

of them have not been seen before and never will be seen again.

³ Fire burns in front of them and follows them in every direction! Ahead of them the land lies as fair as the Garden of Eden in all its beauty. Behind them is nothing but desolation; not one thing escapes.

⁴ They look like tiny horses, and they run as fast.

⁵ Look at them as they leap along the mountaintops! Listen to the noise they make—like the rumbling of chariots, like the roar of a fire sweeping across a field, or like a mighty army moving into battle.

⁶ Fear grips all the people; every face grows pale with fright.

⁷ The attackers march like warriors and scale city walls like trained soldiers. Straight forward they march, never breaking rank.

⁸ They never jostle each other; each moves in exactly the right place. They

lunge through the gaps, and no weapon can stop them.

⁹ They swarm over the city and run along its walls. They enter all the houses, climbing like thieves through the windows.

¹⁰ The earth quakes as they advance, and the heavens tremble. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars no longer shine.

¹¹ The LORD leads them with a shout! This is his mighty army, and they follow his orders. The day of the LORD is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can endure it?

¹² That is why the LORD says, "Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning.

¹³ Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and

merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you.

¹⁴ Who knows? Perhaps even yet he will give you a reprieve, sending you a blessing instead of this terrible curse. Perhaps he will give you so much that you will be able to offer grain and wine to the LORD your God as before!

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Jerusalem! Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting.

¹⁶ Bring everyone—the elders, the children, and even the babies. Call the bridegroom from his quarters and the bride from her private room.

¹⁷ The priests, who minister in the LORD's presence, will stand between the people and the altar, weeping. Let them pray, "Spare your people, LORD! They belong to you, so don't let them become an object of mockery. Don't let their

name become a proverb of unbelieving foreigners who say, 'Where is the God of Israel? He must be helpless!'"

¹⁸ Then the LORD will pity his people and be indignant for the honor of his land!

¹⁹ He will reply, "Look! I am sending you grain and wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy your needs. You will no longer be an object of mockery among the surrounding nations.

²⁰ I will remove these armies from the north and send them far away. I will drive them back into the parched wastelands, where they will die. Those in the rear will go into the Dead Sea; those at the front will go into the Mediterranean. The stench of their rotting bodies will rise over the land." Surely the LORD has done great things!

²¹ Don't be afraid, my people! Be glad now and rejoice because the LORD has done great things.

²² Don't be afraid, you animals of the field! The pastures will soon be green. The trees will again be filled with luscious fruit; fig trees and grapevines will flourish once more.

²³ Rejoice, you people of Jerusalem! Rejoice in the LORD your God! For the rains he sends are an expression of his grace. Once more the autumn rains will come, as well as the rains of spring.

²⁴ The threshing floors will again be piled high with grain, and the presses will overflow with wine and olive oil.

²⁵ The LORD says, "I will give you back what you lost to the stripping locusts, the cutting locusts, the swarming locusts, and the hopping locusts. It was I who sent this great destroying army against you.

²⁶ Once again you will have all the food you want, and you will praise the LORD your God, who does these miracles for you. Never again will my people be disgraced like this.

²⁷ Then you will know that I am here among my people of Israel and that I alone am the LORD your God. My people will never again be disgraced like this.

²⁸ "Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions.

²⁹ In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike.

³⁰ "I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth—blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

³¹ The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn bloodred before

that great and terrible day of the LORD arrives.

³² And anyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. There will be people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem who escape, just as the LORD has said. These will be among the survivors whom the LORD has called.

3 ¹ "At that time, when I restore the prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem," says the LORD,

² "I will gather the armies of the world into the valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will judge them for harming my people, for scattering my inheritance among the nations, and for dividing up my land.

³ They cast lots to decide which of my people would be their slaves. They traded young boys for prostitutes and little girls for enough wine to get drunk.

⁴ "What do you have against me, Tyre and Sidon and you cities of Philistia? Are

you trying to take revenge on me? If you are, then watch out! I will strike swiftly and pay you back for everything you have done.

⁵ You have taken my silver and gold and all my precious treasures, and you have carried them off to your pagan temples.

⁶ You have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, who took them far from their homeland.

⁷ But I will bring them back again from all these places to which you sold them, and I will pay you back for all you have done.

⁸ I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the peoples of Arabia, a nation far away. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

⁹ Say to the nations far and wide: "Get ready for war! Call out your best warriors! Let all your fighting men advance for the attack!

¹⁰ Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Train even your weaklings to be warriors.

¹¹ Come quickly, all you nations everywhere! Gather together in the valley." And now, O LORD, call out your warriors!

¹² "Let the nations be called to arms. Let them march to the valley of Jehoshaphat. There I, the LORD, will sit to pronounce judgment on them all.

¹³ Now let the sickle do its work, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread the winepress because it is full. The storage vats are overflowing with the wickedness of these people."

¹⁴ Thousands upon thousands are waiting in the valley of decision. It is there that the day of the LORD will soon arrive.

¹⁵ The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will no longer shine.

¹⁶ The LORD's voice will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem, and the earth and heavens will begin to shake. But to his people of Israel, the LORD will be a welcoming refuge and a strong fortress.

¹⁷ "Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, live in Zion, my holy mountain. Jerusalem will be holy forever, and foreign armies will never conquer her again.

¹⁸ In that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk. Water will fill the dry streambeds of Judah, and a fountain will burst forth from the LORD's Temple, watering the arid valley of acacias.

¹⁹ Egypt will become a wasteland and Edom a wilderness, because they attacked Judah and killed her innocent people.

²⁰ "But Judah will remain forever, and Jerusalem will endure through all future generations.

²¹ I will pardon my people's crimes, which I have not yet pardoned; and I, the LORD, will make my home in Jerusalem with my people."

Amos

1 ¹ This message was given to Amos, a shepherd from the town of Tekoa in Judah. He received this message in visions two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, was king of Israel.

² This is his report of what he saw and heard: "The LORD's voice roars from his Temple on Mount Zion; he thunders from Jerusalem! Suddenly, the lush pastures of the shepherds dry up. All the grass on Mount Carmel withers and dies."

³ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Damascus have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer!"

They beat down my people in Gilead as grain is threshed with threshing sledges of iron.

⁴ So I will send down fire on King Hazael's palace, and the fortresses of King Ben-hadad will be destroyed.

⁵ I will break down the gates of Damascus and slaughter its people all the way to the valley of Aven. I will destroy the ruler in Beth-edon, and the people of Aram will return to Kir as slaves. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

⁶ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Gaza have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! They sent my people into exile, selling them as slaves in Edom.

⁷ So I will send down fire on the walls of Gaza, and all its fortresses will be destroyed.

⁸ I will slaughter the people of Ashdod and destroy the king of Ashkelon. Then I will turn to attack Ekron, and the few Philistines still left will be killed. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

⁹ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Tyre have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! They broke their treaty of brotherhood with Israel, selling whole villages as slaves to Edom.

¹⁰ So I will send down fire on the walls of Tyre, and all its fortresses will be destroyed."

¹¹ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Edom have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! They chased down their relatives, the Israelites, with swords. They showed

them no mercy and were unrelenting in their anger.

¹² So I will send down fire on Teman, and the fortresses of Bozrah will be destroyed."

¹³ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Ammon have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! When they attacked Gilead to extend their borders, they committed cruel crimes, ripping open pregnant women with their swords.

¹⁴ So I will send down fire on the walls of Rabbah, and all its fortresses will be destroyed. There will be wild shouts during the battle, swirling like a whirlwind in a mighty storm.

¹⁵ And their king and his princes will go into exile together. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

2¹ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Moab have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! They desecrated the tomb of Edom's king and burned his bones to ashes.

² So I will send down fire on the land of Moab, and all the fortresses in Kerioth will be destroyed. The people will fall in the noise of battle, as the warriors shout and the trumpets blare.

³ And I will destroy their king and slaughter all their princes. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

⁴ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Judah have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! They have rejected the laws of the LORD, refusing to obey him. They have been led astray by the same lies that deceived their ancestors.

⁵ So I will send down fire on Judah, and all the fortresses of Jerusalem will be destroyed."

⁶ This is what the LORD says: "The people of Israel have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! They have perverted justice by selling honest people for silver and poor people for a pair of sandals.

⁷ They trample helpless people in the dust and deny justice to those who are oppressed. Both father and son sleep with the same woman, corrupting my holy name.

⁸ At their religious festivals, they lounge around in clothing stolen from their debtors. In the house of their god, they present offerings of wine purchased with stolen money.

⁹ "Yet think of all I did for my people! I destroyed the Amorites before my

people arrived in the land. The Amorites were as tall as cedar trees and strong as oaks, but I destroyed their fruit and dug out their roots.

¹⁰ It was I who rescued you from Egypt and led you through the desert for forty years so you could possess the land of the Amorites.

¹¹ I chose some of your sons to be prophets and others to be Nazirites. Can you deny this, my people of Israel?" asks the LORD.

¹² "But you caused the Nazirites to sin by making them drink your wine, and you said to my prophets, 'Shut up!'

¹³ "So I will make you groan as a wagon groans when it is loaded down with grain.

¹⁴ Your fastest runners will not get away. The strongest among you will become weak. Even the mightiest warriors will be unable to save themselves.

¹⁵ The archers will fail to stand their ground. The swiftest soldiers won't be fast enough to escape. Even warriors on horses won't be able to outrun the danger.

¹⁶ On that day, the most courageous of your fighting men will drop their weapons and run for their lives. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

3 ¹ Listen to this message that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel and Judah—the entire family I rescued from Egypt:

² "From among all the families on the earth, I chose you alone. That is why I must punish you for all your sins."

³ Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?

⁴ Does a lion ever roar in a thicket without first finding a victim? Does a young lion growl in its den without first catching its prey?

⁵ Does a bird ever get caught in a trap that has no bait? Does a trap ever spring shut when there's nothing there to catch?

⁶ When the war trumpet blares, shouldn't the people be alarmed? When disaster comes to a city, isn't it because the LORD planned it?

⁷ "But always, first of all, I warn you through my servants the prophets. I, the Sovereign LORD, have now done this."

⁸ The lion has roared—tremble in fear! The Sovereign LORD has spoken—I dare not refuse to proclaim his message!

⁹ Announce this to the leaders of Philistia and Egypt: "Take your seats now on the hills around Samaria, and witness the scandalous spectacle of all Israel's crimes."

¹⁰ "My people have forgotten what it means to do right," says the LORD.

"Their fortresses are filled with wealth taken by theft and violence.

¹¹ Therefore," says the Sovereign LORD, "an enemy is coming! He will surround them and shatter their defenses. Then he will plunder all their fortresses."

¹² This is what the LORD says: "A shepherd who tries to rescue a sheep from a lion's mouth will recover only two legs and a piece of ear. So it will be when the Israelites in Samaria are rescued with only a broken chair and a tattered pillow.

¹³ Now listen to this, and announce it throughout all Israel," says the Lord, the LORD God Almighty.

¹⁴ "On the very day I punish Israel for its sins, I will destroy the pagan altars at Bethel. The horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground.

¹⁵ And I will destroy the beautiful homes of the wealthy—their winter

mansions and their summer houses, too—all their palaces filled with ivory. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

4 ¹ Listen to me, you "fat cows" of Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and who are always asking your husbands for another drink!

² The Sovereign LORD has sworn this by his holiness: "The time will come when you will be led away with hooks in your noses. Every last one of you will be dragged away like a fish on a hook!

³ You will leave by going straight through the breaks in the wall; you will be thrown from your fortresses. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁴ "Go ahead and offer your sacrifices to the idols at Bethel and Gilgal. Keep on disobeying—your sins are mounting up! Offer sacrifices each morning and bring your tithes every three days!

⁵ Present your bread made with yeast as an offering of thanksgiving. Then give your extra voluntary offerings so you can brag about it everywhere! This is the kind of thing you Israelites love to do," says the Sovereign LORD.

⁶ "I brought hunger to every city and famine to every town. But still you wouldn't return to me," says the LORD.

⁷ "I kept the rain from falling when you needed it the most, ruining all your crops. I sent rain on one town but withheld it from another. Rain fell on one field, while another field withered away.

⁸ People staggered from one town to another for a drink of water, but there was never enough. But still you wouldn't return to me," says the LORD.

⁹ "I struck your farms and vineyards with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured

all your fig and olive trees. But still you wouldn't return to me," says the LORD.

¹⁰ "I sent plagues against you like the plagues I sent against Egypt long ago. I killed your young men in war and slaughtered all your horses. The stench of death filled the air! But still you wouldn't return to me," says the LORD.

¹¹ "I destroyed some of your cities, as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Those of you who survived were like half-burned sticks snatched from a fire. But still you wouldn't return to me," says the LORD.

¹² "Therefore, I will bring upon you all these further disasters I have announced. Prepare to meet your God as he comes in judgment, you people of Israel!"

¹³ For the LORD is the one who shaped the mountains, stirs up the winds, and reveals his every thought. He turns the

light of dawn into darkness and treads the mountains under his feet. The LORD God Almighty is his name!

5 ¹ Listen, you people of Israel! Listen to this funeral song I am singing:

² "The virgin Israel has fallen, never to rise again! She lies forsaken on the ground, with none to raise her up."

³ The Sovereign LORD says: "When one of your cities sends a thousand men to battle, only a hundred will return. When a town sends a hundred, only ten will come back alive."

⁴ Now this is what the LORD says to the family of Israel: "Come back to me and live!

⁵ Don't go to worship the idols of Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. For the people of Gilgal will be dragged off into exile, and the people of Bethel will come to nothing."

⁶ Come back to the LORD and live! If you don't, he will roar through Israel like a fire, devouring you completely. Your gods in Bethel certainly won't be able to quench the flames!

⁷ You wicked people! You twist justice, making it a bitter pill for the poor and oppressed. Righteousness and fair play are meaningless fictions to you.

⁸ It is the LORD who created the stars, the Pleiades and Orion. It is he who turns darkness into morning and day into night. It is he who draws up water from the oceans and pours it down as rain on the land. The LORD is his name!

⁹ With blinding speed and power he destroys the strong, crushing all their defenses.

¹⁰ How you hate honest judges! How you despise people who tell the truth!

¹¹ You trample the poor and steal what little they have through taxes and unfair

rent. Therefore, you will never live in the beautiful stone houses you are building. You will never drink wine from the lush vineyards you are planting.

¹² For I know the vast number of your sins and rebellions. You oppress good people by taking bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

¹³ So those who are wise will keep quiet, for it is an evil time.

¹⁴ Do what is good and run from evil—that you may live! Then the LORD God Almighty will truly be your helper, just as you have claimed he is.

¹⁵ Hate evil and love what is good; remodel your courts into true halls of justice. Perhaps even yet the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on his people who remain.

¹⁶ Therefore, this is what the Lord, the LORD God Almighty, says: "There will be crying in all the public squares and in

every street. Call for the farmers to weep with you, and summon professional mourners to wail and lament.

¹⁷ There will be wailing in every vineyard, for I will pass through and destroy them all. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

¹⁸ How terrible it will be for you who say, "If only the day of the LORD were here! For then the LORD would rescue us from all our enemies." But you have no idea what you are wishing for. That day will not bring light and prosperity, but darkness and disaster.

¹⁹ In that day you will be like a man who runs from a lion—only to meet a bear. After escaping the bear, he leans his hand against a wall in his house—and is bitten by a snake.

²⁰ Yes, the day of the LORD will be a dark and hopeless day, without a ray of joy or hope.

²¹ "I hate all your show and pretense—the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies.

²² I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings. I won't even notice all your choice peace offerings.

²³ Away with your hymns of praise! They are only noise to my ears. I will not listen to your music, no matter how lovely it is.

²⁴ Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, a river of righteous living that will never run dry.

²⁵ "Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, Israel?

²⁶ No, your real interest was in your pagan gods—Sakkuth your king god and Kaiwan your star god—the images you yourselves made.

²⁷ So I will send you into exile, to a land east of Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is God Almighty.

6 ¹ How terrible it will be for you who lounge in luxury and think you are secure in Jerusalem and Samaria! You are famous and popular in Israel, you to whom the people go for help.

² Go over to Calneh and see what happened there. Then go to the great city of Hamath and on down to the Philistine city of Gath. You are no better than they were, and look at how they were destroyed.

³ You push away every thought of coming disaster, but your actions only bring the day of judgment closer.

⁴ How terrible it will be for you who sprawl on ivory beds surrounded with luxury, eating the meat of tender lambs and choice calves.

⁵ You sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and you fancy yourselves to be great musicians, as King David was.

⁶ You drink wine by the bowlful, and you perfume yourselves with exotic fragrances, caring nothing at all that your nation is going to ruin.

⁷ Therefore, you will be the first to be led away as captives. Suddenly, all your revelry will end.

⁸ The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his own name, and this is what he, the LORD God Almighty, says: "I despise the pride and false glory of Israel, and I hate their beautiful homes. I will give this city and everything in it to their enemies."

⁹ If there are ten men left in one house, they will all die.

¹⁰ And when a close relative—one who is responsible for burning the dead—goes into the house to carry away a dead body, he will ask the last survivor,

"Is there anyone else with you?" And the person will answer, "No!" Then he will say, "Hush! Don't even whisper the name of the LORD. He might hear you!"

¹¹ When the LORD gives the command, homes both great and small will be smashed to pieces.

¹² Can horses gallop over rocks? Can oxen be used to plow rocks? Stupid even to ask—but that's how stupid you are when you turn justice into poison and make bitter the sweet fruit of righteousness.

¹³ And just as stupid is this bragging about your conquest of Lo-debar. You boast, "Didn't we take Karnaim by our own strength and power?"

¹⁴ "O people of Israel, I am about to bring an enemy nation against you," says the LORD God Almighty. "It will oppress you bitterly throughout your land—from

Lebo–hamath in the north to the Arabah Valley in the south."

7¹ The Sovereign LORD showed me a vision. I saw him preparing to send a vast swarm of locusts over the land. This was after the king's share had been harvested from the fields and as the main crop was coming up.

² In my vision the locusts ate everything in sight that was green. Then I said, "O Sovereign LORD, please forgive your people! Unless you relent, Israel will not survive, for we are only a small nation."

³ So the LORD relented and did not fulfill the vision. "I won't do it," he said.

⁴ Then the Sovereign LORD showed me another vision. I saw him preparing to punish his people with a great fire. The fire had burned up the depths of the sea and was devouring the entire land.

⁵ Then I said, "O Sovereign LORD, please don't do it. Unless you relent, Israel

will not survive, for we are only a small nation."

⁶ Then the LORD turned from this plan, too. "I won't do that either," said the Sovereign LORD.

⁷ Then he showed me another vision. I saw the Lord standing beside a wall that had been built using a plumb line. He was checking it with a plumb line to see if it was straight.

⁸ And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" I answered, "A plumb line." And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins.

⁹ The pagan shrines of your ancestors and the temples of Israel will be destroyed, and I will bring the dynasty of King Jeroboam to a sudden end."

¹⁰ But when Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, heard what Amos was saying, he rushed a message to King Jeroboam:

"Amos is hatching a plot against you right here on your very doorstep! What he is saying is intolerable. It will lead to rebellion all across the land.

¹¹ He is saying, 'Jeroboam will soon be killed and the people of Israel will be sent away into exile.'"

¹² Then Amaziah sent orders to Amos: "Get out of here, you seer! Go on back to the land of Judah and do your preaching there!

¹³ Don't bother us here in Bethel with your prophecies, especially not here where the royal sanctuary is!"

¹⁴ But Amos replied, "I'm not one of your professional prophets. I certainly never trained to be one. I'm just a shepherd, and I take care of fig trees.

¹⁵ But the LORD called me away from my flock and told me, 'Go and prophesy to my people in Israel.'

¹⁶ "Now then, listen to this message from the LORD! You say, 'Don't prophesy against Israel. Stop preaching against my people.'

¹⁷ But this is what the LORD says: Because you have refused to listen, your wife will become a prostitute in this city, and your sons and daughters will be killed. Your land will be divided up, and you yourself will die in a foreign land. And the people of Israel will certainly become captives in exile, far from their homeland."

8 ¹ Then the Sovereign LORD showed me another vision. In it I saw a basket filled with ripe fruit.

² "What do you see, Amos?" he asked. I replied, "A basket full of ripe fruit." Then the LORD said, "This fruit represents my people of Israel—ripe for punishment! I will not delay their punishment again.

³ In that day the riotous sounds of singing in the Temple will turn to wailing. Dead bodies will be scattered everywhere. They will be carried out of the city in silence. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!"

⁴ Listen to this, you who rob the poor and trample the needy!

⁵ You can't wait for the Sabbath day to be over and the religious festivals to end so you can get back to cheating the helpless. You measure out your grain in false measures and weigh it out on dishonest scales.

⁶ And you mix the wheat you sell with chaff swept from the floor! Then you enslave poor people for a debt of one piece of silver or a pair of sandals.

⁷ Now the LORD has sworn this oath by his own name, the Pride of Israel: "I will never forget the wicked things you have done!"

⁸ The earth will tremble for your deeds, and everyone will mourn. The land will rise up like the Nile River at floodtime, toss about, and sink again.

⁹ At that time," says the Sovereign LORD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth while it is still day.

¹⁰ I will turn your celebrations into times of mourning, and your songs of joy will be turned to weeping. You will wear funeral clothes and shave your heads as signs of sorrow, as if your only son had died. How very bitter that day will be!

¹¹ "The time is surely coming," says the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread or water but of hearing the words of the LORD.

¹² People will stagger everywhere from sea to sea, searching for the word of the

LORD, running here and going there, but they will not find it.

¹³ Beautiful girls and fine young men will grow faint and weary, thirsting for the LORD's word.

¹⁴ And those who worship and swear by the idols of Samaria, Dan, and Beersheba will fall down, never to rise again."

9 ¹ Then I saw a vision of the Lord standing beside the altar. He said, "Strike the tops of the Temple columns so hard that the foundation will shake. Smash the columns so the roof will crash down on the people below. Then those who survive will be slaughtered in battle. No one will escape!

² "Even if they dig down to the place of the dead, I will reach down and pull them up. Even if they climb up into the heavens, I will bring them down.

³ Even if they hide at the very top of Mount Carmel, I will search them out

and capture them. Even if they hide at the bottom of the ocean, I will send the great sea serpent after them to bite and destroy them.

⁴ Even if they are driven into exile, I will command the sword to kill them there. I am determined to bring disaster upon them and not to help them."

⁵ The Lord, the LORD Almighty, touches the land and it melts, and all its people mourn. The ground rises like the Nile River at floodtime, and then it sinks again.

⁶ The upper stories of the LORD's home are in the heavens, while its foundation is on the earth. He draws up water from the oceans and pours it down as rain on the land. The LORD is his name!

⁷ "Do you Israelites think you are more important to me than the Ethiopians?" asks the LORD. "I brought you out of Egypt, but have I not done as much

for other nations, too? I brought the Philistines from Crete and led the Arameans out of Kir.

⁸ "I, the Sovereign LORD, am watching this sinful nation of Israel, and I will uproot it and scatter its people across the earth. Yet I have promised that I will never completely destroy the family of Israel," says the LORD.

⁹ "For I have commanded that Israel be persecuted by the other nations as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet not one true kernel will be lost.

¹⁰ But all the sinners will die by the sword—all those who say, 'Nothing bad will happen to us.'

¹¹ "In that day I will restore the fallen kingdom of David. It is now like a house in ruins, but I will rebuild its walls and restore its former glory.

¹² And Israel will possess what is left of Edom and all the nations I have called to

be mine. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do these things.

¹³ "The time will come," says the LORD, "when the grain and grapes will grow faster than they can be harvested. Then the terraced vineyards on the hills of Israel will drip with sweet wine!

¹⁴ I will bring my exiled people of Israel back from distant lands, and they will rebuild their ruined cities and live in them again. They will plant vineyards and gardens; they will eat their crops and drink their wine.

¹⁵ I will firmly plant them there in the land I have given them," says the LORD your God. "Then they will never be uprooted again."

Obadiah

1 ¹ This is the vision that the Sovereign LORD revealed to Obadiah concerning the land of Edom. We have heard a message from the LORD that an ambassador was sent to the nations to say, "Get ready, everyone! Let's assemble our armies and attack Edom!"

² The LORD says, "I will cut you down to size among the nations, Edom; you will be small and despised.

³ You are proud because you live in a rock fortress and make your home high in the mountains. 'Who can ever reach us way up here?' you ask boastfully. Don't fool yourselves!

⁴ Though you soar as high as eagles and build your nest among the stars, I will

bring you crashing down. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁵ "If thieves came at night and robbed you, they would not take everything. Those who harvest grapes always leave a few for the poor. But your enemies will wipe you out completely!

⁶ Every nook and cranny of Edom will be searched and looted. Every treasure will be found and taken.

⁷ "All your allies will turn against you. They will help to chase you from your land. They will promise you peace, while plotting your destruction. Your trusted friends will set traps for you, and you won't even know about it.

⁸ At that time not a single wise person will be left in the whole land of Edom!" says the LORD. "For on the mountains of Edom I will destroy everyone who has wisdom and understanding.

⁹ The mightiest warriors of Teman will be terrified, and everyone on the mountains of Edom will be cut down in the slaughter.

¹⁰ "And why? Because of the violence you did to your close relatives in Israel. Now you will be destroyed completely and filled with shame forever.

¹¹ For you deserted your relatives in Israel during their time of greatest need. You stood aloof, refusing to lift a finger to help when foreign invaders carried off their wealth and cast lots to divide up Jerusalem. You acted as though you were one of Israel's enemies.

¹² "You shouldn't have done this! You shouldn't have gloated when they exiled your relatives to distant lands. You shouldn't have rejoiced because they were suffering such misfortune. You shouldn't have crowed over them as they suffered these disasters.

¹³ You shouldn't have plundered the land of Israel when they were suffering such calamity. You shouldn't have gloated over the destruction of your relatives, looting their homes and making yourselves rich at their expense.

¹⁴ You shouldn't have stood at the crossroads, killing those who tried to escape. You shouldn't have captured the survivors, handing them over to their enemies in that terrible time of trouble.

¹⁵ "The day is near when I, the LORD, will judge the godless nations! As you have done to Israel, so it will be done to you. All your evil deeds will fall back on your own heads.

¹⁶ Just as you swallowed up my people on my holy mountain, so you and the surrounding nations will swallow the punishment I pour out on you. Yes, you nations will drink and stagger and

disappear from history, as though you had never even existed.

¹⁷ "But Jerusalem will become a refuge for those who escape; it will be a holy place. And the people of Israel will come back to reclaim their inheritance.

¹⁸ At that time Israel will be a raging fire, and Edom, a field of dry stubble. The fire will roar across the field, devouring everything and leaving no survivors in Edom. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹⁹ "Then my people living in the Negev will occupy the mountains of Edom. Those living in the foothills of Judah will possess the Philistine plains and take over the fields of Ephraim and Samaria. And the people of Benjamin will occupy the land of Gilead.

²⁰ The exiles of Israel will return to their land and occupy the Phoenician coast as far north as Zarephath. The captives from Jerusalem exiled in the north will

return to their homeland and resettle the villages of the Negev.

²¹ Deliverers will go up to Mount Zion in Jerusalem to rule over the mountains of Edom. And the LORD himself will be king!"

Jonah

1 ¹ The LORD gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai:

² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh! Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."

³ But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction in order to get away from the LORD. He went down to the seacoast, to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping that by going away to the west he could escape from the LORD.

⁴ But as the ship was sailing along, suddenly the LORD flung a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent

storm that threatened to send them to the bottom.

⁵ Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. And all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold.

⁶ So the captain went down after him. "How can you sleep at a time like this?" he shouted. "Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will have mercy on us and spare our lives."

⁷ Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm. When they did this, Jonah lost the toss.

⁸ "What have you done to bring this awful storm down on us?" they demanded. "Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?"

⁹ And Jonah answered, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land."

¹⁰ Then he told them that he was running away from the LORD. The sailors were terrified when they heard this. "Oh, why did you do it?" they groaned.

¹¹ And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, "What should we do to you to stop this storm?"

¹² "Throw me into the sea," Jonah said, "and it will become calm again. For I know that this terrible storm is all my fault."

¹³ Instead, the sailors tried even harder to row the boat ashore. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn't make it.

¹⁴ Then they cried out to the LORD, Jonah's God. "O LORD," they pleaded,

"don't make us die for this man's sin. And don't hold us responsible for his death, because it isn't our fault. O LORD, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons."

¹⁵ Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once!

¹⁶ The sailors were awestruck by the LORD's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.

¹⁷ Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

2 ¹ Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from inside the fish.

² He said, "I cried out to the LORD in my great trouble, and he answered me. I called to you from the world of the dead, and LORD, you heard me!

³ You threw me into the ocean depths, and I sank down to the heart of the sea. I was buried beneath your wild and stormy waves.

⁴ Then I said, 'O LORD, you have driven me from your presence. How will I ever again see your holy Temple?'

⁵ "I sank beneath the waves, and death was very near. The waters closed in around me, and seaweed wrapped itself around my head.

⁶ I sank down to the very roots of the mountains. I was locked out of life and imprisoned in the land of the dead. But you, O LORD my God, have snatched me from the yawning jaws of death!

⁷ "When I had lost all hope, I turned my thoughts once more to the LORD. And my earnest prayer went out to you in your holy Temple.

⁸ Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies.

⁹ But I will offer sacrifices to you with songs of praise, and I will fulfill all my vows. For my salvation comes from the LORD alone."

¹⁰ Then the LORD ordered the fish to spit up Jonah on the beach, and it did.

3 ¹ Then the LORD spoke to Jonah a second time:

² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message of judgment I have given you."

³ This time Jonah obeyed the LORD's command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all.

⁴ On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!"

⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they decided to go without food and wear sackcloth to show their sorrow.

⁶ When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in sackcloth and sat on a heap of ashes.

⁷ Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: "No one, not even the animals, may eat or drink anything at all.

⁸ Everyone is required to wear sackcloth and pray earnestly to God. Everyone must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence.

⁹ Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will have pity on us and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us."

¹⁰ When God saw that they had put a stop to their evil ways, he had mercy on them and didn't carry out the destruction he had threatened.

4 ¹ This change of plans upset Jonah, and he became very angry.

² So he complained to the LORD about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people.

³ Just kill me now, LORD! I'd rather be dead than alive because nothing I predicted is going to happen."

⁴ The LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?"

⁵ Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as he waited to see if anything would happen to the city.

⁶ And the LORD God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This

eased some of his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

⁷ But God also prepared a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant, so that it soon died and withered away.

⁸ And as the sun grew hot, God sent a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. "Death is certainly better than this!" he exclaimed.

⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?" "Yes," Jonah retorted, "even angry enough to die!"

¹⁰ Then the LORD said, "You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. And a plant is only, at best, short lived.

¹¹ But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to

mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?"

Micah

1 ¹ The LORD gave these messages to Micah of Moresheth during the years when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. The messages concerned both Samaria and Jerusalem, and they came to Micah in the form of visions.

² Attention! Let all the people of the world listen! The Sovereign LORD has made accusations against you; the Lord speaks from his holy Temple.

³ Look! The LORD is coming! He leaves his throne in heaven and comes to earth, walking on the high places.

⁴ They melt beneath his feet and flow into the valleys like wax in a fire, like water pouring down a hill.

⁵ And why is this happening? Because of the sins and rebellion of Israel and

Judah. Who is to blame for Israel's rebellion? Samaria, its capital city! Where is the center of idolatry in Judah? In Jerusalem, its capital!

⁶ "So I, the LORD, will make the city of Samaria a heap of rubble. Her streets will be plowed up for planting vineyards. I will roll the stones of her walls down into the valley below, exposing all her foundations.

⁷ All her carved images will be smashed to pieces. All her sacred treasures will be burned up. These things were bought with the money earned by her prostitution, and they will now be carried away to pay prostitutes elsewhere."

⁸ Because of all this, I will mourn and lament. I will walk around naked and barefoot in sorrow and shame. I will howl like a jackal and wail like an ostrich.

⁹ For my people's wound is far too deep to heal. It has reached into Judah, even to the gates of Jerusalem.

¹⁰ Don't tell our enemies in the city of Gath; don't weep at all. You people in Beth-leaphrah, roll in the dust to show your anguish and despair.

¹¹ You people of Shaphir, go as captives into exile—naked and ashamed. The people of Zaanan dare not come outside their walls. The people of Beth-ezel mourn because the very foundations of their city have been swept away.

¹² The people of Maroth anxiously wait for relief, but only bitterness awaits them as the LORD's judgment reaches even to the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³ Quick! Use your swiftest chariots and flee, you people of Lachish. You were the first city in Judah to follow Israel in the sin of idol worship, and so you led Jerusalem into sin.

¹⁴ Send a farewell gift to Moresheth-gath; there is no hope of saving it. The town of Aczib has deceived the kings of Israel, for it promised help it could not give.

¹⁵ You people of Mareshah, I will bring a conqueror to capture your town. And the leaders of Israel will go to Adullam.

¹⁶ Weep, you people of Judah! Shave your heads in sorrow, for the children you love will be snatched away, and you will never see them again. Make yourselves as bald as an eagle, for your little ones will be exiled to distant lands.

2 ¹ How terrible it will be for you who lie awake at night, thinking up evil plans. You rise at dawn and hurry to carry out any of the wicked schemes you have power to accomplish.

² When you want a certain piece of land, you find a way to seize it. When you want someone's house, you take it

by fraud and violence. No one's family or inheritance is safe with you around!

³ But this is what the LORD says: "I will reward your evil with evil; you won't be able to escape! After I am through with you, none of you will ever again walk proudly in the streets."

⁴ In that day your enemies will make fun of you by singing this song of despair about your experience: "We are finished, completely ruined! God has confiscated our land, taking it from us. He has given our fields to those who betrayed us."

⁵ Others will set your boundaries then, and the LORD's people will have no say in how the land is divided.

⁶ "Don't say such things," the people say. "Don't prophesy like that. Such disasters will never come our way!"

⁷ Should you talk that way, O family of Israel? Will the LORD have patience with such behavior? If you would do what is

right, you would find my words to be good.

⁸ Yet to this very hour my people rise against me! You steal the shirts right off the backs of those who trusted you, making them as ragged as men who have just come home from battle.

⁹ You have evicted women from their homes and stripped their children of all their God-given rights.

¹⁰ Up! Begone! This is no longer your land and home, for you have filled it with sin and ruined it completely.

¹¹ Suppose a prophet full of lies were to say to you, "I'll preach to you the joys of wine and drink!" That's just the kind of prophet you would like!

¹² "Someday, O Israel, I will gather the few of you who are left. I will bring you together again like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture. Yes, your land will again be filled with noisy crowds!

¹³ Your leader will break out and lead you out of exile. He will bring you through the gates of your cities of captivity, back to your own land. Your king will lead you; the LORD himself will guide you."

3 ¹ Listen, you leaders of Israel! You are supposed to know right from wrong, ² but you are the very ones who hate good and love evil. You skin my people alive and tear the flesh off their bones.

³ You eat my people's flesh, cut away their skin, and break their bones. You chop them up like meat for the cooking pot.

⁴ Then you beg the LORD for help in times of trouble! Do you really expect him to listen? After all the evil you have done, he won't even look at you!

⁵ This is what the LORD says to you false prophets: "You are leading my people astray! You promise peace for those who

give you food, but you declare war on anyone who refuses to pay you.

⁶ Now the night will close around you, cutting off all your visions. Darkness will cover you, making it impossible for you to predict the future. The sun will set for you prophets, and your day will come to an end.

⁷ Then you seers will cover your faces in shame, and you diviners will be disgraced. And you will admit that your messages were not from God."

⁸ But as for me, I am filled with power and the Spirit of the LORD. I am filled with justice and might, fearlessly pointing out Israel's sin and rebellion.

⁹ Listen to me, you leaders of Israel! You hate justice and twist all that is right.

¹⁰ You are building Jerusalem on a foundation of murder and corruption.

¹¹ You rulers govern for the bribes you can get; you priests teach God's laws

only for a price; you prophets won't prophesy unless you are paid. Yet all of you claim you are depending on the LORD. "No harm can come to us," you say, "for the LORD is here among us."

¹² So because of you, Mount Zion will be plowed like an open field; Jerusalem will be reduced to rubble! A great forest will grow on the hilltop, where the Temple now stands.

4 ¹ In the last days, the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship.

² Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him." For in those days the LORD's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem.

³ The LORD will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end.

⁴ Everyone will live quietly in their own homes in peace and prosperity, for there will be nothing to fear. The LORD Almighty has promised this!

⁵ Even though the nations around us worship idols, we will follow the LORD our God forever and ever.

⁶ "In that coming day," says the LORD, "I will gather together my people who are lame, who have been exiles, filled with grief.

⁷ They are weak and far from home, but I will make them strong again, a mighty nation. Then I, the LORD, will rule from Jerusalem as their king forever."

⁸ As for you, O Jerusalem, the citadel of God's people, your royal might and

power will come back to you again. The kingship will be restored to my precious Jerusalem.

⁹ But why are you now screaming in terror? Have you no king to lead you? He is dead! Have you no wise people to counsel you? All are gone! Pain has gripped you like it does a woman in labor.

¹⁰ Writhe and groan in terrible pain, you people of Jerusalem, for you must leave this city to live in the open fields. You will soon be sent into exile in distant Babylon. But the LORD will rescue you there; he will redeem you from the grip of your enemies.

¹¹ True, many nations have gathered together against you, calling for your blood, eager to gloat over your destruction.

¹² But they do not know the LORD's thoughts or understand his plan.

These nations don't know that he is gathering them together to be beaten and trampled like bundles of grain on a threshing floor.

¹³ "Rise up and destroy the nations, O Jerusalem!" says the LORD. "For I will give you iron horns and bronze hooves, so you can trample many nations to pieces. Then you will give all the wealth they acquired as offerings to me, the Lord of all the earth."

5 ¹ Mobilize! Marshal your troops! The enemy is laying siege to Jerusalem. With a rod they will strike the leader of Israel in the face.

² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past.

³ The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the time when the woman in labor gives birth to her son.

Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land.

⁴ And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD's strength, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored all around the world.

⁵ And he will be the source of our peace. When the Assyrians invade our land and break through our defenses, we will appoint seven rulers to watch over us, eight princes to lead us.

⁶ They will rule Assyria with drawn swords and enter the gates of the land of Nimrod. They will rescue us from the Assyrians when they pour over the borders to invade our land.

⁷ Then the few left in Israel will go out among the nations. They will be like dew sent by the LORD or like rain falling on the grass, which no one can hold back.

⁸ The remnant of Israel will go out among the nations and be as strong as a lion. And the other nations will be like helpless sheep, with no one to rescue them.

⁹ The people of Israel will stand up to their foes, and all their enemies will be wiped out.

¹⁰ "At that same time," says the LORD, "I will destroy all your weapons—your horses and chariots.

¹¹ I will tear down your walls and demolish the defenses of your cities.

¹² I will put an end to all witchcraft; there will be no more fortune-tellers to consult.

¹³ I will destroy all your idols and sacred pillars, so you will never again worship the work of your own hands.

¹⁴ I will abolish your pagan shrines with their Asherah poles and destroy the cities where your idol temples stand.

¹⁵ I will pour out my vengeance on all the nations that refuse to obey me."

6 ¹ Listen to what the LORD is saying: "Stand up and state your case against me. Let the mountains and hills be called to witness your complaints.

² "And now, O mountains, listen to the LORD's complaint! He has a case against his people Israel! He will prosecute them to the full extent of the law.

³ O my people, what have I done to make you turn from me? Tell me why your patience is exhausted! Answer me!

⁴ For I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from your slavery. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to help you.

⁵ "Don't you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead? And remember your journey from Acacia to Gilgal, when

I, the LORD, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness."

⁶ What can we bring to the LORD to make up for what we've done? Should we bow before God with offerings of yearling calves?

⁷ Should we offer him thousands of rams and tens of thousands of rivers of olive oil? Would that please the LORD? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for the sins of our souls? Would that make him glad?

⁸ No, O people, the LORD has already told you what is good, and this is what he requires: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

⁹ Listen! Fear the LORD if you are wise! His voice is calling out to everyone in Jerusalem: "The armies of destruction are coming; the LORD is sending them.

¹⁰ Will there be no end of your getting rich by cheating? The homes of the wicked are filled with treasures gained by dishonestly measuring out grain in short measures.

¹¹ And how can I tolerate all your merchants who use dishonest scales and weights?

¹² The rich among you have become wealthy through extortion and violence. Your citizens are so used to lying that their tongues can no longer tell the truth.

¹³ "Therefore, I will wound you! I will bring you to ruin for all your sins.

¹⁴ You will eat but never have enough. Your hunger pangs and emptiness will still remain. And though you try to save your money, it will come to nothing in the end. You will save a little, but I will give it to those who conquer you.

¹⁵ You will plant crops but not harvest them. You will press your olives but not get enough oil to anoint yourselves. You will trample the grapes but get no juice to make your wine.

¹⁶ "The only laws you keep are those of evil King Omri; the only example you follow is that of wicked King Ahab! Therefore, I will make an example of you, bringing you to complete ruin. You will be treated with contempt, mocked by all who see you."

7 ¹ What misery is mine! I feel like the fruit picker after the harvest who can find nothing to eat. Not a cluster of grapes or a single fig can be found to satisfy my hunger.

² The godly people have all disappeared; not one fair-minded person is left on the earth. They are all murderers, even setting traps for their own brothers.

³ They go about their evil deeds with both hands. How skilled they are at using them! Officials and judges alike demand bribes. The people with money and influence pay them off, and together they scheme to twist justice.

⁴ Even the best of them is like a brier; the straightest is more crooked than a hedge of thorns. But your judgment day is coming swiftly now. Your time of punishment is here.

⁵ Don't trust anyone—not your best friend or even your wife!

⁶ For the son despises his father. The daughter defies her mother. The daughter-in-law defies her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household.

⁷ As for me, I look to the LORD for his help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.

⁸ Do not gloat over me, my enemies! For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD himself will be my light.

⁹ I will be patient as the LORD punishes me, for I have sinned against him. But after that, he will take up my case and punish my enemies for all the evil they have done to me. The LORD will bring me out of my darkness into the light, and I will see his righteousness.

¹⁰ Then my enemies will see that the LORD is on my side. They will be ashamed that they taunted me, saying, "Where is the LORD—that God of yours?" With my own eyes I will see them trampled down like mud in the streets.

¹¹ In that day, Israel, your cities will be rebuilt, and your borders will be extended.

¹² People from many lands will come and honor you—from Assyria all the way to the towns of Egypt, and from Egypt all the way to the Euphrates River, and from many distant seas and mountains.

¹³ But the land will become empty and desolate because of the wickedness of those who live there.

¹⁴ O LORD, come and rule your people; lead your flock in green pastures. Help them to live in peace and prosperity. Let them enjoy the fertile pastures of Bashan and Gilead as they did long ago.

¹⁵ "Yes," says the LORD, "I will do mighty miracles for you, like those I did when I rescued you from slavery in Egypt."

¹⁶ All the nations of the world will stand amazed at what the LORD will do for you. They will be embarrassed that their power is so insignificant. They will stand in silent awe, deaf to everything around them.

¹⁷ They will come to realize what lowly creatures they really are. Like snakes crawling from their holes, they will come out to meet the LORD our God. They will fear him greatly, trembling in terror at his presence.

¹⁸ Where is another God like you, who pardons the sins of the survivors among his people? You cannot stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing mercy.

¹⁹ Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean!

²⁰ You will show us your faithfulness and unfailing love as you promised with an oath to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob long ago.

Nahum

1 ¹ This message concerning Nineveh came as a vision to Nahum, who lived in Elkosh.

² The LORD is a jealous God, filled with vengeance and wrath. He takes revenge on all who oppose him and furiously destroys his enemies!

³ The LORD is slow to get angry, but his power is great, and he never lets the guilty go unpunished. He displays his power in the whirlwind and the storm. The billowing clouds are the dust beneath his feet.

⁴ At his command the oceans and rivers dry up, the lush pastures of Bashan and Carmel fade, and the green forests of Lebanon wilt.

⁵ In his presence the mountains quake, and the hills melt away; the earth trembles, and its people are destroyed.

⁶ Who can stand before his fierce anger? Who can survive his burning fury? His rage blazes forth like fire, and the mountains crumble to dust in his presence.

⁷ The LORD is good. When trouble comes, he is a strong refuge. And he knows everyone who trusts in him.

⁸ But he sweeps away his enemies in an overwhelming flood. He pursues his foes into the darkness of night.

⁹ Why are you scheming against the LORD? He will destroy you with one blow; he won't need to strike twice!

¹⁰ His enemies, tangled up like thorns, staggering like drunks, will be burned like dry straw in a field.

¹¹ Who is this king of yours who dares to plot evil against the LORD?

¹² This is what the LORD says: "Even though the Assyrians have many allies, they will be destroyed and disappear. O my people, I have already punished you once, and I will not do it again.

¹³ Now I will break your chains and release you from Assyrian oppression."

¹⁴ And this is what the LORD says concerning the Assyrians in Nineveh: "You will have no more children to carry on your name. I will destroy all the idols in the temples of your gods. I am preparing a grave for you because you are despicable and don't deserve to live!"

¹⁵ Look! A messenger is coming over the mountains with good news! He is bringing a message of peace. Celebrate your festivals, O people of Judah, and fulfill all your vows, for your enemies from Nineveh will never invade your

land again. They have been completely destroyed!

2 ¹ Nineveh, you are already surrounded by enemy armies! Sound the alarm! Man the ramparts! Muster your defenses, and keep a sharp watch for the enemy attack to begin!

² For the land of Israel lies empty and broken after your attacks, but the LORD will restore its honor and power again.

³ Shields flash red in the sunlight! The attack begins! See their scarlet uniforms! Watch as their glittering chariots move into position, with a forest of spears waving above them.

⁴ The chariots race recklessly along the streets and through the squares, swift as lightning, flickering like torches.

⁵ The king shouts to his officers; they stumble in their haste, rushing to the walls to set up their defenses.

⁶ But too late! The river gates are open!
The enemy has entered! The palace is
about to collapse!

⁷ Nineveh's exile has been decreed, and
all the servant girls mourn its capture.
Listen to them moan like doves; watch
them beat their breasts in sorrow.

⁸ Nineveh is like a leaking water
reservoir! The people are slipping away.
"Stop, stop!" someone shouts, but the
people just keep on running.

⁹ Loot the silver! Plunder the gold!
There seems no end to Nineveh's many
treasures—its vast, uncounted wealth.

¹⁰ Soon the city is an empty shambles,
stripped of its wealth. Hearts melt in
horror, and knees shake. The people
stand aghast, their faces pale and
trembling.

¹¹ Where now is that great Nineveh,
lion of the nations, full of fight and
boldness, where the old and feeble and

the young and tender lived with nothing to fear?

¹² O Nineveh, you were once a mighty lion! You crushed your enemies to feed your cubs and your mate. You filled your city and your homes with captives and plunder.

¹³ "I am your enemy!" says the LORD Almighty. "Your chariots will soon go up in smoke. The finest of your youth will be killed in battle. Never again will you bring back plunder from conquered nations. Never again will the voices of your proud messengers be heard."

3 ¹ How terrible it will be for Nineveh, the city of murder and lies! She is crammed with wealth to be plundered.

² Listen! Hear the crack of the whips as the chariots rush forward against her. Wheels rumble, horses' hooves pound, and chariots clatter as they bump wildly through the streets.

³ See the flashing swords and glittering spears in the upraised arms of the cavalry! The dead are lying in the streets—dead bodies, heaps of bodies, everywhere. People stumble over them, scramble to their feet, and fall again.

⁴ All this because Nineveh, the beautiful and faithless city, mistress of deadly charms, enticed the nations with her beauty. She taught them all to worship her false gods, enchanting people everywhere.

⁵ "No wonder I am your enemy!" declares the LORD Almighty. "And now I will lift your skirts so all the earth will see your nakedness and shame.

⁶ I will cover you with filth and show the world how vile you really are.

⁷ All who see you will shrink back in horror and say, 'Nineveh lies in utter ruin.' Yet no one anywhere will regret your destruction."

⁸ Are you any better than Thebes, surrounded by rivers, protected by water on all sides?

⁹ Ethiopia and the land of Egypt were the source of her strength, which seemed without limit. The nations of Put and Libya also helped and supported her.

¹⁰ Yet Thebes fell, and her people were led away as captives. Her babies were dashed to death against the stones of the streets. Soldiers cast lots to see who would get the Egyptian officers as servants. All their leaders were bound in chains.

¹¹ And you, Nineveh, will also stagger like a drunkard. You will hide for fear of the attacking enemy.

¹² All your fortresses will fall. They will be devoured like the ripe figs that fall into the mouths of those who shake the trees.

¹³ Your troops will be as weak and helpless as women. The gates of your land will be opened wide to the enemy and set on fire and burned.

¹⁴ Get ready for the siege! Store up water! Strengthen the defenses! Make bricks to repair the walls! Go into the pits to trample clay, and pack it into molds!

¹⁵ But in the middle of your preparations, the fire will devour you; the sword will cut you down. The enemy will consume you like locusts, devouring everything they see. There will be no escape, even if you multiply like grasshoppers.

¹⁶ Merchants, as numerous as the stars, have filled your city with vast wealth. But like a swarm of locusts, they strip the land and then fly away.

¹⁷ Your princes and officials are also like locusts, crowding together in the hedges

to survive the cold. But like locusts that fly away when the sun comes up to warm the earth, all of them will fly away and disappear.

¹⁸ O Assyrian king, your princes lie dead in the dust. Your people are scattered across the mountains. There is no longer a shepherd to gather them together.

¹⁹ There is no healing for your wound; your injury is fatal. All who hear of your destruction will clap their hands for joy. Where can anyone be found who has not suffered from your cruelty?

Habakkuk

1 ¹ This is the message that the prophet Habakkuk received from the LORD in a vision.

² How long, O LORD, must I call for help? But you do not listen! "Violence!" I cry, but you do not come to save.

³ Must I forever see this sin and misery all around me? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight.

⁴ The law has become paralyzed and useless, and there is no justice given in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, and justice is perverted with bribes and trickery.

⁵ The LORD replied, "Look at the nations and be amazed! Watch and

be astounded at what I will do! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it.

⁶ I am raising up the Babylonians to be a new power on the world scene. They are a cruel and violent nation who will march across the world and conquer it.

⁷ They are notorious for their cruelty. They do as they like, and no one can stop them.

⁸ Their horses are swifter than leopards. They are a fierce people, more fierce than wolves at dusk. Their horsemen race forward from distant places. Like eagles they swoop down to pounce on their prey.

⁹ "On they come, all of them bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a wind from the desert, sweeping captives ahead of them like sand.

¹⁰ They scoff at kings and princes and scorn all their defenses. They simply pile ramps of earth against their walls and capture them!

¹¹ They sweep past like the wind and are gone. But they are deeply guilty, for their own strength is their god."

¹² O LORD my God, my Holy One, you who are eternal—is your plan in all of this to wipe us out? Surely not! O LORD our Rock, you have decreed the rise of these Babylonians to punish and correct us for our terrible sins.

¹³ You are perfectly just in this. But will you, who cannot allow sin in any form, stand idly by while they swallow us up? Should you be silent while the wicked destroy people who are more righteous than they?

¹⁴ Are we but fish to be caught and killed? Are we but creeping things that

have no leader to defend them from their enemies?

¹⁵ Must we be strung up on their hooks and dragged out in their nets while they rejoice?

¹⁶ Then they will worship their nets and burn incense in front of them. "These nets are the gods who have made us rich!" they will claim.

¹⁷ Will you let them get away with this forever? Will they succeed forever in their heartless conquests?

2 ¹ I will climb up into my watchtower now and wait to see what the LORD will say to me and how he will answer my complaint.

² Then the LORD said to me, "Write my answer in large, clear letters on a tablet, so that a runner can read it and tell everyone else.

³ But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the

time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.

⁴ "Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked; but the righteous will live by their faith.

⁵ Wealth is treacherous, and the arrogant are never at rest. They range far and wide, with their mouths opened as wide as death, but they are never satisfied. In their greed they have gathered up many nations and peoples.

⁶ But the time is coming when all their captives will taunt them, saying, 'You thieves! At last justice has caught up with you! Now you will get what you deserve for your oppression and extortion!'

⁷ Suddenly, your debtors will rise up in anger. They will turn on you and take all you have, while you stand trembling and helpless.

⁸ You have plundered many nations; now they will plunder you. You murderers! You have filled the countryside with violence and all the cities, too.

⁹ "How terrible it will be for you who get rich by unjust means! You believe your wealth will buy security, putting your families beyond the reach of danger.

¹⁰ But by the murders you committed, you have shamed your name and forfeited your lives.

¹¹ The very stones in the walls of your houses cry out against you, and the beams in the ceilings echo the complaint.

¹² "How terrible it will be for you who build cities with money gained by murder and corruption!

¹³ Has not the LORD Almighty promised that the wealth of nations will turn to ashes? They work so hard, but all in vain!

¹⁴ For the time will come when all the earth will be filled, as the waters fill the sea, with an awareness of the glory of the LORD.

¹⁵ "How terrible it will be for you who make your neighbors drunk! You force your cup on them so that you can gloat over their nakedness and shame.

¹⁶ But soon it will be your turn! Come, drink and be exposed! Drink from the cup of the LORD's judgment, and all your glory will be turned to shame.

¹⁷ You cut down the forests of Lebanon. Now you will be cut down! You terrified the wild animals you caught in your traps. Now terror will strike you because of your murder and violence in cities everywhere!

¹⁸ "What have you gained by worshiping all your man-made idols? How foolish to trust in something made by your own

hands! What fools you are to believe such lies!

¹⁹ How terrible it will be for you who beg lifeless wooden idols to save you. You ask speechless stone images to tell you what to do. Can an idol speak for God? They may be overlaid with gold and silver, but they are lifeless inside.

²⁰ But the LORD is in his holy Temple. Let all the earth be silent before him."

3 ¹ This prayer was sung by the prophet Habakkuk:

² I have heard all about you, LORD, and I am filled with awe by the amazing things you have done. In this time of our deep need, begin again to help us, as you did in years gone by. Show us your power to save us. And in your anger, remember your mercy.

³ I see God, the Holy One, moving across the deserts from Edom and Mount Paran. His brilliant splendor fills

the heavens, and the earth is filled with his praise! What a wonderful God he is!

⁴ Rays of brilliant light flash from his hands. He rejoices in his awesome power.

⁵ Pestilence marches before him; plague follows close behind.

⁶ When he stops, the earth shakes. When he looks, the nations tremble. He shatters the everlasting mountains and levels the eternal hills. But his power is not diminished in the least!

⁷ I see the peoples of Cushan and Midian trembling in terror.

⁸ Was it in anger, LORD, that you struck the rivers and parted the sea? Were you displeased with them? No, you were sending your chariots of salvation!

⁹ You were commanding your weapons of power! You split open the earth with flowing rivers!

¹⁰ The mountains watched and trembled. Onward swept the raging waters. The mighty deep cried out, lifting its hands to the LORD.

¹¹ The lofty sun and moon began to fade, obscured by brilliance from your arrows and the flashing of your glittering spear.

¹² You marched across the land in awesome anger and trampled the nations in your fury.

¹³ You went out to rescue your chosen people, to save your anointed ones. You crushed the heads of the wicked and laid bare their bones from head to toe.

¹⁴ With their own weapons, you destroyed those who rushed out like a whirlwind, thinking Israel would be easy prey.

¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses, and the mighty waters piled high.

¹⁶ I trembled inside when I heard all this; my lips quivered with fear. My legs gave way beneath me, and I shook in terror. I will wait quietly for the coming day when disaster will strike the people who invade us.

¹⁷ Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty,

¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation.

¹⁹ The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains. (For the choir director: This prayer is to be accompanied by stringed instruments.)

Zephaniah

1 ¹ The LORD gave these messages to Zephaniah when Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah. Zephaniah was the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah.

² "I will sweep away everything in all your land," says the LORD.

³ "I will sweep away both people and animals alike. Even the birds of the air and the fish in the sea will die. I will reduce the wicked to heaps of rubble, along with the rest of humanity," says the LORD.

⁴ "I will crush Judah and Jerusalem with my fist and destroy every last trace of their Baal worship. I will put an end to all the idolatrous priests, so that even the memory of them will disappear.

⁵ For they go up to their roofs and bow to the sun, moon, and stars. They claim to follow the LORD, but then they worship Molech, too. So now I will destroy them!

⁶ And I will destroy those who used to worship me but now no longer do. They no longer ask for the LORD's guidance or seek my blessings."

⁷ Stand in silence in the presence of the Sovereign LORD, for the awesome day of the LORD's judgment has come. The LORD has prepared his people for a great slaughter and has chosen their executioners.

⁸ "On that day of judgment," says the LORD, "I will punish the leaders and princes of Judah and all those following pagan customs.

⁹ Yes, I will punish those who participate in pagan worship ceremonies, and those

who steal and kill to fill their masters' homes with loot.

¹⁰ "On that day," says the LORD, "a cry of alarm will come from the Fish Gate and echo throughout the newer Mishneh section of the city. And a great crashing sound will come from the surrounding hills.

¹¹ Wail in sorrow, all you who live in the market area, for all who buy and sell there will die.

¹² "I will search with lanterns in Jerusalem's darkest corners to find and punish those who sit contented in their sins, indifferent to the LORD, thinking he will do nothing at all to them.

¹³ They are the very ones whose property will be plundered by the enemy, whose homes will be ransacked. They will never have a chance to live in the new homes they have built. They

will never drink wine from the vineyards they have planted.

¹⁴ "That terrible day of the LORD is near. Swiftly it comes—a day when strong men will cry bitterly.

¹⁵ It is a day when the LORD's anger will be poured out. It is a day of terrible distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, of clouds, blackness,

¹⁶ trumpet calls, and battle cries. Down go the walled cities and strongest battlements!

¹⁷ "Because you have sinned against the LORD, I will make you as helpless as a blind man searching for a path. Your blood will be poured out into the dust, and your bodies will lie there rotting on the ground."

¹⁸ Your silver and gold will be of no use to you on that day of the LORD's anger. For the whole land will be devoured by

the fire of his jealousy. He will make a terrifying end of all the people on earth.

2¹ Gather together and pray, you shameless nation.

² Gather while there is still time, before judgment begins and your opportunity is blown away like chaff. Act now, before the fierce fury of the LORD falls and the terrible day of the LORD's anger begins.

³ Beg the LORD to save you—all you who are humble, all you who uphold justice. Walk humbly and do what is right. Perhaps even yet the LORD will protect you from his anger on that day of destruction.

⁴ Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron—these Philistine cities, too, will be rooted out and left in desolation.

⁵ And how terrible it will be for you Philistines who live along the coast and in the land of Canaan, for this judgment

is against you, too! The LORD will destroy you until not one of you is left.

⁶ The coastal area will become a pasture, a place of shepherd camps and enclosures for sheep.

⁷ The few survivors of the tribe of Judah will pasture there. They will lie down to rest in the abandoned houses in Ashkelon. For the LORD their God will visit his people in kindness and restore their prosperity again.

⁸ "I have heard the taunts of the people of Moab and Ammon, mocking my people and invading their borders.

⁹ Now, as surely as I live," says the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, "Moab and Ammon will be destroyed as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah. Their land will become a place of stinging nettles, salt pits, and eternal desolation. Those of my people who are left will plunder them and take their land."

¹⁰ They will receive the wages of their pride, for they have scoffed at the people of the LORD Almighty.

¹¹ The LORD will terrify them as he destroys all the gods in the land. Then people from nations around the world will worship the LORD, each in their own land.

¹² "You Ethiopians will also be slaughtered by my sword," says the LORD.

¹³ And the LORD will strike the lands of the north with his fist. He will destroy Assyria and make its great capital, Nineveh, a desolate wasteland, parched like a desert.

¹⁴ The city that once was so proud will become a pasture for sheep and cattle. All sorts of wild animals will settle there. Owls of many kinds will live among the ruins of its palaces, hooting from the gaping windows. Rubble will block all

the doorways, and the cedar paneling will lie open to the wind and weather.

¹⁵ This is the fate of that boisterous city, once so secure. "In all the world there is no city as great as I," it boasted. But now, look how it has become an utter ruin, a place where animals live! Everyone passing that way will laugh in derision or shake a defiant fist.

3 ¹ How terrible it will be for rebellious, polluted Jerusalem, the city of violence and crime.

² It proudly refuses to listen even to the voice of the LORD. No one can tell it anything; it refuses all correction. It does not trust in the LORD or draw near to its God.

³ Its leaders are like roaring lions hunting for their victims—out for everything they can get. Its judges are like ravenous wolves at evening time,

who by dawn have left no trace of their prey.

⁴ Its prophets are arrogant liars seeking their own gain. Its priests defile the Temple by disobeying God's laws.

⁵ But the LORD is still there in the city, and he does no wrong. Day by day his justice is more evident, but no one takes notice—the wicked know no shame.

⁶ "I have wiped out many nations, devastating their fortress walls and towers. Their cities are now deserted; their streets are in silent ruin. There are no survivors to even tell what happened.

⁷ I thought, 'Surely they will have reverence for me now! Surely they will listen to my warnings, so I won't need to strike again.' But no; however much I punish them, they continue their evil practices from dawn till dusk and dusk till dawn."

⁸ So now the LORD says: "Be patient; the time is coming soon when I will stand up and accuse these evil nations. For it is my decision to gather together the kingdoms of the earth and pour out my fiercest anger and fury on them. All the earth will be devoured by the fire of my jealousy.

⁹ "On that day I will purify the lips of all people, so that everyone will be able to worship the LORD together.

¹⁰ My scattered people who live beyond the rivers of Ethiopia will come to present their offerings.

¹¹ And then you will no longer need to be ashamed of yourselves, for you will no longer be rebels against me. I will remove all the proud and arrogant people from among you. There will be no pride on my holy mountain.

¹² Those who are left will be the lowly and the humble, for it is they who trust in the name of the LORD.

¹³ The people of Israel who survive will do no wrong to each other, never telling lies or deceiving one another. They will live peaceful lives, lying down to sleep in safety; there will be no one to make them afraid."

¹⁴ Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

¹⁵ For the LORD will remove his hand of judgment and will disperse the armies of your enemy. And the LORD himself, the King of Israel, will live among you! At last your troubles will be over, and you will fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day the announcement to Jerusalem will be, "Cheer up, Zion! Don't be afraid!

¹⁷ For the LORD your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will exult over you by singing a happy song."

¹⁸ "I will gather you who mourn for the appointed festivals; you will be disgraced no more.

¹⁹ And I will deal severely with all who have oppressed you. I will save the weak and helpless ones; I will bring together those who were chased away. I will give glory and renown to my former exiles, who have been mocked and shamed.

²⁰ On that day I will gather you together and bring you home again. I will give you a good name, a name of distinction among all the nations of the earth. They will praise you as I restore your fortunes before their very eyes. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

Haggai

1 ¹ On August 29 of the second year of King Darius's reign, the LORD gave a message through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

² "This is what the LORD Almighty says: The people are saying, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house—the Temple.'"

³ So the LORD sent this message through the prophet Haggai:

⁴ "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?"

⁵ This is what the LORD Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you!

⁶ You have planted much but harvested little. You have food to eat, but not

enough to fill you up. You have wine to drink, but not enough to satisfy your thirst. You have clothing to wear, but not enough to keep you warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

⁷ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: Consider how things are going for you!

⁸ Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD.

⁹ You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the LORD Almighty, while you are all busy building your own fine houses.

¹⁰ That is why the heavens have withheld the dew and the earth has withheld its crops.

¹¹ I have called for a drought on your fields and hills—a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olives and all your other crops, a drought to starve both you and your cattle and to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get."

¹² Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God's people obeyed the message from the LORD their God. It had been delivered by the prophet Haggai, whom the LORD their God had sent, and the people worshiped the LORD in earnest.

¹³ Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave the people this message from the LORD: "I am with you, says the LORD!"

¹⁴ So the LORD sparked the enthusiasm of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God's people. They came and began

their work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God.

¹⁵ This was on September 21 of the second year of King Darius's reign.

2 ¹ Then on October 17 of that same year, the LORD sent another message through the prophet Haggai.

² "Say this to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of God's people there in the land:

³ Is there anyone who can remember this house—the Temple—as it was before? In comparison, how does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all!

⁴ But now take courage, Zerubbabel, says the LORD. Take courage, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Take courage, all you people still left in the land, says the LORD. Take courage and

work, for I am with you, says the LORD Almighty.

⁵ My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.

⁶ "For this is what the LORD Almighty says: In just a little while I will again shake the heavens and the earth. I will shake the oceans and the dry land, too.

⁷ I will shake all the nations, and the treasures of all the nations will come to this Temple. I will fill this place with glory, says the LORD Almighty.

⁸ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD Almighty.

⁹ The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory, says the LORD Almighty. And in this place I will bring peace. I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!"

¹⁰ On December 18 of the second year of King Darius's reign, the LORD sent this message to the prophet Haggai:

¹¹ "This is what the LORD Almighty says! Ask the priests this question about the law:

¹² If one of you is carrying a holy sacrifice in his robes and happens to brush against some bread or stew, wine or oil, or any other kind of food, will it also become holy?" The priests replied, "No."

¹³ Then Haggai asked, "But if someone becomes ceremonially unclean by touching a dead person and then brushes against any of the things mentioned, will it be defiled?" And the priests answered, "Yes."

¹⁴ Then Haggai said, "That is how it is with this people and this nation, says the LORD. Everything they do and everything they offer is defiled.

¹⁵ So think about this from now on—consider how things were going for you before you began to lay the foundation of the LORD's Temple.

¹⁶ When you hoped for a twenty-bushel crop, you harvested only ten. When you expected to draw fifty gallons from the winepress, you found only twenty.

¹⁷ I sent blight and mildew and hail to destroy all the produce of your labor. Yet, even so, you refused to return to me, says the LORD.

¹⁸ "On this eighteenth day of December—the day when the foundation of the LORD's Temple was laid—carefully consider this:

¹⁹ I am giving you a promise now while the seed is still in the barn, before you have harvested your grain and before the grapevine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have

produced their crops. From this day onward I will bless you."

²⁰ The LORD sent this second message to Haggai on December 18:

²¹ "Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, that I am about to shake the heavens and the earth.

²² I will overthrow royal thrones, destroying the power of foreign kingdoms. I will overturn their chariots and charioteers. The horses will fall, and their riders will kill each other.

²³ But when this happens, says the LORD Almighty, I will honor you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant. I will treat you like a signet ring on my finger, says the LORD, for I have specially chosen you. I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!"

Zechariah

1 ¹ In midautumn of the second year of King Darius's reign, the LORD gave this message to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah and grandson of Iddo.

² "I, the LORD, was very angry with your ancestors.

³ Therefore, say to the people, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD Almighty.'

⁴ Do not be like your ancestors who would not listen when the earlier prophets said to them, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: Turn from your evil ways and stop all your evil practices.'

⁵ "Your ancestors and their prophets are now long dead.

⁶ But all the things I said through my servants the prophets happened to your ancestors, just as I said they would. As a result, they repented and said, 'We have received what we deserved from the LORD Almighty. He has done what he said he would do.'

⁷ Then on February 15 of the second year of King Darius's reign, the LORD sent another message to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah and grandson of Iddo. Zechariah said:

⁸ In a vision during the night, I saw a man sitting on a red horse that was standing among some myrtle trees in a small valley. Behind him were red, brown, and white horses, each with its own rider.

⁹ I asked the angel who was talking with me, "My lord, what are all those horses for?" "I will show you," the angel replied.

¹⁰ So the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, "They are the ones the LORD has sent out to patrol the earth."

¹¹ Then the other riders reported to the angel of the LORD, who was standing among the myrtle trees, "We have patrolled the earth, and the whole earth is at peace."

¹² Upon hearing this, the angel of the LORD prayed this prayer: "O LORD Almighty, for seventy years now you have been angry with Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. How long will it be until you again show mercy to them?"

¹³ And the LORD spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me.

¹⁴ Then the angel said to me, "Shout this message for all to hear: 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: My love for

Jerusalem and Mount Zion is passionate and strong.

¹⁵ But I am very angry with the other nations that enjoy peace and security. I was only a little angry with my people, but the nations punished them far beyond my intentions.

¹⁶ "Therefore, this is what the LORD says: I have returned to show mercy to Jerusalem. My Temple will be rebuilt, says the LORD Almighty, and plans will be made for the reconstruction of Jerusalem.'

¹⁷ Say this also: 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: The towns of Israel will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem as his own.'

¹⁸ Then I looked up and saw four animal horns.

¹⁹ "What are these?" I asked the angel who was talking with me. He replied,

"These horns represent the world powers that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."

²⁰ Then the LORD showed me four blacksmiths.

²¹ "What are these men coming to do?" I asked. The angel replied, "The blacksmiths have come to terrify the four horns that scattered and humbled Judah. They will throw them down and destroy them."

2¹ When I looked around me again, I saw a man with a measuring line in his hand.

² "Where are you going?" I asked. He replied, "I am going to measure Jerusalem, to see how wide and how long it is."

³ Then the angel who was with me went to meet a second angel who was coming toward him.

⁴ The other angel said, "Hurry, and say to that young man, 'Jerusalem will someday be so full of people that it won't have room enough for everyone! Many will live outside the city walls, with all their livestock—and yet they will be safe.

⁵ For I, myself, will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem, says the LORD. And I will be the glory inside the city!'"

⁶ The LORD says, "Come away! Flee from the north, for I have scattered you to the four winds.

⁷ Come away! Escape to Jerusalem, you who are exiled in Babylon!"

⁸ "After a period of glory, the LORD Almighty sent me against the nations who oppressed you. For he said, 'Anyone who harms you harms my most precious possession.

⁹ I will raise my fist to crush them, and their own slaves will plunder them.' Then

you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me."

¹⁰ The LORD says, "Shout and rejoice, O Jerusalem, for I am coming to live among you.

¹¹ Many nations will join themselves to the LORD on that day, and they, too, will be my people. I will live among you, and you will know that the LORD Almighty sent me to you.

¹² The land of Judah will be the LORD's inheritance in the holy land, and he will once again choose Jerusalem to be his own city.

¹³ Be silent before the LORD, all humanity, for he is springing into action from his holy dwelling."

3 ¹ Then the angel showed me Jeshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD. Satan was there at the angel's right hand, accusing Jeshua of many things.

² And the LORD said to Satan, "I, the LORD, reject your accusations, Satan. Yes, the LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebukes you. This man is like a burning stick that has been snatched from a fire."

³ Jeshua's clothing was filthy as he stood there before the angel.

⁴ So the angel said to the others standing there, "Take off his filthy clothes." And turning to Jeshua he said, "See, I have taken away your sins, and now I am giving you these fine new clothes."

⁵ Then I said, "Please, could he also have a clean turban on his head?" So they put a clean priestly turban on his head and dressed him in new clothes while the angel of the LORD stood by.

⁶ Then the angel of the LORD spoke very solemnly to Jeshua and said,

⁷ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: If you follow my ways and obey my requirements, then you will be given authority over my Temple and its courtyards. I will let you walk in and out of my presence along with these others standing here.

⁸ Listen to me, O Jeshua the high priest, and all you other priests. You are symbols of the good things to come. Soon I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.

⁹ Now look at the jewel I have set before Jeshua, a single stone with seven facets. I will engrave an inscription on it, says the LORD Almighty, and I will remove the sins of this land in a single day.

¹⁰ And on that day, says the LORD Almighty, each of you will invite your neighbor into your home to share your peace and prosperity."

4 ¹ Then the angel who had been talking with me returned and woke me, as though I had been asleep.

² "What do you see now?" he asked. I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl of oil on top of it. Around the bowl are seven lamps, each one having seven spouts with wicks.

³ And I see two olive trees, one on each side of the bowl."

⁴ Then I asked the angel, "What are these, my lord? What do they mean?"

⁵ "Don't you know?" the angel asked. "No, my lord," I replied.

⁶ Then he said to me, "This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty.

⁷ Nothing, not even a mighty mountain, will stand in Zerubbabel's way; it will flatten out before him! Then Zerubbabel will set the final stone of the Temple in

place, and the people will shout: 'May God bless it! May God bless it!'"

⁸ Then another message came to me from the LORD:

⁹ "Zerubbabel is the one who laid the foundation of this Temple, and he will complete it. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me.

¹⁰ Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand. For these seven lamps represent the eyes of the LORD that search all around the world."

¹¹ Then I asked the angel, "What are these two olive trees on each side of the lampstand,

¹² and what are the two olive branches that pour out golden oil through two gold tubes?"

¹³ "Don't you know?" he asked. "No, my lord," I replied.

¹⁴ Then he said to me, "They represent the two anointed ones who assist the Lord of all the earth."

5 ¹ I looked up again and saw a scroll flying through the air.

² "What do you see?" the angel asked. "I see a flying scroll," I replied. "It appears to be about thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide."

³ Then he said to me, "This scroll contains the curse that is going out over the entire land. One side says that those who steal will be banished from the land; the other side says that those who swear falsely will be banished from the land.

⁴ And this is what the LORD Almighty says: I am sending this curse into the house of every thief and into the house of everyone who swears falsely by my name. And my curse will remain in that house until it is completely

destroyed—even its timbers and stones."

⁵ Then the angel who was talking with me came forward and said, "Look up! Something is appearing in the sky."

⁶ "What is it?" I asked. He replied, "It is a basket for measuring grain, and it is filled with the sins of everyone throughout the land."

⁷ When the heavy lead cover was lifted off the basket, there was a woman sitting inside it.

⁸ The angel said, "The woman's name is Wickedness," and he pushed her back into the basket and closed the heavy lid again.

⁹ Then I looked up and saw two women flying toward us, with wings gliding on the wind. Their wings were like those of a stork, and they picked up the basket and flew with it into the sky.

¹⁰ "Where are they taking the basket?" I asked the angel.

¹¹ He replied, "To the land of Babylonia, where they will build a temple for the basket. And when the temple is ready, they will set the basket there on its pedestal."

6 ¹ Then I looked up again and saw four chariots coming from between two bronze mountains.

² The first chariot was pulled by red horses, the second by black horses,

³ the third by white horses, and the fourth by dappled–gray horses.

⁴ "And what are these, my lord?" I asked the angel who was talking with me.

⁵ He replied, "These are the four spirits of heaven who stand before the Lord of all the earth. They are going out to do his work."

⁶ The chariot with black horses is going north, the chariot with white horses is going west, and the chariot with dappled–gray horses is going south."

⁷ The powerful horses were eager to be off, to patrol back and forth across the earth. And the LORD said, "Go and patrol the earth!" So they left at once on their patrol.

⁸ Then the LORD summoned me and said, "Those who went north have vented the anger of my Spirit there."

⁹ Then I received another message from the LORD:

¹⁰ "Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah will bring gifts of silver and gold from the Jews exiled in Babylon. As soon as they arrive, meet them at the home of Josiah son of Zephaniah.

¹¹ Accept their gifts and make a crown from the silver and gold. Then put the

crown on the head of Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

¹² Tell him that the LORD Almighty says: Here is the man called the Branch. He will branch out where he is and build the Temple of the LORD.

¹³ He will build the LORD's Temple, and he will receive royal honor and will rule as king from his throne. He will also serve as priest from his throne, and there will be perfect harmony between the two.

¹⁴ "The crown will be a memorial in the Temple of the LORD to honor those who gave it—Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah son of Zephaniah."

¹⁵ Many will come from distant lands to rebuild the Temple of the LORD. And when this happens, you will know my messages have been from the LORD Almighty. All this will happen if you

carefully obey the commands of the LORD your God.

7¹ On December 7 of the fourth year of King Darius's reign, another message came to Zechariah from the LORD.

² The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech, along with their men, to seek the LORD's favor.

³ They were to ask this question of the prophets and of the priests at the Temple of the LORD Almighty: "Should we continue to mourn and fast each summer on the anniversary of the Temple's destruction, as we have done for so many years?"

⁴ The LORD Almighty sent me this message:

⁵ "Say to all your people and your priests, 'During those seventy years of exile, when you fasted and mourned in the summer and at the festival in early

autumn, was it really for me that you were fasting?

⁶ And even now in your holy festivals, you don't think about me but only of pleasing yourselves.

⁷ Isn't this the same message the LORD proclaimed through the prophets years ago when Jerusalem and the towns of Judah were bustling with people, and the Negev and the foothills of Judah were populated areas?"

⁸ Then this message came to Zechariah from the LORD:

⁹ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: Judge fairly and honestly, and show mercy and kindness to one another.

¹⁰ Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, and poor people. And do not make evil plans to harm each other.

¹¹ "Your ancestors would not listen to this message. They turned stubbornly

away and put their fingers in their ears to keep from hearing.

¹² They made their hearts as hard as stone, so they could not hear the law or the messages that the LORD Almighty had sent them by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. That is why the LORD Almighty was so angry with them.

¹³ "Since they refused to listen when I called to them, I would not listen when they called to me, says the LORD Almighty.

¹⁴ I scattered them as with a whirlwind among the distant nations, where they lived as strangers. Their land became so desolate that no one even traveled through it. The land that had been so pleasant became a desert."

8 ¹ Then another message came to me from the LORD Almighty:

² "This is what the LORD Almighty says: My love for Mount Zion is passionate

and strong; I am consumed with passion for Jerusalem!

³ And now the LORD says: I am returning to Mount Zion, and I will live in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City; the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.

⁴ This is what the LORD Almighty says: Once again old men and women will walk Jerusalem's streets with a cane and sit together in the city squares.

⁵ And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls at play.

⁶ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: All this may seem impossible to you now, a small and discouraged remnant of God's people. But do you think this is impossible for me, the LORD Almighty?

⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: You can be sure that I will rescue my people from the east and from the west.

⁸ I will bring them home again to live safely in Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be faithful and just toward them as their God.

⁹ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: Take heart and finish the task! You have heard what the prophets have been saying about building the Temple of the LORD Almighty ever since the foundation was laid.

¹⁰ Before the work on the Temple began, there were no jobs and no wages for either people or animals. No traveler was safe from the enemy, for there were enemies on all sides. I had turned everyone against each other.

¹¹ But now I will not treat the remnant of my people as I treated them before, says the LORD Almighty.

¹² For I am planting seeds of peace and prosperity among you. The grapevines will be heavy with fruit. The earth

will produce its crops, and the sky will release the dew. Once more I will make the remnant in Judah and Israel the heirs of these blessings.

¹³ Among the nations, Judah and Israel had become symbols of what it means to be cursed. But no longer! Now I will rescue you and make you both a symbol and a source of blessing! So don't be afraid or discouraged, but instead get on with rebuilding the Temple!

¹⁴ "For this is what the LORD Almighty says: I did not change my mind when your ancestors angered me and I promised to punish them, says the LORD Almighty.

¹⁵ Neither will I change my decision to bless Jerusalem and the people of Judah. So don't be afraid.

¹⁶ But this is what you must do: Tell the truth to each other. Render verdicts in

your courts that are just and that lead to peace.

¹⁷ Do not make evil plots to harm each other. And stop this habit of swearing to things that are false. I hate all these things, says the LORD."

¹⁸ Here is another message that came to me from the LORD Almighty.

¹⁹ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: The traditional fasts and times of mourning you have kept in early summer, midsummer, autumn, and winter are now ended. They will become festivals of joy and celebration for the people of Judah. So love truth and peace.

²⁰ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: People from nations and cities around the world will travel to Jerusalem.

²¹ The people of one city will say to the people in another, 'Let us go to Jerusalem to ask the LORD to bless us

and to seek the LORD Almighty. We are planning to go ourselves.’

²² People from many nations, even powerful nations, will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to ask the LORD to bless them.

²³ "This is what the LORD Almighty says: In those days ten people from nations and languages around the world will clutch at the hem of one Jew’s robe. And they will say, ‘Please let us walk with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’"

9¹ This is the message from the LORD against the land of Aram and the city of Damascus, for the eyes of all humanity, including the people of Israel, are on the LORD.

² Doom is certain for Hamath, near Damascus, and for the cities of Tyre and Sidon, too, though they are so clever.

³ Tyre has built a strong fortress and has piled up so much silver and gold that it is as common as dust in the streets!

⁴ But now the Lord will strip away Tyre's possessions and hurl its fortifications into the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre will be set on fire and burned to the ground.

⁵ The city of Ashkelon will see Tyre fall and will be filled with fear. Gaza will shake with terror, and so will Ekron, for their hopes will be dashed. Gaza will be conquered and its king killed, and Ashkelon will be completely deserted.

⁶ Foreigners will occupy the city of Ashdod. Thus, I will destroy the pride of the Philistines.

⁷ They will no longer eat meat with blood in it or feed on other forbidden foods. All the surviving Philistines will worship our God and be adopted as a new clan in Judah. And the Philistines

of Ekron will join my people, just as the Jebusites once did.

⁸ I will guard my Temple and protect it from invading armies. I am closely watching their movements. No foreign oppressor will ever again overrun my people's land.

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—even on a donkey's colt.

¹⁰ I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and I will destroy all the weapons used in battle. Your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹ Because of the covenant I made with you, sealed with blood, I will free

your prisoners from death in a waterless dungeon.

¹² Come back to the place of safety, all you prisoners, for there is yet hope! I promise this very day that I will repay you two mercies for each of your woes!

¹³ Judah is my bow, and Israel is my arrow! Jerusalem is my sword, and like a warrior, I will brandish it against the Greeks.

¹⁴ The LORD will appear above his people; his arrows will fly like lightning! The Sovereign LORD will sound the trumpet; he will go out against his enemies like a whirlwind from the southern desert.

¹⁵ The LORD Almighty will protect his people, and they will subdue their enemies with sling stones. They will shout in battle as though drunk with wine, shedding the blood of their enemies. They will be filled with blood

like a bowl, drenched with blood like the corners of the altar.

¹⁶ When that day arrives, the LORD their God will rescue his people, just as a shepherd rescues his sheep. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.

¹⁷ How wonderful and beautiful they will be! The young men and women will thrive on the abundance of grain and new wine.

10 ¹ Ask the LORD for rain in the spring, and he will give it. It is the LORD who makes storm clouds that drop showers of rain so that every field becomes a lush pasture.

² Household gods give false advice, fortune-tellers predict only lies, and interpreters of dreams pronounce comfortless falsehoods. So my people are wandering like lost sheep, without a shepherd to protect and guide them.

³ "My anger burns against your shepherds, and I will punish these leaders. For the LORD Almighty has arrived to look after his flock of Judah; he will make them strong and glorious, like a proud warhorse in battle.

⁴ From Judah will come the cornerstone, the tent peg, the battle bow, and all the rulers.

⁵ They will be like mighty warriors in battle, trampling their enemies in the mud under their feet. Since the LORD is with them as they fight, they will overthrow even the horsemen of the enemy.

⁶ "I will strengthen Judah and save Israel; I will reestablish them because I love them. It will be as though I had never rejected them, for I am the LORD their God, who will hear their cries.

⁷ The people of Israel will become like mighty warriors, and their hearts will be

happy as if by wine. Their children, too, will see it all and be glad; their hearts will rejoice in the LORD.

⁸ When I whistle to them, they will come running, for I have redeemed them. From the few that are left, their population will grow again to its former size.

⁹ Though I have scattered them like seeds among the nations, still they will remember me in distant lands. With their children, they will survive and come home again to Israel.

¹⁰ I will bring them back from Egypt and Assyria and resettle them in Gilead and Lebanon. There won't be enough room for them all!

¹¹ They will pass safely through the sea of distress, for the waves of the sea will be held back. And the waters of the Nile will become dry. The pride of Assyria will

be crushed, and the rule of Egypt will end.

¹² I will make my people strong in my power, and they will go wherever they wish by my authority. I, the LORD, have spoken!"

11 ¹ Open your doors, Lebanon, so that fire may sweep through your cedar forests.

² Weep, you cypress trees, for all the ruined cedars; the tallest and most beautiful of them are fallen. Weep, you oaks of Bashan, as you watch the thickest forests being felled.

³ Listen to the wailing of the shepherds, for their wealth is gone. Hear the young lions roaring, for their thickets in the Jordan Valley have been destroyed.

⁴ This is what the LORD my God says: "Go and care for a flock that is intended for slaughter.

⁵ The buyers will slaughter their sheep without remorse. The sellers will say, 'Praise the LORD, I am now rich!' Even the shepherds have no compassion for them.

⁶ And likewise, I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land," says the LORD. "I will let them fall into each other's clutches, as well as into the clutches of their king. They will turn the land into a wilderness, and I will not protect them."

⁷ So I cared for the flock intended for slaughter—the flock that was oppressed. Then I took two shepherd's staffs and named one Favor and the other Union.

⁸ I got rid of their three evil shepherds in a single month. But I became impatient with these sheep—this nation—and they hated me, too.

⁹ So I told them, "I won't be your shepherd any longer. If you die, you die. If you are killed, you are killed. And those who remain will devour each other!"

¹⁰ Then I took my staff called Favor and snapped it in two, showing that I had revoked the covenant I had made with all the nations.

¹¹ That was the end of my covenant with them. Those who bought and sold sheep were watching me, and they knew that the LORD was speaking to them through my actions.

¹² And I said to them, "If you like, give me my wages, whatever I am worth; but only if you want to." So they counted out for my wages thirty pieces of silver.

¹³ And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potters" —this magnificent sum at which they valued me! So I took the thirty coins and threw them to the potters in the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁴ Then I broke my other staff, Union, to show that the bond of unity between Judah and Israel was broken.

¹⁵ Then the LORD said to me, "Go again and play the part of a worthless shepherd.

¹⁶ This will illustrate how I will give this nation a shepherd who will not care for the sheep that are threatened by death, nor look after the young, nor heal the injured, nor feed the healthy. Instead, this shepherd will eat the meat of the fattest sheep and tear off their hooves.

¹⁷ Doom is certain for this worthless shepherd who abandons the flock! The sword will cut his arm and pierce his right eye! His arm will become useless, and his right eye completely blind!"

12 ¹ This message concerning the fate of Israel came from the LORD: "This message is from the LORD, who stretched out the heavens, laid the

foundations of the earth, and formed the spirit within humans.

² I will make Jerusalem and Judah like an intoxicating drink to all the nearby nations that send their armies to besiege Jerusalem.

³ On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone, a burden for the world. None of the nations who try to lift it will escape unscathed.

⁴ "On that day, says the LORD, I will cause every horse to panic and every rider to lose his nerve. I will watch over the people of Judah, but I will blind the horses of her enemies.

⁵ And the clans of Judah will say to themselves, 'The people of Jerusalem have found strength in the LORD Almighty, their God.'

⁶ "On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a brazier that sets a woodpile ablaze or like a burning torch among

sheaves of grain. They will burn up all the neighboring nations right and left, while the people living in Jerusalem remain secure.

⁷ The LORD will give victory to the rest of Judah first, before Jerusalem, so that the people of Jerusalem and the royal line of David will not have greater honor than the rest of Judah.

⁸ On that day the LORD will defend the people of Jerusalem; the weakest among them will be as mighty as King David! And the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the LORD who goes before them!

⁹ For my plan is to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

¹⁰ "Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on all the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son.

They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.

¹¹ The sorrow and mourning in Jerusalem on that day will be like the grievous mourning of Hadad–rimmon in the valley of Megiddo.

¹² "All Israel will weep in profound sorrow, each family by itself, with the husbands and wives in separate groups. The family of David will mourn, along with the family of Nathan,

¹³ the family of Levi, and the family of Shimei.

¹⁴ Each of the surviving families from Judah will mourn separately, husbands and wives apart.

13 ¹ "On that day a fountain will be opened for the dynasty of David and for the people of Jerusalem, a fountain to cleanse them from all their sins and defilement.

² "And on that day, says the LORD Almighty, I will get rid of every trace of idol worship throughout the land, so that even the names of the idols will be forgotten. I will remove from the land all false prophets and the unclean spirits that inspire them.

³ If anyone begins prophesying again, his own father and mother will tell him, 'You must die, for you have prophesied lies in the name of the LORD.' Then his own father and mother will stab him.

⁴ "No one will be boasting then of a prophetic gift! No one will wear prophet's clothes to try to fool the people.

⁵ 'No,' he will say. 'I'm not a prophet; I'm a farmer. The soil has been my means of livelihood from my earliest youth.'

⁶ And if someone asks, 'Then what are those scars on your chest?' he will say, 'I was wounded at the home of friends!'

⁷ "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, the man who is my partner, says the LORD Almighty. Strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn against the lambs.

⁸ Two-thirds of the people in the land will be cut off and die, says the LORD. But a third will be left in the land.

⁹ I will bring that group through the fire and make them pure, just as gold and silver are refined and purified by fire. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'These are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'"

14 ¹ Watch, for the day of the LORD is coming when your possessions will be plundered right in front of you!

² On that day I will gather all the nations to fight against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, the houses plundered, and the

women raped. Half the population will be taken away into captivity, and half will be left among the ruins of the city.

³ Then the LORD will go out to fight against those nations, as he has fought in times past.

⁴ On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives will split apart, making a wide valley running from east to west, for half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south.

⁵ You will flee through this valley, for it will reach across to Azal. Yes, you will flee as you did from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all his holy ones with him.

⁶ On that day the sources of light will no longer shine,

⁷ yet there will be continuous day! Only the LORD knows how this could happen! There will be no normal day and night, for at evening time it will still be light.

⁸ On that day life-giving waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half toward the Dead Sea and half toward the Mediterranean, flowing continuously both in summer and in winter.

⁹ And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one LORD—his name alone will be worshiped.

¹⁰ All the land from Geba, north of Judah, to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become one vast plain. But Jerusalem will be raised up in its original place and will be inhabited all the way from the Benjamin Gate over to the site of the old gate, then to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses.

¹¹ And Jerusalem will be filled, safe at last, never again to be cursed and destroyed.

¹² And the LORD will send a plague on all the nations that fought against Jerusalem. Their people will become like walking corpses, their flesh rotting away. Their eyes will shrivel in their sockets, and their tongues will decay in their mouths.

¹³ On that day they will be terrified, stricken by the LORD with great panic. They will fight against each other in hand-to-hand combat;

¹⁴ Judah, too, will be fighting at Jerusalem. The wealth of all the neighboring nations will be captured—great quantities of gold and silver and fine clothing.

¹⁵ This same plague will strike the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and all the other animals in the enemy camps.

¹⁶ In the end, the enemies of Jerusalem who survive the plague will go up to Jerusalem each year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁷ And any nation anywhere in the world that refuses to come to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, will have no rain.

¹⁸ And if the people of Egypt refuse to attend the festival, the LORD will punish them with the same plague that he sends on the other nations who refuse to go.

¹⁹ Egypt and the other nations will all be punished if they don't go to celebrate the festival.

²⁰ On that day even the harness bells of the horses will be inscribed with these words: SET APART AS HOLY TO THE LORD. And the cooking pots in the Temple of

the LORD will be as sacred as the basins used beside the altar.

²¹ In fact, every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be set apart as holy to the LORD Almighty. All who come to worship will be free to use any of these pots to boil their sacrifices. And on that day there will no longer be traders in the Temple of the LORD Almighty.

Malachi

1 ¹ This is the message that the LORD gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi.

² "I have loved you deeply," says the LORD. But you retort, "Really? How have you loved us?" And the LORD replies, "I showed my love for you by loving your ancestor Jacob. Yet Esau was Jacob's brother,

³ and I rejected Esau and devastated his hill country. I turned Esau's inheritance into a desert for jackals."

⁴ And Esau's descendants in Edom may say, "We have been shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may try to rebuild, but I will demolish them again! Their country will be known as

‘The Land of Wickedness,’ and their people will be called ‘The People with Whom the LORD Is Forever Angry.’

⁵ When you see the destruction for yourselves, you will say, ‘Truly, the LORD’s great power reaches far beyond our borders!’”

⁶ The LORD Almighty says to the priests: "A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. I am your father and master, but where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have despised my name! "But you ask, ‘How have we ever despised your name?’

⁷ "You have despised my name by offering defiled sacrifices on my altar. "Then you ask, ‘How have we defiled the sacrifices?’ "You defile them by saying the altar of the LORD deserves no respect.

⁸ When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn’t that wrong? And isn’t it

wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!" says the LORD Almighty.

⁹ "Go ahead, beg God to be merciful to you! But when you bring that kind of offering, why should he show you any favor at all?" asks the LORD Almighty.

¹⁰ "I wish that someone among you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! I am not at all pleased with you," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will not accept your offerings.

¹¹ But my name is honored by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of my name. For my name is great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty.

¹² "But you dishonor my name with your actions. By bringing contemptible

food, you are saying it's all right to defile the Lord's table.

¹³ You say, 'It's too hard to serve the LORD,' and you turn up your noses at his commands," says the LORD Almighty. "Think of it! Animals that are stolen and mutilated, crippled and sick—presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?" asks the LORD.

¹⁴ "Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the LORD Almighty, "and my name is feared among the nations!

2 ¹ "Listen, you priests; this command is for you!

² Listen to me and take it to heart. Honor my name," says the LORD Almighty, "or I will bring a terrible curse against you. I will curse even the blessings you receive. Indeed, I have

already cursed them, because you have not taken my warning seriously.

³ I will rebuke your descendants and splatter your faces with the dung of your festival sacrifices, and I will add you to the dung heap.

⁴ Then at last you will know it was I who sent you this warning so that my covenant with the Levites may continue," says the LORD Almighty.

⁵ "The purpose of my covenant with the Levites was to bring life and peace, and this is what I gave them. This called for reverence from them, and they greatly revered me and stood in awe of my name.

⁶ They passed on to the people all the truth they received from me. They did not lie or cheat; they walked with me, living good and righteous lives, and they turned many from lives of sin.

⁷ The priests' lips should guard knowledge, and people should go to them for instruction, for the priests are the messengers of the LORD Almighty.

⁸ But not you! You have left God's paths. Your 'guidance' has caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites," says the LORD Almighty.

⁹ "So I have made you despised and humiliated in the eyes of all the people. For you have not obeyed me but have shown partiality in your interpretation of the law."

¹⁰ Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God? Then why are we faithless to each other, violating the covenant of our ancestors?

¹¹ In Judah, in Israel, and in Jerusalem there is treachery, for the men of Judah have defiled the LORD's beloved

sanctuary by marrying women who worship idols.

¹² May the LORD cut off from the nation of Israel every last man who has done this and yet brings an offering to the LORD Almighty.

¹³ Here is another thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings, and he doesn't accept them with pleasure.

¹⁴ You cry out, "Why has the LORD abandoned us?" I'll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows.

¹⁵ Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his.

And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth.

¹⁶ "For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the LORD Almighty. "So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife."

¹⁷ You have wearied the LORD with your words. "Wearied him?" you ask. "How have we wearied him?" You have wearied him by suggesting that the LORD favors evildoers since he does not punish them. You have wearied him by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

3¹ "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the LORD Almighty.

² "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal or like a strong soap that whitens clothes.

³ He will sit and judge like a refiner of silver, watching closely as the dross is burned away. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold or silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD.

⁴ Then once more the LORD will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in former times.

⁵ At that time I will put you on trial. I will be a ready witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners

living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty.

⁶ "I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already completely destroyed.

⁷ Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my laws and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How can we return when we have never gone away?'

⁸ "Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! "But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' "You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me.

⁹ You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me.

¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD

Almighty, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you!

¹¹ Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not shrivel before they are ripe," says the LORD Almighty.

¹² "Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight," says the LORD Almighty.

¹³ "You have said terrible things about me," says the LORD. "But you say, 'What do you mean? How have we spoken against you?'

¹⁴ "You have said, 'What's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the LORD Almighty that we are sorry for our sins?'

¹⁵ From now on we will say, "Blessed are the arrogant." For those who do evil

get rich, and those who dare God to punish them go free of harm.'"

¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD spoke with each other, and the LORD listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and loved to think about him.

¹⁷ "They will be my people," says the LORD Almighty. "On the day when I act, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient and dutiful child.

¹⁸ Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."

4 ¹ The LORD Almighty says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. The arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw on that day.

They will be consumed like a tree—roots and all.

² "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture.

³ On the day when I act, you will tread upon the wicked as if they were dust under your feet," says the LORD Almighty.

⁴ "Remember to obey the instructions of my servant Moses, all the laws and regulations that I gave him on Mount Sinai for all Israel.

⁵ "Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives.

⁶ His preaching will turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children to their parents. Otherwise

I will come and strike the land with a curse."

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