

Contemporary English Version

Old Testament
(Psalms s.d. Malachi)

Psalms

1 ¹ God blesses those people who refuse evil advice and won't follow sinners or join in sneering at God.

² Instead, the Law of the LORD makes them happy, and they think about it day and night.

³ They are like trees growing beside a stream, trees that produce fruit in season and always have leaves. Those people succeed in everything they do.

⁴ That isn't true of those who are evil, because they are like straw blown by the wind.

⁵ Sinners won't have an excuse on the day of judgment, and they won't have a place with the people of God.

⁶ The LORD protects everyone who follows him, but the wicked follow a road that leads to ruin.

2 ¹ Why do the nations plot, and why do their people make useless plans?

² The kings of this earth have all joined together to turn against the LORD and his chosen one.

³They say, Let's cut the ropes and set ourselves free!

⁴In heaven the LORD laughs as he sits on his throne, making fun of the nations.

⁵The LORD becomes furious and threatens them. His anger terrifies them as he says,

⁶I've put my king on Zion, my sacred hill.

⁷I will tell the promise that the LORD made to me: You are my son, because today I have become your father.

⁸Ask me for the nations, and every nation on earth will belong to you.

⁹You will smash them with an iron rod and shatter them like dishes of clay.

¹⁰Be wise, all you rulers, and pay close attention.

¹¹Serve and honour the LORD; be glad and tremble.

¹²Show respect to his son because if you don't, the LORD might become furious and suddenly destroy you. But he blesses and protects everyone who runs to him.

3¹I have a lot of enemies, LORD.
Many fight against

²me and say, God won't rescue you!

³But you are my shield, and you give me victory and great honour.

⁴I pray to you, and you answer from your sacred hill.

⁵I sleep and wake up refreshed because you, LORD, protect me.

⁶Ten thousand enemies attack from every side, but I am not afraid.

⁷Come and save me, LORD God! Break my enemies' jaws and shatter their teeth,

⁸because you protect and bless your people.

4¹You are my God and protector. Please answer my prayer. I was in terrible distress, but you set me free. Now have pity and listen as I pray.

²How long will you people refuse to respect me? You love foolish things, and you run after what is worthless.

³The LORD has chosen everyone who is faithful to be his very own, and he answers my prayers.

⁴But each of you had better tremble and turn from your sins. Silently search your heart as you lie in bed.

⁵Offer the proper sacrifices and trust the LORD.

⁶There are some who ask, Who will be good to us? Let your kindness, LORD, shine brightly on us.

⁷You brought me more happiness than a rich harvest of grain and grapes.

⁸I can lie down and sleep soundly because you, LORD, will keep me safe.

5¹Listen, LORD, as I pray! Pay attention when I groan.

²You are my King and my God. Answer my cry for help because I pray to you.

³Each morning you listen to my prayer, as I bring my requests to you and wait for your reply.

⁴You are not the kind of God who is pleased with evil. Sinners can't stay with you.

⁵No one who boasts can stand in your presence, LORD, and you hate evil people.

⁶You destroy every liar, and you despise violence and deceit.

⁷Because of your great mercy, I come to your house, LORD, and I am filled with wonder as I bow down to worship at your holy temple.

⁸You do what is right, and I ask you to guide me. Make your teaching clear because of my enemies.

⁹Nothing they say is true! They just want to destroy. Their words are deceitful like a hidden pit, and their tongues are good only for telling lies.

¹⁰Punish them, God, and let their own plans bring their downfall. Get rid of them! They keep committing crimes and turning against you.

¹¹Let all who run to you for protection always sing joyful songs. Provide shelter for those who truly love you and let them rejoice.

¹²Our LORD, you bless those who live right, and you shield them with your kindness.

6¹ Don't punish me, LORD, or even correct me when you are angry!

²Have pity on me and heal my feeble body. My bones tremble with fear,

³and I am in deep distress. How long will it be?

⁴Turn and come to my rescue. Show your wonderful love and save me, LORD.

⁵If I die, I cannot praise you or even remember you.

⁶My groaning has worn me out. At night my bed and pillow are soaked with tears.

⁷Sorrow has made my eyes dim, and my sight has failed because of my enemies.

⁸You, LORD, heard my crying, and those hateful people had better leave me alone.

⁹You have answered my prayer and my plea for mercy.

¹⁰My enemies will be ashamed and terrified, as they quickly run away in complete disgrace.

7¹You, LORD God, are my protector. Rescue me and keep me safe from all who chase me.

²Or else they will rip me apart like lions attacking a victim, and no one will save me.

³I am innocent, LORD God!

⁴I have not betrayed a friend or had pity on an enemy who attacks for no reason.

⁵If I have done any of this, then let my enemies chase and capture me. Let them trample me to death and leave me in the dirt.

⁶Get angry, LORD God! Do something! Attack my furious enemies. See that justice is done.

⁷Make the nations come to you, as you sit on your throne above them all.

⁸Our LORD, judge the nations! Judge me and show that I am honest and innocent.

⁹You know every heart and mind, and you always do right. Now make violent people stop, but protect all of us who obey you.

¹⁰You, God, are my shield, the protector of everyone whose heart is right.

¹¹You see that justice is done, and each day you take revenge.

¹²Whenever your enemies refuse to change their ways, you sharpen your sword and string your bow.

¹³Your deadly arrows are ready with flaming tips.

¹⁴An evil person is like a woman about to give birth to a hateful, deceitful, and rebellious child.

¹⁵Such people dig a deep hole, then fall in it themselves.

¹⁶The trouble they cause comes back on them, and their heads are crushed by their own evil deeds.

¹⁷I will praise you, LORD! You always do right. I will sing about you, the LORD Most High.

8¹ Our LORD and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth! You let your glory be seen in the heavens above.

²With praises from children and from tiny infants, you have built a fortress. It makes your enemies silent, and all who turn against you are left speechless.

³I often think of the heavens your hands have made, and of the moon and stars you put in place.

⁴Then I ask, Why do you care about us humans? Why are you concerned for us weaklings?

⁵You made us a little lower than you yourself, and you have crowned us with glory and honour.

⁶You let us rule everything your hands have made. And you put all of it under our power

⁷the sheep and the cattle, and every wild animal,

⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and all ocean creatures.

⁹ Our LORD and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth!

9¹ I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart and tell about the wonders you have worked.

² God Most High, I will rejoice; I will celebrate and sing because of you.

³ When my enemies face you, they run away and stumble and are destroyed.

⁴ You take your seat as judge, and your fair decisions prove that I was in the right.

⁵ You warn the nations and destroy evil people; you wipe out their names for ever and ever.

⁶ Our enemies are destroyed completely for all time. Their cities are torn down, and they will never be remembered again.

⁷ You rule for ever, LORD, and you are on your throne, ready for judgment.

⁸ You judge the world fairly and treat all nations with justice.

⁹ The poor can run to you because you are a fortress in times of trouble.

¹⁰Everyone who honours your name can trust you, because you are faithful to all who depend on you.

¹¹You rule from Zion, LORD, and we sing about you to let the nations know everything you have done.

¹²You did not forget to punish the guilty or listen to the cries of those in need.

¹³Please have mercy, LORD! My enemies ill-treat me. Keep me from the gates that lead to death,

¹⁴and I will sing about you at the gate to Zion. I will be happy there because you rescued me.

¹⁵Our LORD, the nations fell into their own pits, and their feet were caught in their own traps.

¹⁶You showed what you are like, and you made certain that justice is done, but evil people are trapped by their own evil deeds.

¹⁷The wicked will go down to the world of the dead to be with those nations that forgot about you.

¹⁸The poor and the homeless won't always be forgotten and without hope.

¹⁹Do something, LORD! Don't let the nations win. Make them stand trial in your court of law.

²⁰Make the nations afraid and let them all discover just how weak they are.

10¹Why are you far away, LORD?
Why do you hide yourself when I am in trouble?

²Proud and brutal people hunt down the poor. But let them get caught by their own evil plans!

³The wicked boast about their deepest desires. Those greedy people hate and curse you, LORD.

⁴The wicked are too proud to turn to you or even think about you.

⁵They are always successful, though they can't understand your teachings, and they keep sneering at their enemies.

⁶In their hearts they say, Nothing can hurt us! We'll always be happy and free from trouble.

⁷They curse and tell lies, and all they talk about is how to be cruel or how to do wrong.

⁸They hide outside villages, waiting to strike and murder some innocent victim.

⁹They are hungry lions hiding in the bushes, hoping to catch some helpless passer-by. They trap the poor in nets and drag them away.

¹⁰They crouch down and wait to grab a victim.

¹¹They say, God can't see! He's got a blindfold on.

¹²Do something, LORD God, and use your powerful arm to help those in need.

¹³The wicked don't respect you. In their hearts they say, God won't punish us!

¹⁴But you see the trouble and the distress, and you will do something. The poor can count on you, and so can orphans.

¹⁵Now break the arms of all merciless people. Punish them for doing wrong and make them stop.

¹⁶Our LORD, you will always rule, but nations will vanish from the earth.

¹⁷You listen to the longings of those who suffer. You offer them hope, and you pay attention to their cries for help.

¹⁸You defend orphans and everyone else in need, so that no one on earth can terrify others again.

11 ¹The LORD is my fortress! Don't say to me, Escape like a bird to the mountains!

²You tell me, Watch out! Those evil people have put their arrows on their bows, and they are standing in the shadows, aiming at good people.

³What can an honest person do when everything crumbles?

⁴The LORD is sitting in his sacred temple on his throne in heaven. He knows everything we do because he sees us all.

⁵The LORD tests honest people, but despises those who are cruel and love violence.

⁶He will send fiery coals and flaming sulphur down on the wicked, and they will drink nothing but a scorching wind.

⁷The LORD always does right and wants justice done. Everyone who does right will see his face.

12 ¹Please help me, LORD! All who were faithful and all who were loyal have disappeared.

²Everyone tells lies, and no one is sincere.

³ Won't you chop off all flattering tongues that boast so loudly?

⁴ They say to themselves, We are great speakers. No one else has a chance.

⁵ But you, LORD, tell them, I will do something! The poor are ill-treated and helpless people moan. I'll rescue all who suffer.

⁶ Our LORD, you are true to your promises, and your word is like silver heated seven times in a fiery furnace.

⁷ You will protect us and always keep us safe from those people.

⁸ But all who are wicked will keep on strutting, while everyone praises their shameless deeds.

13 ¹ How much longer, LORD, will you forget about me? Will it be for ever? How long will you hide?

² How long must I be confused and miserable all day? How long will my enemies keep beating me down?

³ Please listen, LORD God, and answer my prayers. Make my eyes sparkle again, or else I will fall into the sleep of death.

⁴ My enemies will say, Now we've won! They will be greatly pleased when I am defeated.

⁵ I trust your love, and I feel like celebrating because you rescued me.

⁶ You have been good to me, LORD, and I will sing about you.

14 ¹ Only a fool would say, There is no God! People like that are worthless; they are heartless and cruel and never do right.

² From heaven the LORD looks down to see if anyone is wise enough to search for him.

³ But all of them are corrupt; no one does right.

⁴ Won't you evil people learn? You refuse to pray, and you gobble up the LORD's people.

⁵ But you will be frightened, because God is on the side of every good person.

⁶ You may spoil the plans of the poor, but the LORD protects them.

⁷ I long for someone from Zion to come and save Israel! Our LORD, when you bless your people again, Jacob's family will be glad, and Israel will celebrate.

15 ¹Who may stay in God's temple
or live on the holy mountain of
the LORD?

²Only those who obey God and do as
they should. They speak the truth

³and don't spread gossip; they treat
others fairly and don't say cruel things.

⁴They hate worthless people, but show
respect for all who worship the LORD.
And they keep their promises, no matter
what the cost.

⁵They lend their money without
charging interest, and they don't take
bribes to hurt the innocent. Those who
do these things will always stand firm.

16 ¹Protect me, LORD God! I run to
you for safety,

²and I have said, Only you are my
Lord! Every good thing I have is a gift
from you.

³Your people are wonderful, and they
make me happy,

⁴but worshippers of other gods will
have much sorrow. I refuse to offer
sacrifices of blood to those gods or
worship in their name.

⁵You, LORD, are all I want! You are my
choice, and you keep me safe.

⁶You make my life pleasant, and my future is bright.

⁷I praise you, LORD, for being my guide. Even in the darkest night, your teachings fill my mind.

⁸I will always look to you, as you stand beside me and protect me from fear.

⁹With all my heart, I will celebrate, and I can safely rest.

¹⁰I am your chosen one. You won't leave me in the grave or let my body decay.

¹¹You have shown me the path to life, and you make me glad by being near to me. Sitting at your right side, I will always be joyful.

17 ¹I am innocent, LORD! Won't you listen as I pray and beg for help? I am honest! Please hear my prayer.

²Only you can say that I am innocent, because only your eyes can see the truth.

³You know my heart, and even during the night you have tested me and found me innocent. I have made up my mind never to tell a lie.

⁴I don't do like others. I obey your teachings and am not cruel.

⁵I have followed you, without ever stumbling.

⁶I pray to you, God, because you will help me. Listen and answer my prayer!

⁷Show your wonderful love. Your mighty arm protects those who run to you for safety from their enemies.

⁸Protect me as you would your very own eyes; hide me in the shadow of your wings.

⁹Don't let my brutal enemies attack from all sides and kill me.

¹⁰They refuse to show mercy, and they keep boasting.

¹¹They have caught up with me! My enemies are everywhere, eagerly hoping to pull me to the ground.

¹²They are like hungry lions hunting for food, or like young lions hiding in ambush.

¹³Do something, LORD! Attack and defeat them. Take your sword and save me from those evil people.

¹⁴Use your powerful arm and rescue me from the hands of mere humans whose world won't last. You provide food for those you love. Their children have

plenty, and their grandchildren will have more than enough.

¹⁵I am innocent, LORD, and I will see your face! When I awake, all I want is to see you as you are.

18¹I love you, LORD God, and you make me strong.

²You are my mighty rock, my fortress, my protector, the rock where I am safe, my shield, my powerful weapon, and my place of shelter.

³I praise you, LORD! I prayed, and you rescued me from my enemies.

⁴Death had wrapped its ropes around me, and I was almost swallowed by its flooding waters.

⁵Ropes from the world of the dead had coiled around me, and death had set a trap in my path.

⁶I was in terrible trouble when I called out to you, but from your temple you heard me and answered my prayer.

⁷The earth shook and shivered, and the mountains trembled down to their roots. You were angry

⁸and breathed out smoke. Scorching heat and fiery flames spewed from your mouth.

⁹You opened the heavens like curtains,
and you came down with storm clouds
under your feet.

¹⁰You rode on the backs of flying
creatures and swooped down with the
wind as wings.

¹¹Darkness was your robe;
thunderclouds filled the sky, hiding you
from sight.

¹²Hailstones and fiery coals lit up the
sky in front of you.

¹³LORD Most High, your voice
thundered from the heavens, as
hailstones and fiery coals poured down
like rain.

¹⁴You scattered your enemies with
arrows of lightning.

¹⁵You roared at the sea, and its deepest
channels could be seen. You snorted,
and the earth shook to its foundations.

¹⁶You reached down from heaven, and
you lifted me from deep in the ocean.

¹⁷You rescued me from enemies, who
were hateful and too powerful for me.

¹⁸On the day disaster struck, they
came and attacked, but you defended
me.

¹⁹When I was fenced in, you freed and rescued me because you love me.

²⁰You are good to me, LORD, because I do right, and you reward me because I am innocent.

²¹I do what you want and never turn to do evil.

²²I keep your laws in mind and never look away from your teachings.

²³I obey you completely and guard against sin.

²⁴You have been good to me because I do right; you have rewarded me for being innocent by your standards.

²⁵You are always loyal to your loyal people, and you are faithful to the faithful.

²⁶With all who are sincere, you are sincere, but you treat the unfaithful as their deeds deserve.

²⁷You rescue the humble, but you put down all who are proud.

²⁸You, the LORD God, keep my lamp burning and turn darkness to light.

²⁹You help me defeat armies and capture cities.

³⁰Your way is perfect, LORD, and your word is correct. You are a shield for those who run to you for help.

³¹You alone are God! Only you are a mighty rock.

³²You give me strength and guide me right.

³³You make my feet run as fast as those of a deer, and you help me stand on the mountains.

³⁴You teach my hands to fight and my arms to use a bow of bronze.

³⁵You alone are my shield. Your right hand supports me, and by coming to help me, you have made me famous.

³⁶You clear the way for me, and now I won't stumble.

³⁷I kept chasing my enemies, until I caught them and destroyed them.

³⁸I stuck my sword through my enemies, and they were crushed under my feet.

³⁹You helped me win victories, and you forced my attackers to fall victim to me.

⁴⁰You made my enemies run, and I killed them.

⁴¹ They cried out for help, but no one saved them; they called out to you, but there was no answer.

⁴² I ground them to dust blown by the wind, and I poured them out like mud in the streets.

⁴³ You rescued me from stubborn people, and you made me the leader of foreign nations, who are now my slaves.

⁴⁴ They obey and come crawling.

⁴⁵ They have lost all courage, and from their fortresses, they come trembling.

⁴⁶ You are the living LORD! I will praise you. You are a mighty rock. I will honour you for keeping me safe.

⁴⁷ You took revenge for me, and you put nations in my power.

⁴⁸ You protected me from violent enemies and made me much greater than all of them.

⁴⁹ I will praise you, LORD, and I will honour you among the nations.

⁵⁰ You give glorious victories to your chosen king. Your faithful love for David and for his descendants will never end.

19¹ The heavens keep telling the wonders of God, and the skies declare what he has done.

²Each day informs the following day;
each night announces to the next.

³They don't speak a word, and there is
never the sound of a voice.

⁴Yet their message reaches all the
earth, and it travels around the world. In
the heavens a tent is set up for the sun.

⁵It rises like a bridegroom and gets
ready like a hero eager to run a race.

⁶It travels all the way across the sky.
Nothing hides from its heat.

⁷The Law of the LORD is perfect; it
gives us new life. His teachings last for
ever, and they give wisdom to ordinary
people.

⁸The LORD's instruction is right; it
makes our hearts glad. His commands
shine brightly, and they give us light.

⁹Worshipping the LORD is sacred; he
will always be worshipped. All of his
decisions are correct and fair.

¹⁰They are worth more than the finest
gold and are sweeter than honey from a
honeycomb.

¹¹By your teachings, Lord, I am
warned; by obeying them, I am greatly
rewarded.

¹²None of us know our faults. Forgive me when I sin without knowing it.

¹³Don't let me do wrong on purpose, Lord, or let sin have control over my life. Then I will be innocent, and not guilty of some terrible fault.

¹⁴Let my words and my thoughts be pleasing to you, LORD, because you are my mighty rock and my protector.

20¹I pray that the LORD will listen when you are in trouble, and that the God of Jacob will keep you safe.

²May the LORD send help from his temple and come to your rescue from Mount Zion.

³May he remember your gifts and be pleased with what you bring.

⁴May God do what you want most and let all go well for you.

⁵Then you will win victories, and we will celebrate, while raising our banners in the name of our God. May the LORD answer all of your prayers!

⁶I am certain, LORD, that you will help your chosen king. You will answer my prayers from your holy place in heaven, and you will save me with your mighty arm.

⁷ Some people trust the power of chariots or horses, but we trust you, LORD God.

⁸ Others will stumble and fall, but we will be strong and stand firm.

⁹ Give the king victory, LORD, and answer our prayers.

21 ¹ Our LORD, your mighty power makes the king glad, and he celebrates victories that you have given him.

² You did what he wanted most and never told him No.

³ You truly blessed the king, and you placed on him a crown of finest gold.

⁴ He asked to live a long time, and you promised him life that never ends.

⁵ The king is highly honoured. You have let him win victories that have made him famous.

⁶ You have given him blessings that will last for ever, and you have made him glad by being so near to him.

⁷ LORD Most High, the king trusts you, and your kindness keeps him from defeat.

⁸ With your mighty arm, LORD, you will strike down all of your hateful enemies.

⁹They will be destroyed by fire once you are here, and because of your anger, flames will swallow them.

¹⁰You will wipe their families from the earth, and they will disappear.

¹¹All their plans to harm you will come to nothing.

¹²You will make them run away by shooting your arrows at their faces.

¹³Show your strength, LORD, so that we may sing and praise your power.

22¹ My God, my God, why have you deserted me? Why are you so far away? Won't you listen to my groans and come to my rescue?

²I cry out day and night, but you don't answer, and I can never rest.

³Yet you are the holy God, ruling from your throne and praised by Israel.

⁴Our ancestors trusted you, and you rescued them.

⁵When they cried out for help, you saved them, and you did not let them down when they depended on you.

⁶But I am merely a worm, far less than human, and I am hated and rejected by people everywhere.

⁷ Everyone who sees me makes fun and sneers. They shake their heads,

⁸ and say, Trust the LORD! If you are his favourite, let him protect you and keep you safe.

⁹ You, LORD, brought me safely through birth, and you protected me when I was a baby at my mother's breast.

¹⁰ From the day I was born, I have been in your care, and from the time of my birth, you have been my God.

¹¹ Don't stay far off when I am in trouble with no one to help me.

¹² Enemies are all around like a herd of wild bulls. Powerful bulls from Bashan are everywhere.

¹³ My enemies are like lions roaring and attacking with jaws open wide.

¹⁴ I have no more strength than a few drops of water. All my bones are out of joint; my heart is like melted wax.

¹⁵ My strength has dried up like a broken clay pot, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You, God, have left me to die in the dust.

¹⁶ Brutal enemies attack me like a pack of dogs, tearing at my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ I can count all my bones, and my enemies just stare and sneer at me.

¹⁸ They took my clothes and gambled for them.

¹⁹ Don't stay far away, LORD! My strength comes from you, so hurry and help.

²⁰ Rescue me from enemy swords and save me from those dogs.

²¹ Don't let lions eat me. You rescued me from the horns of wild bulls,

²² and when your people meet, I will praise you, LORD.

²³ All who worship the LORD, now praise him! You belong to Jacob's family and to the people of Israel, so fear and honour the LORD!

²⁴ The LORD doesn't hate or despise the helpless in all their troubles. When I cried out, he listened and did not turn away.

²⁵ When your people meet, you will fill my heart with your praises, LORD, and everyone will see me keep my promises to you.

²⁶ The poor will eat and be full, and all who worship you will be thankful and live in hope.

²⁷ Everyone on this earth will remember you, LORD. People all over the world will turn and worship you,

²⁸ because you are in control, the ruler of all nations.

²⁹ All who are rich and have more than enough will bow down to you, Lord. Even those who are dying and almost in the grave will come and bow down.

³⁰ In the future, everyone will worship and learn about you, our Lord.

³¹ People not yet born will be told, The Lord has saved us!

23 ¹ You, LORD, are my shepherd. I will never be in need.

² You let me rest in fields of green grass. You lead me to streams of peaceful water,

³ and you refresh my life. You are true to your name, and you lead me along the right paths.

⁴ I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid. You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.

⁵ You treat me to a feast, while my enemies watch. You honour me as

your guest, and you fill my cup until it overflows.

⁶Your kindness and love will always be with me each day of my life, and I will live for ever in your house, LORD.

24¹The earth and everything on it belong to the LORD. The world and its people belong to him.

²The LORD placed it all on the oceans and rivers.

³Who may climb the LORD's hill or stand in his holy temple?

⁴Only those who do right for the right reasons, and don't worship idols or tell lies under oath.

⁵The LORD God, who saves them, will bless and reward them,

⁶because they worship and serve the God of Jacob.

⁷Open the ancient gates, so that the glorious king may come in.

⁸Who is this glorious king? He is our LORD, a strong and mighty warrior.

⁹Open the ancient gates, so that the glorious king may come in.

¹⁰Who is this glorious king? He is our LORD, the All-Powerful!

25 ¹I offer you my heart, LORD God,
²and I trust you. Don't make me
ashamed or let enemies defeat me.

³Don't disappoint any of your
worshippers, but disappoint all deceitful
liars.

⁴Show me your paths and teach me to
follow;

⁵guide me by your truth and instruct
me. You keep me safe, and I always
trust you.

⁶Please, LORD, remember, you have
always been patient and kind.

⁷Forget each wrong I did when I was
young. Show how truly kind you are and
remember me.

⁸You are honest and merciful, and you
teach sinners how to follow your path.

⁹You lead humble people to do what is
right and to stay on your path.

¹⁰In everything you do, you are kind
and faithful to everyone who keeps our
agreement with you.

¹¹Be true to your name, LORD, by
forgiving each one of my terrible sins.

¹²You will show the right path to all
who worship you.

¹³They will have plenty, and then their children will receive the land.

¹⁴Our LORD, you are the friend of your worshippers, and you make an agreement with all of us.

¹⁵I always look to you, because you rescue me from every trap.

¹⁶I am lonely and troubled. Show that you care and have pity on me.

¹⁷My awful worries keep growing. Rescue me from sadness.

¹⁸See my troubles and misery and forgive my sins.

¹⁹Look at all my enemies! See how much they hate me.

²⁰I come to you for shelter. Protect me, keep me safe, and don't disappoint me.

²¹I obey you with all my heart, and I trust you, knowing that you will save me.

²²Our God, please save Israel from all its troubles.

26¹Show that I am right, LORD! I stay true to myself, and I have trusted you without doubting.

²Test my thoughts and find out what I am like.

³ I never forget your kindness, and I am always faithful to you.

⁴ I don't spend my time with worthless liars

⁵ or go with evil crowds.

⁶ I wash my hands, LORD, to show my innocence, and I worship at your altar,

⁷ while gratefully singing about your wonders.

⁸ I love the temple where you live, and where your glory shines.

⁹ Don't sweep me away, as you do sinners. Don't punish me with death as you do those people who are brutal

¹⁰ or full of meanness or who bribe others.

¹¹ I stay true to myself. Be kind and rescue me.

¹² Now I stand on solid ground! And when your people meet, I will praise you, LORD.

27 ¹ You, LORD, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me, and I have no fears.

² Brutal people may attack and try to kill me, but they will stumble. Fierce enemies may attack, but they will fall.

³Armies may surround me, but I won't be afraid; war may break out, but I will trust you.

⁴I ask only one thing, LORD: Let me live in your house every day of my life to see how wonderful you are and to pray in your temple.

⁵In times of trouble, you will protect me. You will hide me in your tent and keep me safe on top of a mighty rock.

⁶You will let me defeat all of my enemies. Then I will celebrate, as I enter your tent with animal sacrifices and songs of praise.

⁷Please listen when I pray! Have pity. Answer my prayer.

⁸My heart tells me to pray. I am eager to see your face,

⁹so don't hide from me. I am your servant, and you have helped me. Don't turn from me in anger. You alone keep me safe. Don't reject or desert me.

¹⁰Even if my father and mother should desert me, you will take care of me.

¹¹Teach me to follow, LORD, and lead me on the right path because of my enemies.

¹²Don't let them do to me what they want. People tell lies about me and make terrible threats,

¹³but I know I will live to see how kind you are.

¹⁴Trust the LORD! Be brave and strong and trust the LORD.

28¹Only you, LORD, are a mighty rock! Don't refuse to help me when I pray. If you don't answer me, I will soon be dead.

²Please listen to my prayer and my cry for help, as I lift my hands towards your holy temple.

³Don't drag me away, LORD, with those cruel people, who speak kind words, while planning trouble.

⁴Treat them as they deserve! Punish them for their sins.

⁵They don't pay any attention to your wonderful deeds. Now you will destroy them and leave them in ruin.

⁶I praise you, LORD, for answering my prayers.

⁷You are my strong shield, and I trust you completely. You have helped me, and I will celebrate and thank you in song.

⁸You give strength to your people, LORD, and you save and protect your chosen ones.

⁹Come, save us and bless us. Be our shepherd and always carry us in your arms.

29¹ All you angels in heaven, honour the glory and power of the LORD!

²Honour the wonderful name of the LORD, and worship the LORD most holy and glorious.

³The voice of the LORD echoes over the oceans. The glorious LORD God thunders above the roar of the raging sea,

⁴and his voice is mighty and marvellous.

⁵The voice of the LORD destroys the cedar trees; the LORD shatters cedars on Mount Lebanon.

⁶God makes Mount Lebanon skip like a calf and Mount Hermon jump like a wild ox.

⁷The voice of the LORD makes lightning flash

⁸and the desert tremble. And because of the LORD, the desert near Kadesh shivers and shakes.

⁹The voice of the LORD makes deer give birth before their time. Forests are

stripped of leaves, and the temple is filled with shouts of praise.

¹⁰The LORD rules on his throne, king of the flood for ever.

¹¹Pray that our LORD will make us strong and give us peace.

30¹I will praise you, LORD! You saved me from the grave and kept my enemies from celebrating my death.

²I prayed to you, LORD God, and you healed me,

³saving me from death and the grave.

⁴Your faithful people, LORD, will praise you with songs and honour your holy name.

⁵Your anger lasts a little while, but your kindness lasts for a lifetime. At night we may cry, but when morning comes we will celebrate.

⁶I was carefree and thought, I'll never be shaken!

⁷You, LORD, were my friend, and you made me strong as a mighty mountain. But when you hid your face, I was crushed.

⁸I prayed to you, LORD, and in my prayer I said,

⁹What good will it do you if I am in the grave? Once I have turned to dust, how can I praise you or tell how loyal you are?

¹⁰Have pity, LORD! Help!

¹¹You have turned my sorrow into joyful dancing. No longer am I sad and wearing sackcloth.

¹²I thank you from my heart, and I will never stop singing your praises, my LORD and my God.

31 ¹I come to you, LORD, for protection. Don't let me be ashamed. Do as you have promised and rescue me.

²Listen to my prayer and hurry to save me. Be my mighty rock and the fortress where I am safe.

³You, LORD God, are my mighty rock and my fortress. Lead me and guide me, so that your name will be honoured.

⁴Protect me from hidden traps and keep me safe.

⁵You are faithful, and I trust you because you rescued me.

⁶I hate the worshippers of worthless idols, but I trust you, LORD.

⁷ I celebrate and shout because you are kind. You saw all my suffering, and you cared for me.

⁸ You kept me from the hands of my enemies, and you set me free.

⁹ Have pity, LORD! I am suffering and almost blind. My whole body aches.

¹⁰ I have known only sorrow all my life long, and I suffer year after year. I am weak from sin, and my bones are limp.

¹¹ My enemies insult me. Neighbours are even worse, and I disgust my friends. People meet me in the street, and they turn and run.

¹² I am completely forgotten like someone dead. I am merely a broken dish.

¹³ I hear the crowds whisper, Everyone is afraid! They are plotting and scheming to murder me.

¹⁴ But I trust you, LORD, and I claim you as my God.

¹⁵ My life is in your hands. Save me from enemies who hunt me down.

¹⁶ Smile on me, your servant. Have pity and rescue me.

¹⁷I pray only to you. Don't disappoint me. Disappoint my cruel enemies until they lie silent in their graves.

¹⁸Silence those proud liars! Make them stop boasting and insulting your people.

¹⁹You are wonderful, and while everyone watches, you store up blessings for all who honour and trust you.

²⁰You are their shelter from harmful plots, and you are their protection from vicious gossip.

²¹I will praise you, LORD, for showing great kindness when I was like a city under attack.

²²I was terrified and thought, They've chased me far away from you! But you answered my prayer when I shouted for help.

²³All who belong to the LORD, show how you love him. The LORD protects the faithful, but he severely punishes everyone who is proud.

²⁴All who trust the LORD, be cheerful and strong.

32¹ Our God, you bless everyone whose sins you forgive and wipe away.

²You bless them by saying, You told me your sins, without trying to hide them, and now I forgive you.

³Before I confessed my sins, my bones felt limp, and I groaned all day long.

⁴Night and day your hand weighed heavily on me, and my strength was gone as in the summer heat.

⁵So I confessed my sins and told them all to you. I said, I'll tell the LORD each one of my sins. Then you forgave me and took away my guilt.

⁶We worship you, Lord, and we should always pray whenever we find out that we have sinned. Then we won't be swept away by a raging flood.

⁷You are my hiding place! You protect me from trouble, and you put songs in my heart because you have saved me.

⁸You said to me, I will point out the road that you should follow. I will be your teacher and watch over you.

⁹Don't be stupid like horses and mules that must be led with ropes to make them obey.

¹⁰All kinds of troubles will strike the wicked, but your kindness shields those who trust you, LORD.

¹¹ And so your good people should celebrate and shout.

33 ¹ You are the LORD's people. Obey him and celebrate! He deserves your praise.

² Praise the LORD with harps! Use harps with ten strings to make music for him.

³ Sing a new song. Shout! Play beautiful music.

⁴ The LORD is truthful; he can be trusted.

⁵ He loves justice and fairness, and he is kind to everyone everywhere on earth.

⁶ The LORD made the heavens and everything in them by his word.

⁷ He scooped up the ocean and stored the water.

⁸ Everyone in this world should worship and honour the LORD!

⁹ As soon as he spoke the world was created; at his command, the earth was formed.

¹⁰ The LORD destroys the plans and spoils the schemes of the nations.

¹¹ But what the LORD has planned will stand for ever. His thoughts never change.

¹²The LORD blesses each nation that worships only him. He blesses his chosen ones.

¹³The LORD looks at the world

¹⁴from his throne in heaven, and he watches us all.

¹⁵The LORD gave us each a mind, and nothing we do can be hidden from him.

¹⁶Mighty armies alone cannot win wars for a king; great strength by itself cannot keep a soldier safe.

¹⁷In war the strength of a horse cannot be trusted to take you to safety.

¹⁸But the LORD watches over all who honour him and trust his kindness.

¹⁹He protects them from death and starvation.

²⁰We depend on you, LORD, to help and protect us.

²¹You make our hearts glad because we trust you, the only God.

²²Be kind and bless us! We depend on you.

34 ¹I will always praise the LORD.
²With all my heart, I will praise the LORD. Let all who are helpless, listen and be glad.

³ Honour the LORD with me! Celebrate his great name.

⁴ I asked the LORD for help, and he saved me from all my fears.

⁵ Keep your eyes on the LORD! You will shine like the sun and never blush with shame.

⁶ I was a nobody, but I prayed, and the LORD saved me from all my troubles.

⁷ If you honour the LORD, his angel will protect you.

⁸ Discover for yourself that the LORD is kind. Come to him for protection, and you will be glad.

⁹ Honour the LORD! You are his special people. No one who honours the LORD will ever be in need.

¹⁰ Young lions may go hungry or even starve, but if you trust the LORD, you will never miss out on anything good.

¹¹ Come, my children, listen as I teach you to respect the LORD.

¹² Do you want to live and enjoy a long life?

¹³ Then don't say cruel things and don't tell lies.

¹⁴ Do good instead of evil and try to live at peace.

¹⁵If you obey the LORD, he will watch over you and answer your prayers.

¹⁶But God despises evil people, and he will wipe them all from the earth, till they are forgotten.

¹⁷When his people pray for help, he listens and rescues them from their troubles.

¹⁸The LORD is there to rescue all who are discouraged and have given up hope.

¹⁹The LORD's people may suffer a lot, but he will always bring them safely through.

²⁰Not one of their bones will ever be broken.

²¹Wicked people are killed by their own evil deeds, and if you hate God's people you will be punished.

²²The LORD saves the lives of his servants. Run to him for protection, and you won't be punished.

35 ¹Fight my enemies, LORD! Attack my attackers!

²Shield me and help me.

³Aim your spear at everyone who hunts me down, but promise to save me.

⁴Let all who want to kill me be disappointed and disgraced. Chase away and confuse all who plan to harm me.

⁵Send your angel after them and let them be like straw in the wind.

⁶Make them run in the dark on a slippery road, as your angel chases them.

⁷I did them no harm, but they hid a net to trap me, and they dug a deep pit to catch and kill me.

⁸Surprise them with disaster! Trap them in their own nets and let them fall and rot in the pits they have dug.

⁹I will celebrate and be joyful because you, LORD, have saved me.

¹⁰Every bone in my body will shout: No one is like the LORD! You protect the helpless from those in power; you save the poor and needy from those who hurt them.

¹¹Liars accuse me of crimes I know nothing about.

¹²They repay evil for good, and I feel all alone.

¹³When they were sick, I wore sackcloth and went without food. I truly prayed for them,

¹⁴as I would for a friend or a relative. I was in sorrow and mourned, as I would for my mother.

¹⁵I have stumbled, and worthless liars I don't even know surround me and sneer.

¹⁶Worthless people make fun and never stop laughing.

¹⁷But all you do is watch! When will you do something? Save me from the attack of those vicious lions.

¹⁸And when your people meet, I will praise you and thank you, Lord, in front of them all.

¹⁹Don't let my brutal enemies be glad because of me. They hate me for no reason. Don't let them wink behind my back.

²⁰They say hurtful things, and they lie to people who want to live in peace.

²¹They are quick to accuse me. They say, You did it! We saw you ourselves.

²²You see everything, LORD! Please don't keep silent or stay so far away.

²³Fight to defend me, Lord God,

²⁴and prove that I am right by your standards. Don't let them laugh at me

²⁵or say to each other, Now we've got what we want! We'll gobble him up!

²⁶Disappoint and confuse all who are glad to see me in trouble, but disgrace and embarrass my proud enemies who say to me, You are nothing!

²⁷Let all who want me to win be happy and joyful. From now on let them say, The LORD is wonderful! God is glad when all goes well for his servant.

²⁸Then I will shout all day, Praise the LORD God! He did what was right.

36¹ Sinners don't respect God; sin is all they think about.

²They like themselves too much to hate their own sins or even to see them.

³They tell deceitful lies, and they don't have the sense to live right.

⁴Those people stay awake, thinking up mischief, and they follow the wrong road, refusing to turn from sin.

⁵Your love is faithful, LORD, and even the clouds in the sky can depend on you.

⁶Your decisions are always fair. They are firm like mountains, deep like the sea, and all people and animals are under your care.

⁷Your love is a treasure, and everyone finds shelter in the shadow of your wings.

⁸You give your guests a feast in your house, and you serve a tasty drink that flows like a river.

⁹The life-giving fountain belongs to you, and your light gives light to each of us.

¹⁰Our LORD, keep showing love to everyone who knows you, and use your power to save all whose thoughts please you.

¹¹Don't let those proud and merciless people kick me around or chase me away.

¹²Look at those wicked people! They are knocked down, never to get up again.

37 ¹Don't be annoyed by anyone who does wrong, and don't envy them.

²They will soon disappear like grass without rain.

³Trust the LORD and live right! The land will be yours, and you will be safe.

⁴Do what the LORD wants, and he will give you your heart's desire.

⁵Let the LORD lead you and trust him to help.

⁶Then it will be as clear as the noonday sun that you were right.

⁷Be patient and trust the LORD. Don't let it bother you when all goes well for those who do sinful things.

⁸Don't be angry or furious. Anger can lead to sin.

⁹All sinners will disappear, but if you trust the LORD, the land will be yours.

¹⁰Sinners will soon disappear, never to be found,

¹¹but the poor will take the land and enjoy a big harvest.

¹²Merciless people make plots against good people and snarl like animals,

¹³but the Lord laughs and knows their time is coming soon.

¹⁴The wicked kill with swords and shoot arrows to murder the poor and the needy and all who do right.

¹⁵But they will be killed by their own swords, and their arrows will be broken.

¹⁶It is better to live right and be poor than to be sinful and rich.

¹⁷The wicked will lose all of their power, but the LORD gives strength to everyone who is good.

¹⁸Those who obey the LORD are daily in his care, and what he has given them will be theirs for ever.

¹⁹They won't be in trouble when times are bad, and they will have plenty when food is scarce.

²⁰Wicked people are enemies of the LORD and will vanish like smoke from a field on fire.

²¹An evil person borrows and never pays back; a good person is generous and never stops giving.

²²Everyone the LORD blesses will receive the land; everyone the LORD curses will be destroyed.

²³If you do what the LORD wants, he will make certain each step you take is sure.

²⁴The LORD will hold your hand, and if you stumble, you still won't fall.

²⁵As long as I can remember, good people have never been left helpless, and their children have never gone begging for food.

²⁶They gladly give and lend, and their children turn out good.

²⁷ If you stop sinning and start doing right, you will keep living and be secure for ever.

²⁸ The LORD loves justice, and he won't ever desert his faithful people. He always protects them, but destroys the children of the wicked.

²⁹ God's people will own the land and live here for ever.

³⁰ Words of wisdom come when good people speak for justice.

³¹ They remember God's teachings, and they never take a wrong step.

³² The wicked try to trap and kill good people,

³³ but the LORD is on their side, and he will defend them when they are on trial.

³⁴ Trust the LORD and follow him. He will give you the land, and you will see the wicked destroyed.

³⁵ I have seen brutal people abuse others and grow strong like trees in rich soil.

³⁶ Suddenly they disappeared! I looked, but they were gone and no longer there.

³⁷ Think of the bright future waiting for all the families of honest and innocent and peace-loving people.

³⁸But not a trace will be left of the wicked or their families.

³⁹The LORD protects his people, and they can come to him in times of trouble.

⁴⁰The LORD helps them and saves them from the wicked because they run to him.

38¹When you are angry, LORD, please don't punish me or even correct me.

²You shot me with your arrows, and you struck me with your hand.

³My body hurts all over because of your anger. Even my bones are in pain, and my sins

⁴are so heavy that I am crushed.

⁵Because of my foolishness, I am covered with sores that stink and spread.

⁶My body is twisted and bent, and I groan all day long.

⁷Fever has my back in flames, and I hurt all over.

⁸I am worn out and weak, moaning and in distress.

⁹You, Lord, know every one of my deepest desires, and my noisy groans are no secret to you.

¹⁰My heart is beating fast. I feel weak all over, and my eyes are red.

¹¹Because of my sickness, no friends or neighbours will come near me.

¹²All who want me dead set traps to catch me, and those who want to harm and destroy me plan and plot all day.

¹³I am not able to hear or speak a word;

¹⁴I am completely deaf and can't make a sound.

¹⁵I trust you, LORD God, and you will do something.

¹⁶I said, Don't let them laugh or boast because I slip.

¹⁷I am about to collapse from constant pain.

¹⁸I told you my sins, and I am sorry for them.

¹⁹Many deadly and powerful enemies hate me,

²⁰and they repay evil for good because I try to do right.

²¹You are the LORD God! Stay nearby and don't desert me.

²²You are the one who saves me. Please hurry and help.

39¹ I told myself, I'll be careful not to sin by what I say, and I'll muzzle my mouth when evil people are near.

² I kept completely silent, but it did no good, and I suffered even more.

³ I felt a fire burning inside, and the more I thought, the more it burnt, until at last I said:

⁴ Please, LORD, show me my future. Will I soon be gone?

⁵ You made my life short, so brief that the time means nothing to you. Human life is but a breath,

⁶ and it disappears like a shadow. Our struggles are senseless; we store up more and more, without ever knowing who will get it all.

⁷ What am I waiting for? I depend on you, Lord!

⁸ Save me from my sins. Don't let fools sneer at me.

⁹ You treated me like this, and I kept silent, not saying a word.

¹⁰ Won't you stop punishing me? You have worn me down.

¹¹ You punish us severely because of our sins. Like a moth, you destroy what

we treasure most. We are as frail as a breath.

¹²Listen, LORD, to my prayer! My eyes are flooded with tears, as I pray to you. I am merely a stranger visiting your home as my ancestors did.

¹³Stop being angry with me and let me smile again before I am dead and gone.

40¹I patiently waited, LORD, for you to hear my prayer. You listened

²and pulled me from a lonely pit full of mud and mire. You let me stand on a rock with my feet firm,

³and you gave me a new song, a song of praise to you. Many will see this, and they will honour and trust you, the LORD God.

⁴You bless all of those who trust you, LORD, and refuse to worship idols or follow false gods.

⁵You, LORD God, have done many wonderful things, and you have planned marvellous things for us. No one is like you! I would never be able to tell all you have done.

⁶Sacrifices and offerings are not what please you; gifts and payment for sin are

not what you demand. But you made me willing to listen and obey.

⁷And so, I said, I am here to do what is written about me in the book, where it says,

⁸I enjoy pleasing you. Your Law is in my heart.

⁹When your people worshipped, you know I told them, Our LORD always helps!

¹⁰When all your people met, I did not keep silent. I said, Our LORD is kind. He is faithful and caring, and he saves us.

¹¹You, LORD, never fail to have pity on me; your love and faithfulness always keep me secure.

¹²I have more troubles than I can count. My sins are all around me, and I can't find my way. My sins outnumber the hairs on my head, and I feel weak.

¹³Please show that you care and come to my rescue. Hurry and help me!

¹⁴Disappoint and confuse all who want me dead; turn away and disgrace all who want to hurt me.

¹⁵Embarrass and shame all those who say, Just look at you now!

¹⁶Our LORD, let your worshippers rejoice and be glad. They love you for saving them, so let them always say, The LORD is wonderful!

¹⁷I am poor and needy, but, LORD God, you care about me, and you come to my rescue. Please hurry and help.

41 ¹You, LORD God, bless everyone who cares for the poor, and you rescue those people in times of trouble.

²You protect them and keep them alive. You make them happy here in this land, and you don't hand them over to their enemies.

³You always heal them and restore their strength when they are sick.

⁴I prayed, Have pity, LORD! Heal me, though I have sinned against you.

⁵My vicious enemies ask me, When will you die and be forgotten?

⁶When visitors come, all they ever bring are worthless words, and when they leave, they spread gossip.

⁷My enemies whisper about me. They think the worst,

⁸and they say, You have some fatal disease! You'll never get well.

⁹My most trusted friend has turned against me, though he ate at my table.

¹⁰Have pity, LORD! Heal me, so I can pay them back.

¹¹Then my enemies won't defeat me, and I will know that you really care.

¹²You have helped me because I am innocent, and you will always be close to my side.

¹³You, the LORD God of Israel, will be praised for ever! Amen and amen.

42¹As a deer gets thirsty for streams of water, I truly am thirsty for you, my God.

²In my heart, I am thirsty for you, the living God. When will I see your face?

³Day and night my tears are my only food, as everyone keeps asking, Where is your God?

⁴Sorrow floods my heart, when I remember leading the worshippers to your house. I can still hear them shout their joyful praises.

⁵Why am I discouraged? Why am I restless? I trust you! And I will praise you again because you help me,

⁶and you are my God. I am deeply discouraged as I think about you from

where the Jordan begins at Mount Hermon and from Mount Mizar.

⁷Your vicious waves have swept over me like an angry ocean or a roaring waterfall.

⁸Every day, you are kind, and at night you give me a song as my prayer to you, the living LORD God.

⁹You are my mighty rock. Why have you forgotten me? Why must enemies ill-treat me and make me sad?

¹⁰Even my bones are in pain, while all day long my enemies sneer and ask, Where is your God?

¹¹Why am I discouraged? Why am I restless? I trust you! And I will praise you again because you help me, and you are my God.

43¹Show that I am right, God! Defend me against everyone who doesn't know you; rescue me from each of those deceitful liars.

²I run to you for protection. Why have you turned me away? Why must enemies ill-treat me and make me sad?

³Send your light and your truth to guide me. Let them lead me to your house on your sacred mountain.

⁴Then I will worship at your altar because you make me joyful. You are my God, and I will praise you. Yes, I will praise you as I play my harp.

⁵Why am I discouraged? Why am I restless? I trust you! And I will praise you again because you help me, and you are my God.

44¹ Our God, our ancestors told us what wonders you worked and we listened carefully.

²You chased off the nations by causing them trouble with your powerful arm. Then you let our ancestors take over their land.

³Their strength and weapons were not what won the land and gave them victory! You loved them and fought with your powerful arm and your shining glory.

⁴You are my God and King, and you give victory to the people of Jacob.

⁵By your great power, we knocked our enemies down and trampled on them.

⁶I don't depend on my arrows or my sword to save me.

⁷But you saved us from our hateful enemies, and you put them to shame.

⁸We boast about you, our God, and we are always grateful.

⁹But now you have rejected us; you don't lead us into battle, and we look foolish.

¹⁰You made us retreat, and our enemies have taken everything we own.

¹¹You let us be slaughtered like sheep, and you scattered us among the nations.

¹²You sold your people for little or nothing, and you earned no profit.

¹³You made us look foolish to our neighbours, and people who live nearby insult us and sneer.

¹⁴Foreigners joke about us and shake their heads.

¹⁵I am embarrassed every day, and I blush with shame.

¹⁶But others mock and sneer, as they watch my enemies take revenge on me.

¹⁷All of this has happened to us, though we didn't forget you or break our agreement.

¹⁸We always kept you in mind and followed your teaching.

¹⁹But you crushed us, and you covered us with deepest darkness where wild animals live.

²⁰We did not forget you or lift our hands in prayer to foreign gods.

²¹You would have known it because you discover every secret thought.

²²We face death all day for you. We are like sheep on their way to be slaughtered.

²³Wake up! Do something, Lord! Why are you sleeping? Don't desert us for ever.

²⁴Why do you keep looking away? Don't forget our sufferings and all our troubles.

²⁵We are flat on the ground, holding on to the dust.

²⁶Do something! Help us! Show how kind you are and come to our rescue.

45¹ My thoughts are filled with beautiful words for the king, and I will use my voice as a writer would use pen and ink.

²No one is as handsome as you! Your words are always kind. That is why God will always bless you.

³Mighty king, glorious ruler, strap on your sword

⁴and ride out in splendour! Win victories for truth and mercy and justice.

Do fearsome things with your powerful arm.

⁵Send your sharp arrows through enemy hearts and make all nations fall at your feet.

⁶You are God, and you will rule for ever as king. Your royal power brings about justice.

⁷You love justice and hate evil. And so, your God chose you and made you happier than any of your friends.

⁸The sweet aroma of the spices myrrh, aloes, and cassia, covers your royal robes. You enjoy the music of harps in palaces decorated with ivory.

⁹Daughters of kings are here, and your bride stands at your right side, wearing a wedding gown trimmed with pure gold.

¹⁰Bride of the king, listen carefully to me. Forget your own people and your father's family.

¹¹The king is your husband, so do what he desires.

¹²All the richest people from the city of Tyre will try to influence you

¹³with precious treasures. Your bride, my king, has inward beauty, and her

wedding gown is woven with threads of gold.

¹⁴Wearing the finest garments, she is brought to you, followed by her young friends, the bridesmaids.

¹⁵Everyone is excited, as they follow you to the royal palace.

¹⁶Your sons and your grandsons will also be kings as your ancestors were. You will make them the rulers everywhere on earth.

¹⁷I will make your name famous from now on, and you will be praised for ever and ever.

46 ¹God is our mighty fortress,
always ready to help in times of trouble.

²And so, we won't be afraid! Let the earth tremble and the mountains tumble into the deepest sea.

³Let the ocean roar and foam, and its raging waves shake the mountains.

⁴A river and its streams bring joy to the city, which is the sacred home of God Most High.

⁵God is in that city, and it won't be shaken. He will help it at dawn.

⁶Nations rage! Kingdoms fall! But at the voice of God the earth itself melts.

⁷The LORD All-Powerful is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

⁸Come! See the fearsome things the LORD has done on earth.

⁹God brings wars to an end all over the world. He breaks the arrows, shatters the spears, and burns the shields.

¹⁰Our God says, Calm down, and learn that I am God! All nations on earth will honour me.

¹¹The LORD All-Powerful is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

47 ¹All you nations, clap your hands and shout joyful praises to God.

²The LORD Most High is fearsome, the ruler of all the earth.

³God has put every nation under our power,

⁴and he chose for us the land that was the pride of Jacob, his favourite.

⁵God goes up to his throne, as people shout and trumpets blast.

⁶Sing praises to God our King,

⁷the ruler of all the earth! Praise God with songs.

⁸God rules the nations from his sacred throne.

⁹Their leaders come together and are now the people of Abraham's God. All rulers on earth surrender their weapons, and God is greatly praised!

48¹The LORD God is wonderful!
He deserves all praise in the city where he lives. His holy mountain,

²beautiful and majestic, brings joy to all on earth. Mount Zion, truly sacred, is home for the Great King.

³God is there to defend it and has proved to be its protector.

⁴Kings joined forces to attack the city,

⁵but when they saw it, they were terrified and ran away.

⁶They trembled all over like women giving birth

⁷or like seagoing ships wrecked by eastern winds.

⁸We had heard about it, and now we have seen it in the city of our God, the LORD All-Powerful. This is the city that God will let stand for ever.

⁹Our God, here in your temple we think about your love.

¹⁰You are famous and praised everywhere on earth, as you win victories with your powerful arm.

¹¹Mount Zion will celebrate, and all Judah will be glad, because you bring justice.

¹²Let's walk around Zion and count its towers.

¹³We will see its strong walls and visit each fortress. Then you can say to future generations,

¹⁴Our God is like this for ever and will always guide us.

49¹Everyone on this earth, now listen to what I say!

²Listen, no matter who you are, rich or poor.

³I speak words of wisdom, and my thoughts make sense.

⁴I have in mind a mystery that I will explain while playing my harp.

⁵Why should I be afraid in times of trouble, when I am surrounded by vicious enemies?

⁶They trust in their riches and boast about all their wealth.

⁷You cannot buy back your life or pay off God!

⁸It costs far too much to buy back your life. You can never pay God enough

⁹to stay alive for ever and safe from death.

¹⁰We see that wise people die, and so do stupid fools. Then their money is left for someone else.

¹¹The grave will be their home for ever and ever, although they once had land of their own.

¹²Our human glory disappears, and, like animals, we die.

¹³Here is what happens to fools and to those who trust the words of fools:

¹⁴They are like sheep with death as their shepherd, leading them to the grave. In the morning God's people will walk all over them, as their bodies lie rotting in their home, the grave.

¹⁵But God will rescue me from the power of death.

¹⁶Don't let it bother you when others get rich and live in luxury.

¹⁷Soon they will die and all their wealth will be left behind.

¹⁸We humans are praised when we do well, and all of us are glad to be alive.

¹⁹But we will each go down to our ancestors, never again to see the light of day.

²⁰Our human glory disappears, and, like animals, we die.

50¹From east to west, the powerful LORD God has been calling together everyone on earth.

²God shines brightly from Zion, the most beautiful city.

³Our God approaches, but not silently; a flaming fire comes first, and a storm surrounds him.

⁴God comes to judge his people. He shouts to the heavens and to the earth,

⁵Call my followers together! They offered me a sacrifice, and we made an agreement.

⁶The heavens announce, God is the judge, and he is always honest.

⁷My people, I am God! Israel, I am your God. Listen to my charges against you.

⁸Although you offer sacrifices and always bring gifts,

⁹I won't accept your offerings of bulls and goats.

¹⁰Every animal in the forest belongs to me, and so do the cattle on a thousand hills.

¹¹I know all the birds in the mountains, and every wild creature is in my care.

¹²If I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you, because I own the world and everything in it.

¹³I don't eat the meat of bulls or drink the blood of goats.

¹⁴I am God Most High! The only sacrifice I want is for you to be thankful and to keep your word.

¹⁵Pray to me in time of trouble. I will rescue you, and you will honour me.

¹⁶But to the wicked I say: You don't have the right to mention my laws or claim to keep our agreement!

¹⁷You refused correction and rejected my commands.

¹⁸You made friends with every criminal you met, and you liked people who break their wedding vows.

¹⁹You talked only about violence and told nothing but lies;

²⁰you sat around gossiping, ruining the reputation of your own relatives.

²¹ When you did all this, I didn't say a word, and you thought, God is just like us! But now I will accuse you.

²² You have ignored me! So pay close attention or I will tear you apart, and no one can help you.

²³ The sacrifice that honours me is a thankful heart. Obey me, and I, your God, will show my power to save.

51 ¹ You are kind, God! Please have pity on me. You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins.

² Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt.

³ I know about my sins, and I cannot forget my terrible guilt.

⁴ You are really the one I have sinned against; I have disobeyed you and have done wrong. So it is right and fair for you to correct and punish me.

⁵ I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.

⁶ But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom.

⁷ Wash me with hyssop until I am clean and whiter than snow.

⁸Let me be happy and joyful! You crushed my bones, now let them celebrate.

⁹Turn your eyes from my sin and cover my guilt.

¹⁰Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again.

¹¹Don't chase me away from you or take your Holy Spirit away from me.

¹²Make me as happy as you did when you saved me; make me want to obey!

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

¹⁴Keep me from any deadly sin. Only you can save me! Then I will shout and sing about your power to save.

¹⁵Help me to speak, and I will praise you, Lord.

¹⁶Offerings and sacrifices are not what you want.

¹⁷The way to please you is to feel sorrow deep in our hearts. This is the kind of sacrifice you won't refuse.

¹⁸Please be willing, Lord, to help the city of Zion and to rebuild its walls.

¹⁹Then you will be pleased with the proper sacrifices, and we will offer bulls on your altar once again.

52¹ You people may be strong and boast about your sins, but God can be trusted day after day.

² You plan brutal crimes, and your lying words cut like a sharp razor.

³ You would rather do evil than good, and tell lies than speak the truth.

⁴ You love to say cruel things, and your words are a trap.

⁵ God will destroy you for ever! He will grab you and drag you from your homes. You will be uprooted and left to die.

⁶ When good people see this fearsome sight, they will laugh and say,

⁷ Just look at them now! Instead of trusting God, they trusted their wealth and their cruelty.

⁸ But I am like an olive tree growing in God's house, and I can count on his love for ever and ever.

⁹ I will always thank God for what he has done; I will praise his good name when his people meet.

53¹ Only a fool would say, There is no God! People like that are worthless! They are heartless and cruel and never do right.

²From heaven God looks down to see if anyone is wise enough to search for him.

³But all of them are crooked and corrupt. Not one of them does right.

⁴Won't you lawbreakers learn? You refuse to pray, and you gobble up the people of God.

⁵But you will be more terrified than ever before. God will scatter the bones of his enemies, and you will be ashamed when God rejects you.

⁶I long for someone from Zion to come and save Israel! Our God, when you bless your people again, Jacob's family will be glad, and Israel will celebrate.

54 ¹Save me, God, by your power and prove that I am right.

²Listen to my prayer and hear what I say.

³Cruel strangers have attacked and want me dead. Not one of them cares about you.

⁴You will help me, Lord God, and keep me from falling;

⁵you will punish my enemies for their evil deeds. Be my faithful friend and destroy them.

⁶I will bring a gift and offer a sacrifice to you, LORD. I will praise your name because you are good.

⁷You have rescued me from all my troubles, and my own eyes have seen my enemies fall.

55 ¹Listen, God, to my prayer! Don't reject my request.

²Please listen and help me. My thoughts are troubled, and I keep groaning

³because my loud enemies shout and attack. They treat me terribly and hold angry grudges.

⁴My heart is racing fast, and I am afraid of dying.

⁵I am trembling with fear, completely terrified.

⁶I wish I had wings like a dove, so I could fly far away and be at peace.

⁷I would go and live in some distant desert.

⁸I would quickly find shelter from howling winds and raging storms.

⁹Confuse my enemies, Lord! Upset their plans. Cruelty and violence are all I see in the city,

¹⁰and they are like guards on patrol day and night. The city is full of trouble, evil,

¹¹and corruption. Troublemakers and liars freely roam the streets.

¹²My enemies are not the ones who sneer and make fun. I could put up with that or even hide from them.

¹³But it was my closest friend, the one I trusted most.

¹⁴We enjoyed being together, and we went with others to your house, our God.

¹⁵All who hate me are controlled by the power of evil. Sentence them to death and send them down alive to the world of the dead.

¹⁶I ask for your help, LORD God, and you will keep me safe.

¹⁷Morning, noon, and night you hear my concerns and my complaints.

¹⁸I am attacked from all sides, but you will rescue me unharmed by the battle.

¹⁹You have always ruled, and you will hear me. You will defeat my enemies because they won't turn and worship you.

²⁰My friend turned against me and broke his promise.

²¹ His words were smoother than butter, and softer than olive oil. But hatred filled his heart, and he was ready to attack with a sword.

²² Our LORD, we belong to you. We tell you what worries us, and you won't let us fall.

²³ But what about those people who are cruel and brutal? You will throw them down into the deepest pit long before their time. I trust you, LORD!

56 ¹ Have pity, God Most High! My enemies chase me all day.

² Many of them are pursuing and attacking me,

³ but even when I am afraid, I keep on trusting you.

⁴ I praise your promises! I trust you and am not afraid. No one can harm me.

⁵ Enemies spend the whole day finding fault with me; all they think about is how to do me harm.

⁶ They attack from ambush, watching my every step and hoping to kill me.

⁷ They won't get away with these crimes, God, because when you get angry, you destroy people.

⁸You have kept record of my days of wandering. You have stored my tears in your bottle and counted each of them.

⁹When I pray, LORD God, my enemies will retreat, because I know for certain that you are with me.

¹⁰I praise your promises!

¹¹I trust you and am not afraid. No one can harm me.

¹²I will keep my promises to you, my God, and bring you gifts.

¹³You protected me from death and kept me from stumbling, so that I would please you and follow the light that leads to life.

57 ¹God Most High, have pity on me! Have mercy. I run to you for safety. In the shadow of your wings, I seek protection till danger dies down.

²I pray to you, my protector.

³You will send help from heaven and save me, but you will bring trouble on my attackers. You are faithful, and you can be trusted.

⁴I live among lions, who gobble up people! They have spears and arrows instead of teeth, and they have sharp swords instead of tongues.

⁵ May you, my God, be honoured above the heavens; may your glory be seen everywhere on earth.

⁶ Enemies set traps for my feet and struck me down. They dug a pit in my path, but fell in it themselves.

⁷ I am faithful to you, and you can trust me. I will sing and play music for you, my God.

⁸ I feel wide awake! I will wake up my harp and wake up the sun.

⁹ I will praise you, Lord, for everyone to hear, and I will sing hymns to you in every nation.

¹⁰ Your love reaches higher than the heavens; your loyalty extends beyond the clouds.

¹¹ May you, my God, be honoured above the heavens; may your glory be seen everywhere on earth.

58 ¹ Do you mighty people talk only to oppose justice? Don't you ever judge fairly?

² You are always planning evil, and you are brutal.

³ You have done wrong and lied from the day you were born.

⁴Your words spread poison like the bite of a cobra

⁵that refuses to listen to the snake charmer.

⁶My enemies are fierce as lions, LORD God! Shatter their teeth. Snatch out their fangs.

⁷Make them disappear like leaking water, and make their arrows miss.

⁸Let them dry up like snails or be like a child that dies before seeing the sun.

⁹Wipe them out quicker than a pot can be heated by setting thorns on fire.

¹⁰Good people will be glad when they see the wicked getting what they deserve, and they will wash their feet in their enemies' blood.

¹¹Everyone will say, It's true! Good people are rewarded. God does rule the earth with justice.

59¹ Save me, God! Protect me from enemy attacks!

²Keep me safe from brutal people who want to kill me.

³Merciless enemies, LORD, are hiding and plotting, hoping to kill me. I have not hurt them in any way at all.

⁴But they are ready to attack. Do something! Help me! Look at what's happening.

⁵LORD God All-Powerful, you are the God of Israel. Punish the other nations and don't pity those terrible and rebellious people.

⁶My enemies return at evening, growling like dogs roaming the city.

⁷They curse and their words cut like swords, as they say to themselves, No one can hear us!

⁸You, LORD, laugh at them and sneer at the nations.

⁹You are my mighty fortress, and I depend on you.

¹⁰You love me and will let me see my enemies defeated.

¹¹Don't kill them, or everyone may forget! Just use your mighty power to make them tremble and fall. You are a shield for your people.

¹²My enemies are liars! So let them be trapped by their boastful lies.

¹³Get angry and destroy them. Leave them in ruin. Then all the nations will know that you rule in Israel.

¹⁴ Those liars return at evening,
growling like dogs roaming the city.

¹⁵ They search for scraps of food, and
they snarl until they are full.

¹⁶ But I will sing about your strength,
my God, and I will celebrate because of
your love. You are my fortress, my place
of protection in times of trouble.

¹⁷ I will sing your praises! You are my
mighty fortress, and you love me.

60¹ You, God, are angry with us! We
are rejected and crushed. Make
us strong again!

² You made the earth shake and split
wide open; now heal its wounds and
stop its trembling.

³ You brought hard times on your
people, and you gave us wine that made
us stagger.

⁴ You gave a signal to those who
worship you, so they could escape from
enemy arrows.

⁵ Answer our prayers! Use your powerful
arm and give us victory. Then the people
you love will be safe.

⁶ Our God, you solemnly promised,
I would gladly divide up the city of

Shechem and give away Succoth Valley piece by piece.

⁷The lands of Gilead and Manasseh are mine. Ephraim is my war helmet, and Judah is the symbol of my royal power.

⁸Moab is merely my washbasin. Edom belongs to me, and I shout in triumph over the Philistines.

⁹Our God, who will bring me to the fortress, or lead me to Edom?

¹⁰Have you rejected us and deserted our armies?

¹¹Help us defeat our enemies! No one else can rescue us.

¹²You will give us victory and crush our enemies.

61 ¹Please listen, God, and answer my prayer!

²I feel hopeless, and I cry out to you from a faraway land. Lead me to the mighty rock high above me.

³You are a strong tower, where I am safe from my enemies.

⁴Let me live with you for ever and find protection under your wings, my God.

⁵You heard my promises, and you have blessed me, just as you bless everyone who worships you.

⁶Let the king have a long and healthy life.

⁷May he always rule with you, God, at his side; may your love and loyalty watch over him.

⁸I will sing your praises for ever and will always keep my promises.

62¹ Only God can save me, and I calmly wait for him.

²God alone is the mighty rock that keeps me safe and the fortress where I am secure.

³I feel like a shaky fence or a sagging wall. How long will all of you attack and assault me?

⁴You want to bring me down from my place of honour. You love to tell lies, and when your words are kind, hatred hides in your heart.

⁵Only God gives inward peace, and I depend on him.

⁶God alone is the mighty rock that keeps me safe, and he is the fortress where I feel secure.

⁷God saves me and honours me. He is that mighty rock where I find safety.

⁸Trust God, my friends, and always tell him each one of your concerns. God is our place of safety.

⁹We humans are only a breath; none of us are truly great. All of us together weigh less than a puff of air.

¹⁰Don't trust in violence or depend on dishonesty or rely on great wealth.

¹¹I heard God say two things: I am powerful,

¹²and I am very kind. The Lord rewards each of us according to what we do.

63¹You are my God. I worship you. In my heart, I long for you, as I would long for a stream in a scorching desert.

²I have seen your power and your glory in the place of worship.

³Your love means more than life to me, and I praise you.

⁴As long as I live, I will pray to you.

⁵I will sing joyful praises and be filled with excitement like a guest at a banquet.

⁶I think about you before I go to sleep, and my thoughts turn to you during the night.

⁷ You have helped me, and I sing happy songs in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ I stay close to you, and your powerful arm supports me.

⁹ All who want to kill me will end up in the ground.

¹⁰ Swords will run them through, and wild dogs will eat them.

¹¹ Because of you, our God, the king will celebrate with your faithful followers, but liars will be silent.

64 ¹ Listen to my concerns, God, and protect me from my terrible enemies.

² Keep me safe from secret plots of corrupt and evil gangs.

³ Their words cut like swords, and their cruel remarks sting like sharp arrows.

⁴ They fearlessly ambush and shoot innocent people.

⁵ They are determined to do evil, and they tell themselves, Let's set traps! No one can see us.

⁶ They make evil plans and say, We'll commit a perfect crime. No one knows our thoughts.

⁷ But God will shoot his arrows and quickly wound them.

⁸They will be destroyed by their own words, and everyone who sees them will tremble with fear.

⁹They will be afraid and say, Look at what God has done and keep it all in mind.

¹⁰May the LORD bless his people with peace and happiness and let them celebrate.

65 ¹Our God, you deserve praise in Zion, where we keep our promises to you.

²Everyone will come to you because you answer prayer.

³Our terrible sins get us down, but you forgive us.

⁴You bless your chosen ones, and you invite them to live near you in your temple. We will enjoy your house, the sacred temple.

⁵Our God, you save us, and your fearsome deeds answer our prayers for justice! You give hope to people everywhere on earth, even those across the sea.

⁶You are strong, and your mighty power put the mountains in place.

⁷ You silence the roaring waves and the noisy shouts of the nations.

⁸ People far away marvel at your fearsome deeds, and all who live under the sun celebrate and sing because of you.

⁹ You take care of the earth and send rain to help the soil grow all kinds of crops. Your rivers never run dry, and you prepare the earth to produce much grain.

¹⁰ You water all its fields and level the lumpy ground. You send showers of rain to soften the soil and help the plants sprout.

¹¹ Wherever your footsteps touch the earth, a rich harvest is gathered.

¹² Desert pastures blossom, and mountains celebrate.

¹³ Meadows are filled with sheep and goats; valleys overflow with grain and echo with joyful songs.

66 ¹ Tell everyone on this earth to shout praises to God!

² Sing about his glorious name. Honour him with praises.

³Say to God, Everything you do is fearsome, and your mighty power makes your enemies come crawling.

⁴You are worshipped by everyone! We all sing praises to you.

⁵Come and see the fearsome things our God has done!

⁶When God made the sea dry up, our people walked across, and because of him, we celebrated there.

⁷His mighty power rules for ever, and nothing the nations do can be hidden from him. So don't turn against God.

⁸All you people, come, praise our God! Let his praises be heard.

⁹God protects us from death and keeps us steady.

¹⁰Our God, you tested us, just as silver is tested.

¹¹You trapped us in a net and gave us heavy burdens.

¹²You sent war chariots to crush our skulls. We travelled through fire and through floods, but you brought us to a land of plenty.

¹³I will bring sacrifices into your house, my God, and I will do what I promised

¹⁴when I was in trouble.

¹⁵I will sacrifice my best sheep and offer bulls and goats on your altar.

¹⁶All who worship God, come here and listen; I will tell you everything God has done for me.

¹⁷I prayed to the Lord, and I praised him.

¹⁸If my thoughts had been sinful, he would have refused to hear me.

¹⁹But God did listen and answered my prayer.

²⁰Let's praise God! He listened when I prayed, and he is always kind.

67 ¹Our God, be kind and bless us!
Be pleased and smile.

²Then everyone on earth will learn to follow you, and all nations will see your power to save us.

³Make everyone praise you and shout your praises.

⁴Let the nations celebrate with joyful songs, because you judge fairly and guide all nations.

⁵Make everyone praise you and shout your praises.

⁶Our God has blessed the earth with a wonderful harvest!

⁷ Pray for his blessings to continue and for everyone on earth to worship our God.

68 ¹ Do something, God! Scatter your hateful enemies. Make them turn and run.

² Scatter them like smoke! When you come near, make them melt like wax in a fire.

³ But let your people be happy and celebrate because of you.

⁴ Our God, you are the one who rides on the clouds, and we praise you. Your name is the LORD, and we celebrate as we worship you.

⁵ Our God, from your sacred home you take care of orphans and protect widows.

⁶ You find families for those who are lonely. You set prisoners free and let them prosper, but all who rebel will live in a scorching desert.

⁷ You set your people free, and you led them through the desert.

⁸ God of Israel, the earth trembled, and rain poured down. You alone are the God who rules from Mount Sinai.

⁹ When your land was thirsty, you sent showers to refresh it.

¹⁰Your people settled there, and you were generous to everyone in need.

¹¹You gave the command, and a chorus of women told what had happened:

¹²Kings and their armies retreated and ran, and everything they left is now being divided.

¹³And for those who stayed back to guard the sheep, there are metal doves with silver-coated wings and shiny gold feathers.

¹⁴God All-Powerful, you scattered the kings like snow falling on Mount Zalmon.

¹⁵Our LORD and our God, Bashan is a mighty mountain covered with peaks.

¹⁶Why is it jealous of Zion, the mountain you chose as your home for ever?

¹⁷When you, LORD God, appeared to your people at Sinai, you came with thousands of mighty chariots.

¹⁸When you climbed the high mountain, you took prisoners with you and were given gifts. Your enemies didn't want you to live there, but they gave you gifts.

¹⁹We praise you, Lord God! You treat us with kindness day after day, and you rescue us.

²⁰You always protect us and save us from death.

²¹Our Lord and our God, your terrible enemies are ready for war, but you will crush their skulls.

²²You promised to bring them from Bashan and from the deepest sea.

²³Then we could stamp on their blood, and our dogs could chew on their bones.

²⁴We have seen crowds marching to your place of worship, our God and King.

²⁵The singers come first, and then the musicians, surrounded by young women playing tambourines.

²⁶They come shouting, People of Israel, praise the LORD God!

²⁷The small tribe of Benjamin leads the way, followed by the leaders from Judah. Then come the leaders from Zebulun and Naphtali.

²⁸Our God, show your strength! Show us once again.

²⁹Then kings will bring gifts to your temple in Jerusalem.

³⁰Punish that animal that lives in the swamp! Punish that nation whose leaders and people are like wild bulls. Make them come crawling with gifts of

silver. Scatter those nations that enjoy making war.

³¹ Force the Egyptians to bring gifts of bronze; make the Ethiopians hurry to offer presents.

³² Now sing praises to God! Every kingdom on earth, sing to the Lord!

³³ Praise the one who rides across the ancient skies; listen as he speaks with a mighty voice.

³⁴ Tell about God's power! He is honoured in Israel, and he rules the skies.

³⁵ The God of Israel is fearsome in his temple, and he makes us strong. Let's praise our God!

69¹ Save me, God! I am about to drown.

² I am sinking deep in the mud, and my feet are slipping. I am about to be swept under by a mighty flood.

³ I am worn out from crying, and my throat is dry. I have waited for you till my eyes are blurred.

⁴ There are more people who hate me for no reason than there are hairs on my head. Many terrible enemies want to

destroy me, God. Am I supposed to give back something I didn't steal?

⁵You know my foolish sins. Not one is hidden from you.

⁶LORD God All-Powerful, ruler of Israel, don't let me embarrass anyone who trusts and worships you.

⁷It is for your sake alone that I am insulted and blush with shame.

⁸I am like a stranger to my relatives and like a foreigner to my own family.

⁹My love for your house burns in me like a fire, and when others insulted you, they insulted me as well.

¹⁰I cried and went without food, but they still insulted me.

¹¹They sneered at me for wearing sackcloth to show my sorrow.

¹²Rulers and judges gossip about me, and drunkards make up songs to mock me.

¹³But I pray to you, LORD. So when the time is right, answer me and help me with your wonderful love.

¹⁴Don't let me sink in the mud, but save me from my enemies and from the deep water.

¹⁵ Don't let me be swept away by a flood or drowned in the ocean or swallowed by death.

¹⁶ Answer me, LORD! You are kind and good. Pay attention to me! You are truly merciful.

¹⁷ Don't turn away from me. I am your servant, and I am in trouble. Please hurry and help!

¹⁸ Come and save me from my enemies.

¹⁹ You know how I am insulted, mocked, and disgraced; you know every one of my enemies.

²⁰ I am crushed by insults, and I feel sick. I had hoped for mercy and pity, but there was none.

²¹ Enemies poisoned my food, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar.

²² Make their table a trap for them and their friends.

²³ Blind them with darkness and make them tremble.

²⁴ Show them how angry you are! Be furious and catch them.

²⁵ Destroy their camp and don't let anyone live in their tents.

²⁶They cause trouble for people you have already punished; their gossip hurts those you have wounded.

²⁷Make them guiltier than ever and don't forgive them.

²⁸Wipe their names from the book of the living; remove them from the list of the innocent.

²⁹I am ill-treated and in pain. Protect me, God, and keep me safe!

³⁰I will praise the LORD God with a song and a thankful heart.

³¹This will please the LORD better than offering an ox or a full-grown bull.

³²When those in need see this, they will be happy, and the LORD's worshippers will be encouraged.

³³The LORD will listen when the homeless cry out, and he will never forget his people in prison.

³⁴Heaven and earth will praise our God, and so will the oceans and everything in them.

³⁵God will rescue Jerusalem, and he will rebuild the towns of Judah. His people will live there on their own land,

³⁶and when the time comes, their children will inherit the land. Then

everyone who loves God will also settle there.

70 ¹Save me, LORD God! Hurry and help.

²Disappoint and confuse all who want to kill me. Turn away and disgrace all who want to hurt me.

³Embarrass and shame those who say, We told you so!

⁴Let your worshippers celebrate and be glad because of you. They love your saving power, so let them always say, God is wonderful!

⁵I am poor and needy, but you, the LORD God, care about me. You are the one who saves me. Please hurry and help!

71 ¹I run to you, LORD, for protection. Don't disappoint me.

²You do what is right, so come to my rescue. Listen to my prayer and keep me safe.

³Be my mighty rock, the place where I can always run for protection. Save me by your command! You are my mighty rock and my fortress.

⁴Come and save me, LORD God, from vicious and cruel and brutal enemies!

⁵I depend on you, and I have trusted you since I was young.

⁶I have relied on you from the day I was born. You brought me safely through birth, and I always praise you.

⁷Many people think of me as something evil. But you are my mighty protector,

⁸and I praise and honour you all day long.

⁹Don't throw me aside when I am old; don't desert me when my strength is gone.

¹⁰My enemies are plotting because they want me dead.

¹¹They say, Now we'll catch you! God has deserted you, and no one can save you.

¹²Come closer, God! Please hurry and help.

¹³Embarrass and destroy all who want me dead; disgrace and confuse all who want to hurt me.

¹⁴I will never give up hope or stop praising you.

¹⁵All day long I will tell the wonderful things you do to save your people. But you have done much more than I could possibly know.

¹⁶I will praise you, LORD God, for your mighty deeds and your power to save.

¹⁷You have taught me since I was a child, and I never stop telling about your marvellous deeds.

¹⁸Don't leave me when I am old and my hair turns grey. Let me tell future generations about your mighty power.

¹⁹Your deeds of kindness are known in the heavens. No one is like you!

²⁰You made me suffer a lot, but you will bring me back from this deep pit and give me new life.

²¹You will make me truly great and take my sorrow away.

²²I will praise you, God, the Holy One of Israel. You are faithful. I will play the harp and sing your praises.

²³You have rescued me! I will celebrate and shout, singing praises to you with all my heart.

²⁴All day long I will announce your power to save. I will tell how you disgraced and disappointed those who wanted to hurt me.

72¹ Please help the king to be honest and fair just like you, our God.

²Let him be honest and fair with all your people, especially the poor.

³Let peace and justice rule every mountain and hill.

⁴Let the king defend the poor, rescue the homeless, and crush everyone who hurts them.

⁵Let the king live for ever like the sun and the moon.

⁶Let him be as helpful as rain that refreshes the meadows and the ground.

⁷Let the king be fair with everyone, and let there be peace until the moon falls from the sky.

⁸Let his kingdom reach from sea to sea, from the River Euphrates across all the earth.

⁹Force the desert tribes to accept his rule, and make his enemies crawl in the dust.

¹⁰Force the rulers of Tarshish and of the islands to pay taxes to him. Make the kings of Sheba and of Seba bring gifts.

¹¹Make other rulers bow down and all nations serve him.

¹²Do this because the king rescues the homeless when they cry out, and he helps everyone who is poor and in need.

¹³The king has pity on the weak and the helpless and protects those in need.

¹⁴He cares when they suffer, and he saves them from cruel and violent deaths.

¹⁵Long live the king! Give him gold from Sheba. Always pray for the king and praise him each day.

¹⁶Let cities overflow with food and hills be covered with grain, just like Mount Lebanon. Let the people in the cities prosper like wild flowers.

¹⁷May the glory of the king shine brightly for ever like the sun in the sky. Let him make nations prosper and learn to praise him.

¹⁸LORD God of Israel, we praise you. Only you can work miracles.

¹⁹We will always praise your glorious name. Let your glory be seen everywhere on earth. Amen and amen.

²⁰This ends the prayers of David, the son of Jesse.

73¹ God is truly good to Israel, especially to everyone with a pure heart.

²But I almost stumbled and fell,

³because it made me jealous to see proud and evil people and to watch them prosper.

⁴They never have to suffer, they stay healthy,

⁵and they don't have troubles like everyone else.

⁶Their pride is like a necklace, and they commit sin more often than they dress themselves.

⁷Their eyes bulge with fat, and their minds are flooded with foolish thoughts.

⁸They sneer and say cruel things, and because of their pride, they make violent threats.

⁹They dare to speak against God and to order others around.

¹⁰God will bring his people back, and they will drink the water he so freely gives.

¹¹Only evil people would say, God Most High cannot know everything!

¹²Yet all goes well for them, and they live in peace.

¹³What good did it do me to keep my thoughts pure and refuse to do wrong?

¹⁴I am sick all day, and I am punished each morning.

¹⁵If I had said evil things, I would not have been loyal to your people.

¹⁶It was hard for me to understand all this!

¹⁷Then I went to your temple, and there I understood what will happen to my enemies.

¹⁸You will make them stumble, never to get up again.

¹⁹They will be terrified, suddenly swept away and no longer there.

²⁰They will disappear, Lord, despised like a bad dream the morning after.

²¹Once I was bitter and brokenhearted.

²²I was stupid and ignorant, and I treated you as a wild animal would.

²³But I never really left you, and you hold my right hand.

²⁴Your advice has been my guide, and later you will welcome me in glory.

²⁵In heaven I have only you, and on this earth you are all I want.

²⁶My body and mind may fail, but you are my strength and my choice for ever.

²⁷Powerful LORD God, all who stay far from you will be lost, and you will destroy those who are unfaithful.

²⁸It is good for me to be near you. I choose you as my protector, and I will tell about your wonderful deeds.

74¹Our God, why have you completely rejected us? Why are you so angry with the ones you care for?

²Remember the people you rescued long ago, the tribe you chose to be your very own. Think of Mount Zion, your home;

³walk over to the temple left in ruins for ever by those who hate us.

⁴Your enemies roared like lions in your holy temple, and they have placed their banners there.

⁵It looks like a forest chopped to pieces.

⁶They used axes and hatchets to smash the carvings.

⁷They burnt down your temple and badly disgraced it.

⁸They said to themselves, We'll crush them! Then they burnt every one of your meeting places all over the country.

⁹There are no more miracles and no more prophets. Who knows how long it will be like this?

¹⁰Our God, how much longer will our enemies sneer? Won't they ever stop insulting you?

¹¹Why don't you punish them? Why are you holding back?

¹²Our God and King, you have ruled since ancient times; you have won victories everywhere on this earth.

¹³By your power you made a path through the sea, and you smashed the heads of sea monsters.

¹⁴You crushed the heads of the monster Leviathan, then fed him to wild creatures in the desert.

¹⁵You opened the ground for streams and springs and dried up mighty rivers.

¹⁶You rule the day and the night, and you put the moon and the sun in place.

¹⁷You made summer and winter and gave them to the earth.

¹⁸Remember your enemies, LORD! They foolishly sneer and won't respect you.

¹⁹You treat us like pet doves, but they ill-treat us. Don't keep forgetting us and letting us be fed to those wild animals.

²⁰Remember the agreement you made with us. Violent enemies are hiding in every dark corner of the earth.

²¹Don't disappoint those in need or make them turn from you, but help the poor and homeless to shout your praises.

²²Do something, God! Defend yourself. Remember how those fools sneer at you all day long.

²³Don't forget the loud shouts of your enemies.

75¹Our God, we thank you for being so near to us! Everyone celebrates your wonderful deeds.

²You have set a time to judge with fairness.

³The earth trembles, and its people shake; you alone keep its foundations firm.

⁴You tell every boaster, Stop boasting! And to the wicked you say, Don't boast of your power!

⁵Stop boasting! Stop telling me how great you are.

⁶Our LORD and our God, victory doesn't come from the east or the west or from the desert.

⁷ You are the one who judges. You can take away power and give it to others.

⁸ You hold in your hand a cup filled with wine, strong and foaming. You will pour out some for every sinful person on this earth, and they will have to drink until it is gone.

⁹ But I will always tell about you, the God of Jacob, and I will sing your praise.

¹⁰ Our Lord, you will destroy the power of evil people, but you will give strength to those who are good.

76 ¹ You, our God, are famous in Judah and honoured in Israel.

² Your home is on Mount Zion in the city of peace.

³ There you destroyed fiery arrows, shields, swords, and all the other weapons.

⁴ You are more glorious than the eternal mountains.

⁵ Brave warriors were robbed of what they had taken, and now they lie dead, unable to lift an arm.

⁶ God of Jacob, when you roar, enemy chariots and horses drop dead in their tracks.

⁷ Our God, you are fearsome, and no one can oppose you when you are angry.

⁸ From heaven you announced your decisions as judge! And all who live on this earth were terrified and silent

⁹ when you took over as judge, ready to rescue everyone in need.

¹⁰ Even the most angry people will praise you when you are furious.

¹¹ Everyone, make your promises to the LORD your God and do what you promise. The LORD is fearsome, and all his servants should bring him gifts.

¹² God destroys the courage of rulers and kings and makes cowards of them.

77 ¹ I pray to you, Lord God, and I beg you to listen.

² In days filled with trouble, I search for you. And at night I tirelessly lift my hands in prayer, refusing comfort.

³ When I think of you, I feel restless and weak.

⁴ Because of you, Lord God, I can't sleep. I am restless and can't even talk.

⁵ I think of times gone by, of those years long ago.

⁶ Each night my mind is flooded with questions:

⁷ Have you rejected me for ever? Won't you be kind again?

⁸ Is this the end of your love and your promises?

⁹ Have you forgotten how to have pity? Do you refuse to show mercy because of your anger?

¹⁰ Then I said, God Most High, what hurts me most is that you no longer help us with your mighty arm.

¹¹ Our LORD, I will remember the things you have done, your miracles of long ago.

¹² I will think about each one of your mighty deeds.

¹³ Everything you do is right, and no other god compares with you.

¹⁴ You alone work miracles, and you have let nations see your mighty power.

¹⁵ With your own arm you rescued your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

¹⁶ The ocean looked at you, God, and it trembled deep down with fear.

¹⁷ Water flowed from the clouds. Thunder was heard above as your arrows of lightning flashed about.

¹⁸Your thunder roared like chariot wheels. The world was made bright by lightning, and all the earth trembled.

¹⁹You walked through the water of the mighty sea, but your footprints were never seen.

²⁰You guided your people like a flock of sheep, and you chose Moses and Aaron to be their leaders.

78¹ My friends, I beg you to listen as I teach.

²I will give instruction and explain the mystery of what happened long ago.

³These are things we learnt from our ancestors,

⁴and we will tell them to the next generation. We won't keep secret the glorious deeds and the mighty miracles of the LORD.

⁵God gave his Law to Jacob's descendants, the people of Israel. And he told our ancestors to teach their children,

⁶so that each new generation would know his Law and tell it to the next.

⁷Then they would trust God and obey his teachings, without forgetting anything God had done.

⁸They would be different from their ancestors, who were stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful to God.

⁹The warriors from Ephraim were armed with arrows, but they ran away when the battle began.

¹⁰They broke their agreement with God, and they turned their backs on his teaching.

¹¹They forgot all he had done, even the mighty miracles

¹²he did for their ancestors near Zoan in Egypt.

¹³God made a path in the sea and piled up the water as he led them across.

¹⁴He guided them during the day with a cloud, and each night he led them with a flaming fire.

¹⁵God made water flow from rocks he split open in the desert, and his people drank freely, as though from a lake.

¹⁶He made streams gush out like rivers from rocks.

¹⁷But in the desert, the people of God Most High kept sinning and rebelling.

¹⁸They stubbornly tested God and demanded from him what they wanted to eat.

¹⁹They challenged God by saying, Can God provide food out here in the desert?

²⁰It's true God struck the rock and water gushed out like a river, but can he give his people bread and meat?

²¹When the LORD heard this, he was angry and furious with Jacob's descendants, the people of Israel.

²²They had refused to trust him, and they had doubted his saving power.

²³But God gave a command to the clouds, and he opened the doors in the skies.

²⁴From heaven he sent grain that they called manna.

²⁵He gave them more than enough, and each one of them ate this special food.

²⁶God's mighty power brought a strong wind from the south-east,

²⁷and it brought birds that covered the ground, like sand on the beach.

²⁸Then God made the birds fall in the camp of his people near their tents.

²⁹God gave his people all they wanted, and each of them ate until they were full.

³⁰But before they had swallowed the last bite,

³¹ God became angry and killed the strongest and best from the families of Israel.

³² But the rest kept on sinning and would not trust God's miracles.

³³ So he cut their lives short and made them terrified.

³⁴ After he killed some of them, the others turned to him with all their hearts.

³⁵ They remembered God Most High, the mighty rock that kept them safe.

³⁶ But they tried to flatter God, and they told him lies;

³⁷ they were unfaithful and broke their promises.

³⁸ Yet God was kind. He kept forgiving their sins and didn't destroy them. He often became angry, but never lost his temper.

³⁹ God remembered that they were made of flesh and were like a wind that blows once and then dies down.

⁴⁰ While they were in the desert, they often rebelled and made God sad.

⁴¹ They kept testing him and caused terrible pain for the Holy One of Israel.

⁴²They forgot about his power and how he had rescued them from their enemies.

⁴³God showed them all kinds of wonderful miracles near Zoan in Egypt.

⁴⁴He turned the rivers of Egypt into blood, and no one could drink from the streams.

⁴⁵He sent swarms of flies to pester the Egyptians, and he sent frogs to cause them trouble.

⁴⁶God let worms and grasshoppers eat their crops.

⁴⁷He destroyed their grapevines and their fig trees with hail and floods.

⁴⁸Then he killed their cattle with hail and their other animals with lightning.

⁴⁹God was so angry and furious that he went into a rage and caused them great trouble by sending swarms of destroying angels.

⁵⁰God gave in to his anger and slaughtered them in a terrible way.

⁵¹He killed the firstborn son of each Egyptian family.

⁵²Then God led his people out of Egypt and guided them in the desert like a flock of sheep.

⁵³ He led them safely along, and they were not afraid, but their enemies drowned in the sea.

⁵⁴ God brought his people to the sacred mountain that he had taken by his own power.

⁵⁵ He made nations run from the tribes of Israel, and he let the tribes take over their land.

⁵⁶ But the people tested God Most High, and they refused to obey his laws.

⁵⁷ They were as unfaithful as their ancestors, and they were as crooked as a twisted arrow.

⁵⁸ God demanded all their love, but they made him angry by worshipping idols.

⁵⁹ So God became furious and completely rejected the people of Israel.

⁶⁰ Then he deserted his home at Shiloh, where he lived here on earth.

⁶¹ He let enemies capture the sacred chest and let them dishonour him.

⁶² God took out his anger on his chosen ones and let them be killed by enemy swords.

⁶³ Fire destroyed the young men, and the young women were left with no one to marry.

⁶⁴ Priests died violent deaths, but their widows were not allowed to mourn.

⁶⁵ Finally the Lord woke up, and he shouted like a drunken soldier.

⁶⁶ God scattered his enemies and made them ashamed for ever.

⁶⁷ Then the Lord decided not to make his home with Joseph's descendants in Ephraim.

⁶⁸ Instead he chose the tribe of Judah, and he chose Mount Zion, the place he loves.

⁶⁹ There he built his temple as lofty as the mountains and as solid as the earth that he had made to last for ever.

⁷⁰ The Lord God chose David to be his servant and took him from tending sheep

⁷¹ and from caring for lambs. Then God made him the leader of Israel, his own nation.

⁷² David treated the people fairly and guided them with wisdom.

79¹ Our God, foreign nations have taken your land, disgraced your temple, and left Jerusalem in ruins.

² They have fed the bodies of your servants to flesh-eating birds; your loyal people are food for savage animals.

³All Jerusalem is covered with their blood, and there is no one left to bury them.

⁴Every nation around us sneers and makes fun.

⁵Our LORD, will you keep on being angry? Will your angry feelings keep flaming up like fire?

⁶Get angry with those nations that don't know you and won't worship you!

⁷They have gobbled up Jacob's descendants and left the land in ruins.

⁸Don't make us pay for the sins of our ancestors. Have pity and come quickly! We are completely helpless.

⁹Our God, you keep us safe. Now help us! Rescue us. Forgive our sins and bring honour to yourself.

¹⁰Why should nations ask us, Where is your God? Let us and the other nations see you take revenge for your servants who died a violent death.

¹¹Listen to the prisoners groan! Let your mighty power save all who are sentenced to die.

¹²Each of those nations sneered at you, our Lord. Now let others sneer at them, seven times as much.

¹³Then we, your people, will always thank you. We are like sheep with you as our shepherd, and all generations will hear us praise you.

80¹ Shepherd of Israel, you lead the descendants of Joseph, and you sit on your throne above the winged creatures. Listen to our prayer and let your light shine

²for the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Save us by your power.

³Our God, make us strong again! Smile on us and save us.

⁴LORD God All-Powerful, how much longer will the prayers of your people make you angry?

⁵You gave us tears for food, and you made us drink them by the bowlful.

⁶Because of you, our enemies who live nearby laugh and joke about us.

⁷But if you smile on us, we will be saved.

⁸We were like a grapevine you brought out of Egypt. You chased other nations away and planted us here.

⁹Then you cleared the ground, and we put our roots deep, spreading over the land.

¹⁰Shade from this vine covered the mountains. Its branches climbed the mighty cedars

¹¹and stretched to the sea; its new growth reached to the river.

¹²Our Lord, why have you torn down the wall from around the vineyard? You let everyone who walks by pick the grapes.

¹³Now the vine is gobbled up by pigs from the forest and other wild animals.

¹⁴God All-Powerful, please do something! Look down from heaven and see what's happening to this vine.

¹⁵With your own hands you planted its roots, and you raised it as your very own.

¹⁶Enemies chopped the vine down and set it on fire. Now show your anger and destroy them.

¹⁷But help the one who sits at your right side, the one you raised to be your own.

¹⁸Then we will never turn away. Put new life into us, and we will worship you.

¹⁹LORD God All-Powerful, make us strong again! Smile on us and save us.

81 ¹ Be happy and shout to God who makes us strong! Shout praises to the God of Jacob.

² Sing as you play tambourines and the lovely sounding stringed instruments.

³ Sound the trumpets and start the New Moon Festival. We must also celebrate when the moon is full.

⁴ This is the law in Israel, and it was given to us by the God of Jacob.

⁵ The descendants of Joseph were told to obey it, when God led them out from the land of Egypt. In a language unknown to me, I heard someone say:

⁶ I lifted the burden from your shoulder and took the heavy basket from your hands.

⁷ When you were in trouble, I rescued you, and from the thunderclouds, I answered your prayers. Later I tested you at Meribah Spring.

⁸ Listen, my people, while I, the Lord, correct you! Israel, if you would only pay attention to me!

⁹ Don't worship foreign gods or bow down to gods you know nothing about.

¹⁰I am the LORD your God. I rescued you from Egypt. Just ask, and I will give you whatever you need.

¹¹But, my people, Israel, you refused to listen, and you would have nothing to do with me!

¹²So I let you be stubborn and keep on following your own advice.

¹³My people, Israel, if only you would listen and do as I say!

¹⁴I, the LORD, would quickly defeat your enemies with my mighty power.

¹⁵Everyone who hates me would come crawling, and that would be the end of them.

¹⁶But I would feed you with the finest bread and with the best honey until you were full.

82¹When all the other gods have come together, the Lord God judges them and says:

²How long will you keep judging unfairly and favouring evil people?

³Be fair to the poor and to orphans. Defend the helpless and everyone in need.

⁴Rescue the weak and homeless from the powerful hands of heartless people.

⁵None of you know or understand a thing. You live in darkness, while the foundations of the earth tremble.

⁶I, the Most High God, say that all of you are gods and also my own children.

⁷But you will die, just like everyone else, including powerful rulers.

⁸Do something, God! Judge the nations of the earth; they belong to you.

83 ¹Our God, don't just sit there, silently doing nothing!

²Your hateful enemies are turning against you and rebelling.

³They are sly, and they plot against those you treasure.

⁴They say, Let's wipe out the nation of Israel and make sure that no one remembers its name!

⁵All of them fully agree in their plans against you, and among them are

⁶Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites;

⁷Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia and Phoenicia.

⁸Even Assyria has joined forces with Moab and Ammon.

⁹Our Lord, punish all of them as you punished Midian. Destroy them, as you

destroyed Sisera and Jabin at Kishon
Creek

¹⁰near Endor, and let their bodies rot.

¹¹Treat their leaders as you did Oreb
and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna.

¹²All of them said, We'll take God's
valuable land!

¹³Our God, scatter them around like
dust in a whirlwind.

¹⁴Just as flames destroy forests on the
mountains,

¹⁵pursue and terrify them with storms
of your own.

¹⁶Make them blush with shame, until
they turn and worship you, our LORD.

¹⁷Let them be for ever ashamed and
confused. Let them die in disgrace.

¹⁸Make them realize that you are the
LORD Most High, the only ruler of earth!

84 ¹LORD God All-Powerful, your
temple is so lovely!

²Deep in my heart I long for your
temple, and with all that I am I sing
joyful songs to you.

³LORD God All-Powerful, my King and
my God, sparrows find a home near your
altars; swallows build nests there to
raise their young.

⁴You bless everyone who lives in your house, and they sing your praises.

⁵You bless all who depend on you for their strength and all who deeply desire to visit your temple.

⁶When they reach Dry Valley, springs start flowing, and the autumn rain fills it with pools of water.

⁷Your people grow stronger, and you, the God of gods, will be seen in Zion.

⁸LORD God All-Powerful, the God of Jacob, please answer my prayer!

⁹You are the shield that protects your people, and I am your chosen one. Won't you smile on me?

¹⁰One day in your temple is better than a thousand anywhere else. I would rather serve in your house, than live in the homes of the wicked.

¹¹Our LORD and our God, you are like the sun and also like a shield. You treat us with kindness and with honour, never denying any good thing to those who live right.

¹²LORD God All-Powerful, you bless everyone who trusts you.

85¹ Our LORD, you have blessed your land and made all go well for Jacob's descendants.

² You have forgiven the sin and taken away the guilt of your people.

³ Your fierce anger is no longer aimed at us.

⁴ Our LORD and our God, you save us! Please bring us back home and don't be angry.

⁵ Will you always be angry with us and our families?

⁶ Won't you give us fresh life and let your people be glad because of you?

⁷ Show us your love and save us!

⁸ I will listen to you, LORD God, because you promise peace to those who are faithful and no longer foolish.

⁹ You are ready to rescue everyone who worships you, so that you will live with us in all your glory.

¹⁰ Love and loyalty will come together; goodness and peace will unite.

¹¹ Loyalty will sprout from the ground; justice will look down from the sky above.

¹² Our LORD, you will bless us; our land will produce wonderful crops.

¹³Justice will march in front, making a path for you to follow.

86 ¹Please listen, LORD, and answer my prayer! I am poor and helpless.

²Protect me and save me because you are my God. I am your faithful servant, and I trust you.

³Be kind to me! I pray to you all day.

⁴Make my heart glad! I serve you, and my prayer is sincere.

⁵You willingly forgive, and your love is always there for those who pray to you.

⁶Please listen, LORD! Answer my prayer for help.

⁷When I am in trouble, I pray, knowing you will listen.

⁸No other gods are like you; only you work miracles.

⁹You created each nation, and they will all bow down to worship and honour you.

¹⁰You perform great wonders because you alone are God.

¹¹Teach me to follow you, and I will obey your truth. Always keep me faithful.

¹²With all my heart I thank you. I praise you, LORD God.

¹³Your love for me is so great that you protected me from death and the grave.

¹⁴Proud and violent enemies, who don't care about you, have ganged up to attack and kill me.

¹⁵But you, the Lord God, are kind and merciful. You don't easily get angry, and your love can always be trusted.

¹⁶I serve you, LORD, and I am the child of one of your servants. Look on me with kindness. Make me strong and save me.

¹⁷Show that you approve of me! Then my hateful enemies will feel like fools, because you have helped and comforted me.

87 ¹Zion was built by the LORD on the holy mountain,

²and he loves that city more than any other place in all of Israel.

³Zion, you are the city of God, and wonderful things are told about you.

⁴Egypt, Babylonia, Philistia, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia are some of those nations that know you, and their people all say, I was born in Zion.

⁵God Most High will strengthen the city of Zion. Then everyone will say, We were born here too.

⁶The LORD will make a list of his people, and all who were born here will be included.

⁷All who sing or dance will say, I too am from Zion.

88 ¹You keep me safe, LORD God.

So when I pray at night,
²please listen carefully to each of my concerns.

³I am deeply troubled and close to death;

⁴I am as good as dead and completely helpless.

⁵I am no better off than those in the grave, those you have forgotten and no longer help.

⁶You have put me in the deepest and darkest grave;

⁷your anger rolls over me like ocean waves.

⁸You have made my friends turn in horror from me. I am a prisoner who cannot escape,

⁹and I am almost blind because of my sorrow. Each day I lift my hands in prayer to you, LORD.

¹⁰Do you work miracles for the dead? Do they stand up and praise you?

¹¹ Are your love and loyalty announced in the world of the dead?

¹² Do they know of your miracles or your saving power in the dark world below where all is forgotten?

¹³ Each morning I pray to you, LORD.

¹⁴ Why do you reject me? Why do you turn from me?

¹⁵ Ever since I was a child, I have been sick and close to death. You have terrified me and made me helpless.

¹⁶ Your anger is like a flood! And I am shattered by your furious attacks

¹⁷ that strike each day and from every side.

¹⁸ My friends and neighbours have turned against me because of you, and now darkness is my only companion.

89¹ Our LORD, I will sing of your love for ever. Everyone yet to be born will hear me praise your faithfulness.

² I will tell them, God's love can always be trusted, and his faithfulness lasts as long as the heavens.

³ You said, David, my servant, is my chosen one, and this is the agreement I made with him:

⁴David, one of your descendants will always be king.

⁵Our LORD, let the heavens now praise your miracles, and let all your angels praise your faithfulness.

⁶None who live in the heavens can compare with you.

⁷You are the most fearsome of all who live in heaven; all the others fear and greatly honour you.

⁸You are LORD God All-Powerful! No one is as loving and faithful as you are.

⁹You rule the roaring sea and calm its waves.

¹⁰You crushed the monster Rahab, and with your powerful arm you scattered your enemies.

¹¹The heavens and the earth belong to you. And so does the world with all its people because you created them

¹²and everything else. Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon gladly praise you.

¹³You are strong and mighty!

¹⁴Your kingdom is ruled by justice and fairness with love and faithfulness leading the way.

¹⁵Our LORD, you bless those who join in the festival and walk in the brightness of your presence.

¹⁶We are happy all day because of you, and your saving power brings honour to us.

¹⁷Your own glorious power makes us strong, and because of your kindness, our strength increases.

¹⁸Our LORD and our King, the Holy One of Israel, you are truly our shield.

¹⁹In a vision, you once said to your faithful followers: I have helped a mighty hero. I chose him from my people and made him famous.

²⁰David, my servant, is the one I chose to be king,

²¹and I will always be there to help and strengthen him.

²²No enemy will outsmart David, and he won't be defeated by any hateful people.

²³I will strike down and crush his troublesome enemies.

²⁴He will always be able to depend on my love, and I will make him strong with my own power.

²⁵ I will let him rule the lands across the rivers and seas.

²⁶ He will say to me, You are my Father and my God, as well as the mighty rock where I am safe.

²⁷ I have chosen David as my firstborn son, and he will be the ruler of all kings on earth.

²⁸ My love for him will last, and my agreement with him will never be broken.

²⁹ One of David's descendants will always be king, and his family will rule until the sky disappears.

³⁰ Suppose some of his children should reject my Law and refuse my instructions.

³¹ Or suppose they should disobey all of my teachings.

³² Then I will correct and punish them because of their sins.

³³ But I will always love David and faithfully keep all of my promises to him.

³⁴ I won't break my agreement or go back on my word.

³⁵ I have sworn once and for all by my own holy name, and I won't lie to David.

³⁶His family will always rule. I will let his kingdom last as long as the sun

³⁷and moon appear in the sky.

³⁸You are now angry, God, and you have turned your back on your chosen king.

³⁹You broke off your agreement with your servant, the king, and you completely destroyed his kingdom.

⁴⁰The walls of his city have been broken through, and every fortress now lies in ruin.

⁴¹All who pass by take what they want, and nations everywhere joke about the king.

⁴²You made his enemies powerful and let them celebrate.

⁴³But you forced him to retreat because you did not fight on his side.

⁴⁴You took his crown and threw his throne to the ground.

⁴⁵You made an old man of him and put him to shame.

⁴⁶How much longer, LORD? Will you hide for ever? How long will your anger keep burning like fire?

⁴⁷Remember, life is short! Why did you empty our lives of all meaning?

⁴⁸No one can escape the power of death and the grave.

⁴⁹Our Lord, where is the love you have always shown and that you promised so faithfully to David?

⁵⁰Remember your servant, Lord! People make jokes about me, and I suffer many insults.

⁵¹I am your chosen one, but your enemies chase and make fun of me.

⁵²Our LORD, we praise you for ever. Amen and amen.

90¹ Our Lord, in all generations you have been our home.

²You have always been God long before the birth of the mountains, even before you created the earth and the world.

³At your command we die and turn back to dust,

⁴but a thousand years mean nothing to you! They are merely a day gone by or a few hours in the night.

⁵You bring our lives to an end just like a dream. We are merely tender grass

⁶that sprouts and grows in the morning, but dries up by evening.

⁷Your furious anger frightens and destroys us,

⁸and you know all our sins, even those we do in secret.

⁹Your anger is a burden each day we live, then life ends like a sigh.

¹⁰We can expect seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are healthy, but even our best years bring trouble and sorrow. Suddenly our time is up, and we disappear.

¹¹No one knows the full power of your furious anger, but it is as great as the fear that we owe to you.

¹²Teach us to use wisely all the time we have.

¹³Help us, LORD! Don't wait! Pity your servants.

¹⁴When morning comes, let your love satisfy all our needs. Then we can celebrate and be glad for what time we have left.

¹⁵Make us happy for as long as you caused us trouble and sorrow.

¹⁶Do wonderful things for us, your servants, and show your mighty power to our children.

¹⁷Our Lord and our God, treat us with kindness and let all go well for us. Please let all go well!

91 ¹ Live under the protection of God Most High and stay in the shadow of God All-Powerful.

² Then you will say to the LORD, You are my fortress, my place of safety; you are my God, and I trust you.

³ The Lord will keep you safe from secret traps and deadly diseases.

⁴ He will spread his wings over you and keep you secure. His faithfulness is like a shield or a city wall.

⁵ You won't need to worry about dangers at night or arrows during the day.

⁶ And you won't fear diseases that strike in the dark or sudden disaster at midday.

⁷ You will not be harmed, though thousands fall all around you.

⁸ And with your own eyes you will see the punishment of the wicked.

⁹ The LORD Most High is your fortress. Run to him for safety,

¹⁰ and no terrible disasters will strike you or your home.

¹¹ God will command his angels to protect you wherever you go.

¹² They will carry you in their arms, and you won't hurt your feet on the stones.

¹³You will overpower the strongest lions and the most deadly snakes.

¹⁴The Lord says, If you love me and truly know who I am, I will rescue you and keep you safe.

¹⁵When you are in trouble, call out to me. I will answer and be there to protect and honour you.

¹⁶You will live a long life and see my saving power.

92¹ It is wonderful to be grateful and to sing your praises, LORD Most High!

²It is wonderful each morning to tell about your love and at night to announce how faithful you are.

³I enjoy praising your name to the music of harps,

⁴because everything you do makes me happy, and I sing joyful songs.

⁵You do great things, LORD. Your thoughts are too deep

⁶for an ignorant fool to know or understand.

⁷Though the wicked sprout and spread like grass, they will be pulled up by their roots.

⁸But you will rule over all of us for ever,

⁹and your hateful enemies will be scattered and then destroyed.

¹⁰You have given me the strength of a wild ox, and you have chosen me to be your very own.

¹¹My eyes have seen, and my ears have heard the doom and destruction of my terrible enemies.

¹²Good people will prosper like palm trees, and they will grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon.

¹³They will take root in your house, LORD God, and they will do well.

¹⁴They will be like trees that stay healthy and fruitful, even when they are old.

¹⁵And they will say about you, The LORD always does right! God is our mighty rock.

93¹ Our LORD, you are King! Majesty and power are your royal robes. You put the world in place, and it will never be moved.

²You have always ruled, and you are eternal.

³The ocean is roaring, LORD! The sea is pounding hard.

⁴Its mighty waves are majestic, but you are more majestic, and you rule over all.

⁵Your decisions are firm, and your temple will always be beautiful and holy.

94¹LORD God, you punish the guilty. Show what you are like and punish them now.

²You judge the earth. Come and help us! Pay back those proud people for what they have done.

³How long will the wicked celebrate and be glad?

⁴All those cruel people strut and boast,

⁵and they crush and wound your chosen nation, LORD.

⁶They murder widows, foreigners, and orphans.

⁷Then they say, The LORD God of Jacob doesn't see or know.

⁸Can't you fools see? Won't you ever learn?

⁹God gave us ears and eyes! Can't he hear and see?

¹⁰God instructs the nations and gives knowledge to us all. Won't he also correct us?

¹¹ The LORD knows how useless our plans really are.

¹² Our LORD, you bless everyone whom you instruct and teach by using your Law.

¹³ You give them rest from their troubles, until a pit can be dug for the wicked.

¹⁴ You won't turn your back on your chosen nation.

¹⁵ Justice and fairness will go hand in hand, and all who do right will follow along.

¹⁶ Who will stand up for me against those cruel people?

¹⁷ If you had not helped me, LORD, I would soon have gone to the land of silence.

¹⁸ When I felt my feet slipping, you came with your love and kept me steady.

¹⁹ And when I was burdened with worries, you comforted me and made me feel secure.

²⁰ But you are opposed to dishonest lawmakers

²¹ who gang up to murder innocent victims.

²²You, LORD God, are my fortress, that mighty rock where I am safe.

²³You will pay back my enemies, and you will wipe them out for the evil they did.

95¹ Sing joyful songs to the LORD! Praise the mighty rock where we are safe.

²Come to worship him with thankful hearts and songs of praise.

³The LORD is the greatest God, king over all other gods.

⁴He holds the deepest part of the earth in his hands, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

⁵The ocean is the Lord's because he made it, and with his own hands he formed the dry land.

⁶Bow down and worship the LORD our Creator!

⁷The LORD is our God, and we are his people, the sheep he takes care of in his own pasture. Listen to God's voice today!

⁸Don't be stubborn and rebel as your ancestors did at Meribah and Massah out in the desert.

⁹For forty years they tested God and saw the things he did.

¹⁰Then God got tired of them and said, You never show good sense, and you don't understand what I want you to do.

¹¹In his anger, God told them, You people will never enter my place of rest.

96 ¹Sing a new song to the LORD!
Everyone on this earth, sing praises to the LORD,

²sing and praise his name. Day after day announce, The LORD has saved us!

³Tell every nation on earth, The LORD is wonderful and does marvellous things!

⁴The LORD is great and deserves our greatest praise! He is the only God worthy of our worship.

⁵Other nations worship idols, but the LORD created the heavens.

⁶Give honour and praise to the LORD, whose power and beauty fill his holy temple.

⁷Tell everyone of every nation, Praise the glorious power of the LORD.

⁸He is wonderful! Praise him and bring an offering into his temple.

⁹Everyone on earth, now tremble and worship the LORD, majestic and holy.

¹⁰Announce to the nations, The LORD is King! The world stands firm, never to be shaken, and he will judge its people with fairness.

¹¹Tell the heavens and the earth to be glad and celebrate! Command the ocean to roar with all its creatures

¹²and the fields to rejoice with all their crops. Then every tree in the forest will sing joyful songs

¹³to the LORD. He is coming to judge all people on earth with fairness and truth.

97 ¹The LORD is King! Tell the earth to celebrate and all islands to shout.

²Dark clouds surround him, and his throne is supported by justice and fairness.

³Fire leaps from his throne, destroying his enemies,

⁴and his lightning is so bright that the earth sees it and trembles.

⁵Mountains melt away like wax in the presence of the LORD of all the earth.

⁶The heavens announce, The LORD brings justice! Everyone sees God's glory.

⁷ Those who boast about the useless idols they worship are terribly ashamed, and all the false gods bow down to the LORD.

⁸ When the people of Zion and of the towns of Judah hear that God brings justice, they will celebrate.

⁹ The LORD rules the whole earth, and he is more glorious than all the false gods.

¹⁰ Love the LORD and hate evil! God protects his loyal people and rescues them from violence.

¹¹ If you obey and do right, a light will show you the way and fill you with happiness.

¹² You are the LORD's people! So celebrate and praise the only God.

98¹ Sing a new song to the LORD! He has worked miracles, and with his own powerful arm, he has won the victory.

² The LORD has shown the nations that he has the power to save and to bring justice.

³ God has been faithful in his love for Israel, and his saving power is seen everywhere on earth.

⁴Tell everyone on this earth to sing happy songs in praise of the LORD.

⁵Make music for him on harps. Play beautiful melodies!

⁶Sound the trumpets and horns and celebrate with joyful songs for our LORD and King!

⁷Command the ocean to roar with all its creatures, and the earth to shout with all its people.

⁸Order the rivers to clap their hands, and all the hills to sing together.

⁹Let them worship the LORD! He is coming to judge everyone on the earth, and he will be honest and fair.

99¹ Our LORD, you are King! You rule from your throne above the winged creatures, as people tremble and the earth shakes.

²You are praised in Zion, and you control all nations.

³Only you are God! And your power alone, so great and fearsome, is worthy of praise.

⁴You are our mighty King, a lover of fairness, who sees that justice is done everywhere in Israel.

⁵ Our LORD and our God, we praise you and kneel down to worship you, the God of holiness!

⁶ Moses and Aaron were two of your priests. Samuel was also one of those who prayed in your name, and you, our LORD, answered their prayers.

⁷ You spoke to them from a thick cloud, and they obeyed your laws.

⁸ Our LORD and our God, you answered their prayers and forgave their sins, but when they did wrong, you punished them.

⁹ We praise you, LORD God, and we worship you at your sacred mountain. Only you are God!

100 ¹ Shout praises to the LORD, everyone on this earth.

² Be joyful and sing as you come in to worship the LORD!

³ You know the LORD is God! He created us, and we belong to him; we are his people, the sheep in his pasture.

⁴ Be thankful and praise the LORD as you enter his temple.

⁵ The LORD is good! His love and faithfulness will last for ever.

101 ¹ I will sing to you, LORD! I will celebrate your kindness and your justice.

² Please help me learn to do the right thing, and I will be honest and fair in my own kingdom.

³ I refuse to be corrupt or to take part in anything crooked,

⁴ and I won't be dishonest or deceitful.

⁵ Anyone who spreads gossip will be silenced, and no one who is conceited will be my friend.

⁶ I will find trustworthy people to serve as my advisers, and only an honest person will serve as an official.

⁷ No one who cheats or lies will have a position in my royal court.

⁸ Each morning I will silence any lawbreakers I find in the countryside or in the city of the LORD.

102 ¹ I pray to you, LORD! Please listen.

² Don't hide from me in my time of trouble. Pay attention to my prayer and quickly give an answer.

³ My days disappear like smoke, and my bones are burning as though in a furnace.

⁴I am wasting away like grass, and my appetite is gone.

⁵My groaning never stops, and my bones can be seen through my skin.

⁶I am like a lonely owl in the desert

⁷or a restless sparrow alone on a roof.

⁸My enemies insult me all day, and they use my name for a curse word.

⁹Instead of food, I have ashes to eat and tears to drink,

¹⁰because you are furious and have thrown me aside.

¹¹My life fades like a shadow at the end of day and withers like grass.

¹²Our LORD, you are King for ever and will always be famous.

¹³You will show pity to Zion because the time has come.

¹⁴We, your servants, love each stone in the city, and we are sad to see them lying in the dust.

¹⁵Our LORD, the nations will honour you, and all kings on earth will praise your glory.

¹⁶You will rebuild the city of Zion. Your glory will be seen,

¹⁷and the prayers of the homeless will be answered.

¹⁸Future generations must also praise the LORD, so write this for them:

¹⁹From his holy temple, the LORD looked down at the earth.

²⁰He listened to the groans of prisoners, and he rescued everyone who was doomed to die.

²¹All Jerusalem should praise you, our LORD,

²²when people from every nation meet to worship you.

²³I should still be strong, but you, LORD, have made an old person of me.

²⁴You will live for ever! Years mean nothing to you. Don't cut my life in half!

²⁵In the beginning, LORD, you laid the earth's foundation and created the heavens.

²⁶They will all disappear and wear out like clothes. You change them, as you would a coat, but you last for ever.

²⁷You are always the same. Years cannot change you.

²⁸Every generation of those who serve you will live in your presence.

103¹ With all my heart I praise the LORD, and with all that I am I praise his holy name!

²With all my heart I praise the LORD! I will never forget how kind he has been.

³The LORD forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick,

⁴and protects us from death. His kindness and love are a crown on our heads.

⁵Each day that we live, he provides for our needs and gives us the strength of a young eagle.

⁶For all who are ill-treated, the LORD brings justice.

⁷He taught his Law to Moses and showed all Israel what he could do.

⁸The LORD is merciful! He is kind and patient, and his love never fails.

⁹The LORD won't always be angry and point out our sins;

¹⁰he doesn't punish us as our sins deserve.

¹¹How great is God's love for all who worship him? Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!

¹²How far has the LORD taken our sins from us? Further than the distance from east to west!

¹³Just as parents are kind to their children, the LORD is kind to all who worship him,

¹⁴because he knows we are made of dust.

¹⁵We humans are like grass or wild flowers that quickly bloom.

¹⁶But a scorching wind blows, and they quickly wither to be for ever forgotten.

¹⁷The LORD is always kind to those who worship him, and he keeps his promises to their descendants

¹⁸who faithfully obey him.

¹⁹God has set up his kingdom in heaven, and he rules the whole creation.

²⁰All you mighty angels, who obey God's commands, come and praise your LORD!

²¹All you thousands who serve and obey God, come and praise your LORD!

²²All God's creation and all that he rules, come and praise your LORD! With all my heart I praise the LORD!

104¹ I praise you, LORD God, with all my heart. You are glorious and majestic, dressed in royal robes

²and surrounded by light. You spread out the sky like a tent,

³and you built your home over the mighty ocean. The clouds are your chariot with the wind as its wings.

⁴The winds are your messengers, and flames of fire are your servants.

⁵You built foundations for the earth, and it will never be shaken.

⁶You covered the earth with the ocean that rose above the mountains.

⁷Then your voice thundered! And the water flowed

⁸down the mountains and through the valleys to the place you prepared.

⁹Now you have set boundaries, so that the water will never flood the earth again.

¹⁰You provide streams of water in the hills and valleys,

¹¹so that the donkeys and other wild animals can satisfy their thirst.

¹²Birds build their nests nearby and sing in the trees.

¹³From your home above you send rain on the hills and water the earth.

¹⁴You let the earth produce grass for cattle, plants for our food,

¹⁵wine to cheer us up, olive oil for our skin, and grain for our health.

¹⁶Our LORD, your trees always have water, and so do the cedars you planted in Lebanon.

¹⁷Birds nest in those trees, and storks make their home in the fir trees.

¹⁸Wild goats find a home in the tall mountains, and small animals can hide between the rocks.

¹⁹You created the moon to tell us the seasons. The sun knows when to set,

²⁰and you made the darkness, so the animals in the forest could come out at night.

²¹Lions roar as they hunt for the food you provide.

²²But when morning comes, they return to their dens,

²³then we go out to work until the end of day.

²⁴Our LORD, by your wisdom you made so many things; the whole earth is covered with your living creatures.

²⁵But what about the ocean so big and wide? It is alive with creatures, large and small.

²⁶And there are the ships, as well as Leviathan, the monster you created to splash in the sea.

²⁷ All of these depend on you to provide them with food,

²⁸ and you feed each one with your own hand, until they are full.

²⁹ But when you turn away, they are terrified; when you end their life, they die and rot.

³⁰ You created all of them by your Spirit, and you give new life to the earth.

³¹ Our LORD, we pray that your glory will last for ever and that you will be pleased with what you have done.

³² You look at the earth, and it trembles. You touch the mountains, and smoke goes up.

³³ As long as I live, I will sing and praise you, the LORD God.

³⁴ I hope my thoughts will please you, because you are the one who makes me glad.

³⁵ Destroy all wicked sinners from the earth once and for all. With all my heart I praise you, LORD! I praise you!

105 ¹ Praise the LORD and pray in his name! Tell everyone what he has done.

² Sing praises to the LORD! Tell about his miracles.

³Celebrate and worship his holy name with all your heart.

⁴Trust the LORD and his mighty power.

⁵Remember his miracles and all his wonders and his fair decisions.

⁶You belong to the family of Abraham, his servant; you are his chosen ones, the descendants of Jacob.

⁷The LORD is our God, bringing justice everywhere on earth.

⁸He will never forget his agreement or his promises, not in thousands of years.

⁹God made an eternal promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

¹⁰(105: 9)

¹¹when he said, I'll give you the land of Canaan.

¹²At the time there were only a few of us, and we were homeless.

¹³We wandered from nation to nation, from one country to another.

¹⁴God did not let anyone ill-treat our people. Instead he protected us by punishing rulers

¹⁵and telling them, Don't touch my chosen leaders or harm my prophets!

¹⁶God kept crops from growing until food was scarce everywhere in the land.

¹⁷ But he had already sent Joseph, sold as a slave into Egypt,

¹⁸ with chains of iron around his legs and neck.

¹⁹ Joseph remained a slave until his own words had come true, and the LORD had finished testing him.

²⁰ Then the king of Egypt set Joseph free

²¹ and put him in charge of everything he owned.

²² Joseph was in command of the officials, and he taught the leaders how to use wisdom.

²³ Jacob and his family came and settled in Egypt as foreigners.

²⁴ They were the LORD's people, so he let them grow stronger than their enemies.

²⁵ They served the LORD, and he made the Egyptians plan hateful things against them.

²⁶ God sent his servant Moses. He also chose and sent Aaron

²⁷ to his people in Egypt, and they worked miracles and wonders there.

²⁸ Moses and Aaron obeyed God, and he sent darkness to cover Egypt.

²⁹ God turned their rivers into streams of blood, and the fish all died.

³⁰ Frogs were everywhere, even in the royal palace.

³¹ When God gave the command, flies and gnats swarmed all around.

³² In place of rain, God sent hailstones and flashes of lightning.

³³ He destroyed their grapevines and their fig trees, and he made splinters of all the other trees.

³⁴ God gave the command, and more grasshoppers came than could be counted.

³⁵ They ate every green plant and all the crops that grew in the land of Egypt.

³⁶ Then God took the life of every firstborn son.

³⁷ When God led Israel from Egypt, they took silver and gold, and no one was left behind.

³⁸ The Egyptians were afraid and gladly let them go.

³⁹ God hid them under a cloud and guided them by fire during the night.

⁴⁰ When they asked for food, he sent more birds than they could eat.

⁴¹ God even split open a rock, and streams of water gushed into the desert.

⁴² God never forgot his sacred promise to his servant Abraham.

⁴³ When the Lord rescued his chosen people from Egypt, they celebrated with songs.

⁴⁴ The Lord gave them the land and everything else the nations had worked for.

⁴⁵ He did this so that his people would obey all his laws. Shout praises to the LORD!

106 ¹ We will celebrate and praise you, LORD! You are good to us, and your love never fails.

² No one can praise you enough for all the mighty things you have done.

³ You bless those people who are honest and fair in everything they do.

⁴ Remember me, LORD, when you show kindness by saving your people.

⁵ Let me prosper with the rest of your chosen ones, as they celebrate with pride because they belong to you.

⁶ We and our ancestors have sinned terribly.

⁷ When they were in Egypt, they paid no attention to your marvellous deeds or your wonderful love. And they turned against you at the Red Sea.

⁸ But you were true to your name, and you rescued them to prove how mighty you are.

⁹ You said to the Red Sea, Dry up! Then you led your people across on land as dry as a desert.

¹⁰ You saved all of them

¹¹ and drowned every one of their enemies.

¹² Then your people trusted you and sang your praises.

¹³ But they soon forgot what you had done and rejected your advice.

¹⁴ They became greedy for food and tested you there in the desert.

¹⁵ So you gave them what they wanted, but later you destroyed them with a horrible disease.

¹⁶ Everyone in camp was jealous of Moses and of Aaron, your chosen priest.

¹⁷ Dathan and Abiram rebelled, and the earth opened up and swallowed them.

¹⁸ Then fire broke out and destroyed all of their followers.

¹⁹At Horeb your people made and worshipped the statue

²⁰of a bull, instead of you, their glorious God.

²¹You worked powerful miracles to save them from Egypt, but they forgot about you

²²and the fearsome things you did at the Red Sea.

²³You were angry and started to destroy them, but Moses, your chosen leader, begged you not to do it.

²⁴They would not trust you, LORD, and they did not like the promised land.

²⁵They would not obey you, and they grumbled in their tents.

²⁶So you threatened them by saying, I'll kill you out here in the desert!

²⁷I'll scatter your children everywhere in the world.

²⁸Your people became followers of a god named Baal Peor, and they ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

²⁹They did such terrible things that you punished them with a deadly disease.

³⁰But Phinehas helped them, and the sickness stopped.

³¹ Now he will always be highly honoured.

³² At Meribah Spring they turned against you and made you furious.

³³ Then Moses got into trouble for speaking in anger.

³⁴ Our LORD, they disobeyed you by refusing to destroy the nations.

³⁵ Instead they were friendly with those foreigners and followed their customs.

³⁶ Then they fell into the trap of worshipping idols.

³⁷ They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons

³⁸ and to the gods of Canaan. Then they poured out the blood of these innocent children and made the land filthy.

³⁹ By doing such gruesome things, they also became filthy.

⁴⁰ Finally, LORD, you were angry and terribly disgusted with your people.

⁴¹ So you put them in the power of nations that hated them.

⁴² They were ill-treated and abused by their enemies,

⁴³ but you saved them time after time. They were determined to rebel, and their sins caused their downfall.

⁴⁴ You answered their prayers when they were in trouble.

⁴⁵ You kept your agreement and were so merciful

⁴⁶ that their enemies had pity on them.

⁴⁷ Save us, LORD God! Bring us back from among the nations. Let us celebrate and shout in praise of your holy name.

⁴⁸ LORD God of Israel, you deserve to be praised for ever and ever. Let everyone say, Amen! Shout praises to the LORD!

107 ¹ Shout praises to the LORD! He is good to us, and his love never fails.

² Everyone the LORD has rescued from trouble should praise him,

³ everyone he has brought from the east and the west, the north and the south.

⁴ Some of you were lost in the scorching desert, far from a town.

⁵ You were hungry and thirsty and about to give up.

⁶ You were in serious trouble, but you prayed to the LORD, and he rescued you.

⁷ Straight away he brought you to a town.

⁸You should praise the LORD for his love and for the wonderful things he does for all of us.

⁹To everyone who is thirsty, he gives something to drink; to everyone who is hungry, he gives good things to eat.

¹⁰Some of you were prisoners suffering in deepest darkness and bound by chains,

¹¹because you had rebelled against God Most High and refused his advice.

¹²You were worn out from working like slaves, and no one came to help.

¹³You were in serious trouble, but you prayed to the LORD, and he rescued you.

¹⁴He brought you out of the deepest darkness and broke your chains.

¹⁵You should praise the LORD for his love and for the wonderful things he does for all of us.

¹⁶He breaks down bronze gates and shatters iron locks.

¹⁷Some of you had foolishly committed a lot of sins and were in terrible pain.

¹⁸The very thought of food was disgusting to you, and you were almost dead.

¹⁹You were in serious trouble, but you prayed to the LORD, and he rescued you.

²⁰By the power of his own word, he healed you and saved you from destruction.

²¹You should praise the LORD for his love and for the wonderful things he does for all of us.

²²You should celebrate by offering sacrifices and singing joyful songs to tell what he has done.

²³Some of you made a living by sailing the mighty sea,

²⁴and you saw the miracles the LORD performed there.

²⁵At his command a storm arose, and waves covered the sea.

²⁶You were tossed to the sky and to the ocean depths, until things looked so bad that you lost your courage.

²⁷You staggered like drunkards and gave up all hope.

²⁸You were in serious trouble, but you prayed to the LORD, and he rescued you.

²⁹He made the storm stop and the sea be quiet.

³⁰You were happy because of this, and he brought you to the port where you wanted to go.

³¹You should praise the LORD for his love and for the wonderful things he does for all of us.

³²Honour the LORD when you and your leaders meet to worship.

³³If you start doing wrong, the LORD will turn rivers into deserts,

³⁴flowing streams into scorched land, and fruitful fields into beds of salt.

³⁵But the LORD can also turn deserts into lakes and scorched land into flowing streams.

³⁶If you are hungry, you can settle there and build a town.

³⁷You can plant fields and vineyards that produce a good harvest.

³⁸The LORD will bless you with many children and with herds of cattle.

³⁹Sometimes you may be crushed by troubles and sorrows, until only a few of you are left to survive.

⁴⁰But the LORD will take revenge on those who conquer you, and he will make them wander across desert sands.

⁴¹ When you are suffering and in need, he will come to your rescue, and your families will grow as fast as a herd of sheep.

⁴² You will see this because you obey the LORD, but everyone who is wicked will be silenced.

⁴³ Be wise! Remember this and think about the kindness of the LORD.

108 ¹ Our God, I am faithful to you with all my heart, and you can trust me. I will sing and play music for you with all that I am.

² I will start playing my harps before the sun rises.

³ I will praise you, LORD, for everyone to hear; I will sing hymns to you in every nation.

⁴ Your love reaches higher than the heavens, and your loyalty extends beyond the clouds.

⁵ Our God, may you be honoured above the heavens; may your glory be seen everywhere on earth.

⁶ Answer my prayers and use your powerful arm to give us victory. Then the people you love will be safe.

⁷ Our God, from your holy place you made this promise: I will gladly divide up the city of Shechem and give away Succoth Valley piece by piece.

⁸ The lands of Gilead and Manasseh are mine. Ephraim is my war helmet, and Judah is my symbol of royal power.

⁹ Moab is merely my washbasin, and Edom belongs to me. I shout with victory over the Philistines.

¹⁰ Our God, who will bring me to the fortress or lead me to Edom?

¹¹ Have you rejected us? You don't lead our armies.

¹² Help us defeat our enemies! No one else can rescue us.

¹³ You are the one who gives us victory and crushes our enemies.

109 ¹ I praise you, God! Don't keep silent.

² Destructive and deceitful lies are told about me,

³ and hateful things are said for no reason.

⁴ I had pity and prayed for my enemies, but their words to me were harsh and cruel.

⁵For being friendly and kind, they paid me back with meanness and hatred.

⁶My enemies said, Find some worthless fools to accuse him of a crime.

⁷Try him and find him guilty! Consider his prayers a lie.

⁸Cut his life short and let someone else have his job.

⁹Make orphans of his children and a widow of his wife;

¹⁰make his children beg for food and live in the slums.

¹¹Let the people he owes take everything he owns. Give it all to strangers.

¹²Don't let anyone be kind to him or have pity on the children he leaves behind.

¹³Bring an end to his family, and from now on let him be a forgotten man.

¹⁴Don't let the LORD forgive the sins of his parents and his ancestors.

¹⁵Don't let the LORD forget the sins of his family, or let anyone remember his family ever lived.

¹⁶He was so cruel to the poor, homeless, and discouraged that they died young.

¹⁷ He cursed others. Now place a curse on him! He never wished others well. Wish only trouble for him!

¹⁸ He cursed others more often than he dressed himself. Let his curses strike him deep, just as water and olive oil soak through to our bones.

¹⁹ Let his curses surround him, just like the clothes he wears each day.

²⁰ Those are the cruel things my enemies wish for me. Let it all happen to them!

²¹ Be true to your name, LORD God! Show your great kindness and rescue me.

²² I am poor and helpless, and I have lost all hope.

²³ I am fading away like an evening shadow; I am tossed aside like a crawling insect.

²⁴ I have gone without eating, until my knees are weak, and my body is bony.

²⁵ When my enemies see me, they say cruel things and shake their heads.

²⁶ Please help me, LORD God! Come and save me because of your love.

²⁷ Let others know that you alone have saved me.

²⁸I don't care if they curse me, as long as you bless me. You will make my enemies fail when they attack, and you will make me glad to be your servant.

²⁹You will cover them with shame, just as their bodies are covered with clothes.

³⁰I will sing your praises and thank you, LORD, when your people meet.

³¹You help everyone in need, and you defend them when they are on trial.

110¹The LORD said to my Lord,
Sit at my right side, until I
make your enemies into a footstool for
you.

²The LORD will let your power reach out from Zion, and you will rule over your enemies.

³Your glorious power will be seen on the day you begin to rule. You will wear the sacred robes and shine like the morning sun in all your strength.

⁴The LORD has made a promise that will never be broken: You will be a priest for ever, just like Melchizedek.

⁵My Lord is at your right side, and when he gets angry he will crush the other kings.

⁶He will judge the nations and crack their skulls, leaving piles of dead bodies all over the earth.

⁷He will drink from any stream that he chooses, while winning victory after victory.

111 ¹Shout praises to the LORD!
With all my heart I will thank the LORD when his people meet.

²The LORD has done many wonderful things! Everyone who is pleased with God's marvellous deeds will keep them in mind.

³Everything the LORD does is glorious and majestic, and his power to bring justice will never end.

⁴The LORD God is famous for his wonderful deeds, and he is kind and merciful.

⁵He gives food to his worshippers and always keeps his agreement with them.

⁶He has shown his mighty power to his people and has given them the lands of other nations.

⁷God is always honest and fair, and his laws can be trusted.

⁸They are true and right and will stand for ever.

⁹God rescued his people, and he will never break his agreement with them. He is fearsome and holy.

¹⁰Respect and obey the LORD! This is the first step to wisdom and good sense. God will always be respected.

112¹ Shout praises to the LORD! The LORD blesses everyone who worships him and gladly obeys his teachings.

²Their descendants will have great power in the land, because the LORD blesses all who do right.

³They will get rich and prosper and will always be remembered for their fairness.

⁴They will be so kind and merciful and good, that they will be a light in the dark for others who do the right thing.

⁵Life will go well for those who freely lend and are honest in business.

⁶They won't ever be troubled, and the kind things they do will never be forgotten.

⁷Bad news won't bother them; they have decided to trust the LORD.

⁸They are dependable and not afraid, and they will live to see their enemies defeated.

⁹They will always be remembered and greatly praised, because they were kind and freely gave to the poor.

¹⁰When evil people see this, they angrily bite their tongues and disappear. They will never get what they really want.

113¹ Shout praises to the LORD!
Everyone who serves him,
come and praise his name.

²Let the name of the LORD be praised now and for ever.

³From dawn until sunset the name of the LORD deserves to be praised.

⁴The LORD is far above all the nations; he is more glorious than the heavens.

⁵No one can compare with the LORD our God. His throne is high above,

⁶and he looks down to see the heavens and the earth.

⁷God lifts the poor and needy from dust and ashes,

⁸and he lets them take part in ruling his people.

⁹When a wife has no children, he blesses her with some, and she is happy. Shout praises to the LORD!

114 ¹ God brought his people out of Egypt, that land with a strange language.

² He made Judah his holy place and ruled over Israel.

³ When the sea looked at God, it ran away, and the River Jordan flowed upstream.

⁴ The mountains and the hills skipped around like goats.

⁵ Ask the sea why it ran away or ask the Jordan why it flowed upstream.

⁶ Ask the mountains and the hills why they skipped like goats!

⁷ Earth, you will tremble, when the Lord God of Jacob comes near,

⁸ because he turns solid rock into flowing streams and pools of water.

115 ¹ We don't deserve praise! The LORD alone deserves all the praise, because of his love and faithfulness.

² Why should the nations ask, Where is your God?

³ Our God is in the heavens, doing as he chooses.

⁴ The idols of the nations are made of silver and gold.

⁵They have a mouth and eyes, but they can't speak or see.

⁶Their ears can't hear, and their noses can't smell.

⁷Their hands have no feeling, their legs don't move, and they can't make a sound.

⁸Everyone who made the idols and all who trust them are just as helpless as those useless gods.

⁹People of Israel, you must trust the LORD to help and protect you.

¹⁰Family of Aaron the priest, you must trust the LORD to help and protect you.

¹¹All of you worship the LORD, so you must trust him to help and protect you.

¹²The LORD will not forget to give us his blessing; he will bless all Israel and the family of Aaron.

¹³All who worship the LORD, no matter who they are, will receive his blessing.

¹⁴I pray that the LORD will let your family and your descendants always grow strong.

¹⁵May the LORD who created the heavens and the earth give you his blessing.

¹⁶The LORD has kept the heavens for himself, but he has given the earth to us humans.

¹⁷The dead are silent and cannot praise the LORD,

¹⁸but we will praise him now and for evermore. Shout praises to the LORD!

116¹I love you, LORD! You answered my prayers.

²You paid attention to me, and so I will pray to you as long as I live.

³Death attacked from all sides, and I was captured by its painful chains. But when I was really suffering,

⁴I prayed and said, LORD, please don't let me die!

⁵You are kind, LORD, so good and merciful.

⁶You protect ordinary people, and when I was helpless, you saved me

⁷and treated me so kindly that I don't need to worry any more.

⁸You, LORD, have saved my life from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

⁹Now I will walk at your side in this land of the living.

¹⁰I was faithful to you when I was suffering,

¹¹though in my confusion I said, I can't trust anyone!

¹²What must I give you, LORD, for being so good to me?

¹³I will pour out an offering of wine to you, and I will pray in your name because you have saved me.

¹⁴I will keep my promise to you when your people meet.

¹⁵You are deeply concerned when one of your loyal people faces death.

¹⁶I worship you, LORD, just as my mother did, and you have rescued me from the chains of death.

¹⁷I will offer you a sacrifice to show how grateful I am, and I will pray.

¹⁸I will keep my promise to you when your people

¹⁹gather at your temple in Jerusalem. Shout praises to the LORD!

117 ¹All you nations, come, praise the LORD! Let everyone praise him.

²His love for us is wonderful; his faithfulness never ends. Shout praises to the LORD!

118¹ Tell the LORD how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful.

² Let Israel shout, God is always merciful!

³ Let the family of Aaron the priest shout, God is always merciful!

⁴ Let every true worshipper of the LORD shout, God is always merciful!

⁵ When I was really suffering, I prayed to the LORD. He answered my prayer, and took my worries away.

⁶ The LORD is on my side, and I am not afraid of what others can do to me.

⁷ With the LORD on my side, I will defeat all of my hateful enemies.

⁸ It is better to trust the LORD for protection than to trust anyone else,

⁹ including strong leaders.

¹⁰ Nations surrounded me, but I got rid of them by the power of the LORD.

¹¹ They attacked from all sides, but I got rid of them by the power of the LORD.

¹² They swarmed around like bees, but by the power of the LORD, I got rid of them and their fiery sting.

¹³ Their attacks were so fierce that I nearly fell, but the LORD helped me.

¹⁴ My power and my strength come from the LORD, and he has saved me.

¹⁵ From the tents of God's people come shouts of victory: The LORD is powerful!

¹⁶ With his mighty arm the LORD wins victories! The LORD is powerful!

¹⁷ And so my life is safe, and I will live to tell what the LORD has done.

¹⁸ He punished me terribly, but he did not let death lay its hands on me.

¹⁹ Open the gates of justice! I will enter and tell the LORD how thankful I am.

²⁰ Here is the gate of the LORD!
Everyone who does right may enter this gate.

²¹ I praise the LORD for answering my prayers and saving me.

²² The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone.

²³ The LORD has done this, and it is amazing to us.

²⁴ This day belongs to the LORD! Let's celebrate and be glad today.

²⁵ We'll ask the LORD to save us! We'll sincerely ask the LORD to let us win.

²⁶God bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD! We praise you from here in the house of the LORD.

²⁷The LORD is our God, and he has given us light! Start the celebration! March with palm branches all the way to the altar.

²⁸The LORD is my God! I will praise him and tell him how thankful I am.

²⁹Tell the LORD how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful.

119¹ Our LORD, you bless everyone who lives right and obeys your Law.

²You bless all those who follow your commands from deep in their hearts

³and who never do wrong or turn from you.

⁴You have ordered us always to obey your teachings;

⁵I don't ever want to stray from your laws.

⁶Thinking about your commands will keep me from doing some foolish thing.

⁷I will do right and praise you by learning to respect your perfect laws.

⁸I will obey all of them! Don't turn your back on me.

⁹Young people can live a clean life by obeying your word.

¹⁰I worship you with all my heart. Don't let me walk away from your commands.

¹¹I treasure your word above all else; it keeps me from sinning against you.

¹²I praise you, LORD! Teach me your laws.

¹³With my own mouth, I tell others the laws that you have spoken.

¹⁴Obedying your instructions brings as much happiness as being rich.

¹⁵I will study your teachings and follow your footsteps.

¹⁶I will take pleasure in your laws and remember your words.

¹⁷Treat me with kindness, LORD, so that I may live and do what you say.

¹⁸Open my mind and let me discover the wonders of your Law.

¹⁹I live here as a stranger. Don't keep me from knowing your commands.

²⁰What I want most of all and at all times is to honour your laws.

²¹You punish those boastful, worthless nobodies who turn from your commands.

²²Don't let them sneer and insult me for following you.

²³I keep thinking about your teachings, LORD, even if rulers plot against me.

²⁴Your laws are my greatest joy! I follow their advice.

²⁵I am at the point of death. Let your teachings breathe new life into me.

²⁶When I told you my troubles, you answered my prayers. Now teach me your laws.

²⁷Help me to understand your teachings, and I will think about your marvellous deeds.

²⁸I am overcome with sorrow. Encourage me, as you have promised to do.

²⁹Keep me from being deceitful, and be kind enough to teach me your Law.

³⁰I am determined to be faithful and to respect your laws.

³¹I follow your rules, LORD. Don't let me be ashamed.

³²I am eager to learn all that you want me to do; help me to understand more and more.

³³Point out your rules to me, and I won't disobey even one of them.

³⁴Help me to understand your Law; I promise to obey it with all my heart.

³⁵ Direct me by your commands! I love to do what you say.

³⁶ Make me want to obey you, rather than to be rich.

³⁷ Take away my foolish desires, and let me find life by walking with you.

³⁸ I am your servant! Do for me what you promised to those who worship you.

³⁹ Your wonderful teachings protect me from the insults that I hate so much.

⁴⁰ I long for your teachings. Be true to yourself and let me live.

⁴¹ Show me your love and save me, LORD, as you have promised.

⁴² Then I will have an answer for everyone who insults me for trusting your word.

⁴³ I rely on your laws! Don't take away my chance to speak your truth.

⁴⁴ I will keep obeying your Law for ever and ever.

⁴⁵ I have gained perfect freedom by following your teachings,

⁴⁶ and I trust them so much that I tell them to kings.

⁴⁷ I love your commands! They bring me happiness.

⁴⁸I love and respect them and will keep them in mind.

⁴⁹Don't forget your promise to me, your servant. I depend on it.

⁵⁰When I am suffering, I find comfort in your promise that leads to life.

⁵¹Conceited people sneer at me, but I obey your Law.

⁵²I find true comfort, LORD, because your laws have stood the test of time.

⁵³I get furious when evil people turn against your Law.

⁵⁴No matter where I am, your teachings fill me with songs.

⁵⁵Even in the night I think about you, LORD, and I obey your Law.

⁵⁶You have blessed me because I have always followed your teachings.

⁵⁷You, LORD, are my choice, and I will obey you.

⁵⁸With all my heart I beg you to be kind to me, just as you have promised.

⁵⁹I pay careful attention as you lead me, and I follow closely.

⁶⁰As soon as you command, I do what you say.

⁶¹Evil people may set a trap, but I obey your Law.

⁶²Your laws are so fair that I wake up and praise you in the middle of the night.

⁶³I choose as my friends everyone who worships you and follows your teachings.

⁶⁴Our LORD, your love is seen all over the world. Teach me your laws.

⁶⁵I am your servant, LORD, and you have kept your promise to treat me with kindness.

⁶⁶Give me wisdom and good sense. I trust your commands.

⁶⁷Once you corrected me for not obeying you, but now I obey.

⁶⁸You are kindhearted, and you do good things, so teach me your laws.

⁶⁹My reputation is being ruined by conceited liars, but with all my heart I follow your teachings.

⁷⁰Those liars have no sense, but I find happiness in your Law.

⁷¹When you corrected me, it did me good because it taught me to study your laws.

⁷²I would rather obey you than have a thousand pieces of silver and gold.

⁷³You created me and put me together. Make me wise enough to learn what you have commanded.

⁷⁴Your worshippers will see me, and they will be glad that I trust your word.

⁷⁵Your decisions are correct, and you were right to punish me.

⁷⁶I serve you, LORD. Comfort me with your love, just as you have promised.

⁷⁷I love to obey your Law! Have mercy and let me live.

⁷⁸Put down those proud people who hurt me with their lies, because I have chosen to study your teachings.

⁷⁹Let your worshippers come to me, so they will learn to obey your rules.

⁸⁰Let me truly respect your laws, so I won't be ashamed.

⁸¹I long for you to rescue me! Your word is my only hope.

⁸²I am worn out from waiting for you to keep your word. When will you have mercy?

⁸³My life is wasting away like a dried-up wineskin, but I have not forgotten your teachings.

⁸⁴I am your servant! How long must I suffer? When will you punish those troublemakers?

⁸⁵ Those proud people reject your teachings, and they dig pits for me to fall in.

⁸⁶ Your laws can be trusted! Protect me from cruel liars.

⁸⁷ They have almost killed me, but I have been faithful to your teachings.

⁸⁸ Show that you love me and let me live, so that I may obey all of your commands.

⁸⁹ Our LORD, you are eternal! Your word will last as long as the heavens.

⁹⁰ You remain faithful in every generation, and the earth you created will keep standing firm.

⁹¹ All things are your servants, and the laws you made are still in effect today.

⁹² If I had not found happiness in obeying your Law, I would have died in misery.

⁹³ I won't ever forget your teachings, because you give me new life by following them.

⁹⁴ I belong to you, and I have respected your laws, so keep me safe.

⁹⁵ Brutal enemies are waiting to ambush and destroy me, but I obey your rules.

⁹⁶ Nothing is completely perfect, except your teachings.

⁹⁷ I deeply love your Law! I think about it all day.

⁹⁸ Your laws never leave my mind, and they make me much wiser than my enemies.

⁹⁹ Thinking about your teachings gives me better understanding than my teachers,

¹⁰⁰ and obeying your laws makes me wiser than those who have lived a long time.

¹⁰¹ I obey your word instead of following a way that leads to trouble.

¹⁰² You have been my teacher, and I won't reject your instructions.

¹⁰³ Your teachings are sweeter than honey.

¹⁰⁴ They give me understanding and make me hate all lies.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk.

¹⁰⁶ Your laws are fair, and I have given my word to respect them all.

¹⁰⁷ I am in terrible pain! Save me, LORD, as you said you would.

¹⁰⁸Accept my offerings of praise and teach me your laws.

¹⁰⁹I never forget your teachings, although my life is always in danger.

¹¹⁰Some merciless people are trying to trap me, but I never turn my back on your teachings.

¹¹¹They will always be my most prized possession and my source of joy.

¹¹²I have made up my mind to obey your laws for ever, no matter what.

¹¹³I hate anyone whose loyalty is divided, but I love your Law.

¹¹⁴You are my place of safety and my shield. Your word is my only hope.

¹¹⁵All you worthless people, get away from me! I am determined to obey the commands of my God.

¹¹⁶Be true to your word, LORD. Keep me alive and strong; don't let me be ashamed because of my hope.

¹¹⁷Keep me safe and secure, so that I will always respect your laws.

¹¹⁸You reject all deceitful liars because they refuse your teachings.

¹¹⁹As far as you are concerned, all evil people are rubbish, and so I follow your rules.

¹²⁰ I tremble all over when I think of you and the way you judge.

¹²¹ I did what was fair and right! Don't hand me over to those who want to ill-treat me.

¹²² Take good care of me, your servant, and don't let me be harmed by those conceited people.

¹²³ My eyes are weary from waiting to see you keep your promise to come and save me.

¹²⁴ Show your love for me, your servant, and teach me your laws.

¹²⁵ I serve you, so let me understand your teachings.

¹²⁶ Do something, LORD! They have broken your Law.

¹²⁷ Your laws mean more to me than the finest gold.

¹²⁸ I follow all your commands, but I hate anyone who leads me astray.

¹²⁹ Your teachings are wonderful, and I respect them all.

¹³⁰ Understanding your word brings light to the minds of ordinary people.

¹³¹ I honestly want to know everything you teach.

¹³² Think about me and be kind, just as you are to everyone who loves your name.

¹³³ Keep your promise and don't let me stumble or let sin control my life.

¹³⁴ Protect me from abuse, so I can obey your laws.

¹³⁵ Smile on me, your servant, and teach me your laws.

¹³⁶ When anyone disobeys you, my eyes overflow with tears.

¹³⁷ Our LORD, you always do right, and your decisions are fair.

¹³⁸ All your teachings are true and trustworthy.

¹³⁹ It upsets me greatly when my enemies neglect your teachings.

¹⁴⁰ Your word to me, your servant, is like pure gold; I treasure what you say.

¹⁴¹ Everyone calls me a nobody, but I remember your laws.

¹⁴² You will always do right, and your teachings are true.

¹⁴³ I am in deep distress, but I love your teachings.

¹⁴⁴ Your rules are always fair. Help me to understand them and live.

¹⁴⁵ I pray to you, LORD! Please answer me. I promise to obey your laws.

¹⁴⁶ I beg you to save me, so I can follow your rules.

¹⁴⁷ Even before sunrise, I pray for your help, and I put my hope in what you have said.

¹⁴⁸ I lie awake at night, thinking of your promises.

¹⁴⁹ Show that you love me, LORD, and answer my prayer. Please do the right thing and save my life.

¹⁵⁰ People who disobey your Law have made evil plans and want to hurt me,

¹⁵¹ but you are with me, and all your commands can be trusted.

¹⁵² From studying your laws, I found out long ago that you made them to last for ever.

¹⁵³ I have not forgotten your Law! Look at the trouble I am in, and rescue me.

¹⁵⁴ Be my defender and protector! Keep your promise and save my life.

¹⁵⁵ Evil people won't obey you, and so they have no hope of being saved.

¹⁵⁶ You are merciful, LORD! Please do the right thing and save my life.

¹⁵⁷ I have a lot of brutal enemies, but still I never turn from your laws.

¹⁵⁸ All those unfaithful people who refuse to obey you are disgusting to me.

¹⁵⁹ Remember how I love your laws, and show your love for me by keeping me safe.

¹⁶⁰ All you say can be trusted; your teachings are true and will last for ever.

¹⁶¹ Rulers are cruel to me for no reason. But with all my heart I respect your words,

¹⁶² because they bring happiness like treasures taken in war.

¹⁶³ I can't stand liars, but I love your Law.

¹⁶⁴ I praise you seven times a day because your laws are fair.

¹⁶⁵ You give peace of mind to all who love your Law. Nothing can make them fall.

¹⁶⁶ You are my only hope for being saved, LORD, and I do all you command.

¹⁶⁷ I love and obey your laws with all my heart.

¹⁶⁸ You know everything I do. You know I respect every law you have given.

¹⁶⁹Please, LORD, hear my prayer and give me the understanding that comes from your word.

¹⁷⁰Listen to my concerns and keep me safe, just as you have promised.

¹⁷¹If you will teach me your laws, I will praise you

¹⁷²and sing about your promise, because all your teachings are what they ought to be.

¹⁷³Be ready to protect me because I have chosen to obey your laws.

¹⁷⁴I am waiting for you to save me, LORD. Your Law makes me happy.

¹⁷⁵Keep me alive, so I can praise you, and let me find help in your teachings.

¹⁷⁶I am your servant, but I have wandered away like a lost sheep. Please come after me, because I have not forgotten your teachings.

120¹When I am in trouble, I pray,
²Come and save me, LORD,
from deceitful liars!

³What punishment is fitting for you deceitful liars?

⁴Your reward should be sharp and flaming arrows!

⁵ But I must live as a foreigner among the people of Meshech and in the tents of Kedar.

⁶ I have spent too much time living among people who hate peace.

⁷ I am in favour of peace, but when I speak of it, all they want is war.

121 ¹ I look to the hills! Where will I find help?

² It will come from the LORD, who created the heavens and the earth.

³ The LORD is your protector, and he won't go to sleep or let you stumble.

⁴ The protector of Israel doesn't doze or ever get drowsy.

⁵ The LORD is your protector, there at your right side to shade you from the sun.

⁶ You won't be harmed by the sun during the day or by the moon at night.

⁷ The LORD will protect you and keep you safe from all dangers.

⁸ The LORD will protect you now and always wherever you go.

122 ¹ It made me glad to hear them say, Let's go to the house of the LORD!

²Jerusalem, we are standing inside your gates.

³Jerusalem, what a strong and beautiful city you are!

⁴Every tribe of the LORD obeys him and comes to you to praise his name.

⁵David's royal throne is here where justice rules.

⁶Jerusalem, we pray that you will have peace, and that all will go well for those who love you.

⁷May there be peace inside your city walls and in your palaces.

⁸Because of my friends and my relatives, I will pray for peace.

⁹And because of the house of the LORD our God, I will work for your good.

123¹Our LORD and our God, I turn my eyes to you, on your throne in heaven.

²Servants look to their master, but we will look to you, until you have mercy on us.

³Please have mercy, LORD! We have been insulted more than we can stand,

⁴and we can't take more abuse from those proud, conceited people.

124¹ The LORD was on our side!
Let everyone in Israel say:

² The LORD was on our side! Otherwise,
the enemy attack

³ would have killed us all, because it
was furious.

⁴ We would have been swept away in a
violent flood

⁵ of high and roaring waves.

⁶ Let's praise the LORD! He protected
us from enemies who were like wild
animals,

⁷ and we escaped like birds from a
hunter's torn net.

⁸ The LORD made heaven and earth,
and he is the one who sends us help.

125¹ Everyone who trusts the
LORD is like Mount Zion that
cannot be shaken and will stand for ever.

² Just as Jerusalem is protected by
mountains on every side, the LORD
protects his people by holding them in
his arms now and for ever.

³ He won't let the wicked rule his people
or lead them to do wrong.

⁴ Let's ask the LORD to be kind to
everyone who is good and completely
obeys him.

⁵When the LORD punishes the wicked, he will punish everyone else who lives a crooked life. Pray for peace in Israel!

126 ¹It seemed like a dream when the LORD brought us back to the city of Zion.

²We celebrated with laughter and joyful songs. In foreign nations it was said, The LORD has worked miracles for his people.

³And so we celebrated because the LORD had indeed worked miracles for us.

⁴Our LORD, we ask you to bless our people again, and let us be like streams in the Southern Desert.

⁵We cried as we went out to plant our seeds. Now let us celebrate as we bring in the crops.

⁶We cried on the way to plant our seeds, but we will celebrate and shout as we bring in the crops.

127 ¹Without the help of the LORD it is useless to build a home or to guard a city.

²It is useless to get up early and stay up late in order to earn a living. God takes care of his own, even while they sleep.

³Children are a blessing and a gift from the LORD.

⁴Having a lot of children to take care of you in your old age is like a warrior with a lot of arrows.

⁵The more you have, the better off you will be, because they will protect you when your enemies attack with arguments.

128¹The LORD will bless you if you respect him and obey his laws.

²Your fields will produce, and you will be happy and all will go well.

³Your wife will be as fruitful as a grapevine, and just as an olive tree is rich with olives, your home will be rich with healthy children.

⁴That is how the LORD will bless everyone who respects him.

⁵I pray that the LORD will bless you from Zion and let Jerusalem prosper as long as you live.

⁶May you live long enough to see your grandchildren. Let's pray for peace in Israel!

129¹ Since the time I was young,
enemies have often attacked!

Let everyone in Israel say:

² Since the time I was young, enemies
have often attacked! But they have not
defeated me,

³ though my back is like a field that has
just been ploughed.

⁴ The LORD always does right, and he
has set me free from the ropes of those
cruel people.

⁵ I pray that all who hate the city of
Zion will be made ashamed and forced
to turn and run.

⁶ May they be like grass on the flat roof
of a house, grass that dries up as soon
as it sprouts.

⁷ Don't let them be like wheat gathered
in bundles.

⁸ And don't let anyone who passes by
say to them, The LORD bless you! I
give you my blessing in the name of the
LORD.

130¹ From a sea of troubles I call
out to you, LORD.

² Won't you please listen as I beg for
mercy?

³If you kept record of our sins, no one could last long.

⁴But you forgive us, and so we will worship you.

⁵With all my heart, I am waiting, LORD, for you! I trust your promises.

⁶I wait for you more eagerly than a soldier on guard duty waits for the dawn. Yes, I wait more eagerly than a soldier on guard duty waits for the dawn.

⁷Israel, trust the LORD! He is always merciful, and he has the power to save you.

⁸Israel, the LORD will save you from all your sins.

131 ¹I am not conceited, LORD, and I don't waste my time on impossible schemes.

²But I have learnt to feel safe and satisfied, just like a young child on its mother's lap.

³People of Israel, you must trust the LORD now and for ever.

132 ¹Our LORD, don't forget David and how he suffered.

²Mighty God of Jacob, remember how he promised:

³I won't go home or crawl into bed

⁴ or close my eyelids,
⁵ until I find a home for you, the mighty
LORD God of Jacob.

⁶ When we were in Ephrath, we heard
that the sacred chest was somewhere
near Jaar.

⁷ Then we said, Let's go to the throne of
the LORD and worship at his feet.

⁸ Come to your new home, LORD, you
and the sacred chest with all its power.

⁹ Let victory be like robes for the
priests; let your faithful people celebrate
and shout.

¹⁰ David is your chosen one, so don't
reject him.

¹¹ You made a solemn promise to David,
when you said, I, the LORD, promise
that someone in your family will always
be king.

¹² If they keep our agreement and
follow my teachings, then someone in
your family will rule for ever.

¹³ You have gladly chosen Zion as your
home, our LORD.

¹⁴ You said, This is my home! I will live
here for ever.

¹⁵ I will bless Zion with food, and even
the poor will eat until they are full.

¹⁶Victory will be like robes for the priests, and its faithful people will celebrate and shout.

¹⁷I will give mighty power to the kingdom of David. Each one of my chosen kings will shine like a lamp

¹⁸and wear a sparkling crown. But I will disgrace their enemies.

133 ¹It is truly wonderful when relatives live together in peace.

²It is as beautiful as olive oil poured on Aaron's head and running down his beard and the collar of his robe.

³It is like the dew from Mount Hermon, falling on Zion's mountains, where the LORD has promised to bless his people with life for evermore.

134 ¹Everyone who serves the LORD, come and offer praises. Everyone who has gathered in his temple tonight,

²lift your hands in prayer towards his holy place and praise the LORD.

³The LORD is the Creator of heaven and earth, and I pray that the LORD will bless you from Zion.

135¹ Shout praises to the LORD!
You are his servants, so praise
his name.

² All who serve in the temple of the
LORD our God,

³ come and shout praises. Praise the
name of the LORD! He is kind and good.

⁴ He chose the family of Jacob and the
people of Israel for his very own.

⁵ The LORD is much greater than any
other god.

⁶ He does as he chooses in heaven and
on earth and deep in the sea.

⁷ The LORD makes the clouds rise from
far across the earth, and he makes
lightning to go with the rain. Then from
his secret place he sends out the wind.

⁸ The LORD killed the firstborn of people
and animals in the land of Egypt.

⁹ God used miracles and wonders
to fight the king of Egypt and all his
officials.

¹⁰ He destroyed many nations and killed
powerful kings,

¹¹ including King Sihon of the Amorites
and King Og of Bashan. He conquered
every kingdom in the land of Canaan

¹²and gave their property to his people Israel.

¹³The name of the LORD will be remembered for ever, and he will be famous for all time to come.

¹⁴The LORD will bring justice and show mercy to all who serve him.

¹⁵Idols of silver and gold are made and worshipped in other nations.

¹⁶They have a mouth and eyes, but they can't speak or see.

¹⁷They are completely deaf, and they can't breathe.

¹⁸Everyone who makes idols and all who trust them will end up as helpless as their idols.

¹⁹Everyone in Israel, come, praise the LORD! All the family of Aaron

²⁰and all the tribe of Levi, come, praise the LORD! All of his worshippers, come, praise the LORD.

²¹Praise the LORD from Zion! He lives here in Jerusalem. Shout praises to the LORD!

136 ¹Praise the LORD! He is good.
God's love never fails.

²Praise the God of all gods. God's love never fails.

³Praise the Lord of lords. God's love never fails.

⁴Only God works great miracles. God's love never fails.

⁵With wisdom he made the sky. God's love never fails.

⁶The Lord stretched the earth over the ocean. God's love never fails.

⁷He made the bright lights in the sky. God's love never fails.

⁸He lets the sun rule each day. God's love never fails.

⁹He lets the moon and the stars rule each night. God's love never fails.

¹⁰God struck down the firstborn in every Egyptian family. God's love never fails.

¹¹He rescued Israel from Egypt. God's love never fails.

¹²God used his great strength and his powerful arm. God's love never fails.

¹³He split the Red Sea apart. God's love never fails.

¹⁴The Lord brought Israel safely through the sea. God's love never fails.

¹⁵He destroyed the Egyptian king and his army there. God's love never fails.

¹⁶The Lord led his people through the desert. God's love never fails.

¹⁷Our God defeated mighty kings. God's love never fails.

¹⁸And he killed famous kings. God's love never fails.

¹⁹One of them was Sihon, king of the Amorites. God's love never fails.

²⁰Another was King Og of Bashan. God's love never fails.

²¹God took away their land. God's love never fails.

²²He gave their land to Israel, the people who serve him. God's love never fails.

²³God saw the trouble we were in. God's love never fails.

²⁴He rescued us from our enemies. God's love never fails.

²⁵He gives food to all who live. God's love never fails.

²⁶Praise God in heaven! God's love never fails.

137 ¹Beside the rivers of Babylon we thought about Jerusalem, and we sat down and cried.

²We hung our small harps on the willow trees.

³Our enemies had brought us here as their prisoners, and now they wanted us to sing and entertain them. They insulted us and shouted, Sing about Zion!

⁴Here in a foreign land, how can we sing about the LORD?

⁵Jerusalem, if I forget you, let my right hand go limp.

⁶Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I don't think about you above all else.

⁷Our LORD, punish the Edomites! Because the day Jerusalem fell, they shouted, Completely destroy the city! Tear down every building!

⁸Babylon, you are doomed! I pray the Lord's blessings on anyone who punishes you for what you did to us.

⁹May the Lord bless everyone who beats your children against the rocks!

138¹With all my heart I praise you, LORD. In the presence of angels I sing your praises.

²I worship at your holy temple and praise you for your love and your faithfulness. You were true to your word and made yourself more famous than ever before.

³When I asked for your help, you answered my prayer and gave me courage.

⁴All kings on this earth have heard your promises, LORD, and they will praise you.

⁵You are so famous that they will sing about the things you have done.

⁶Though you are above us all, you care for humble people, and you keep a close watch on everyone who is proud.

⁷I am surrounded by trouble, but you protect me against my angry enemies. With your own powerful arm you keep me safe.

⁸You, LORD, will always treat me with kindness. Your love never fails. You have made us what we are. Don't give up on us now!

139¹You have looked deep into my heart, LORD, and you know all about me.

²You know when I am resting or when I am working, and from heaven you discover my thoughts.

³You notice everything I do and everywhere I go.

⁴Before I even speak a word, you know what I will say,

⁵and with your powerful arm you protect me from every side.

⁶I can't understand all this! Such wonderful knowledge is far above me.

⁷Where could I go to escape from your Spirit or from your sight?

⁸If I were to climb up to the highest heavens, you would be there. If I were to dig down to the world of the dead you would also be there.

⁹Suppose I had wings like the dawning day and flew across the ocean.

¹⁰Even then your powerful arm would guide and protect me.

¹¹Or suppose I said, I'll hide in the dark until night comes to cover me over.

¹²But you see in the dark because daylight and dark are all the same to you.

¹³You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body,

¹⁴and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me.

Everything you do is marvellous! Of this I have no doubt.

¹⁵ Nothing about me is hidden from you! I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below,

¹⁶ but with your own eyes you saw my body being formed. Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do.

¹⁷ Your thoughts are far beyond my understanding, much more than I could ever imagine.

¹⁸ I try to count your thoughts, but they outnumber the grains of sand on the beach. And when I awake, I will find you nearby.

¹⁹ How I wish that you would kill all cruel and heartless people and protect me from them!

²⁰ They are always rebelling and speaking evil of you.

²¹ You know I hate anyone who hates you, LORD, and refuses to obey.

²² They are my enemies too, and I truly hate them.

²³ Look deep into my heart, God, and find out everything I am thinking.

²⁴ Don't let me follow evil ways, but lead me in the way that time has proved true.

140¹ Rescue me from cruel and violent enemies, LORD!

² They think up evil plans and always cause trouble.

³ Their words bite deep like the poisonous fangs of a snake.

⁴ Protect me, LORD, from cruel and brutal enemies, who want to destroy me.

⁵ Those proud people have hidden traps and nets to catch me as I walk.

⁶ You, LORD, are my God! Please listen to my prayer.

⁷ You have the power to save me, and you keep me safe in every battle.

⁸ Don't let the wicked succeed in doing what they want, or else they might never stop planning evil.

⁹ They have me surrounded, but make them the victims of their own vicious lies.

¹⁰ Tip flaming coals on them and throw them into pits where they can't climb out.

¹¹ Chase those cruel liars away! Let trouble hunt them down.

¹² Our LORD, I know that you defend the homeless and see that the poor are given justice.

¹³Your people will praise you and will live with you because they do right.

141 ¹I pray to you, LORD! Please listen when I pray and hurry to help me.

²Think of my prayer as sweet-smelling incense, and think of my lifted hands as an evening sacrifice.

³Help me to guard my words whenever I say something.

⁴Don't let me want to do evil or waste my time doing wrong with wicked people. Don't let me even taste the good things they offer.

⁵Let your faithful people correct and punish me. My prayers condemn the deeds of those who do wrong, so don't let me be friends with any of them.

⁶Everyone will admit that I was right when their rulers are thrown down a rocky cliff,

⁷and their bones lie scattered like broken rocks on top of a grave.

⁸You are my LORD and God, and I look to you for safety. Don't let me be harmed.

⁹Protect me from the traps of those violent people,

¹⁰and make them fall into their own traps while you help me escape.

142¹ I pray to you, LORD. I beg for mercy.

²I tell you all my worries and my troubles,

³and whenever I feel low, you are there to guide me. A trap has been hidden along my pathway.

⁴Even if you look, you won't see anyone who cares enough to walk beside me. There is no place to hide, and no one who really cares.

⁵I pray to you, LORD! You are my place of safety, and you are my choice in the land of the living. Please answer my prayer. I am completely helpless.

⁶Help! They are chasing me, and they are too strong.

⁷Rescue me from this prison, so I can praise your name. And when your people notice your wonderful kindness to me, they will rush to my side.

143¹ Listen, LORD, as I pray! You are faithful and honest and will answer my prayer.

²I am your servant. Don't try me in your court, because no one is innocent by your standards.

³My enemies are chasing me, crushing me in the ground. I am in total darkness, like someone long dead.

⁴I have given up all hope, and I feel numb all over.

⁵I remember to think about the many things you did in years gone by.

⁶Then I lift my hands in prayer, because my soul is a desert, thirsty for water from you.

⁷Please hurry, LORD, and answer my prayer. I feel hopeless. Don't turn away and leave me here to die.

⁸Each morning let me learn more about your love because I trust you. I come to you in prayer, asking for your guidance.

⁹Please rescue me from my enemies, LORD! I come to you for safety.

¹⁰You are my God. Show me what you want me to do, and let your gentle Spirit lead me in the right path.

¹¹Be true to your name, LORD, and keep my life safe. Use your saving power to protect me from trouble.

¹²I am your servant. Show how much you love me by destroying my enemies.

144¹I praise you, LORD! You are my mighty rock, and you teach me how to fight my battles.

²You are my friend, and you are my fortress where I am safe. You are my shield, and you made me the ruler of our people.

³Why do we humans mean anything to you, our LORD? Why do you care about us?

⁴We disappear like a breath; we last no longer than a faint shadow.

⁵Open the heavens like a curtain and come down, LORD. Touch the mountains and make them send up smoke.

⁶Use your lightning as arrows to scatter my enemies and make them run away.

⁷Reach down from heaven and set me free. Save me from the mighty flood

⁸of those lying foreigners who can't tell the truth.

⁹In praise of you, our God, I will sing a new song, while playing my harp.

¹⁰By your power, kings win wars, and your servant David is saved from deadly swords.

¹¹ Won't you keep me safe from those lying foreigners who can't tell the truth?

¹² Let's pray that our young sons will grow like strong plants and that our daughters will be as lovely as columns in the corner of a palace.

¹³ May our barns be filled with all kinds of crops. May our fields be covered with sheep by the thousands,

¹⁴ and every cow have calves. Don't let our city be captured or any of us be taken away, and don't let cries of sorrow be heard in our streets.

¹⁵ Our LORD and our God, you give these blessings to all who worship you.

145 ¹ I will praise you, my God and King, and always honour your name.

² I will praise you each day and always honour your name.

³ You are wonderful, LORD, and you deserve all praise, because you are much greater than anyone can understand.

⁴ Each generation will announce to the next your wonderful and powerful deeds.

⁵ I will keep thinking about your marvellous glory and your mighty miracles.

⁶Everyone will talk about your fearsome deeds, and I will tell all nations how great you are.

⁷They will celebrate and sing about your matchless mercy and your power to save.

⁸You are merciful, LORD! You are kind and patient and always loving.

⁹You are good to everyone, and you take care of all your creation.

¹⁰All creation will thank you, and your loyal people will praise you.

¹¹They will tell about your marvellous kingdom and your power.

¹²Then everyone will know about the mighty things you do and your glorious kingdom.

¹³Your kingdom will never end, and you will rule for ever. Our LORD, you keep your word and do everything you say.

¹⁴When someone stumbles or falls, you give a helping hand.

¹⁵Everyone depends on you, and when the time is right, you provide them with food.

¹⁶By your own hand you satisfy the desires of all who live.

¹⁷ Our LORD, everything you do is kind and thoughtful,

¹⁸ and you are near to everyone whose prayers are sincere.

¹⁹ You satisfy the desires of all your worshippers, and you come to save them when they ask for help.

²⁰ You take care of everyone who loves you, but you destroy the wicked.

²¹ I will praise you, LORD, and everyone will respect your holy name for ever.

146 ¹ Shout praises to the LORD!
With all that I am, I will shout his praises.

² I will sing and praise the LORD God for as long as I live.

³ You can't depend on anyone, not even a great leader.

⁴ Once they die and are buried, that will be the end of all their plans.

⁵ The LORD God of Jacob blesses everyone who trusts him and depends on him.

⁶ God made heaven and earth; he created the sea and everything else. God always keeps his word.

⁷ He gives justice to the poor and food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free

⁸ and heals blind eyes. He gives a helping hand to everyone who falls. The LORD loves good people

⁹ and looks after strangers. He defends the rights of orphans and widows, but destroys the wicked.

¹⁰ The LORD God of Zion will rule for ever! Shout praises to the LORD!

147 ¹ Shout praises to the LORD! Our God is kind, and it is right and good to sing praises to him.

² The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem and brings the people of Israel back home again.

³ He renews our hopes and heals our bodies.

⁴ He decided how many stars there would be in the sky and gave each one a name.

⁵ Our LORD is great and powerful! He understands everything.

⁶ The LORD helps the poor, but he pulls the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Celebrate and sing! Play your harps for the LORD our God.

⁸He fills the sky with clouds and sends rain to the earth, so that the hills will be green with grass.

⁹He provides food for cattle and for the young ravens, when they cry out.

¹⁰The LORD doesn't care about the strength of horses or powerful armies.

¹¹The LORD is pleased only with those who worship him and trust his love.

¹²Everyone in Jerusalem, come and praise the LORD your God!

¹³He makes your city gates strong and blesses your people by giving them children.

¹⁴God lets you live in peace, and he gives you the very best wheat.

¹⁵As soon as God speaks, the earth obeys.

¹⁶He covers the ground with snow like a blanket of wool, and he scatters frost like ashes on the ground.

¹⁷God sends down hailstones like chips of rocks. Who can stand the cold?

¹⁸At his command the ice melts, the wind blows, and streams begin to flow.

¹⁹God gave his laws and teachings to the descendants of Jacob, the nation of Israel.

²⁰But he has not given his laws to any other nation. Shout praises to the LORD!

148¹ Shout praises to the LORD!
Shout the LORD's praises in the highest heavens.

²All you angels, and all who serve him above, come and offer praise.

³Sun and moon, and all you bright stars, come and offer praise.

⁴Highest heavens, and the water above the highest heavens, come and offer praise.

⁵Let all things praise the name of the LORD, because they were created at his command.

⁶He made them to last for ever, and nothing can change what he has done.

⁷All creatures on earth, you obey his commands, so come, praise the LORD!

⁸Sea monsters and the deep sea, fire and hail, snow and frost, and every stormy wind, come, praise the LORD!

⁹All mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars,

¹⁰every wild and tame animal, all reptiles and birds, come, praise the LORD!

¹¹ Every king and every ruler, all nations on earth,

¹² every man and every woman, young people and old, come, praise the LORD!

¹³ All creation, come and praise the name of the LORD. Praise his name alone. The glory of God is greater than heaven and earth.

¹⁴ Like a bull with mighty horns, the LORD protects his faithful nation Israel, because they belong to him. Shout praises to the LORD!

149 ¹ Shout praises to the LORD! Sing him a new song of praise when his loyal people meet.

² People of Israel, rejoice because of your Creator. People of Zion, celebrate because of your King.

³ Praise his name by dancing and playing music on harps and tambourines.

⁴ The LORD is pleased with his people, and he gives victory to those who are humble.

⁵ All you faithful people, praise our glorious Lord! Celebrate and worship.

⁶ Praise God with songs on your lips and a sword in your hand.

⁷ Take revenge and punish the nations.

⁸Put chains of iron on their kings and rulers.

⁹Punish them as they deserve; this is the privilege of God's faithful people. Shout praises to the LORD!

150¹ Shout praises to the LORD! Praise God in his temple. Praise him in heaven, his mighty fortress.

²Praise our God! His deeds are wonderful, too marvellous to describe.

³Praise God with trumpets and all kinds of harps.

⁴Praise him with tambourines and dancing, with stringed instruments and woodwinds.

⁵Praise God with cymbals, with clashing cymbals.

⁶Let every living creature praise the LORD. Shout praises to the LORD!

Proverbs

1 ¹ These are the proverbs of King Solomon of Israel, the son of David.

² Proverbs will teach you wisdom and self-control and how to understand sayings with deep meanings.

³ You will learn what is right and honest and fair.

⁴ From these, an ordinary person can learn to be clever, and young people can gain knowledge and good sense.

⁵ If you are already wise, you will become even wiser. And if you are clever, you will learn to understand

⁶ proverbs and sayings, as well as words of wisdom and all kinds of riddles.

⁷ Respect and obey the LORD! This is the beginning of knowledge. Only a fool rejects wisdom and good advice.

⁸ My child, obey the teachings of your parents,

⁹ and wear their teachings as you would a lovely hat or a pretty necklace.

¹⁰ Don't be tempted by sinners or listen

¹¹ when they say, Come on! Let's gang up and kill somebody, just for the fun of it!

¹² They're well and healthy now, but we'll finish them off once and for all.

¹³ We'll take their valuables and fill our homes with stolen goods.

¹⁴ If you join our gang, you'll get your share.

¹⁵ Don't follow anyone like that or do what they do.

¹⁶ They are in a big hurry to commit some crime, perhaps even murder.

¹⁷ They are like a bird that sees the bait, but ignores the trap.

¹⁸ They gang up to murder someone, but they are the victims.

¹⁹ The wealth you get from crime robs you of your life.

²⁰ Wisdom shouts in the streets wherever crowds gather.

²¹ She shouts in the market places and near the city gates as she says to the people,

²² How much longer will you enjoy being stupid fools? Won't you ever stop sneering and laughing at knowledge?

²³ Listen as I correct you and tell you what I think.

²⁴ You completely ignored me and refused to listen;

²⁵ you rejected my advice and paid no attention when I warned you.

²⁶ So when you are struck by some terrible disaster,

²⁷ or when trouble and distress surround you like a whirlwind, I will laugh and make fun of you.

²⁸ You will ask for my help, but I won't listen; you will search, but you won't find me.

²⁹ No, you would not learn, and you refused to respect the LORD.

³⁰ You rejected my advice and paid no attention when I warned you.

³¹ Now you will eat the fruit of what you have done, until you are stuffed full with your own schemes.

³² Sin and self-satisfaction bring destruction and death to stupid fools.

³³ But if you listen to me, you will be safe and secure without fear of disaster.

2¹ My child, you must follow and treasure my teachings and my instructions.

²Keep in tune with wisdom and think what it means to have common sense.

³Beg as loud as you can for good common sense.

⁴Search for wisdom as you would search for silver or hidden treasure.

⁵Then you will understand what it means to respect and to know the LORD God.

⁶All wisdom comes from the LORD, and so do common sense and understanding.

⁷God gives helpful advice to everyone who obeys him and protects all those who live as they should.

⁸God sees that justice is done, and he watches over everyone who is faithful to him.

⁹With wisdom you will learn what is right and honest and fair.

¹⁰Wisdom will control your mind, and you will be pleased with knowledge.

¹¹Sound judgment and good sense will watch over you.

¹²Wisdom will protect you from evil schemes and from those liars

¹³who turned from doing good to live in the darkness.

¹⁴ Most of all they enjoy being mean and deceitful.

¹⁵ They are dishonest themselves, and all they do is crooked.

¹⁶ Wisdom will protect you from the smooth talk of a sinful woman,

¹⁷ who breaks her wedding vows and leaves the man she married when she was young.

¹⁸ The road to her house leads down to the dark world of the dead.

¹⁹ Visit her, and you will never find the road to life again.

²⁰ Follow the example of good people and live an honest life.

²¹ If you are honest and innocent, you will keep your land;

²² if you do wrong and can never be trusted, you will be rooted out.

3¹ My child, remember my teachings and instructions and obey them completely.

² They will help you live a long and prosperous life.

³ Let love and loyalty always show like a necklace, and write them in your mind.

⁴ God and people will like you and consider you a success.

⁵With all your heart you must trust the LORD and not your own judgment.

⁶Always let him lead you, and he will clear the road for you to follow.

⁷Don't ever think that you are wise enough, but respect the LORD and stay away from evil.

⁸This will make you healthy, and you will feel strong.

⁹Honour the LORD by giving him your money and the first part of all your crops.

¹⁰Then you will have more grain and grapes than you will ever need.

¹¹My child, don't turn away or become bitter when the LORD corrects you.

¹²The LORD corrects everyone he loves, just as parents correct their favourite child.

¹³God blesses everyone who has wisdom and common sense.

¹⁴Wisdom is worth more than silver; it makes you much richer than gold.

¹⁵Wisdom is more valuable than precious jewels; nothing you want compares with her.

¹⁶In her right hand Wisdom holds a long life, and in her left hand are wealth and honour.

¹⁷Wisdom makes life pleasant and leads us safely along.

¹⁸Wisdom is a life-giving tree, the source of happiness for all who hold on to her.

¹⁹By his wisdom and knowledge the LORD created heaven and earth.

²⁰By his understanding he let the ocean break loose and clouds release the rain.

²¹My child, use common sense and sound judgment! Always keep them in mind.

²²They will help you to live a long and beautiful life.

²³You will walk safely and never stumble;

²⁴you will rest without a worry and sleep soundly.

²⁵So don't be afraid of sudden disasters or storms that strike those who are evil.

²⁶You can be sure that the LORD will protect you from harm.

²⁷Do all you can for everyone who deserves your help.

²⁸ Don't tell your neighbour to come back tomorrow, if you can help today.

²⁹ Don't try to be mean to neighbours who trust you.

³⁰ Don't argue just to be arguing, when you haven't been hurt.

³¹ Don't be jealous of cruel people or follow their example.

³² The LORD doesn't like anyone who is dishonest, but he lets good people be his friends.

³³ He places a curse on the home of everyone who is evil, but he blesses the home of every good person.

³⁴ The LORD sneers at those who sneer at him, but he is kind to everyone who is humble.

³⁵ You will be praised if you are wise, but you will be disgraced if you are a stubborn fool.

4¹ My child, listen closely to my teachings and learn common sense.

² My advice is useful, so don't turn away.

³ When I was still very young and my mother's favourite child, my father

⁴ said to me: If you follow my teachings and keep them in mind, you will live.

⁵Be wise and learn good sense; remember my teachings and do what I say.

⁶If you love Wisdom and don't reject her, she will watch over you.

⁷The best thing about Wisdom is Wisdom herself; good sense is more important than anything else.

⁸If you value Wisdom and hold tightly to her, great honours will be yours.

⁹It will be like wearing a glorious crown of beautiful flowers.

¹⁰My child, if you listen and obey my teachings, you will live a long time.

¹¹I have shown you the way that makes sense; I have guided you along the right path.

¹²Your road won't be blocked, and you won't stumble when you run.

¹³Hold firmly to my teaching and never let go. It will mean life for you.

¹⁴Don't follow the bad example of cruel and evil people.

¹⁵Turn aside and keep going. Stay away from them.

¹⁶They can't sleep or rest until they do wrong or harm some innocent victim.

¹⁷ Their food and drink are violence and cruelty.

¹⁸ The lifestyle of good people is like sunlight at dawn that keeps getting brighter until broad daylight.

¹⁹ The lifestyle of the wicked is like total darkness, and they will never know what makes them stumble.

²⁰ My child, listen carefully to everything I say.

²¹ Don't forget a single word, but think about it all.

²² Knowing these teachings will mean true life and good health for you.

²³ Carefully guard your thoughts because they are the source of true life.

²⁴ Never tell lies or be deceitful in what you say.

²⁵ Keep looking straight ahead, without turning aside.

²⁶ Know where you are headed, and you will stay on solid ground.

²⁷ Don't make a mistake by turning to the right or the left.

5¹ My son, if you listen closely to my wisdom and good sense,

²you will have sound judgment, and you will always know the right thing to say.

³The words of an immoral woman may be as sweet as honey and as smooth as olive oil.

⁴But all that you really get from being with her is bitter poison and pain.

⁵If you follow her, she will lead you down to the world of the dead.

⁶She has missed the path that leads to life and doesn't even know it.

⁷My son, listen to me and do everything I say.

⁸Stay away from a bad woman! Don't even go near the door of her house.

⁹You will lose your self-respect and end up in debt to some cruel person for the rest of your life.

¹⁰Strangers will get your money and everything else you have worked for.

¹¹When it's all over, your body will waste away, as you groan

¹²and shout, I hated advice and correction!

¹³I paid no attention to my teachers,

¹⁴and now I am disgraced in front of everyone.

¹⁵You should be faithful to your wife, just as you take water from your own well.

¹⁶And don't be like a stream from which just any woman may take a drink.

¹⁷Save yourself for your wife and don't have sex with other women.

¹⁸Be happy with the wife you married when you were young.

¹⁹She is beautiful and graceful, just like a deer; you should be attracted to her and stay deeply in love.

²⁰Don't go mad over a woman who is unfaithful to her own husband!

²¹The LORD sees everything, and he watches us closely.

²²Sinners are trapped and caught by their own evil deeds.

²³They get lost and die because of their foolishness and lack of self-control.

6¹ My child, suppose you agree to pay the debt of someone, who cannot repay a loan.

²Then you are trapped by your own words,

³and you are now in the power of someone else. Here is what you should

do: go and beg for permission to call off the agreement.

⁴Do this before you fall asleep or even get sleepy.

⁵Save yourself, just as a deer or a bird tries to escape from a hunter.

⁶You lazy people can learn by watching an anthill.

⁷Ants don't have leaders,

⁸but they store up food during harvest season.

⁹How long will you lie there doing nothing at all? When are you going to get up and stop sleeping?

¹⁰Sleep a little. Doze a little. Fold your hands and twiddle your thumbs.

¹¹Suddenly, everything is gone, as though it had been taken by an armed robber.

¹²Worthless liars go around

¹³winking and giving signals to deceive others.

¹⁴They are always thinking up something cruel and evil, and they stir up trouble.

¹⁵But they will be struck by sudden disaster and left without a hope.

¹⁶ There are six or seven kinds of people the LORD doesn't like:

¹⁷ Those who are too proud or tell lies or murder,

¹⁸ those who make evil plans or are quick to do wrong,

¹⁹ those who tell lies in court or stir up trouble in a family.

²⁰ Obey the teaching of your parents

²¹ always keep it in mind and never forget it.

²² Their teaching will guide you when you walk, protect you when you sleep, and talk to you when you are awake.

²³ The Law of the Lord is a lamp, and its teachings shine brightly. Correction and self-control will lead you through life.

²⁴ They will protect you from the flattering words of someone else's wife.

²⁵ Don't let yourself be attracted by the charm and lovely eyes of someone like that.

²⁶ A woman who sells her love can be bought for as little as the price of a meal. But making love to another man's wife will cost you everything.

²⁷ If you carry burning coals, you burn your clothes;

²⁸if you step on hot coals, you burn your feet.

²⁹And if you go to bed with another man's wife, you pay the price.

³⁰We don't put up with thieves, not even with one who steals for something to eat.

³¹And thieves who get caught must pay back seven times what was stolen and lose everything.

³²But if you go to bed with another man's wife, you will destroy yourself by your own stupidity.

³³You will be beaten and for ever disgraced,

³⁴because a jealous husband can be furious and merciless when he takes revenge.

³⁵He won't let you pay him off, no matter what you offer.

7¹ My son, pay close attention and don't forget what I tell you to do.

²Obey me, and you will live! Let my instructions be your greatest treasure.

³Keep them at your fingertips and write them in your mind.

⁴Let wisdom be your sister and make common sense your closest friend.

⁵They will protect you from the flattering words of someone else's wife.

⁶From the window of my house, I once happened to see

⁷some foolish young men.

⁸It was late in the evening, some time after dark.

⁹One of these young men turned the corner and was walking by the house of an unfaithful wife.

¹⁰She was dressed up like a woman of the street with only one thing in mind.

¹¹She was one of those women who are loud and restless and never stay at home,

¹²who walk street after street, waiting to trap a man.

¹³She grabbed him and kissed him, and with no sense of shame, she said:

¹⁴I had to offer a sacrifice, and there is enough meat left over for a feast.

¹⁵So I came looking for you, and here you are!

¹⁶The sheets on my bed are bright-coloured cloth from Egypt.

¹⁷And I have covered it with perfume made of myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

¹⁸Let's go there and make love all night.

¹⁹My husband is travelling, and he's far away.

²⁰He took a lot of money along, and he won't be back home before the middle of the month.

²¹And so, she tricked him with all her sweet talk and her flattery.

²²Straight away he followed her like an ox on the way to be slaughtered, or like a fool on the way to be punished

²³and killed with arrows. He was no more than a bird rushing into a trap, without knowing it would cost him his life.

²⁴My son, pay close attention to what I have said.

²⁵Don't even think about that kind of woman or let yourself be misled by someone like her.

²⁶Such a woman has caused the downfall and destruction of a lot of men.

²⁷Her house is a one-way street leading straight down to the world of the dead.

8¹With great understanding, Wisdom is calling out

²as she stands at the crossroads and on every hill.

³She stands by the city gate where everyone enters the city, and she shouts:

⁴I am calling out to each one of you!

⁵Good sense and sound judgment can be yours.

⁶Listen, because what I say is worthwhile and right.

⁷I always speak the truth and refuse to tell a lie.

⁸Every word I speak is honest, not one is misleading or deceptive.

⁹If you have understanding, you will see that my words are just what you need.

¹⁰Let instruction and knowledge mean more to you than silver or the finest gold.

¹¹Wisdom is worth much more than precious jewels or anything else you desire.

¹²I am Wisdom Common Sense is my closest friend; I possess knowledge and sound judgment.

¹³If you respect the LORD, you will hate evil. I hate pride and conceit and deceitful lies.

¹⁴I am strong, and I offer sensible advice and sound judgment.

¹⁵By my power kings govern, and rulers make laws that are fair.

¹⁶Every honest leader rules with help from me.

¹⁷I love everyone who loves me, and I will be found by all who honestly search.

¹⁸I can make you rich and famous, important and successful.

¹⁹What you receive from me is more valuable than even the finest gold or the purest silver.

²⁰I always do what is right,

²¹and I give great riches to everyone who loves me.

²²From the beginning, I was with the LORD. I was there before he began

²³to create the earth. At the very first, the LORD gave life to me.

²⁴When I was born, there were no oceans or springs of water.

²⁵My birth was before mountains were formed or hills were put in place.

²⁶It happened long before God had made the earth or any of its fields or even the dust.

²⁷ I was there when the LORD put the heavens in place and stretched the sky over the surface of the sea.

²⁸ I was with him when he placed the clouds in the sky and created the springs that fill the ocean.

²⁹ I was there when he set boundaries for the sea to make it obey him, and when he laid foundations to support the earth.

³⁰ I was right beside the LORD, helping him plan and build. I made him happy each day, and I was happy at his side.

³¹ I was pleased with his world and pleased with its people.

³² Pay attention, my children! Follow my advice, and you will be happy.

³³ Listen carefully to my instructions, and you will be wise.

³⁴ Come to my home each day and listen to me. You will find happiness.

³⁵ By finding me, you find life, and the LORD will be pleased with you.

³⁶ But if you don't find me, you hurt only yourself, and if you hate me, you are in love with death.

9¹ Wisdom has built her house with its seven columns.

²She has prepared the meat and set out the wine. Her feast is ready.

³She has sent her servant women to announce her invitation from the highest hills:

⁴Everyone who is ignorant or foolish is invited!

⁵All of you are welcome to my meat and wine.

⁶If you want to live, give up your foolishness and let understanding guide your steps.

⁷Correct a worthless boaster, and all you will get are insults and injuries.

⁸Any boaster you correct will only hate you. But if you correct someone who has common sense, you will be loved.

⁹If you have good sense, instruction will help you to have even better sense. And if you live right, education will help you to know even more.

¹⁰Respect and obey the LORD! This is the beginning of wisdom. To have understanding, you must know the Holy God.

¹¹I am Wisdom. If you follow me, you will live a long time.

¹² Good sense is good for you, but if you boast, you hurt yourself.

¹³ Stupidity is reckless, senseless, and foolish.

¹⁴ She sits in front of her house and on the highest hills in the town.

¹⁵ She shouts to everyone who passes by,

¹⁶ If you are stupid, come on inside!
And to every fool she says,

¹⁷ Stolen water tastes best, and the food you eat in secret tastes best of all.

¹⁸ None who listen to Stupidity understand that her guests are as good as dead.

10¹ Here are some proverbs of Solomon: Children with good sense make their parents happy, but foolish children make them sad.

² What you gain by doing evil won't help you at all, but being good can save you from death.

³ If you obey the LORD, you won't go hungry; if you are wicked, God won't let you have what you want.

⁴ Laziness leads to poverty; hard work makes you rich.

⁵At harvest season it's clever to work hard, but stupid to sleep.

⁶Everyone praises good people, but evil hides behind the words of the wicked.

⁷Good people are remembered long after they are gone, but the wicked are soon forgotten.

⁸If you have good sense, you will listen and obey; if all you do is talk, you will destroy yourself.

⁹You will be safe, if you always do right, but you will get caught, if you are dishonest.

¹⁰Deceit causes trouble, and foolish talk will bring you to ruin.

¹¹The words of good people are a source of life, but evil hides behind the words of the wicked.

¹²Hatred stirs up trouble; love overlooks the wrongs that others do.

¹³If you have good sense, it will show when you speak. But if you are stupid, you will be beaten with a stick.

¹⁴If you have good sense, you will learn all you can, but foolish talk will soon destroy you.

¹⁵Great wealth can be a fortress, but poverty is no protection at all.

¹⁶If you live right, the reward is a good life; if you are evil, all you have is sin.

¹⁷Accept correction, and you will find life; reject correction, and you will miss the road.

¹⁸You can hide your hatred by telling lies, but you are a fool to spread lies.

¹⁹You will say the wrong thing if you talk too much so be sensible and watch what you say.

²⁰The words of a good person are like pure silver, but the thoughts of an evil person are almost worthless.

²¹Many are helped by useful instruction, but fools are killed by their own stupidity.

²²When the LORD blesses you with riches, you have nothing to regret.

²³Fools enjoy doing wrong, but anyone with good sense enjoys acting wisely.

²⁴What evil people dread most will happen to them, but good people will get what they want most.

²⁵Those crooks will disappear when a storm strikes, but God will keep safe all who obey him.

²⁶Having a lazy person on the job is like a mouth full of vinegar or smoke in your eyes.

²⁷ If you respect the LORD, you will live longer; if you keep doing wrong, your life will be cut short.

²⁸ If you obey the Lord, you will be happy, but there is no future for the wicked.

²⁹ The LORD protects everyone who lives right, but he destroys anyone who does wrong.

³⁰ Good people will stand firm, but the wicked will lose their land.

³¹ Honest people speak sensibly, but deceitful liars will be silenced.

³² If you obey the Lord, you will always know the right thing to say. But no one will trust you if you tell lies.

11 ¹ The LORD hates anyone who cheats, but he likes everyone who is honest.

² Too much pride can put you to shame. It's wiser to be humble.

³ If you do the right thing, honesty will be your guide. But if you are crooked, you will be trapped by your own dishonesty.

⁴ When God is angry, money won't help you. Obeying God is the only way to be saved from death.

⁵If you are truly good, you will do right; if you are wicked, you will be destroyed by your own sin.

⁶Honesty can keep you safe, but if you can't be trusted, you trap yourself.

⁷When the wicked die, their hopes die with them.

⁸Trouble goes right past the LORD's people and strikes the wicked.

⁹Dishonest people use gossip to destroy their neighbours; good people are protected by their own good sense.

¹⁰When honest people prosper and the wicked disappear, the whole city celebrates.

¹¹When God blesses his people, their city prospers, but deceitful liars can destroy a city.

¹²It's stupid to say bad things about your neighbours. If you are sensible, you will keep quiet.

¹³A gossip tells everything, but a true friend will keep a secret.

¹⁴A city without wise leaders will end up in ruin; a city with many wise leaders will be kept safe.

¹⁵ It's a dangerous thing to guarantee payment for someone's debts. Don't do it!

¹⁶ A gracious woman will be respected, but a man must work hard to get rich.

¹⁷ Kindness is rewarded but if you are cruel, you hurt yourself.

¹⁸ Meanness gets you nowhere, but goodness is rewarded.

¹⁹ Always do the right thing, and you will live; keep on doing wrong, and you will die.

²⁰ The LORD hates cunning people, but he likes everyone who lives right.

²¹ You can be sure of this: all crooks will be punished, but God's people won't.

²² A beautiful woman who acts foolishly is like a gold ring on the snout of a pig.

²³ Good people want what is best, but troublemakers hope to stir up trouble.

²⁴ Sometimes you can become rich by being generous or poor by being greedy.

²⁵ Generosity will be rewarded: give a cup of water, and you will receive a cup of water in return.

²⁶ Charge too much for grain, and you will be cursed; sell it at a fair price, and you will be praised.

²⁷ Try hard to do right, and you will win friends; go looking for trouble, and you will find it.

²⁸ Trust in your wealth, and you will be a failure, but God's people will prosper like healthy plants.

²⁹ Fools who cause trouble in the family won't inherit a thing. They will end up as slaves of someone with good sense.

³⁰ Live right, and you will eat from the life-giving tree. And if you act wisely, others will follow.

³¹ If good people are rewarded here on this earth, all who are cruel and mean will surely be punished.

12¹ To accept correction is wise, to reject it is stupid.

² The LORD likes everyone who lives right, but he punishes everyone who makes evil plans.

³ Sin cannot offer security! But if you live right, you will be as secure as a tree with deep roots.

⁴ A helpful wife is a jewel for her husband, but a shameless wife will make his bones rot.

⁵ Good people have kind thoughts, but you should never trust the advice of someone evil.

⁶ Bad advice is a deadly trap, but good advice is like a shield.

⁷ Once the wicked are defeated, they are gone for ever, but no one who obeys God will ever be thrown down.

⁸ Good sense is worthy of praise, but stupidity is a curse.

⁹ It's better to be ordinary and have only one servant than to think you are somebody and starve to death.

¹⁰ Good people are kind to their animals, but a mean person is cruel.

¹¹ Hard working farmers have more than enough food; daydreamers are nothing more than stupid fools.

¹² An evil person tries to hide behind evil; good people are like trees with deep roots.

¹³ We trap ourselves by telling lies, but we stay out of trouble by living right.

¹⁴ We are rewarded or punished for what we say and do.

¹⁵ Fools think they know what is best, but a sensible person listens to advice.

¹⁶ Losing your temper is foolish;
ignoring an insult is sensible.

¹⁷ An honest person tells the truth
in court, but a dishonest person tells
nothing but lies.

¹⁸ Sharp words cut like a sword, but
words of wisdom heal.

¹⁹ Truth will last for ever; lies are soon
found out.

²⁰ An evil mind is deceitful, but gentle
thoughts bring happiness.

²¹ Good people never have trouble, but
troublemakers have more than enough.

²² The LORD hates every liar, but he is
the friend of all who can be trusted.

²³ Be sensible and don't tell everything
you know only fools spread foolishness
everywhere.

²⁴ Work hard, and you will be a leader;
be lazy, and you will end up a slave.

²⁵ Worry is a heavy burden, but a kind
word always brings cheer.

²⁶ You are better off doing right, than
losing your way by doing wrong.

²⁷ Anyone too lazy to cook will starve,
but a hard worker is a valuable treasure.

²⁸ Follow the road to life, and you won't
be bothered by death.

13¹ Children with good sense accept correction from their parents, but stubborn children ignore it completely.

² You will be well rewarded for saying something kind, but all some people think about is how to be cruel and mean.

³ Keep what you know to yourself, and you will be safe; talk too much, and you are done for.

⁴ No matter how much you want, laziness won't help a bit, but hard work will reward you with more than enough.

⁵ A good person hates deceit, but those who are evil cause shame and disgrace.

⁶ Live right, and you are safe! But sin will destroy you.

⁷ Some who have nothing may pretend to be rich, and some who have everything may pretend to be poor.

⁸ The rich may have to pay a ransom, but the poor don't have that problem.

⁹ The lamp of a good person keeps on shining; the lamp of an evil person soon goes out.

¹⁰ Too much pride causes trouble. Be sensible and take advice.

¹¹ Money wrongly got will disappear bit by bit; money earned little by little will grow and grow.

¹² Not getting what you want can make you feel sick, but a wish that comes true is a life-giving tree.

¹³ If you reject God's teaching, you will pay the price; if you obey his commands, you will be rewarded.

¹⁴ Sensible instruction is a life-giving fountain that helps you escape all deadly traps.

¹⁵ Sound judgment is praised, but people without good sense are on the way to disaster.

¹⁶ If you have good sense, you will act sensibly, but fools act like fools.

¹⁷ Whoever delivers your message can make things better or worse for you.

¹⁸ All who refuse correction will be poor and disgraced; all who accept correction will be praised.

¹⁹ It's a good feeling to get what you want, but only a stupid fool hates to turn from evil.

²⁰ Wise friends make you wise, but you hurt yourself by going around with fools.

²¹ You are in for trouble if you sin, but you will be rewarded if you live right.

²² If you obey God, you will have something to leave your grandchildren. If you don't obey God, those who live right will get what you leave.

²³ Even when the land of the poor produces good crops, they get cheated out of what they grow.

²⁴ If you love your children, you will correct them; if you don't love them, you won't correct them.

²⁵ If you live right, you will have plenty to eat; if you don't live right, you will go away empty.

14¹ A woman's family is held together by her wisdom, but it can be destroyed by her foolishness.

² By living right, you show that you respect the LORD; by being deceitful, you show that you despise him.

³ Proud fools are punished for their stupid talk, but sensible talk can save your life.

⁴ Without the help of an ox there can be no crop, but with a strong ox a big crop is possible.

⁵An honest witness tells the truth; a dishonest witness tells nothing but lies.

⁶Make fun of wisdom, and you will never find it. But if you have understanding, knowledge comes easily.

⁷Stay away from fools, or you won't learn a thing.

⁸Wise people have enough sense to find their way, but stupid fools get lost.

⁹Fools don't care if they are wrong, but God is pleased when people do right.

¹⁰No one else can really know how sad or happy you are.

¹¹The tent of a good person stands longer than the house of someone evil.

¹²You may think you are on the right road and still end up dead.

¹³Sorrow may hide behind laughter, and happiness may end in sorrow.

¹⁴You harvest what you plant, whether good or bad.

¹⁵Don't be stupid and believe all you hear; be clever and know where you are headed.

¹⁶Only a stupid fool is never cautious so be extra careful and stay out of trouble.

¹⁷Fools have quick tempers, and no one likes you if you can't be trusted.

¹⁸Stupidity leads to foolishness; be clever and learn.

¹⁹The wicked will come crawling to those who obey God.

²⁰You have no friends if you are poor, but you have lots of friends if you are rich.

²¹It's wrong to hate others, but God blesses everyone who is kind to the poor.

²²It's a mistake to make evil plans, but you will have loyal friends if you want to do right.

²³Hard work is worthwhile, but empty talk will make you poor.

²⁴Wisdom can make you rich, but foolishness leads to more foolishness.

²⁵An honest witness can save your life, but liars can't be trusted.

²⁶If you respect the LORD, you and your children have a strong fortress

²⁷and a life-giving fountain that keeps you safe from deadly traps.

²⁸Rulers of powerful nations are held in honour; rulers of weak nations are nothing at all.

²⁹It's clever to be patient, but it's stupid to lose your temper.

³⁰It's healthy to be content, but envy can eat you up.

³¹If you ill-treat the poor, you insult your Creator; if you are kind to them, you show him respect.

³²In times of trouble the wicked are destroyed, but even at death the innocent have faith.

³³Wisdom is found in the minds of people with good sense, but fools don't know it.

³⁴Doing right brings honour to a nation, but sin brings disgrace.

³⁵Kings reward servants who act wisely, but they punish those who act foolishly.

15¹A kind answer soothes angry feelings, but harsh words stir them up.

²Words of wisdom come from the wise, but fools speak foolishness.

³The LORD sees everything, whether good or bad.

⁴Kind words are good medicine, but deceitful words can really hurt.

⁵Don't be a fool and disobey your parents. Be clever! Accept correction.

⁶Good people become wealthy, but those who are evil will lose what they have.

⁷Words of wisdom make good sense; the thoughts of a fool make no sense at all.

⁸The LORD is disgusted by gifts from the wicked, but it makes him happy when his people pray.

⁹The LORD is disgusted with all who do wrong, but he loves everyone who does right.

¹⁰If you turn from the right way, you will be punished; if you refuse correction, you will die.

¹¹If the LORD can see everything in the world of the dead, he can see in our hearts.

¹²Those who sneer at others don't like to be corrected, and they won't ask help from someone with sense.

¹³Happiness makes you smile; sorrow can crush you.

¹⁴Anyone with good sense is eager to learn more, but fools are hungry for foolishness.

¹⁵The poor have a hard life, but being content is as good as an endless feast.

¹⁶It's better to obey the LORD and have only a little, than to be very rich and terribly confused.

¹⁷A simple meal with love is better than a feast where there is hatred.

¹⁸Losing your temper causes a lot of trouble, but staying calm settles arguments.

¹⁹Being lazy is like walking in a thorn patch, but everyone who does right walks on a smooth road.

²⁰Children with good sense make their parents happy, but foolish children are hateful to them.

²¹Stupidity brings happiness to senseless fools, but everyone with good sense follows the straight path.

²²Without good advice everything goes wrong it takes careful planning for things to go right.

²³Giving the right answer at the right time makes everyone happy.

²⁴All who are wise follow a road that leads upward to life and away from death.

²⁵The LORD destroys the homes of those who are proud, but he protects the property of widows.

²⁶The LORD hates evil thoughts, but kind words please him.

²⁷Being greedy causes trouble for your family, but you protect yourself by refusing bribes.

²⁸Good people think before they answer, but the wicked speak evil without ever thinking.

²⁹The LORD never even hears the prayers of the wicked, but he answers the prayers of all who obey him.

³⁰A friendly smile makes you happy, and good news makes you feel strong.

³¹Healthy correction is good, and if you accept it, you will be wise.

³²You hurt only yourself by rejecting instruction, but it makes good sense to accept it.

³³Showing respect to the LORD will make you wise, and being humble will bring honour to you.

16¹We humans make plans, but the LORD has the final word.

²We may think we know what is right, but the LORD is the judge of our motives.

³Share your plans with the LORD, and you will succeed.

⁴The LORD has a reason for everything he does, and he lets evil people live only to be punished.

⁵The LORD doesn't like anyone who is conceited you can be sure they will be punished.

⁶If we truly love God, our sins will be forgiven; if we show him respect, we will keep away from sin.

⁷When we please the LORD, even our enemies make friends with us.

⁸It's better to be honest and poor than to be dishonest and rich.

⁹We make our own plans, but the LORD decides where we will go.

¹⁰Rulers speak with authority and are never wrong.

¹¹The LORD doesn't like it when we cheat in business.

¹²Justice makes rulers powerful. They should hate evil

¹³and like honesty and truth.

¹⁴An angry ruler can put you to death. So be wise! Don't make one angry.

¹⁵When a ruler is happy and pleased with you, it's like refreshing rain, and you will live.

¹⁶It's much better to be wise and sensible than to be rich.

¹⁷God's people avoid evil ways, and they protect themselves by watching where they go.

¹⁸Too much pride will destroy you.

¹⁹You are better off being humble and poor than getting rich from what you take by force.

²⁰If you know what you're doing, you will prosper. God blesses everyone who trusts him.

²¹Good judgment proves that you are wise, and if you speak kindly, you can teach others.

²²Good sense is a fountain that gives life, but fools are punished by their foolishness.

²³You can persuade others if you are wise and speak sensibly.

²⁴Kind words are like honey they cheer you up and make you feel strong.

²⁵Sometimes what seems right is really a road to death.

²⁶The hungrier you are, the harder you work.

²⁷Worthless people plan trouble. Even their words burn like a flaming fire.

²⁸Gossip is no good! It causes hard feelings and comes between friends.

²⁹Don't trust violent people. They will mislead you to do the wrong thing.

³⁰When someone winks or grins behind your back, trouble is on the way.

³¹Grey hair is a glorious crown worn by those who have lived right.

³²Controlling your temper is better than being a hero who captures a city.

³³We make our own decisions, but the LORD alone determines what happens.

17 ¹A dry crust of bread eaten in peace and quiet is better than a feast eaten where everyone argues.

²A hard-working slave will be placed in charge of a no-good child, and that slave will be given the same inheritance that each child receives.

³Silver and gold are tested by flames of fire; our thoughts are tested by the LORD.

⁴Troublemakers listen to troublemakers, and liars listen to liars.

⁵By insulting the poor, you insult your Creator. You will be punished if you make fun of someone in trouble.

⁶Grandparents are proud of their grandchildren, and children should be proud of their parents.

⁷It sounds strange for a fool to talk sensibly, but it's even worse for a ruler to tell lies.

⁸A bribe works miracles like a magic charm that brings good luck.

⁹You will keep your friends if you forgive them, but you will lose your friends if you keep talking about what they did wrong.

¹⁰A sensible person accepts correction, but you can't beat sense into a fool.

¹¹Cruel people want to rebel, and so vicious attackers will be sent against them.

¹²A bear robbed of her cubs is far less dangerous than a stubborn fool.

¹³You will always have trouble if you are mean to those who are good to you.

¹⁴The start of an argument is like a water leak so stop it before real trouble breaks out.

¹⁵The LORD doesn't like those who defend the guilty or condemn the innocent.

¹⁶Why should fools have money for an education when they refuse to learn?

¹⁷A friend is always a friend, and relatives are born to share our troubles.

¹⁸It's stupid to guarantee someone else's loan.

¹⁹The wicked and the proud love trouble and keep begging to be hurt.

²⁰Dishonesty does you no good, and telling lies will get you in trouble.

²¹It's never pleasant to be the parent of a fool and have nothing but pain.

²²If you are cheerful, you feel good; if you are sad, you hurt all over.

²³Crooks accept secret bribes to keep justice from being done.

²⁴Anyone with wisdom knows what makes good sense, but fools can never make up their minds.

²⁵Foolish children bring sorrow to their father and pain to their mother.

²⁶It isn't fair to punish the innocent and those who do right.

²⁷It makes a lot of sense to be a person of few words and to stay calm.

²⁸Even fools seem clever when they are quiet.

18¹ It's selfish and stupid to think only of yourself and to sneer at people who have sense.

² Fools have no desire to learn; they would much rather give their own opinion.

³ Wrongdoing leads to shame and disgrace.

⁴ Words of wisdom are a stream that flows from a deep fountain.

⁵ It's wrong to favour the guilty and keep the innocent from getting justice.

⁶ Foolish talk will get you into a lot of trouble.

⁷ Saying foolish things is like setting a trap to destroy yourself.

⁸ There's nothing so delicious as the taste of gossip! It melts in your mouth.

⁹ Being lazy is no different from being a troublemaker.

¹⁰ The LORD is a mighty tower where his people can run for safety

¹¹ the rich think their money is a wall of protection.

¹² Pride leads to destruction; humility leads to honour.

¹³ It's stupid and embarrassing to give an answer before you listen.

¹⁴ Being cheerful helps when we are sick, but nothing helps when we give up.

¹⁵ Everyone with good sense wants to learn.

¹⁶ A gift will get you in to see anyone.

¹⁷ You may think you have won your case in court, until your opponent speaks.

¹⁸ Drawing straws is one way to settle a difficult case.

¹⁹ Making up with a friend you have offended is harder than breaking through a city wall.

²⁰ Make your words good you will be glad you did.

²¹ Words can bring death or life! Talk too much, and you will eat everything you say.

²² A man's greatest treasure is his wife she is a gift from the LORD.

²³ The poor must beg for help, but the rich can give a harsh reply.

²⁴ Some friends don't help, but a true friend is closer than your own family.

19¹ It's better to be poor and live right than to be a stupid liar.

²Willingness and stupidity don't go well together. If you are too eager, you will miss the road.

³We are ruined by our own stupidity, though we blame the LORD.

⁴The rich have many friends; the poor have none.

⁵Dishonest witnesses and liars won't escape punishment.

⁶Everyone tries to be friends of those who can help them.

⁷If you are poor, your own relatives reject you, and your friends are worse. When you really need them, they are not there.

⁸Do yourself a favour by having good sense you will be glad you did.

⁹Dishonest witnesses and liars will be destroyed.

¹⁰It isn't right for a fool to live in luxury or for a slave to rule in place of a king.

¹¹It's wise to be patient and show what you are like by forgiving others.

¹²An angry king roars like a lion, but when a king is pleased, it's like dew on the crops.

¹³A foolish son brings disgrace to his father. A nagging wife goes on and on like the drip, drip, drip of the rain.

¹⁴You may inherit all you own from your parents, but a sensible wife is a gift from the LORD.

¹⁵If you are lazy and sleep your time away, you will starve.

¹⁶Obey the Lord's teachings and you will live; disobey and you will die.

¹⁷Caring for the poor is lending to the LORD, and you will be well repaid.

¹⁸Correct your children before it's too late; if you don't punish them, you are destroying them.

¹⁹People with bad tempers are always in trouble, and they need help over and over again.

²⁰Pay attention to advice and accept correction, so you can live sensibly.

²¹We may make a lot of plans, but the LORD will do what he has decided.

²²What matters most is loyalty. It's better to be poor than to be a liar.

²³Showing respect to the LORD brings true life if you do it, you can relax without fear of danger.

²⁴ Some people are too lazy to lift a hand to feed themselves.

²⁵ Stupid fools learn good sense by seeing others punished; a sensible person learns by being corrected.

²⁶ Children who bring disgrace rob their father and chase their mother away.

²⁷ If you stop learning, you will forget what you already know.

²⁸ A lying witness makes fun of the court system, and criminals think crime is really delicious.

²⁹ Every stupid fool is just waiting to be punished.

20¹ It isn't clever to get drunk! Drinking makes a fool of you and leads to fights.

² An angry ruler is like a roaring lion make either one angry, and you are dead.

³ It makes you look good when you avoid a fight only fools love to quarrel.

⁴ If you are too lazy to plough, don't expect a harvest.

⁵ Someone's thoughts may be as deep as the ocean, but if you are clever, you will discover them.

⁶There are many who say, You can trust me! But can they be trusted?

⁷Good people live right, and God blesses the children who follow their example.

⁸When rulers decide cases, they weigh the evidence.

⁹Can any of us really say, My thoughts are pure, and my sins are gone?

¹⁰Two things the LORD hates are dishonest scales and dishonest measures.

¹¹The good or bad that children do shows what they are like.

¹²Hearing and seeing are gifts from the LORD.

¹³If you sleep all the time, you will starve; if you get up and work, you will have enough food.

¹⁴Everyone likes to boast about getting a bargain.

¹⁵Sensible words are better than gold or jewels.

¹⁶You deserve to lose your coat if you loan it to someone to guarantee payment for the debt of a stranger.

¹⁷The food you get by cheating may taste delicious, but it turns to gravel.

¹⁸ Be sure you have sound advice before making plans or starting a war.

¹⁹ Stay away from gossips they tell everything.

²⁰ Children who curse their parents will go to the land of darkness long before their time.

²¹ Getting rich quick may turn out to be a curse.

²² Don't try to get even. Trust the LORD, and he will help you.

²³ The LORD hates dishonest scales and dishonest weights. So don't cheat!

²⁴ How can we know what will happen to us when the LORD alone decides?

²⁵ Don't fall into the trap of making promises to God before you think!

²⁶ A wise ruler severely punishes every criminal.

²⁷ Our inner thoughts are a lamp from the LORD, and they search our hearts.

²⁸ Rulers are protected by God's mercy and loyalty, but they must be merciful for their kingdoms to last.

²⁹ Young people take pride in their strength, but the grey hairs of wisdom are even more beautiful.

³⁰A severe beating can knock all of the evil out of you!

21 ¹The LORD controls rulers, just as he determines the course of rivers.

²We may think we are doing the right thing, but the LORD always knows what is in our hearts.

³Doing what is right and fair pleases the LORD more than an offering.

⁴Evil people are proud and arrogant, but sin is the only crop they produce.

⁵If you plan and work hard, you will have plenty; if you get in a hurry, you will end up poor.

⁶Cheating to get rich is a foolish dream and no less than suicide.

⁷You destroy yourself by being cruel and violent and refusing to live right.

⁸All crooks are liars, but anyone who is innocent will do right.

⁹It's better to stay outside on the roof of your house than to live inside with a nagging wife.

¹⁰Evil people want to do wrong, even to their friends.

¹¹ An ignorant fool learns by seeing others punished; a sensible person learns by being instructed.

¹² God is always fair! He knows what the wicked do and will punish them.

¹³ If you won't help the poor, don't expect to be heard when you cry out for help.

¹⁴ A secret bribe will save you from someone's fierce anger.

¹⁵ When justice is done, good citizens are glad and crooks are terrified.

¹⁶ If you stop using good sense, you will find yourself in the grave.

¹⁷ Heavy drinkers and others who live only for pleasure will lose all they have.

¹⁸ God's people will escape, but all who are wicked will pay the price.

¹⁹ It's better out in the desert than at home with a nagging, complaining wife.

²⁰ Be sensible and store up precious treasures don't waste them like a fool.

²¹ If you try to be kind and good, you will be blessed with life and goodness and honour.

²² One wise person can defeat a city full of soldiers and capture their fortress.

²³ Watching what you say can save you a lot of trouble.

²⁴ If you are proud and conceited, everyone will say, You're a snob!

²⁵ If you want too much and are too lazy to work, it could be fatal.

²⁶ But people who obey God are always generous.

²⁷ The Lord despises the offerings of wicked people with evil motives.

²⁸ If you tell lies in court, you are done for; only a reliable witness can do the job.

²⁹ Wicked people bluff their way, but God's people think before they take a step.

³⁰ No matter how much you know or what plans you make, you can't defeat the LORD.

³¹ Even if your army has horses ready for battle, the LORD will always win.

22¹ A good reputation and respect are worth much more than silver and gold.

² The rich and the poor are all created by the LORD.

³ When you see trouble coming, don't be stupid and walk right into it be clever and hide.

⁴ Respect and serve the LORD! Your reward will be wealth, a long life, and honour.

⁵ Crooks walk down a road full of thorny traps. Stay away from there!

⁶ Teach your children right from wrong, and when they are grown they will still do right.

⁷ The poor are ruled by the rich, and those who borrow are slaves of moneylenders.

⁸ Troublemakers get in trouble, and their terrible anger will get them nowhere.

⁹ The LORD blesses everyone who freely gives food to the poor.

¹⁰ Arguments and fights will come to an end, if you chase away those who insult others.

¹¹ The king is the friend of all who are sincere and speak with kindness.

¹² The LORD watches over everyone who shows good sense, but he frustrates the plans of deceitful liars.

¹³ Don't be so lazy that you say, If I go to work, a lion will eat me!

¹⁴The words of a bad woman are like a deep pit; if you make the LORD angry, you will fall right in.

¹⁵All children are foolish, but firm correction will make them change.

¹⁶Cheat the poor to make profit or give gifts to the rich either way you lose.

¹⁷Here are some sayings of people with wisdom, so listen carefully as I teach.

¹⁸You will be glad that you know these sayings and can recite them.

¹⁹I am teaching them today, so that you may trust the LORD.

²⁰I have written thirty sayings filled with sound advice.

²¹You can trust them completely to give you the right words for those in charge of you.

²²Don't take advantage of the poor or cheat them in court.

²³The LORD is their defender, and what you do to them, he will do to you.

²⁴Don't make friends with anyone who has a bad temper.

²⁵You might turn out like them and get caught in a trap.

²⁶Don't guarantee to pay someone else's debt.

²⁷ If you don't have the money, you might lose your bed.

²⁸ Don't move a boundary marker set up by your ancestors.

²⁹ If you do your job well, you will work for a ruler and never be a slave.

23 ¹ When you are invited to eat with a king, use your best manners.

² Don't go and stuff yourself! That would be just the same as cutting your throat.

³ Don't be greedy for all that fancy food! It may not be so tasty.

⁴ Give up trying so hard to get rich.

⁵ Your money flies away before you know it, just like an eagle suddenly taking off.

⁶ Don't accept an invitation to eat a selfish person's food, no matter how good it is.

⁷ People like that take note of how much you eat. They say, Take all you want! But they don't mean it.

⁸ Each bite will come back up, and all your kind words will be wasted.

⁹ Don't talk to fools they will just make fun of you.

¹⁰ Don't move a boundary marker or take the land that belongs to orphans.

¹¹ God All-Powerful is there to defend them against you.

¹² Listen to instruction and do your best to learn.

¹³ Don't fail to correct your children. You won't kill them by being firm,

¹⁴ and it may even save their lives.

¹⁵ My children, if you show good sense, I will be happy,

¹⁶ and if you are truthful, I will really be glad.

¹⁷ Don't be jealous of sinners, but always honour the LORD.

¹⁸ Then you will truly have hope for the future.

¹⁹ Listen to me, my children! Be wise and have enough sense to follow the right path.

²⁰ Don't be a heavy drinker or stuff yourself with food.

²¹ It will make you feel drowsy, and you will end up poor with only rags to wear.

²² Pay attention to your father, and don't neglect your mother when she grows old.

²³ Invest in truth and wisdom, discipline and good sense, and don't part with them.

²⁴ Make your father truly happy by living right and showing sound judgment.

²⁵ Make your parents proud, especially your mother.

²⁶ My son, pay close attention, and gladly follow my example.

²⁷ Bad women and unfaithful wives are like a deep pit

²⁸ they are waiting to attack you like a gang of robbers with victim after victim.

²⁹ Who is always in trouble? Who argues and fights? Who has cuts and bruises? Whose eyes are red?

³⁰ Everyone who stays up late, having just one more drink.

³¹ Don't even look at that colourful stuff bubbling up in the glass! It goes down so easily,

³² but later it bites like a poisonous snake.

³³ You will see weird things, and your mind will play tricks on you.

³⁴ You will feel tossed about like someone trying to sleep on a ship in a storm.

³⁵ You will be bruised all over, without even remembering how it all happened. And you will lie awake asking, When

will morning come, so I can drink some more?

24¹ Don't be jealous of crooks or want to be their friends.

² All they think about and talk about is violence and cruelty.

³ Use wisdom and understanding to establish your home;

⁴ let good sense fill the rooms with priceless treasures.

⁵ Wisdom brings strength, and knowledge gives power.

⁶ Battles are won by listening to advice and making a lot of plans.

⁷ Wisdom is too much for fools! Their advice is no good.

⁸ No one but troublemakers think up trouble.

⁹ Everyone hates senseless fools who think up ways to sin.

¹⁰ Don't give up and be helpless in times of trouble.

¹¹ Don't fail to rescue those who are doomed to die.

¹² Don't say, I didn't know it! God can read your mind. He watches each of us and knows our thoughts. And God will pay us back for what we do.

¹³ Honey is good for you, my children, and it tastes sweet.

¹⁴ Wisdom is like honey for your life if you find it, your future is bright.

¹⁵ Don't be a cruel person who attacks good people and hurts their families.

¹⁶ Even if good people fall seven times, they will get back up. But when trouble strikes the wicked, that's the end of them.

¹⁷ Don't be happy to see your enemies trip and fall down.

¹⁸ The LORD will find out and be unhappy. Then he will stop being angry with them.

¹⁹ Don't let evil people worry you or make you jealous.

²⁰ They will soon be gone like the flame of a lamp that burns out.

²¹ My children, you must respect the LORD and the king, and you must not make friends with anyone who rebels against either of them.

²² Who knows what sudden disaster the LORD or a ruler might bring?

²³ Here are some more sayings that make good sense: When you judge, you must be fair.

²⁴ If you let the guilty go free, people of all nations will hate and curse you.

²⁵ But if you punish the guilty, things will go well for you, and you will prosper.

²⁶ Giving an honest answer is a sign of true friendship.

²⁷ Get your fields ready and plant your crops before setting up home.

²⁸ Don't accuse anyone who isn't guilty. Don't ever tell a lie

²⁹ or say to someone, I'll get even with you!

³⁰ I once walked by the field and the vineyard of a lazy fool.

³¹ Thorns and weeds were everywhere, and the stone wall had fallen down.

³² When I saw this, it taught me a lesson:

³³ Sleep a little. Doze a little. Fold your hands and twiddle your thumbs.

³⁴ Suddenly poverty hits you and everything is gone!

25 ¹ Here are more of Solomon's proverbs. They were copied by the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah.

² God is praised for being mysterious; rulers are praised for explaining mysteries.

³ Who can fully understand the thoughts of a ruler? They reach beyond the sky and go deep in the earth.

⁴ Silver must be purified before it can be used to make something of value.

⁵ Evil people must be removed before anyone can rule with justice.

⁶ Don't try to seem important in the court of a ruler.

⁷ It's better for the ruler to give you a high position than for you to be embarrassed in front of royal officials.

Be sure you are right

⁸ before you sue someone, or you might lose your case and be embarrassed.

⁹ When you and someone else can't get along, don't gossip about it.

¹⁰ Others will find out, and your reputation will then be ruined.

¹¹ The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver.

¹² Listening to good advice is worth much more than jewellery made of gold.

¹³ A messenger you can trust is just as refreshing as cool water in summer.

¹⁴ Broken promises are worse than rain clouds that don't bring rain.

¹⁵Patience and gentle talk can convince a ruler and overcome any problem.

¹⁶Eating too much honey can make you sick.

¹⁷Don't visit friends too often, or they will get tired of it and start hating you.

¹⁸Telling lies about friends is like attacking them with clubs and swords and sharp arrows.

¹⁹A friend you can't trust in times of trouble is like having a toothache or a sore foot.

²⁰Singing to someone in deep sorrow is like pouring vinegar in an open cut.

²¹If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat. And if they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

²²This will be the same as piling burning coals on their heads. And the LORD will reward you.

²³As surely as rain blows in from the north, anger is caused by cruel words.

²⁴It's better to stay outside on the roof of your house than to live inside with a nagging wife.

²⁵Good news from far away refreshes like cold water when you are thirsty.

²⁶When a good person gives in to the wicked, it's like dumping rubbish in a stream of clear water.

²⁷Don't eat too much honey or always want praise.

²⁸Losing self-control leaves you as helpless as a city without a wall.

26¹Expecting snow in summer and rain in the dry season makes more sense than honouring a fool.

²A curse you don't deserve will take wings and fly away like a sparrow or a swallow.

³Horses and donkeys must be beaten and bridled and so must fools.

⁴Don't make a fool of yourself by answering a fool.

⁵But if you answer any fools, show how foolish they are, so they won't feel clever.

⁶Sending a message by a fool is like chopping off your foot and drinking poison.

⁷A fool with words of wisdom is like an athlete with legs that can't move.

⁸Are you going to honour a fool? Why not shoot a slingshot with the stone tied tight?

⁹A thorn bush waved around in the hand of a drunkard is no worse than a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

¹⁰It's no cleverer to shoot arrows at every passer-by than it is to hire a bunch of worthless nobodies.

¹¹Dogs return to eat their vomit, just as fools repeat their foolishness.

¹²There is more hope for a fool than for someone who says, I'm really clever!

¹³Don't be lazy and keep saying, There's a lion outside!

¹⁴A door turns on its hinges, but a lazy person just turns over in bed.

¹⁵Some of us are so lazy that we won't lift a hand to feed ourselves.

¹⁶A lazy person says, I am cleverer than everyone else.

¹⁷It's better to take hold of a mad dog by the ears than to take part in someone else's argument.

¹⁸It's no crazier to shoot sharp and flaming arrows

¹⁹than to cheat someone and say, I was only fooling!

²⁰Where there is no fuel a fire goes out; where there is no gossip arguments come to an end.

²¹ Troublemakers start trouble, just as sparks and fuel start a fire.

²² There is nothing so delicious as the taste of gossip! It melts in your mouth.

²³ Hiding hateful thoughts behind smooth talk is like coating a clay pot with a cheap glaze.

²⁴ The pleasant talk of an enemy hides more evil plans

²⁵ than can be counted so don't believe a word!

²⁶ Everyone will see through those evil plans.

²⁷ If you dig a pit, you will fall in; if you start a stone rolling, it will roll back on you.

²⁸ Watch out for anyone who tells lies and flatters they are out to get you.

27 ¹ Don't boast about tomorrow!

Each day brings its own surprises.

² Don't boast about yourself let others praise you.

³ Stones and sand are heavy, but trouble caused by a fool is a much heavier load.

⁴ An angry person is dangerous, but a jealous person is even worse.

⁵A truly good friend will openly correct you.

⁶You can trust a friend who corrects you, but kisses from an enemy are nothing but lies.

⁷If you have had enough to eat, honey doesn't taste good, but if you are really hungry, you will eat anything.

⁸When you are far from home, you feel like a bird without a nest.

⁹The sweet smell of incense can make you feel good, but true friendship is better still.

¹⁰Don't desert an old friend of your family or visit your relatives when you are in trouble. A friend nearby is better than relatives far away.

¹¹My child, show good sense! Then I will be happy and able to answer anyone who criticizes me.

¹²Be cautious and hide when you see danger don't be stupid and walk right into trouble.

¹³Don't loan money to a stranger unless you are given something to guarantee payment.

¹⁴A loud greeting early in the morning is the same as a curse.

¹⁵The steady dripping of rain and the nagging of a wife are one and the same.

¹⁶It's easier to catch the wind or hold olive oil in your hand than to stop a nagging wife.

¹⁷Just as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other.

¹⁸Take care of a tree, and you will eat its fruit; look after your master, and you will be praised.

¹⁹You see your face in a mirror and your thoughts in the minds of others.

²⁰Death and the grave are never satisfied, and neither are we.

²¹Gold and silver are tested in a red-hot furnace, but we are tested by praise.

²²No matter how hard you beat a fool, you can't pound out the foolishness.

²³You should take good care of your sheep and goats,

²⁴because wealth and honour don't last for ever.

²⁵After the hay is cut and the new growth appears and the harvest is over,

²⁶you can sell lambs and goats to buy clothes and land.

²⁷ From the milk of the goats, you can make enough cheese to feed your family and all your servants.

28¹ Wicked people run away when no one chases them, but those who live right are as brave as lions.

² In time of civil war there are many leaders, but a sensible leader restores law and order.

³ When someone poor takes over and ill-treats the poor, it's like a heavy rain destroying the crops.

⁴ Lawbreakers praise criminals, but law-abiding citizens always oppose them.

⁵ Criminals don't know what justice means, but all who respect the LORD understand it completely.

⁶ It's better to be poor and live right, than to be rich and dishonest.

⁷ It makes good sense to obey the Law of God, but you disgrace your parents if you make friends with worthless nobodies.

⁸ If you make money by charging high interest rates, you will lose it all to someone who cares for the poor.

⁹God cannot stand the prayers of anyone who disobeys his Law.

¹⁰By leading good people to sin, you dig a pit for yourself, but all who live right will have a bright future.

¹¹The rich think highly of themselves, but anyone poor and sensible sees right through them.

¹²When an honest person wins, it's time to celebrate; when crooks are in control, it's best to hide.

¹³If you don't confess your sins, you will be a failure. But God will be merciful if you confess your sins and give them up.

¹⁴The LORD blesses everyone who is afraid to do evil, but if you are cruel, you will end up in trouble.

¹⁵A ruler who ill-treats the poor is like a roaring lion or a bear hunting for food.

¹⁶A heartless leader is a fool, but anyone who refuses to get rich by cheating others will live a long time.

¹⁷Don't give help to murderers! Make them stay on the run for as long as they live.

¹⁸ Honesty will keep you safe, but everyone who is crooked will suddenly fall.

¹⁹ Work hard, and you will have a lot of food; waste time, and you will have a lot of trouble.

²⁰ God blesses his loyal people, but punishes all who want to get rich quick.

²¹ It isn't right to be unfair, but some people can be bribed with only a piece of bread.

²² Don't be selfish and eager to get rich you will end up worse off than you can imagine.

²³ Honest correction is appreciated more than flattery.

²⁴ If you cheat your parents and don't think it's wrong, you are a common thief.

²⁵ Selfish people cause trouble, but you will live a full life if you trust the LORD.

²⁶ Only fools would trust what they alone think, but if you live by wisdom, you will do all right.

²⁷ Giving to the poor will keep you from poverty, but if you close your eyes to their needs, everyone will curse you.

²⁸When crooks are in control, everyone tries to hide, but when they lose power, good people are everywhere.

29¹ If you keep being stubborn after many warnings, you will suddenly discover you have gone too far.

²When justice rules a nation, everyone is glad; when injustice rules, everyone groans.

³If you love wisdom your parents will be glad, but chasing after bad women will cost you everything.

⁴An honest ruler makes the nation strong; a ruler who takes bribes will bring it to ruin.

⁵Flattery is nothing less than setting a trap.

⁶Your sins will catch you, but everyone who lives right will sing and celebrate.

⁷The wicked don't care about the rights of the poor, but good people do.

⁸Sneering at others is a spark that sets a city on fire; using good sense can put out the flames of anger.

⁹Be wise and don't sue a fool. You won't get satisfaction, because all the fool will do is sneer and shout.

¹⁰A murderer hates everyone who is honest and lives right.

¹¹Don't be a fool and quickly lose your temper be sensible and patient.

¹²A ruler who listens to lies will have corrupt officials.

¹³The poor and all who abuse them must each depend on God for light.

¹⁴Kings who are fair to the poor will rule for ever.

¹⁵Correct your children, and they will be wise; children out of control disgrace their mothers.

¹⁶Crime increases when crooks are in power, but law-abiding citizens will see them fall.

¹⁷If you correct your children, they will bring you peace and happiness.

¹⁸Without guidance from God law and order disappear, but God blesses everyone who obeys his Law.

¹⁹Even when servants are clever, it takes more than words to make them obey.

²⁰There is more hope for a fool than for someone who speaks without thinking.

²¹Slaves you treat kindly from their childhood will cause you sorrow.

²² A person with a quick temper stirs up arguments and commits a lot of sins.

²³ Too much pride brings disgrace; humility leads to honour.

²⁴ If you take part in a crime you are your worst enemy, because even under oath you can't tell the truth.

²⁵ Don't fall into the trap of being a coward trust the LORD, and you will be safe.

²⁶ Many try to make friends with a ruler, but justice comes from the LORD.

²⁷ Good people and criminals can't stand each other.

30¹ These are the sayings and the message of Agur son of Jakeh. Someone cries out to God, I am completely worn out! How can I last?

² I am far too stupid to be considered human.

³ I never was wise, and I don't understand what God is like.

⁴ Has anyone gone up to heaven and come back down? Has anyone grabbed hold of the wind? Has anyone wrapped up the sea or marked out boundaries for the earth? If you know of any who

have done such things, then tell me their names and their children's names.

⁵Everything God says is true and it's a shield for all who come to him for safety.

⁶Don't change what God has said! He will correct you and show that you are a liar.

⁷There are two things, Lord, I want you to do for me before I die:

⁸make me absolutely honest and don't let me be too poor or too rich. Give me just what I need.

⁹If I have too much to eat, I might forget about you; if I don't have enough, I might steal and disgrace your name.

¹⁰Don't tell a slave owner something bad about one of the slaves. That slave will curse you, and you will be in trouble.

¹¹Some people curse their father and even their mother;

¹²others think they are perfect, but they are stained by sin.

¹³Some people are stuck-up and act like snobs;

¹⁴others are so greedy that they gobble up the poor and homeless.

¹⁵ Greed has twins, each named Give me! There are three or four things that are never satisfied:

¹⁶ the world of the dead and a childless wife, the thirsty earth and a flaming fire.

¹⁷ Don't make fun of your father or disobey your mother; crows will peck out your eyes, and vultures will eat the rest of you.

¹⁸ There are three or four things I cannot understand:

¹⁹ how eagles fly so high or snakes crawl on rocks, how ships sail the ocean or people fall in love.

²⁰ An unfaithful wife says, Sleeping with another man is as natural as eating.

²¹ There are three or four things that make the earth tremble and are unbearable:

²² a slave who becomes king, a fool who eats too much,

²³ a hateful woman who finds a husband, and a slave who takes the place of the woman who owns her.

²⁴ On this earth four things are small but very wise:

²⁵ ants, who seem to be feeble, but store up food all summer long;

²⁶badgers, who seem to be weak, but live among the rocks;

²⁷locusts, who have no king, but march like an army;

²⁸lizards, which can be caught in your hand, but sneak into palaces.

²⁹Three or four creatures really strut around:

³⁰those fearless lions who rule the jungle,

³¹those proud cocks, those mountain goats, and those rulers who have no enemies.

³²If you are foolishly boasting or planning something evil, then stop it now!

³³If you churn milk you get butter; if you hit your nose, you get blood and if you stay angry, you get in trouble.

31 ¹These are the sayings that King Lemuel of Massa was taught by his mother.

²My son Lemuel, you were born in answer to my prayers, so listen carefully.

³Don't waste your life chasing after women! This has ruined many kings.

⁴Kings and leaders should not get drunk or even want to drink.

⁵ Drinking makes you forget your responsibilities, and you ill-treat the poor.

⁶ Beer and wine are only for the dying or for those who have lost all hope.

⁷ Let them drink and forget how poor and miserable they feel.

⁸ But you must defend those who are helpless and have no hope.

⁹ Be fair and give justice to the poor and homeless.

¹⁰ A truly good wife is the most precious treasure a man can find!

¹¹ Her husband depends on her, and she never lets him down.

¹² She is good to him every day of her life,

¹³ and with her own hands she gladly makes clothes.

¹⁴ She is like a sailing ship that brings food from across the sea.

¹⁵ She gets up before daylight to prepare food for her family and for her servants.

¹⁶ She knows how to buy land and how to plant a vineyard,

¹⁷ and she always works hard.

¹⁸ She knows when to buy or sell, and she stays busy until late at night.

¹⁹ She spins her own cloth,

²⁰ and she helps the poor and the needy.

²¹ Her family has warm clothing, and so she doesn't worry when it snows.

²² She does her own sewing, and everything she wears is beautiful.

²³ Her husband is a well-known and respected leader in the city.

²⁴ She makes clothes to sell to the shop owners.

²⁵ She is strong and graceful, as well as cheerful about the future.

²⁶ Her words are sensible, and her advice is thoughtful.

²⁷ She takes good care of her family and is never lazy.

²⁸ Her children praise her, and with great pride her husband says,

²⁹ There are many good women, but you are the best!

³⁰ Charm can be deceiving, and beauty fades away, but a woman who honours the LORD deserves to be praised.

³¹ Show her respect praise her in public for what she has done.

Ecclesiastes

1 ¹ When the son of David was king in Jerusalem, he was known to be very wise, and he said:

² Nothing makes sense! Everything is nonsense. I have seen it all nothing makes sense!

³ What is there to show for all our hard work here on this earth?

⁴ People come, and people go, but still the world never changes.

⁵ The sun comes up, the sun goes down; it hurries right back to where it started from.

⁶ The wind blows south, the wind blows north; round and round it blows over and over again.

⁷ All rivers empty into the sea, but it never spills over; one by one the rivers return to their source.

⁸ All of life is far more boring than words could ever say. Our eyes and our ears are never satisfied with what we see and hear.

⁹Everything that happens has happened before; nothing is new, nothing under the sun.

¹⁰Someone might say, Here is something new! But it happened before, long before we were born.

¹¹No one who lived in the past is remembered any more, and everyone yet to be born will be forgotten too.

¹²I said these things when I lived in Jerusalem as king of Israel.

¹³With all my wisdom I tried to understand everything that happens here on earth. And God has made this so hard for us humans to do.

¹⁴I have seen it all, and everything is just as senseless as chasing the wind.

¹⁵If something is crooked, it can't be made straight; if something isn't there, it can't be counted.

¹⁶I said to myself, You are by far the wisest person who has ever lived in Jerusalem. You are eager to learn, and you have learnt a lot.

¹⁷Then I decided to find out all I could about wisdom and foolishness. Soon I realized that this too was as senseless as chasing the wind.

¹⁸The more you know, the more it hurts; the more you understand, the more you suffer.

2¹I said to myself, Have fun and enjoy yourself! But this didn't make sense.

²Laughing and having fun is mad. What good does it do?

³I wanted to find out what was best for us during the short time we have on this earth. So I decided to make myself happy with wine and find out what it means to be foolish, without really being foolish myself.

⁴I did some great things. I built houses and planted vineyards.

⁵I had flower gardens and orchards full of fruit trees.

⁶And I had pools where I could get water for the trees.

⁷I owned slaves, and their sons and daughters became my slaves. I had more sheep and goats than anyone who had ever lived in Jerusalem.

⁸Foreign rulers brought me silver, gold, and precious treasures. Men and women sang for me, and I had many wives who gave me great pleasure.

⁹I was the most famous person who had ever lived in Jerusalem, and I was very wise.

¹⁰I got whatever I wanted and did whatever made me happy. But most of all, I enjoyed my work.

¹¹Then I thought about everything I had done, including the hard work, and it was simply chasing the wind. Nothing on earth is worth the trouble.

¹²I asked myself, What can the next king do that I haven't done? Then I decided to compare wisdom with foolishness and stupidity.

¹³And I discovered that wisdom is better than foolishness, just as light is better than darkness.

¹⁴Wisdom is like having two good eyes; foolishness leaves you in the dark. But wise or foolish, we all end up the same.

¹⁵Finally, I said to myself, Being wise got me nowhere! The same thing will happen to me that happens to fools. Nothing makes sense.

¹⁶Wise or foolish, we all die and are soon forgotten.

¹⁷ This made me hate life. Everything we do is painful; it's just as senseless as chasing the wind.

¹⁸ Suddenly I realized that others would some day get everything I had worked so hard for, then I started hating it all.

¹⁹ Who knows if those people will be sensible or stupid? Either way, they will own everything I have earned by hard work and wisdom. It doesn't make sense.

²⁰ I thought about all my hard work, and I felt depressed.

²¹ When we use our wisdom, knowledge, and skill to get what we own, why do we have to leave it to someone who didn't work for it? This is senseless and wrong.

²² What do we really gain from all our hard work?

²³ Our bodies ache during the day, and work is torture. Then at night our thoughts are troubled. It just doesn't make sense.

²⁴ The best thing we can do is to enjoy eating, drinking, and working. I believe these are God's gifts to us,

²⁵ and no one enjoys eating and living more than I do.

²⁶If we please God, he will make us wise, understanding, and happy. But if we sin, God will make us struggle for a living, then he will give all we own to someone who pleases him. This makes no more sense than chasing the wind.

3¹ Everything on earth has its own time and its own season.

²There is a time for birth and death, planting and reaping,

³for killing and healing, destroying and building,

⁴for crying and laughing, weeping and dancing,

⁵for throwing stones and gathering stones, embracing and parting.

⁶There is a time for finding and losing, keeping and giving,

⁷for tearing and sewing, listening and speaking.

⁸There is also a time for love and hate, for war and peace.

⁹What do we gain by all our hard work?

¹⁰I have seen what difficult things God demands of us.

¹¹God makes everything happen at the right time. Yet none of us can ever fully understand all he has done, and he puts

questions in our minds about the past and the future.

¹²I know the best thing we can do is always to enjoy life,

¹³because God's gift to us is the happiness we get from our food and drink and from the work we do.

¹⁴Everything God has done will last for ever; nothing he does can ever be changed. God has done all this, so that we will worship him.

¹⁵Everything that happens has happened before, and all that will be has already been God does everything over and over again.

¹⁶Everywhere on earth I saw violence and injustice instead of fairness and justice.

¹⁷So I told myself that God has set a time and a place for everything. He will judge everyone, both the wicked and the good.

¹⁸I know that God is testing us to show us that we are merely animals.

¹⁹Like animals we breathe and die, and we are no better off than they are. It just doesn't make sense.

²⁰All living creatures go to the same place. We are made from earth, and we return to the earth.

²¹Who really knows if our spirits go up and the spirits of animals go down into the earth?

²²We were meant to enjoy our work, and that's the best thing we can do. We can never know the future.

4¹ I looked again and saw people being ill-treated everywhere on earth. They were crying, but no one was there to offer comfort, and those who ill-treated them were powerful.

²I said to myself, The dead are better off than the living.

³But those who have never been born are better off than anyone else, because they have never seen the terrible things that happen on this earth.

⁴Then I realized that we work and do wonderful things just because we are jealous of others. This makes no more sense than chasing the wind.

⁵Fools will fold their hands and starve to death.

⁶Yet a very little food eaten in peace is better than twice as much earned from overwork and chasing the wind.

⁷Once again I saw that nothing on earth makes sense.

⁸For example, some people don't have friends or family. But they are never satisfied with what they own, and they never stop working to get more. They should ask themselves, Why am I always working to have more? Who will get what I leave behind? What a senseless and miserable life!

⁹You are better off having a friend than being all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn.

¹⁰If you fall, your friend can help you up. But if you fall without having a friend nearby, you are really in trouble.

¹¹If you sleep alone, you won't have anyone to keep you warm on a cold night.

¹²Someone might be able to beat up one of you, but not both of you. As the saying goes, A rope made from three strands of cord is hard to break.

¹³You may be poor and young. But if you are wise, you are better off than

a foolish old king who won't listen to advice.

¹⁴Even if you were not born into the royal family and have been a prisoner and poor, you can still be king.

¹⁵I once saw everyone in the world follow a young leader who came to power after the king was gone.

¹⁶His followers could not even be counted. But years from now, no one will praise him this makes no more sense than chasing the wind.

5¹ Be careful what you do when you enter the house of God. Some fools go there to offer sacrifices, even though they haven't sinned. But it's best just to listen when you go to worship.

²Don't talk before you think or make promises to God without thinking them through. God is in heaven, and you are on earth, so don't talk too much.

³If you keep thinking about something, you will dream about it. If you talk too much, you will say the wrong thing.

⁴God doesn't like fools. So don't be slow to keep your promises to God.

⁵It's better not to make a promise at all than to make one and not keep it.

⁶Don't let your mouth get you in trouble! And don't say to the worship leader, I didn't mean what I said. God can destroy everything you have worked for, so don't say something that makes God angry.

⁷Respect and obey God! Daydreaming leads to a lot of senseless talk.

⁸Don't be surprised if the poor of your country are abused, and injustice takes the place of justice. After all, the lower officials must do what the higher ones order them to do.

⁹And since the king is the highest official, he benefits most from the taxes paid on the land.

¹⁰If you love money and wealth, you will never be satisfied with what you have. This doesn't make sense either.

¹¹The more you have, the more everyone expects from you. Your money won't do you any good others will just spend it for you.

¹²If you have to work hard for a living, you can rest well at night, even if you don't have much to eat. But if you are rich, you can't even sleep.

¹³I have seen something terribly unfair. People get rich, but it does them no good.

¹⁴Suddenly they lose everything in a bad business deal, then have nothing to leave for their children.

¹⁵They came into this world naked, and when they die, they will be just as naked. They can't take anything with them, and they won't have anything to show for all their work.

¹⁶That's terribly unfair. They leave the world just as they came into it. They gained nothing from running after the wind.

¹⁷Besides all this, they are always gloomy at mealtimes, and they are troubled, sick, and bitter.

¹⁸What is the best thing to do in the short life that God has given us? I think we should enjoy eating, drinking, and working hard. This is what God intends us to do.

¹⁹Suppose you are very rich and able to enjoy everything you own. Then go ahead and enjoy working hard this is God's gift to you.

²⁰God will keep you so happy that you won't have time to worry about each day.

6¹ There is something else terribly unfair, and it troubles everyone on earth.

²God may give you everything you want—money, property, and wealth. Then God doesn't let you enjoy it, and someone you don't even know gets it all. That's senseless and terribly unfair!

³You may live a long time and have a hundred children. But a child born dead is better off than you, unless you enjoy life and have a decent burial.

⁴That child will never live to see the sun or to have a name, and it will go straight to the world of darkness. But it will still find more rest than you,

⁵(6: 4)

⁶even if you live two thousand years and don't enjoy life. As you know, we all end up in the same place.

⁷We struggle just to have enough to eat, but we are never satisfied.

⁸We may be sensible, yet we are no better off than a fool. And if we are poor,

it still doesn't do us any good to try to live right.

⁹It's better to enjoy what we have than always to want something else, because that makes no more sense than chasing the wind.

¹⁰Everything that happens was decided long ago. We humans know what we are like, and we can't argue with God, because he is too strong for us.

¹¹The more we talk, the less sense we make, so what good does it do to talk?

¹²Life is short and meaningless, and it fades away like a shadow. Who knows what is best for us? Who knows what will happen after we are gone?

7¹A good reputation at the time of death is better than loving care at the time of birth.

²It's better to go to a funeral than to attend a feast; funerals remind us that we all must die.

³Choose sorrow over laughter because a sad face may hide a happy heart.

⁴A sensible person mourns, but fools always laugh.

⁵Harsh correction is better than the songs of a fool.

⁶Foolish laughter is stupid. It sounds like thorns crackling in a fire.

⁷Corruption makes fools of sensible people, and bribes can ruin you.

⁸Something completed is better than something just begun; patience is better than too much pride.

⁹Only fools get angry quickly and hold a grudge.

¹⁰It isn't wise to ask, Why is everything worse than it used to be?

¹¹Having wisdom is better than an inheritance.

¹²Wisdom will protect you just like money; knowledge with good sense will lead you to life.

¹³Think of what God has done! If God makes something crooked, can you make it straight?

¹⁴When times are good, you should be cheerful; when times are bad, think what it means. God makes them both to keep us from knowing what will happen next.

¹⁵I have seen everything during this senseless life of mine. I have seen good citizens die for doing the right thing, and I have seen criminals live to a ripe old age.

¹⁶ So don't destroy yourself by being too good or acting too clever!

¹⁷ Don't die before your time by being too evil or acting like a fool.

¹⁸ Keep to the middle of the road. You can do this if you truly respect God.

¹⁹ Wisdom will make you stronger than the ten most powerful leaders in your city.

²⁰ No one in this world always does right.

²¹ Don't listen to everything that everyone says, or you might hear your servant cursing you.

²² Haven't you cursed many others?

²³ I told myself that I would be clever and try to understand all of this, but it was too much for me.

²⁴ The truth is beyond us. It's far too deep.

²⁵ So I decided to learn everything I could and become wise enough to discover what life is all about. At the same time, I wanted to understand why it's stupid and senseless to be an evil fool.

²⁶ Here is what I discovered: a bad woman is worse than death. She is a

trap, reaching out with body and soul to catch you. But if you obey God, you can escape. If you don't obey, you are done for.

²⁷With all my wisdom I have tried to find out how everything fits together,

²⁸but so far I have not been able to. I do know there is one good man in a thousand, but never have I found a good woman.

²⁹I did learn one thing: we were completely honest when God created us, but now we have twisted minds.

8¹Who is clever enough to explain everything? Wisdom makes you cheerful and gives you a smile.

²If you promised God that you would be loyal to the king, I advise you to keep that promise.

³Don't quickly oppose the king or argue when he has already made up his mind.

⁴The king's word is law. No one can ask him, Why are you doing this?

⁵If you obey the king, you will stay out of trouble. So be clever and learn what to do and when to do it.

⁶Life is hard, but there is a time and a place for everything,

⁷ though no one can tell the future.

⁸ We cannot control the wind or determine the day of our death. There is no escape in time of war, and no one can hide behind evil.

⁹ I noticed all this and thought seriously about what goes on in the world. Why does one person have the power to hurt another?

¹⁰ I saw the wicked buried with honour, but God's people had to leave the holy city and were forgotten. None of this makes sense.

¹¹ When we see criminals commit crime after crime without being punished, it makes us want to start a life of crime.

¹² They commit hundreds of crimes and live to a ripe old age, in spite of the saying: Everyone who lives right and respects God will prosper,

¹³ but no one who sins and rejects God will prosper or live very long.

¹⁴ There is something else that doesn't make sense to me. Good citizens are treated as criminals, while criminals are honoured as though they were good citizens.

¹⁵ So I think we should get as much out of life as we possibly can. There is nothing better than to enjoy our food and drink and to have a good time. Then we can make it through this troublesome life that God has given us here on earth.

¹⁶ Day and night I went without sleep, trying to understand what goes on in this world.

¹⁷ I saw everything God does, and I realized that no one can really understand what happens. We may be very wise, but no matter how much we try or how much we claim to know, we cannot understand it all.

9¹ I thought about these things. Then I understood that God has power over everyone, even those of us who are wise and live right. Anything can happen to any of us, and so we never know if life will be good or bad.

² But exactly the same thing will finally happen to all of us, whether we live right and respect God or sin and don't respect God. Yes, the same thing will happen if we offer sacrifices to God or if we don't, if we keep our promises or break them.

³It's terribly unfair for the same thing to happen to each of us. We are mean and foolish while we live, and then we die.

⁴As long as we are alive, we still have hope, just as a live dog is better off than a dead lion.

⁵We know that we will die, but the dead don't know a thing. Nothing good will happen to them they are gone and forgotten.

⁶Their loves, their hates, and their jealous feelings have all disappeared with them. They will never again take part in anything that happens on this earth.

⁷Be happy and enjoy eating and drinking! God decided long ago that this is what you should do.

⁸Dress up, comb your hair, and look your best.

⁹Life is short, and you love your wife, so enjoy being with her. This is what you are supposed to do as you struggle through life on this earth.

¹⁰Work hard at whatever you do. You will soon go to the world of the dead,

where no one works or thinks or reasons or knows anything.

¹¹ Here is something else I have learnt: The fastest runners and the greatest heroes don't always win races and battles. Wisdom, intelligence, and skill don't always make you healthy, rich, or popular. We each have our share of bad luck.

¹² None of us know when we might fall victim to a sudden disaster and find ourselves like fish in a net or birds in a trap.

¹³ Once I saw what people really think of wisdom.

¹⁴ It happened when a powerful ruler surrounded and attacked a small city where only a few people lived. The enemy army was getting ready to break through the city walls.

¹⁵ But the city was saved by the wisdom of a poor person who was soon forgotten.

¹⁶ So I decided that wisdom is better than strength. Yet if you are poor, no one pays any attention to you, no matter how clever you are.

¹⁷ Words of wisdom spoken softly make much more sense than the shouts of a ruler to a crowd of fools.

¹⁸ Wisdom is more powerful than weapons, yet one mistake can destroy all the good you have done.

10¹ A few dead flies in perfume make all of it stink, and a little foolishness outweighs a lot of wisdom.

² Sensible thoughts lead you to do right; foolish thoughts lead you to do wrong.

³ Fools show their stupidity by the way they live; it's easy to see they have no sense.

⁴ Don't give up your job when your boss gets angry. If you stay calm, you'll be forgiven.

⁵ Some things rulers do are terribly unfair:

⁶ they honour fools, but dishonour the rich;

⁷ they let slaves ride on horses, but force slave owners to walk.

⁸ If you dig a pit, you might fall in; if you break down a wall, a snake might bite you.

⁹ You could even get hurt by chiselling a stone or chopping a log.

¹⁰If you don't sharpen your axe, it will be harder to use; if you are clever, you'll know what to do.

¹¹The power to charm a snake does you no good if it bites you anyway.

¹²If you talk sensibly, you will have friends; if you talk foolishly, you will destroy yourself.

¹³Fools begin with nonsense, and their stupid chatter ends with disaster.

¹⁴They never tire of talking, but none of us really know what the future will bring.

¹⁵Fools wear themselves out they don't know enough to find their way home.

¹⁶A country is in for trouble when its ruler is childish, and its leaders feast all day long.

¹⁷But a nation will prosper when its ruler is mature, and its leaders don't feast too much.

¹⁸Some people are too lazy to fix a leaky roof then the house falls in.

¹⁹Eating and drinking make you feel happy, and bribes can buy everything you need.

²⁰Don't even think about cursing the king; don't curse the rich, not even in

secret. A little bird might hear and tell everything.

11 ¹ Be generous, and some day you will be rewarded.

² Share what you have with seven or eight others, because you never know when disaster may strike.

³ Rain clouds always bring rain; trees always stay wherever they fall.

⁴ If you worry about the weather and don't plant seeds, you won't harvest a crop.

⁵ No one can explain how a baby breathes before it is born. So how can anyone explain what God does? After all, he created everything.

⁶ Plant your seeds early in the morning and keep working in the field until dark. Who knows? Your work might pay off, and your seeds might produce.

⁷ Nothing on earth is more beautiful than the morning sun.

⁸ Even if you live to a ripe old age, you should try to enjoy each day, because darkness will come and will last a long time. Nothing makes sense.

⁹ Be cheerful and enjoy life while you are young! Do what you want and find

pleasure in what you see. But don't forget that God will judge you for everything you do.

¹⁰Rid yourself of all worry and pain, because the wonderful moments of youth quickly disappear.

12¹ Keep your Creator in mind while you are young! In years to come, you will be burdened down with troubles and say, I don't enjoy life any more.

²Some day the light of the sun and the moon and the stars will all seem dim to you. Rain clouds will remain over your head.

³Your body will grow feeble, your teeth will decay, and your eyesight fail.

⁴The noisy grinding of grain will be shut out by your deaf ears, but even the song of a bird will keep you awake.

⁵You will be afraid to climb up a hill or walk down a road. Your hair will turn as white as almond blossoms. You will feel lifeless and drag along like an old grasshopper. We each go to our eternal home, and the streets are filled with those who mourn.

⁶The silver cord snaps, the golden bowl breaks; the water pitcher is smashed, and the pulley at the well is shattered.

⁷So our bodies return to the earth, and the life-giving breath returns to God.

⁸Nothing makes sense. I have seen it all nothing makes sense.

⁹I was a wise teacher with much understanding, and I collected a number of proverbs that I had carefully studied.

¹⁰Then I tried to explain these things in the best and most accurate way.

¹¹Words of wisdom are like the stick a farmer uses to make animals move. These sayings come from God, our only shepherd, and they are like nails that fasten things together.

¹²My child, I warn you to stay away from any teachings except these. There is no end to books, and too much study will wear you out.

¹³Everything you were taught can be put into a few words: Respect and obey God! This is what life is all about.

¹⁴God will judge everything we do, even what is done in secret, whether good or bad.

The Song of Songs

1 ¹ This is Solomon's most beautiful song.

² She speaks: Kiss me tenderly! Your love is better than wine,

³ and you smell so sweet. All the young women adore you; the very mention of your name is like spreading perfume.

⁴ Hurry, my king! Let's hurry. Take me to your home. The young women speak: We are happy for you! And we praise your love even more than wine. She speaks: Young women of Jerusalem, it is only right that you should adore him. My skin is dark and beautiful, like a tent in the desert or like Solomon's curtains.

⁵ (1: 4)

⁶ Don't stare at me just because the sun has darkened my skin. My brothers were angry with me; they made me work in the vineyard, and so I neglected my complexion. Don't let the other shepherds think badly of me.

⁷ I'm not one of those women who shamelessly follow after shepherds. My

darling, I love you! Where do you feed your sheep and let them rest at midday?

⁸He speaks: My dearest, if you don't know, just follow the path of the sheep. Then feed your young goats near the shepherds' tents.

⁹You move as gracefully as the pony that leads the chariot of the king.

¹⁰Earrings add to your beauty, and you wear a necklace of precious stones.

¹¹Let's make you some jewellery of gold, woven with silver.

¹²She speaks: My king, while you were on your couch, my love was a magic charm.

¹³My darling, you are perfume between my breasts;

¹⁴you are flower blossoms from the gardens of En-Gedi.

¹⁵He speaks: My darling, you are lovely, so very lovely your eyes are those of a dove.

¹⁶She speaks: My love, you are handsome, truly handsome the fresh green grass will be our wedding bed

¹⁷in the shade of cedar and cypress trees.

2¹ She speaks: I am merely a rose
from the land of Sharon, a lily from
the valley.

² He speaks: My darling, when
compared with other young women, you
are a lily among thorns.

³ She speaks: And you, my love, are
an apple tree among trees of the forest.
Your shade brought me pleasure; your
fruit was sweet.

⁴ You led me to your banquet room and
showered me with love.

⁵ Refresh and strengthen me with
raisins and apples. I am hungry for love!

⁶ Put your left hand under my head and
embrace me with your right arm.

⁷ Young women of Jerusalem, promise
me by the power of deer and gazelles
never to awaken love before it is ready.

⁸ She speaks: I hear the voice of the
one I love, as he comes leaping over
mountains and hills

⁹ like a deer or a gazelle. Now he stands
outside our wall, looking through the
window

¹⁰ and speaking to me. He speaks:
My darling, I love you! Let's go away
together.

¹¹ Winter is past, the rain has stopped;

¹² flowers cover the earth, it's time to sing. The cooing of doves is heard in our land.

¹³ Fig trees are bearing fruit, while blossoms on grapevines fill the air with perfume. My darling, I love you! Let's go away together.

¹⁴ You are my dove hiding among the rocks on the side of a cliff. Let me see how lovely you are! Let me hear the sound of your melodious voice.

¹⁵ Our vineyards are in blossom; we must catch the little foxes that destroy the vineyards.

¹⁶ She speaks: My darling, I am yours, and you are mine, as you feed your sheep among the lilies.

¹⁷ Pretend to be a young deer dancing on mountain slopes until daylight comes and shadows fade away.

3¹ She speaks: While in bed at night, I reached for the one I love with heart and soul. I looked for him, but he wasn't there.

² So I searched through the town for the one I love. I looked in every street, but he wasn't there.

³I even asked the guards patrolling the town, Have you seen the one I love so much?

⁴Straight after that, I found him. I held him and would not let go until I had taken him to the home of my mother.

⁵Young women of Jerusalem, promise me by the power of deer and gazelles, never to awaken love before it is ready.

⁶Their friends speak: What do we see approaching from the desert like a cloud of smoke? With it comes the sweet smell of spices, including myrrh and frankincense.

⁷It is King Solomon carried on a throne, surrounded by sixty of Israel's best soldiers.

⁸Each of them wears a sword. They are experts at fighting, even in the dark.

⁹The throne is made of trees from Lebanon.

¹⁰Its posts are silver, the back is gold, and the seat is covered with purple cloth. You women of Jerusalem have taken great care to furnish the inside.

¹¹Now come and see the crown given to Solomon by his mother on his happy wedding day.

4¹ He speaks: My darling, you are lovely, so very lovely as you look through your veil, your eyes are those of a dove. Your hair tosses about as gracefully as goats coming down from Gilead.

² Your teeth are whiter than sheep freshly washed; they match perfectly, not one is missing.

³ Your lips are crimson cords, your mouth is shapely; behind your veil are hidden beautiful rosy cheeks.

⁴ Your neck is more graceful than the tower of David, decorated with thousands of warriors' shields.

⁵ Your breasts are perfect; they are twin deer feeding among lilies.

⁶ I will hasten to those hills sprinkled with sweet perfume and stay there till sunrise.

⁷ My darling, you are lovely in every way.

⁸ My bride, together we will leave Lebanon! We will say goodbye to the peaks of Mount Amana, Senir, and Hermon, where lions and leopards live in the caves.

⁹My bride, my very own, you have stolen my heart! With one glance from your eyes and the glow of your necklace, you have stolen my heart.

¹⁰Your love is sweeter than wine; the smell of your perfume is more fragrant than spices.

¹¹Your lips are a honeycomb; milk and honey flow from your tongue. Your dress has the aroma of cedar trees from Lebanon.

¹²My bride, my very own, you are a garden, a fountain closed off to all others.

¹³Your arms are vines, covered with delicious fruits and all sorts of spices henna, nard,

¹⁴saffron, calamus, cinnamon, frankincense, myrrh, and aloes all the finest spices.

¹⁵You are a spring in the garden, a fountain of pure water, and a refreshing stream from Mount Lebanon.

¹⁶She speaks: Let the north wind blow, the south wind too! Let them spread the aroma of my garden, so the one I love may enter and taste its delicious fruits.

5¹ He speaks: My bride, my very own, I come to my garden and enjoy its spices. I eat my honeycomb and honey; I drink my wine and milk. Their friends speak: Eat and drink until you are drunk with love.

² She speaks: I was asleep, but dreaming: the one I love was at the door, knocking and saying, My darling, my very own, my flawless dove, open the door for me! My head is drenched with evening dew.

³ But I had already undressed and bathed my feet. Should I dress again and get my feet dirty?

⁴ Then my darling's hand reached to open the latch, and my heart stood still.

⁵ When I rose to open the door, my hands and my fingers dripped with perfume.

⁶ My heart stood still while he spoke to me, but when I opened the door, my darling had disappeared. I searched and shouted, but I could not find him there was no answer.

⁷ Then I was found by the guards patrolling the town and guarding the

wall. They beat me up and stripped off my robe.

⁸Young women of Jerusalem, if you find the one I love, please say to him, She is weak with desire.

⁹Their friends speak: Most beautiful of women, why is the one you love more special than others? Why do you ask us to tell him how you feel?

¹⁰She speaks: He is handsome and healthy, the most outstanding among ten thousand.

¹¹His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy, black as a raven.

¹²His eyes are a pair of doves bathing in a stream flowing with milk.

¹³His face is a garden of sweet-smelling spices; his lips are lilies dripping with perfume.

¹⁴His arms are branches of gold covered with jewels; his body is ivory decorated with sapphires.

¹⁵His legs are columns of marble on feet of gold. He stands there majestic like Mount Lebanon and its choice cedar trees.

¹⁶His kisses are sweet. I desire him so much! Young women of Jerusalem, he is my lover and friend.

6¹Their friends speak: Most beautiful of women, tell us where he has gone. Let us help you find him.

²She speaks: My darling has gone down to his garden of spices, where he will feed his sheep and gather lilies.

³I am his, and he is mine, as he feeds his sheep among the lilies.

⁴He speaks: My dearest, the cities of Tirzah and Jerusalem are not as lovely as you. Your charms are more powerful than all the stars in the heavens.

⁵Turn away your eyes they make me melt. Your hair tosses about as gracefully as goats coming down from Gilead.

⁶Your teeth are whiter than sheep freshly washed; they match perfectly, not one is missing.

⁷Behind your veil are hidden beautiful rosy cheeks.

⁸What if I could have sixty queens, eighty wives, and thousands of others!

⁹You would be my only choice, my flawless dove, the favourite child of your mother. The young women, the queens,

and all the others tell how excited you are as they sing your praises:

¹⁰You are as majestic as the morning sky glorious as the moon blinding as the sun! Your charms are more powerful than all the stars above.

¹¹She speaks: I went down to see if blossoms were on the walnut trees, grapevines, and fruit trees.

¹²But in my imagination I was suddenly riding on a glorious chariot.

¹³Their friends speak: Dance! Dance! Beautiful woman from Shulam, let us see you dance! She speaks: Why do you want to see this woman from Shulam dancing with the others?

7 ¹He speaks: You are a princess, and your feet are graceful in their sandals. Your thighs are works of art, each one a jewel;

²your navel is a wine glass filled to overflowing. Your body is full and slender like a bundle of wheat bound together by lilies.

³Your breasts are like twins of a deer.

⁴Your neck is like ivory, and your eyes sparkle like the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath-Rabbim. Your nose is

beautiful like Mount Lebanon above the city of Damascus.

⁵Your head is held high like Mount Carmel; your hair is so lovely it holds a king prisoner.

⁶You are beautiful, so very desirable!

⁷You are tall and slender like a palm tree, and your breasts are full.

⁸I will climb that tree and cling to its branches. I will discover that your breasts are clusters of grapes, and that your breath is the aroma of apples.

⁹Kissing you is more delicious than drinking the finest wine. How wonderful and tasty!

¹⁰She speaks: My darling, I am yours, and you desire me.

¹¹Let's stroll through the fields and sleep in the villages.

¹²At dawn let's slip out and see if grapevines and fruit trees are covered with blossoms. When we are there, I will give you my love.

¹³Perfume from the magic flower fills the air, my darling. Right at our doorstep I have stored up for you all kinds of tasty fruits.

8¹ She speaks: If you were my brother, I could kiss you whenever we happen to meet, and no one would say I did wrong.

²I could take you to the home of my mother, who taught me all I know. I would give you delicious wine and fruit juice as well.

³Put your left hand under my head and embrace me with your right arm.

⁴Young women of Jerusalem, promise me by the power of deer and gazelles never to awaken love before it is ready.

⁵Their friends speak: Who is this young woman coming in from the desert and leaning on the shoulder of the one she loves? She speaks: I stirred up your passions under the apple tree where you were born.

⁶Always keep me in your heart and wear this bracelet to remember me by. The passion of love bursting into flame is more powerful than death, stronger than the grave.

⁷Love cannot be drowned by oceans or floods; it cannot be bought, no matter what is offered.

⁸Their friends speak: We have a little sister whose breasts are not yet formed. If someone asks to marry her, what should we do?

⁹She isn't a wall that we can defend behind a silver shield. Neither is she a room that we can protect behind a wooden door.

¹⁰She speaks: I am a wall around a city, my breasts are towers, and just looking at me brings him great pleasure.

¹¹Solomon has a vineyard at Baal-Hamon, which he rents to others for a thousand pieces of silver each.

¹²My vineyard is mine alone! Solomon can keep his silver and the others can keep their share of the profits.

¹³He speaks: You are in the garden with friends all around. Let me hear your voice!

¹⁴She speaks: Hurry to me, my darling! Run faster than a deer to mountains of spices.

I saiah

1 ¹I am Isaiah, the son of Amoz. And this is the message that I was given about Judah and Jerusalem when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah:

²The LORD has said, Listen, heaven and earth! The children I raised have turned against me.

³Oxen and donkeys know who owns and feeds them, but my people won't ever learn.

⁴Israel, you are a sinful nation loaded down with guilt. You are wicked and corrupt and have turned from the LORD, the holy God of Israel.

⁵Why be punished more? Why not give up your sin? Your head is badly bruised, and you are weak all over.

⁶From your head to your toes there isn't a healthy spot. Bruises, cuts, and open sores go without care or oil to ease the pain.

⁷Your country lies in ruins; your towns are in ashes. Foreigners and strangers

take and destroy your land while you watch.

⁸Enemies surround Jerusalem, alone like a hut in a vineyard or in a cucumber field.

⁹Zion would have disappeared like Sodom and Gomorrah, if the LORD All-Powerful had not let a few of its people survive.

¹⁰You are no better than the leaders and people of Sodom and Gomorrah! So listen to the LORD God:

¹¹Your sacrifices mean nothing to me. I am sick of your offerings of rams and choice cattle; I don't like the blood of bulls or lambs or goats.

¹²Who asked you to bring all this when you come to worship me? Stay out of my temple!

¹³Your sacrifices are worthless, and incense is disgusting. I can't stand the evil you do on your New Moon Festivals or on your Sabbaths and other times of worship.

¹⁴I hate your New Moon Festivals and all others as well. They are a heavy burden I am tired of carrying.

¹⁵No matter how much you pray, I won't listen. You are too violent.

¹⁶Wash yourselves clean! I am disgusted with your filthy deeds. Stop doing wrong

¹⁷and learn to live right. See that justice is done. Defend widows and orphans and help those in need.

¹⁸I, the LORD, invite you to come and talk it over. Your sins are scarlet red, but they will be whiter than snow or wool.

¹⁹If you willingly obey me, the best crops in the land will be yours.

²⁰But if you turn against me, your enemies will kill you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²¹Jerusalem, you are like an unfaithful wife. Once your judges were honest and your people lived right; now you are a city full of murderers.

²²Your silver is fake, and your wine is watered down.

²³Your leaders have rejected me to become friends of crooks; your rulers are looking for gifts and bribes. Widows and orphans never get a fair trial.

²⁴I am the LORD All-Powerful, the mighty ruler of Israel, and I make you a

promise: you are now my enemy, and I will show my anger by taking revenge on you.

²⁵I will punish you terribly and burn away everything that makes you unfit to worship me.

²⁶Jerusalem, I will choose judges and advisers like those you had before. Your new name will be Justice and Faithfulness.

²⁷Jerusalem, you will be saved by showing justice; Zion's people who turn to me will be saved by doing right.

²⁸But those rebellious sinners who turn against me, the LORD, will all disappear.

²⁹You will be made ashamed of those groves of trees where you worshipped idols.

³⁰You will be like a grove of trees dying in a drought.

³¹Your strongest leaders will be like dry wood set on fire by their idols. No one will be able to help, as they all go up in flames.

2¹This is the message that I was given about Judah and Jerusalem:

²In the future, the mountain with the LORD's temple will be the highest of all.

It will reach above the hills; every nation will rush to it.

³Many people will come and say, Let's go to the mountain of the LORD God of Jacob and worship in his temple. The LORD will teach us his Law from Jerusalem, and we will obey him.

⁴He will settle arguments between nations. They will beat their swords and their spears into rakes and shovels; they will never make war or attack one another.

⁵People of Israel, let's live by the light of the LORD.

⁶Our LORD, you have deserted your people, Israel, because they follow customs of nations from the east. They worship Philistine gods and are close friends of foreigners.

⁷They have endless treasures of silver and gold; they have countless horses and war chariots.

⁸Everywhere in the country they worship the idols they have made.

⁹And so, all of them will be ashamed and disgraced. Don't help them!

¹⁰Every one of you, hide among the rocks and in the ground, because the

LORD is fearsome, marvellous, and glorious.

¹¹When the LORD comes, everyone who is proud will be made humble, and the LORD alone will be honoured.

¹²The LORD All-Powerful has chosen a day when those who are proud and conceited will be put down.

¹³The tall and towering cedars of Lebanon will be destroyed. So will the oak trees of Bashan,

¹⁴all high mountains and hills,

¹⁵every strong fortress,

¹⁶all the seagoing ships, and every beautiful boat.

¹⁷When that day comes, everyone who is proud will be put down. Only the LORD will be honoured.

¹⁸Idols will be gone for good.

¹⁹You had better hide in caves and holes the LORD will be fearsome, marvellous, and glorious when he comes to terrify people on earth.

²⁰On that day everyone will throw to the rats and bats their idols of silver and gold they made to worship.

²¹The LORD will be fearsome, marvellous, and glorious when he comes

to terrify people on earth they will hide in caves and in the hills.

²²Stop trusting the power of humans. They are all going to die, so how can they help?

3¹The mighty LORD All-Powerful is going to take away from Jerusalem and Judah everything you need your bread and water,

²soldiers and heroes, judges and prophets, leaders and army officers, officials and advisers, fortune-tellers and others who tell the future.

³(3: 2)

⁴He will let children and babies become your rulers.

⁵You will each be cruel to friends and neighbours. Young people will insult their elders; no one will show respect to those who deserve it.

⁶Some of you will grab hold of a relative and say, You still have a coat. Be our leader and rule this pile of ruins.

⁷But the answer will be, I can't do you any good. Don't make me your leader. There's no food or clothing left in my house.

⁸Jerusalem and Judah, you rebelled against your glorious LORD your words and your actions, made you stumble and fall.

⁹The look on your faces shows that you are sinful as Sodom, and you don't try to hide it. You are in for trouble, and you have brought it all on yourselves.

¹⁰Tell those who obey God, You're very fortunate you will be rewarded for what you have done.

¹¹Tell those who disobey, You're in big trouble what you did to others will come back to you.

¹²Though you are God's people, you are ruled and abused by women and children. You are confused by leaders who guide you down the wrong path.

¹³The LORD is ready to accuse and judge all nations.

¹⁴He will even judge you rulers and leaders of his own nation. You destroyed his vineyard and filled your houses by robbing the poor.

¹⁵The LORD All-Powerful says, You have crushed my people and rubbed in the dust the faces of the poor.

¹⁶The LORD says: The women of Jerusalem are proud and strut around, winking shamelessly. They wear anklets that jingle and call attention to the way they walk.

¹⁷But I, the LORD, will cover their heads with sores, and I will uncover their private parts.

¹⁸When that day comes, I will take away from those women all the fine jewellery they wear on their ankles, heads, necks, ears, arms, noses, fingers, and on their clothes. I will remove their veils, their belts, their perfume, their magic charms, their royal robes, and all their fine dresses, hats, and purses.

¹⁹(3: 18)

²⁰(3: 18)

²¹(3: 18)

²²(3: 18)

²³(3: 18)

²⁴In place of perfume, there will be a stink; in place of belts, there will be ropes; in place of fancy hair styles, they will have bald heads. Instead of expensive clothes, they will wear sackcloth; instead of beauty, they will have ugly scars.

²⁵ The fighting men of Jerusalem will be killed in battle.

²⁶ The city will mourn and sit in the dust, emptied of its people.

4¹ When this happens, seven women will grab the same man, and each of them will say, I'll buy my own food and clothes! Just marry me and take away my disgrace.

² The time is coming when the LORD will make his land fruitful and glorious again, and the people of Israel who survive will take great pride in what the land produces.

³ Everyone who is left alive in Jerusalem will be called special,

⁴ after the LORD sends a fiery judgment to clean the city and its people of their violent deeds.

⁵ Then the LORD will cover the whole city and its meeting places with a thick cloud each day and with a flaming fire each night. God's own glory will be like a huge tent that covers everything.

⁶ It will provide shade from the heat of the sun and a place of shelter and protection from storms and rain.

5¹ The LORD said: I will sing a song about my friend's vineyard that was on the side of a fertile hill.

² My friend dug the ground, removed the stones, and planted the best vines. He built a watchtower and dug a pit in rocky ground for pressing the grapes. He hoped they would be sweet, but bitter grapes were all it produced.

³ Listen, people of Jerusalem and of Judah! You be the judge of me and my vineyard.

⁴ What more could I have done for my vineyard? I hoped for sweet grapes, but bitter grapes were all that grew.

⁵ Now I will let you know what I am going to do. I will cut down the hedge and tear down the wall. My vineyard will be trampled and left in ruins.

⁶ It will turn into a desert, neither pruned nor hoed; it will be covered with thorns and briars. I will command the clouds not to send rain.

⁷ I am the LORD All-Powerful! Israel is the vineyard, and Judah is the garden I tended with care. I had hoped for honesty and for justice, but dishonesty and cries for mercy were all I found.

⁸You are in for trouble! You take over house after house and field after field, until there is no room left for anyone else in all the land.

⁹But the LORD All-Powerful has made this promise to me: Those large and beautiful homes will be left empty, with no one to take care of them.

¹⁰Four hectares of grapevines will produce only twenty-seven litres of juice, and a hundred and eighty litres of seed will produce merely eighteen litres of grain.

¹¹You are in for trouble! You get up early to start drinking, and you keep it up late into the night.

¹²At your drinking parties you have the music of stringed instruments, tambourines, and flutes. But you never even think about all the LORD has done,

¹³and so his people know nothing about him. That's why many of you will be dragged off to foreign lands. Your leaders will starve to death, and everyone else will suffer from thirst.

¹⁴The world of the dead has opened its mouth wide and is eagerly waiting for the leaders of Jerusalem and for its

noisy crowds, especially for those who take pride in that city.

¹⁵Its citizens have been put down, and its proud people have been brought to shame.

¹⁶But the holy LORD God All-Powerful is praised, because he has shown who he is by bringing justice.

¹⁷His people will be like sheep grazing in their own pasture, and they will take off what was left by others.

¹⁸You are in for trouble! The lies you tell are like ropes by which you drag along sin and evil.

¹⁹And you say, Let the holy God of Israel hurry up and do what he has promised, so we can see it for ourselves.

²⁰You are headed for trouble! You say wrong is right, darkness is light, and bitter is sweet.

²¹You think you are clever and wise.

²²And you are great at drinking and mixing drinks. But you are in for trouble.

²³You accept bribes to let the guilty go free, and you cheat the innocent out of a fair trial.

²⁴You will go up in flames like straw and hay! You have rejected the teaching

of the holy LORD God All-Powerful of Israel. Now your roots will rot, and your blossoms will turn to dust.

²⁵You are the LORD's people, but you made him terribly angry, and he struck you with his mighty arm. Mountains shook, and dead bodies covered the streets like rubbish. The LORD is still angry, and he is ready to strike you again.

²⁶The LORD has signalled for the foreign nations to come and attack you. He has already whistled, and they are coming as fast as they can.

²⁷None of them are tired. They don't sleep or get drowsy, and they run without stumbling. Their belts don't come loose; their sandal straps don't break.

²⁸Their arrows are sharp, and their bows are ready. The hoofs of their horses are hard as flint; the wheels of their war chariots turn as fast as a whirlwind.

²⁹They roar and growl like fierce young lions as they grab their victims and drag them off where no one can rescue them.

³⁰On the day they attack, they will roar like the sea. And across the land you will see nothing but darkness and trouble,

because the light of day will be covered by thick clouds.

6¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I had a vision of the LORD. He was on his throne high above, and his robe filled the temple.

² Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying,

³ as they shouted, Holy, holy, holy, LORD All-Powerful! The earth is filled with your glory.

⁴ As they shouted, the doorposts of the temple shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then I cried out, I'm doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD All-Powerful.

⁶ One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs.

⁷ It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, This has touched your lips.

Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty.

⁸After this, I heard the LORD ask, Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us? I'll go, I answered. Send me!

⁹Then the LORD told me to go and speak this message to the people: You will listen and listen, but never understand. You will look and look, but never see. The LORD also said,

¹⁰Make these people stubborn! Make them stop up their ears, cover their eyes, and fail to understand. Don't let them turn to me and be healed.

¹¹Then I asked the LORD, How long will this last? The LORD answered: Until their towns are destroyed and their houses are deserted, until their fields are empty,

¹²and I have sent them far away, leaving their land in ruins.

¹³If only a tenth of the people are left, even they will be destroyed. But just as stumps remain after trees have been cut down, some of my chosen ones will be left.

7¹ Ahaz, the son of Jotham and the grandson of Uzziah, was king of Judah when King Rezin of Syria and King

Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went to attack Jerusalem. But they were not able to do what they had planned.

²When news reached the royal palace that Syria had joined forces with Israel, King Ahaz and everyone in Judah were so terrified that they shook like trees in a storm.

³Then the LORD said to me: Take your son Shearjashub and go and see King Ahaz. You will find him on the road near the cloth makers' shops at the end of the canal that brings water from the upper pool.

⁴Tell Ahaz to stop worrying. There's no need for him to be afraid of King Rezin and King Pekah. They are very angry, but they are nothing more than a dying fire. Ahaz doesn't need to fear

⁵their evil threats

⁶to invade and defeat Judah and Jerusalem and to let the son of Tabeel be king in his place.

⁷I, the LORD, promise that this will never happen.

⁸Damascus is just the capital of Syria, and King Rezin rules only in Damascus. Samaria is just the capital of Israel, and

King Pekah rules only in Samaria. But in less than sixty-five years, Israel will be destroyed. And if Ahaz and his officials don't trust me, they will be defeated.

⁹(7:8)

¹⁰Once again the LORD God spoke to King Ahaz. This time he said,

¹¹Ask me for proof that my promise will come true. Ask for something to happen deep in the world of the dead or high in the heavens above.

¹²No, LORD, Ahaz answered. I won't test you!

¹³Then I said: Listen, every one of you in the royal family of David. You have already tried my patience. Now you are trying God's patience by refusing to ask for proof.

¹⁴But the LORD will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel.

¹⁵Even before the boy is old enough to know how to choose between right and wrong, he will eat yoghurt and honey, and the countries of the two kings you fear will be destroyed.

¹⁶(7:15)

¹⁷ But the LORD will make more trouble for your people and your kingdom than any of you have known since Israel broke away from Judah. He will even bring the king of Assyria to attack you.

¹⁸ When that time comes, the LORD will whistle, and armies will come from Egypt like flies and from Assyria like bees.

¹⁹ They will settle everywhere in the deep valleys and between the rocks, on every bush and all over the pasture land.

²⁰ The Lord will pay the king of Assyria to bring a razor from across the River Euphrates and shave your head and every hair on your body, including your beard.

²¹ No one will have more than one young cow and two sheep,

²² but those who do will have enough milk to make yoghurt. In fact, everyone left in the land will eat yoghurt and honey.

²³ Vineyards that had a thousand vines and were worth a thousand pieces of silver will turn into thorn patches.

²⁴ You will go there to hunt with your bow and arrows, because the whole

country will be covered with thorn bushes.

²⁵The hills where you once planted crops will be overgrown with thorns and thistles. You will be afraid to go there, and your cattle, sheep, and goats will be turned loose on those hills.

8¹The LORD said, Isaiah, get something to write on. Then write in big clear letters the name, MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ.

²I will tell Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah to serve as witnesses to this.

³Some time later, my wife and I had a son, and the LORD said, Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.

⁴Because before he can say Mummy or Daddy, the king of Assyria will attack and take everything of value from Damascus and Samaria.

⁵The LORD spoke to me again and said:

⁶These people have refused the gentle waters of Shiloah and have gladly gone over to the side of King Rezin and King Pekah.

⁷Now I will send the king of Assyria against them with his powerful army,

which will attack like the mighty River Euphrates overflowing its banks.

⁸Enemy soldiers will cover Judah like a flood reaching up to your neck. But God is with us. He will spread his wings and protect our land.

⁹All you foreign nations, go ahead and prepare for war, but you will be crushed.

¹⁰Get together and make plans, but you will fail because God is with us.

¹¹The LORD took hold of me with his powerful hand and said: I'm warning you! Don't act like these people.

¹²Don't call something a rebellious plot, just because they do, and don't be afraid of something, just because they are.

¹³I am the one you should fear and respect. I am the holy God, the LORD All-Powerful!

¹⁴Run to me for protection. I am a rock that will make both Judah and Israel stumble and break their bones. I am a trap that will catch the people of Jerusalem they will be captured and dragged away.

¹⁵(8: 14)

¹⁶My message and my teachings are to be sealed and given to my followers.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, I patiently trust the LORD, even though he is no longer pleased with Israel.

¹⁸ My children and I are warning signs to Israel from the LORD All-Powerful, who lives on Mount Zion.

¹⁹ Someone may say to you, Go to the fortune-tellers who make soft chirping sounds or ask the spirits of the dead. After all, a nation ought to be able to ask its own gods

²⁰ what it should do. None of those who talk like that will live to see the light of day!

²¹ They will go around in great pain and will become so hungry that they will angrily curse their king and their gods. And when they try to find help in heaven

²² and on earth, they will find only trouble and darkness, terrible trouble and deepest darkness.

9¹ But those who have suffered will no longer be in pain. The territories of Zebulun and Naphtali in Galilee were once hated. But this land of the Gentiles across the River Jordan and along the Mediterranean Sea will be greatly respected.

²Those who walked in the dark have seen a bright light. And it shines upon everyone who lives in the land of darkest shadows.

³Our LORD, you have made your nation stronger. Because of you, its people are glad and celebrate like workers at harvest time or like soldiers dividing up what they have taken.

⁴You have broken the power of those who abused and enslaved your people. You have rescued them just as you saved your people from Midian.

⁵The boots of marching warriors and the blood-stained uniforms have been fed to flames and eaten by fire.

⁶A child has been born for us. We have been given a son who will be our ruler. His names will be Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace.

⁷His power will never end; peace will last for ever. He will rule David's kingdom and make it grow strong. He will always rule with honesty and justice. The LORD All-Powerful will make certain that all of this is done.

⁸The Lord had warned the people of Israel,

⁹and all of them knew it, including everyone in the capital city of Samaria. But they were proud and stubborn and said,

¹⁰Houses of brick and sycamore have fallen to the ground, but we will build houses with stones and cedar.

¹¹The LORD made their enemies attack them.

¹²He sent the Arameans from the east and the Philistines from the west, and they swallowed up Israel. But even this did not stop him from being angry, so he kept on punishing them.

¹³The people of Israel still did not turn back to the LORD All-Powerful and worship him.

¹⁴In one day he cut off their head and tail, their leaves and branches.

¹⁵Their rulers and leaders were the head, and the lying prophets were the tail.

¹⁶They had led the nation down the wrong path, and the people were confused.

¹⁷ The Lord was angry with his people and kept punishing them, because they had turned against him. They were evil and spoke foolishly. That's why he did not have pity on their young people or on their widows and orphans.

¹⁸ Evil had spread like a raging forest fire sending thorn bushes up in smoke.

¹⁹ The LORD All-Powerful was angry and used the people as fuel for a fire that scorched the land. They turned against each other

²⁰ like wild animals attacking and eating everyone around them, even their own relatives. But still they were not satisfied.

²¹ The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh turned against each other, then joined forces to attack Judah. But the LORD was still angry and ready to punish the nation even more.

10¹ You people are in for trouble!
You have made cruel and unfair laws

² that let you cheat the poor and needy and rob widows and orphans.

³ But what will you do when you are fiercely attacked and punished by

foreigners? Where will you run for help?
Where will you hide your valuables?

⁴How will you escape being captured or killed? The Lord is still angry, and he isn't through with you yet!

⁵The Lord says: I am furious! And I will use the king of Assyria as a club

⁶to beat down you godless people. I am angry with you, and I will send him to attack you. He will take what he wants and walk on you like mud in the streets.

⁷He has even bigger plans in mind, because he wants to destroy many nations.

⁸The king of Assyria says: My army commanders are kings!

⁹They have already captured the cities of Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Arpad, Samaria, and Damascus.

¹⁰The gods of Jerusalem and Samaria are weaker than the gods of those powerful nations. And I will destroy Jerusalem, together with its gods and idols, just as I did Samaria.

¹¹ (10:10)

¹²The Lord will do what he has planned against Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Then

he will punish the proud and boastful king of Assyria,

¹³who says: I did these things by my own power because I am clever and wise. I attacked kings like a wild bull, and I took the land and the treasures of their nations.

¹⁴I have conquered the whole world! And it was easier than taking eggs from an unguarded nest. No one even flapped a wing or made a cheep.

¹⁵King of Assyria, can an axe or a saw overpower the one who uses it? Can a wooden pole lift whoever holds it?

¹⁶The mighty LORD All-Powerful will send a terrible disease to strike down your army, and you will burn with fever under your royal robes.

¹⁷The holy God, who is the light of Israel, will turn into a fire, and in one day you will go up in flames, just like a thorn bush.

¹⁸The Lord will make your beautiful forests and fertile fields slowly rot.

¹⁹There will be so few trees that even a young child can count them.

²⁰A time is coming when the survivors from Israel and Judah will completely

depend on the holy LORD of Israel, instead of the nation that defeated them.

²¹ There were as many people as there are grains of sand along the seashore, but only a few will survive to come back to Israel's mighty God. This is because he has threatened to destroy their nation, just as they deserve.

²² (10: 21)

²³ The LORD All-Powerful has promised that everyone on this earth will be punished.

²⁴ Now the LORD God All-Powerful says to his people in Jerusalem: The Assyrians will beat you with sticks and abuse you, just as the Egyptians did. But don't be afraid of them.

²⁵ Soon I will stop being angry with you, and I will punish them for their crimes.

²⁶ I will beat the Assyrians with a whip, as I did the people of Midian near the rock at Oreb. And I will show the same mighty power that I used when I made a path through the sea in Egypt.

²⁷ Then they will no longer rule your nation. All will go well for you, and your burden will be lifted.

²⁸Enemy troops have reached the town of Aiath. They have gone through Migron, and they stored their supplies at Michmash,

²⁹before crossing the valley and spending the night at Geba. The people of Ramah are terrified; everyone in Gibeah, the home town of Saul, has run away.

³⁰Loud crying can be heard in the towns of Gallim, Laishah, and sorrowful Anathoth.

³¹No one is left in Madmenah or Gebim.

³²Today the enemy will camp at Nob and shake a threatening fist at Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

³³But the LORD All-Powerful will use his fearsome might to bring down the tallest trees and chop off every branch.

³⁴With an axe, the glorious Lord will destroy every tree in the forests of Lebanon.

11 ¹Like a branch that sprouts from a stump, someone from David's family will some day be king.

²The Spirit of the LORD will be with him to give him understanding, wisdom, and

insight. He will be powerful, and he will know and honour the LORD.

³His greatest joy will be to obey the LORD. This king won't judge by appearances or listen to rumours.

⁴The poor and the needy will be treated with fairness and with justice. His word will be law everywhere in the land, and criminals will be put to death.

⁵Honesty and fairness will be his royal robes.

⁶Leopards will lie down with young goats, and wolves will rest with lambs. Calves and lions will eat together and be cared for by little children.

⁷Cows and bears will share the same pasture; their young will rest side by side. Lions and oxen will both eat straw.

⁸Little children will play near snake holes. They will stick their hands into dens of poisonous snakes and never be hurt.

⁹Nothing harmful will take place on the LORD's holy mountain. Just as water fills the sea, the land will be filled with people who know and honour the LORD.

¹⁰The time is coming when one of David's descendants will be the signal

for the people of all nations to come together. They will follow his advice, and his own nation will become famous.

¹¹ When that day comes, the Lord will again reach out his mighty arm and bring home his people who have survived in Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the land along the coast.

¹² He will give a signal to the nations, and he will bring together the refugees from Judah and Israel, who have been scattered all over the earth.

¹³ Israel will stop being jealous of Judah, and Judah will no longer be the enemy of Israel.

¹⁴ Instead, they will get together and attack the Philistines in the west. Then they will defeat the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites in the east. They will rule those people and take from them whatever they want.

¹⁵ The Lord will dry up the arm of the Red Sea near Egypt, and he will send a scorching wind to divide the River Euphrates into seven streams that anyone can step across.

¹⁶Then for his people who survive, there will be a good road from Assyria, just as there was a good road for their ancestors when they left Egypt.

12¹At that time you will say, I thank you, LORD! You were angry with me, but you stopped being angry and gave me comfort.

²I trust you to save me, LORD God, and I won't be afraid. My power and my strength come from you, and you have saved me.

³With great joy, you people will get water from the well of victory.

⁴At that time you will say, Our LORD, we are thankful, and we worship only you. We will tell the nations how glorious you are and what you have done.

⁵Because of your wonderful deeds we will sing your praises everywhere on earth.

⁶Sing, people of Zion! Celebrate the greatness of the holy LORD of Israel. God is here to help you.

13¹This is the message that I was given about Babylon:

²From high on a barren hill give a signal, shout the orders, and point the

way to enter the gates of Babylon's proud rulers.

³The LORD has commanded his very best warriors and his proud heroes to show how angry he is.

⁴Listen to the noisy crowds on the mountains! Kingdoms and nations are joining forces. The LORD All-Powerful is bringing together an army for battle.

⁵From a distant land the LORD is coming fierce and furious he brings his weapons to destroy the earth.

⁶Cry and weep! The day is coming when the mighty LORD will bring destruction.

⁷All people will be terrified. Hands will grow limp; courage will melt away. Everyone will tremble with pain like a woman giving birth; they will stare at each other with horror on their faces.

⁸(13: 7)

⁹I, the LORD, will show no mercy or pity when that time comes. In my anger I will destroy the earth and every sinner who lives on it.

¹⁰Light will disappear from the stars in the sky; the dawning sun will turn dark, and the moon will lose its glow.

¹¹ I will punish this evil world and its people because of their sins. I will crush the horrible pride of those who are cruel.

¹² Survivors will be harder to find than the purest gold.

¹³ I, the LORD All-Powerful, am terribly angry I will make the sky tremble and the earth shake loose.

¹⁴ Everyone will run to their homelands, just as hunted deer run, and sheep scatter when they have no shepherd.

¹⁵ Those who are captured will be killed by a sword.

¹⁶ They will see their children beaten against rocks, their homes robbed, and their wives abused.

¹⁷ The Medes can't be bought off with silver or gold, and I'm sending them to attack Babylon.

¹⁸ Their arrows will slaughter the young men; no pity will be shown to babies and children.

¹⁹ The city of Babylon is glorious and powerful, the pride of the nation. But it will be like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah after I, the Lord, destroyed them.

²⁰No one will live in Babylon. Even nomads won't camp nearby, and shepherds won't let their sheep rest there.

²¹Only desert creatures, owls, and ostriches will live in its ruins, and goats will leap about.

²²Hyenas and wolves will howl from Babylon's fortresses and beautiful palaces. Its time is almost up!

14¹The LORD will have mercy on Israel and will let them be his chosen people once again. He will bring them back to their own land, and foreigners will join them as part of Israel.

²Other nations will lead them home, and Israel will make slaves of them in the land that belongs to the Lord. Israel will rule over those who once governed and ill-treated them.

³The LORD will set you free from your sorrow, suffering, and slavery.

⁴Then you will make fun of the king of Babylonia by singing this song: That cruel monster is done for! He won't attack us again.

⁵The LORD has crushed the power of those evil kings,

⁶who were furious and never stopped abusing the people of other nations.

⁷Now all the world is at peace; its people are celebrating with joyful songs.

⁸King of Babylonia, even the cypress trees and the cedars of Lebanon celebrate and say, Since you were put down, no one comes along to chop us down.

⁹The world of the dead eagerly waits for you. With great excitement, the spirits of ancient rulers hear about your coming.

¹⁰Each one of them will say, Now you are just as weak as any of us!

¹¹Your pride and your music have ended here in the world of the dead. Worms are your blanket, maggots are your bed.

¹²You, the bright morning star, have fallen from the sky! You brought down other nations; now you are brought down.

¹³You said to yourself, I'll climb to heaven and place my throne above the highest stars. I'll sit there with the gods far away in the north.

¹⁴ I'll be above the clouds, just like God Most High.

¹⁵ But now you are deep in the world of the dead.

¹⁶ Those who see you will stare and wonder, Is this the man who made the world tremble and shook up kingdoms?

¹⁷ Did he capture every city and make earth a desert? Is he the one who refused to let prisoners go home?

¹⁸ When kings die, they are buried in glorious tombs.

¹⁹ But you will be left unburied, just another dead body lying underfoot like a broken branch. You will be one of many killed in battle and gone down to the deep rocky pit.

²⁰ You won't be buried with kings; you ruined your country and murdered your people. You evil monster! We hope that your family will be forgotten for ever.

²¹ We will slaughter your sons to make them pay for the crimes of their ancestors. They won't take over the world or build cities anywhere on this earth.

²² The LORD All-Powerful has promised to attack Babylonia and destroy everyone

there, so that none of them will ever be remembered again.

²³The LORD will sweep out the people, and the land will become a swamp for wild animals.

²⁴The LORD All-Powerful has made this promise: Everything I have planned will happen just as I said.

²⁵I will wipe out every Assyrian in my country, and I will crush those on my mountains. I will free my people from slavery to the Assyrians.

²⁶I have planned this for the whole world, and my mighty arm controls every nation.

²⁷I, the LORD All-Powerful, have made these plans. No one can stop me now!

²⁸This message came from the LORD in the year King Ahaz died:

²⁹Philistines, don't be happy just because the rod that punished you is broken. That rod will become a poisonous snake, and then a flying fiery dragon.

³⁰The poor and needy will find pastures for their sheep and will live in safety. But I will starve some of you, and others will be killed.

³¹ Cry and weep in the gates of your towns, you Philistines! Smoke blows in from the north, and every soldier is ready.

³² If a messenger comes from a distant nation, you must say: The LORD built Zion. Even the poorest of his people will find safety there.

15 ¹ This is a message about Moab: The towns of Ar and Kir were destroyed in a night. Moab is left in ruins!

² Everyone in Dibon has gone up to the temple and the shrines to cry and weep. All of Moab is crying. Heads and beards are shaved because of what happened at Nebo and Medeba.

³ In the towns and at home, everyone wears sackcloth and cries loud and long.

⁴ From Heshbon and Elealeh, weeping is heard in Jahaz; Moab's warriors scream while trembling with fear.

⁵ I pity Moab! Its people are running to Zoar and to Eglath-Shelishiyah. They cry on their way up to the town of Luhith; on the road to Horonaim they tell of disasters.

⁶The streams of Nimrim and the grasslands have dried up. Every plant is parched.

⁷The people of Moab are leaving, crossing over Willow Brook, taking everything they own and have worked for.

⁸In the towns of Eglaim and of Beerelim and everywhere else in Moab mournful cries are heard.

⁹The streams near Dimon are flowing with blood. But the Lord will bring even worse trouble to Dimon, because all in Moab who escape will be attacked by lions.

16¹ Send lambs as gifts to the ruler of the land. Send them across the desert from Sela to Mount Zion.

²The women of Moab crossing the River Arnon are like a flock of birds scattered from their nests.

³Moab's messengers say to the people of Judah, Be kind and help us! Shade us from the heat of the noonday sun. Hide our refugees! Don't turn them away.

⁴Let our people live in your country and find safety here. Moab, your cruel

enemies will disappear; they will no longer attack and destroy your land.

⁵Then a kingdom of love will be set up, and someone from David's family will rule with fairness. He will do what is right and quickly bring justice.

⁶We have heard of Moab's pride. Its people strut and boast, but without reason.

⁷Tell everyone in Moab to mourn for their nation. Tell them to cry and weep for those fine raisins of Kir-Hareseth.

⁸Vineyards near Heshbon and Sibmah have turned brown. The rulers of nations used to get drunk on wine from those vineyards that spread to Jazer, then across the desert and beyond the sea.

⁹Now I mourn like Jazer for the vineyards of Sibmah. I shed tears for Heshbon and for Elealeh. There will be no more harvest celebrations

¹⁰or joyful and happy times, while bringing in the crops. Singing and shouting are gone from the vineyards. There are no joyful shouts where grapes were pressed. God has silenced them all.

¹¹Deep in my heart I suffer for Moab and Kir-Heres.

¹²It's useless for Moab's people to wear themselves out by going to their altars to worship and pray.

¹³The LORD has already said all this about Moab.

¹⁴Now he says, The contract of a hired worker is good for three years, but Moab's glory and greatness won't last any longer than that. Only a few of its people will survive, and they will be left helpless.

17¹This is a message about Damascus: Damascus is doomed! It will end up in ruins.

²The villages around Aroer will be deserted, with only sheep living there and no one to bother them.

³Israel will lose its fortresses. The kingdom of Damascus will be destroyed; its survivors will suffer the same fate as Israel. The LORD All-Powerful has promised this.

⁴When that time comes, the glorious nation of Israel will be brought down; its prosperous people will be skin and bones.

⁵Israel will be like wheat fields in Rephaim Valley picked clean of grain.

⁶It will be like an olive tree beaten with a stick, leaving two or three olives or perhaps four or five on the highest or most fruitful branches. The LORD God of Israel has promised this.

⁷At that time the people will turn and trust their Creator, the holy God of Israel.

⁸They have built altars and places for burning incense to their goddess Asherah, and they have set up sacred poles for her. But they will stop worshipping at these places.

⁹Israel captured powerful cities and chased out the people who lived there. But these cities will lie in ruins, covered over with weeds and undergrowth.

¹⁰Israel, you have forgotten the God who saves you, the one who is the mighty rock where you find protection. You plant the finest flowers to honour a foreign god.

¹¹The plants may sprout and blossom that very same morning, but it will do you no good, because you will suffer endless agony.

¹²The nations are a noisy, thunderous sea.

¹³ But even if they roar like a fearsome flood, God will give the command to turn them back. They will be like dust, or like straw blowing across the hills in a storm.

¹⁴ In the evening their attack is fierce, but by morning they are destroyed. This is what happens to those who raid and rob us.

18¹ Downstream from Ethiopia lies the country of Egypt, swarming with insects.

² Egypt sends messengers up the River Nile on ships made of reeds. Send them fast to Ethiopia, whose people are tall and have smooth skin. Their land is divided by rivers; they are strong and brutal, feared all over the world.

³ Everyone on this earth, listen with care! A signal will be given on the mountains, and you will hear a trumpet.

⁴ The LORD said to me, I will calmly look down from my home above as calmly as the sun at midday or clouds in the heat of harvest season.

⁵ Before the blossoms can turn into grapes, God will cut off the shoots and hack off the branches.

⁶Ethiopians will be food for mountain eagles during the summer and for wild animals during the winter.

⁷Those Ethiopians are tall and their skin is smooth. They are feared all over the world, because they are strong and brutal. But at that time they will come from their land divided by rivers, and they will bring gifts to the LORD All-Powerful, who is worshipped on Mount Zion.

19¹This is a message about Egypt: The LORD comes to Egypt, riding swiftly on a cloud. The people are weak from fear. Their idols tremble as he approaches and says,

²I will punish Egypt with civil war neighbours, cities, and kingdoms will fight each other.

³Egypt will be discouraged when I confuse their plans. They will try to get advice from their idols, from the spirits of the dead, and from fortune-tellers.

⁴I will put the Egyptians under the power of a cruel, heartless king. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have promised this.

⁵The River Nile will dry up and become parched land.

⁶Its streams will stink, Egypt will have no water, and the reeds and tall grass will dry up.

⁷Fields along the Nile will be completely barren; every plant will disappear.

⁸Those who fish in the Nile will be discouraged and mourn.

⁹None of the cloth makers will know what to do, and they will turn pale.

¹⁰Weavers will be confused; paid workers will cry and mourn.

¹¹The king's officials in Zoan are foolish themselves and give stupid advice. How can they say to him, We are very wise, and our families go back to kings of long ago?

¹²Where are those wise men now? If they can, let them say what the LORD All-Powerful intends for Egypt.

¹³The royal officials in Zoan and in Memphis are foolish and deceived. The leaders in every state have given bad advice to the nation.

¹⁴The LORD has confused Egypt; its leaders have made it stagger and vomit like a drunkard.

¹⁵No one in Egypt can do a thing, no matter who they are.

¹⁶When the LORD All-Powerful punishes Egypt with his mighty arm, the Egyptians will become terribly weak and will tremble with fear.

¹⁷They will be so terrified of Judah that they will be frightened by the very mention of its name. This will happen because of what the LORD All-Powerful is planning against Egypt.

¹⁸The time is coming when Hebrew will be spoken in five Egyptian cities, and their people will become followers of the LORD. One of these cities will be called City of the Sun.

¹⁹In the heart of Egypt an altar will be set up for the LORD; at its border a shrine will be built to honour him.

²⁰These will remind the Egyptians that the LORD All-Powerful is with them. And when they are in trouble and ask for help, he will send someone to rescue them from their enemies.

²¹The LORD will show the Egyptians who he is, and they will know and worship the LORD. They will bring him sacrifices and offerings, and they will keep their promises to him.

²²After the LORD has punished Egypt, the people will turn to him. Then he will answer their prayers, and the Egyptians will be healed.

²³At that time a good road will run from Egypt to Assyria. The Egyptians and the Assyrians will travel back and forth from Egypt to Assyria, and they will worship together.

²⁴Israel will join with these two countries. They will be a blessing to everyone on earth,

²⁵then the LORD All-Powerful will bless them by saying, The Egyptians are my people. I created the Assyrians and chose the Israelites.

20¹King Sargon of Assyria gave orders for his army commander to capture the city of Ashdod.

²About this same time the LORD had told me, Isaiah, take off everything, including your sandals! I did this and went around naked and barefoot

³for three years. Then the LORD said: What Isaiah has done is a warning to Egypt and Ethiopia.

⁴Everyone in these two countries will be led away naked and barefoot by the

king of Assyria. Young or old, they will be taken prisoner, and Egypt will be disgraced.

⁵They will be confused and frustrated, because they depended on Ethiopia and boasted about Egypt.

⁶When this happens, the people who live along the coast will say, Look what happened to them! We ran to them for safety, hoping they would protect us from the king of Assyria. But now, there is no escape for us.

21 ¹This is a message about a desert beside the sea: Enemies from a hostile nation attack like a whirlwind from the Southern Desert.

²What a horrible vision was shown to me a vision of betrayal and destruction. Tell Elam and Media to surround and attack the Babylonians. The LORD has sworn to end the suffering they caused.

³I'm in terrible pain like a woman giving birth. I'm shocked and hurt so much that I can't hear or see.

⁴My head spins; I'm horrified! Early evening, my favourite time, has become a nightmare.

⁵In Babylon the high officials were having a feast. They were eating and drinking, when someone shouted, Officers, take your places! Grab your shields.

⁶The LORD said to me, Send guards to find out what's going on.

⁷When they see cavalry troops and columns of soldiers on donkeys and camels, tell them to be ready!

⁸Then a guard said, I have stood day and night on this watchtower, Lord.

⁹Now I see column after column of cavalry troops. Straight away someone shouted, Babylon has fallen! Every idol in the city lies broken on the ground.

¹⁰Then I said, My people, you have suffered terribly, but I have a message for you from the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel.

¹¹This is a message about Dumah: From the country of Seir, someone shouts to me, Guard, how much longer before daylight?

¹²From my guard post, I answered, Morning will soon be here, but night will return. If you want to know more, come back later.

¹³This is a message for Arabs who live in the barren desert in the region of Dedan: You must order your caravans

¹⁴to bring water for those who are thirsty. You people of Tema must bring food for the hungry refugees.

¹⁵They are worn out and weary from being chased by enemies with swords and arrows.

¹⁶The Lord said to me: A year from now the glory of the people of Kedar will all come to an end, just as a worker's contract ends after a year.

¹⁷Only a few of their warriors will be left with bows and arrows. This is a promise that I, the LORD God of Israel, have made.

22¹This is a message about Vision Valley: Why are you celebrating on the flat roofs of your houses?

²Your city is filled with noisy shouts. Those who lie drunk in your streets were not killed in battle.

³Your leaders ran away, but they were captured without a fight. No matter how far they ran, they were found and caught.

⁴Then I said, Leave me alone! Let me cry bitter tears. My people have been destroyed, so don't try to comfort me.

⁵The LORD All-Powerful had chosen a time for noisy shouts and confusion to fill Vision Valley, and for everyone to beg the mountains for help.

⁶The people of Elam and Kir attacked with chariots and carried shields.

⁷Your most beautiful valleys were covered with chariots; your cities were surrounded by cavalry troops.

⁸Judah was left defenceless. At that time you trusted in the weapons you had stored in Forest Palace.

⁹You saw the holes in the outer wall of Jerusalem, and you brought water from the lower pool.

¹⁰You counted the houses in Jerusalem and tore down some of them, so you could get stones to repair the city wall.

¹¹Then you built a large tank between the walls to store the water. But you refused to trust the God who planned this long ago and made it happen.

¹²When all this happened, the LORD All-Powerful told you to weep and mourn, to shave your heads, and wear sackcloth.

¹³But instead, you celebrated by feasting on beef and lamb and by drinking wine, because you said, Let's eat and drink! Tomorrow we may die.

¹⁴The LORD All-Powerful has spoken to me this solemn promise: I won't forgive them for this, not as long as they live.

¹⁵The LORD All-Powerful is sending you with this message for Shebna, the prime minister:

¹⁶Shebna, what gives you the right to have a tomb carved out of rock in this burial place of royalty? None of your relatives are buried here.

¹⁷You may be powerful, but the LORD is about to snatch you up and throw you away.

¹⁸He will roll you into a ball and throw you into a wide open country, where you will die and your chariots will be destroyed. You're a disgrace to those you serve.

¹⁹The LORD is going to take away your job!

²⁰He will give your official robes and your authority to his servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah. Eliakim will be like a father to

the people of Jerusalem and to the royal family of Judah.

²¹ (22: 20)

²²The LORD will put him in charge of the key that belongs to King David's family. No one will be able to unlock what he locks, and no one will be able to lock what he unlocks.

²³The LORD will make him as firm in his position as a tent peg hammered in the ground, and Eliakim will bring honour to his family.

²⁴His children and relatives will be supported by him, like pans hanging from a peg on the wall.

²⁵That peg is fastened firmly now, but some day it will be shaken loose and fall down. Then everything that was hanging on it will be destroyed. This is what the LORD All-Powerful has promised.

23¹This is a message from distant islands about the city of Tyre: Cry, you seagoing ships! Tyre and its houses lie in ruins.

²Mourn in silence, you shop owners of Sidon, you people on the coast. Your sailors crossed oceans, making your city rich.

³Your merchants sailed the seas, making you wealthy by trading with nation after nation. They brought back grain that grew along the Nile.

⁴Sidon, you are a mighty fortress built along the sea. But you will be disgraced like a married woman who never had children.

⁵When Egypt hears about Tyre, it will tremble.

⁶All of you along the coast had better cry and sail far across the ocean.

⁷Can this be the happy city that has stood for centuries? Its people have spread to distant lands;

⁸its merchants were kings honoured all over the world. Who planned to destroy Tyre?

⁹The LORD All-Powerful planned it to bring shame and disgrace to those who are honoured by everyone on earth.

¹⁰People of Tyre, your harbour is destroyed! You will have to become farmers just like the Egyptians.

¹¹The LORD's hand has reached across the sea, upsetting the nations. He has given a command to destroy fortresses in the land of Canaan.

¹²The LORD has said to the people of Sidon, Your celebrating is over you are crushed. Even if you escape to Cyprus, you won't find peace.

¹³Look what the Assyrians have done to Babylonia! They have attacked, destroying every palace in the land. Now wild animals live among the ruins.

¹⁴Not a fortress will be left standing, so tell all the seagoing ships to mourn.

¹⁵The city of Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, which is the lifetime of a king. Then Tyre will be like that evil woman in the song:

¹⁶You're gone and forgotten, you evil woman! So strut through the town, singing and playing your favourite tune to be remembered again.

¹⁷At the end of those seventy years, the LORD will let Tyre get back into business. The city will be like a woman who sells her body to everyone of every nation on earth,

¹⁸but none of what is earned will be kept in the city. That money will belong to the LORD, and it will be used to buy more than enough food and good clothes for those who worship the LORD.

24¹ The LORD is going to twist the earth out of shape and turn it into a desert. Everyone will be scattered,

² including ordinary people and priests, slaves and slave owners, buyers and sellers, lenders and borrowers, the rich and the poor.

³ The earth will be stripped bare and left that way. This is what the LORD has promised.

⁴ The earth wilts away; its mighty leaders melt to nothing.

⁵ The earth is polluted because its people disobeyed the laws of God, breaking their agreement that was to last for ever.

⁶ The earth is under a curse; its people are dying out because of their sins.

⁷ Grapevines have dried up: wine is almost gone mournful sounds are heard instead of joyful shouts.

⁸ No one plays tambourines or stringed instruments; all noisy celebrating has come to an end.

⁹ They no longer sing as they drink their wine, and it tastes sour.

¹⁰ Towns are crushed and in chaos; houses are locked tight.

¹¹ Happy times have disappeared from the earth, and people shout in the streets, We're out of wine!

¹² Cities are destroyed; their gates are torn down.

¹³ Nations will be stripped bare, like olive trees or vineyards after the harvest season.

¹⁴ People in the west shout; they joyfully praise the majesty of the LORD.

¹⁵ And so, everyone in the east and those on the islands should praise the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁶ From all over the world songs of praise are heard for the God of justice. But I feel awful, terribly miserable. Can anyone be trusted? So many are treacherous!

¹⁷ Terror, traps, and pits are waiting for everyone.

¹⁸ If you are terrified and run, you will fall into a pit; if you crawl out of the pit, you will get caught in a trap. The sky has split apart like a window thrown open. The foundations of the earth have been shaken;

¹⁹ the earth is shattered, ripped to pieces.

²⁰It staggers and shakes like a drunkard or a hut in a storm. It is burdened down with sin; the earth will fall, never again to get up.

²¹On that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens and the kings of the earth.

²²He will put them in a pit and keep them prisoner. Then later on, he will punish them.

²³The moon and sun will both be embarrassed and ashamed. The LORD All-Powerful will rule on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, where he will show its rulers his wonderful glory.

25¹You, LORD, are my God! I will praise you for doing the wonderful things you had planned and promised since ancient times.

²You have destroyed the fortress of our enemies, leaving their city in ruins. Nothing in that foreign city will ever be rebuilt.

³Now strong and cruel nations will fear and honour you.

⁴You have been a place of safety for the poor and needy in times of trouble. Brutal enemies pounded us like a heavy

rain or the heat of the sun at midday,
but you were our shelter.

⁵Those wild foreigners struck like
scorching desert heat. But you were like
a cloud, protecting us from the sun. You
kept our enemies from singing songs of
victory.

⁶On this mountain the LORD All-
Powerful will prepare for all nations a
feast of the finest foods. Choice wines
and the best meats will be served.

⁷Here the LORD will strip away the
burial clothes that cover the nations.

⁸The LORD All-Powerful will destroy the
power of death and wipe away all tears.
No longer will his people be insulted
everywhere. The LORD has spoken!

⁹At that time, people will say, The LORD
has saved us! Let's celebrate. We waited
and hoped now our God is here.

¹⁰The powerful arm of the LORD will
protect this mountain. The Moabites will
be put down and trampled on like straw
in a pit of manure.

¹¹They will struggle to get out, but God
will humiliate them no matter how hard
they try.

¹²The walls of their fortresses will be knocked down and scattered in the dust.

26¹The time is coming when the people of Judah will sing this song: Our city is protected. The LORD is our fortress, and he gives us victory.

²Open the city gates for a law-abiding nation that is faithful to God.

³The LORD gives perfect peace to those whose faith is firm.

⁴So always trust the LORD because he is for ever our mighty rock.

⁵God has put down our enemies in their mountain city and rubbed it in the dust.

⁶Now the poor and abused trample all over that city.

⁷Our LORD, you always do right, and you make the path smooth for those who obey you.

⁸You are the one we trust to bring about justice; above all else we want your name to be honoured.

⁹Throughout the night, my heart searches for you, because your decisions show everyone on this earth how to live right.

¹⁰Even when the wicked are treated with mercy in this land of justice, they

do wrong and are blind to your glory, our LORD.

¹¹Your hand is raised and ready to punish them, but they don't see it. Put them to shame! Show how much you care for us and throw them into the fire intended for your enemies.

¹²You will give us peace, LORD, because everything we have done was by your power.

¹³Others have ruled over us besides you, our LORD God, but we obey only you.

¹⁴Those enemies are now dead and can never live again. You have punished them they are destroyed, completely forgotten.

¹⁵Our nation has grown because of you, our LORD. We have more land than before, and you are honoured.

¹⁶When you punished our people, they turned and prayed to you, our LORD.

¹⁷Because of what you did to us, we suffered like a woman about to give birth.

¹⁸But instead of having a child, our terrible pain produced only wind. We

have won no victories, and we have no descendants to take over the earth.

¹⁹Your people will rise to life! Tell them to leave their graves and celebrate with shouts. You refresh the earth like morning dew; you give life to the dead.

²⁰Go inside and lock the doors, my people. Hide there for a little while, until the LORD is no longer angry.

²¹The LORD will come out to punish everyone on earth for their sins. And when he does, those who did violent crimes will be known and punished.

27 ¹On that day, Leviathan, the sea monster, will squirm and try to escape, but the LORD will kill him with a cruel, sharp sword.

²The LORD said: At that time you must sing about a fruitful vineyard.

³I, the LORD, will protect it and always keep it watered. I will guard it day and night to keep it from harm.

⁴I am no longer angry. But if it produces thorns, I will go to war against it and burn it to the ground.

⁵Yet if the vineyard depends on me for protection, it will become my friend and be at peace with me.

⁶Some day Israel will take root like a vine. It will blossom and bear fruit that covers the earth.

⁷I, the LORD, didn't punish and kill the people of Israel as fiercely as I punished and killed their enemies.

⁸I carefully measured out Israel's punishment and sent the scorching heat to chase them far away.

⁹There's only one way that Israel's sin and guilt can be completely forgiven: they must crush the stones of every pagan altar and place of worship.

¹⁰Fortress cities are left like a desert where no one lives. Cattle walk through the ruins, stripping the trees bare.

¹¹When broken branches fall to the ground, women pick them up to feed the fire. But these people are so stupid that the God who created them will show them no mercy.

¹²The time is coming when the LORD will shake the land between the River Euphrates and the border of Egypt, and one by one he will bring all his people together.

¹³A loud trumpet will be heard. Then the people of Israel who were dragged

away to Assyria and Egypt will return to worship the LORD on his holy mountain in Jerusalem.

28¹ The city of Samaria above a fertile valley is in for trouble! Its leaders are drunkards, who stuff themselves with food and wine. But they will be like flowers that dry up and wilt.

² Only the Lord is strong and powerful! His mighty hand will strike them down with the force of a hailstorm or a mighty whirlwind or an overwhelming flood.

³ Every drunkard in Ephraim takes pride in Samaria, but it will be crushed.

⁴ Samaria above a fertile valley will quickly lose its glory. It will be gobbled up like the first ripe fig at harvest season.

⁵ When this time comes, the LORD All-Powerful will be a glorious crown for his people who survive.

⁶ He will see that justice rules and that his people are able to defend their cities.

⁷ Priests and prophets stumble because they are drunk. Their minds are too confused to receive God's messages or give honest decisions.

⁸Their tables are covered, completely covered, with their stinking vomit.

⁹You drunken leaders are like babies! How can you possibly understand or teach the LORD's message?

¹⁰You don't even listen all you hear is senseless sound after senseless sound.

¹¹So, the Lord will speak to his people in strange sounds and foreign languages.

¹²He promised you perfect peace and rest, but you refused to listen.

¹³Now his message to you will be senseless sound after senseless sound. Then you will fall backwards, injured and trapped.

¹⁴You rulers of Jerusalem do nothing but sneer; now you must listen to what the LORD says.

¹⁵Do you think you have an agreement with death and the world of the dead? Why do you trust in your lies to keep you safe from danger and the mighty flood?

¹⁶And so the LORD says, I'm laying a firm foundation for the city of Zion. It's a valuable cornerstone proved to be trustworthy; no one who trusts it will ever be disappointed.

¹⁷ Justice and fairness will be the measuring lines that help me build. Hailstones and floods will destroy and wash away your shelter of lies.

¹⁸ Your agreement with death and the world of the dead will be broken. Then angry, roaring waves will sweep over you.

¹⁹ Morning, noon, and night an overwhelming flood will wash you away. The terrible things that happen will teach you this lesson:

²⁰ your bed is too short, your blanket too skimpy.

²¹ The LORD will fiercely attack as he did at Mount Perazim and in Gibeon Valley. But this time the LORD will do something surprising, not what you expect.

²² So you had better stop sneering or you will be in worse shape than ever before. I heard the LORD All-Powerful threaten the whole country with destruction.

²³ Pay close attention to what I am saying.

²⁴ Farmers don't just plough and break up the ground.

²⁵When a field is ready, they scatter the seeds of dill and cumin; they plant the seeds of wheat and barley in the proper places.

²⁶They learn this from their God.

²⁷After dill and cumin have been harvested, the stalks are beaten, not run over with a wagon.

²⁸Wheat and barley are pounded, but not beaten to pulp; they are run over with a wagon, but not ground to dust.

²⁹This wonderful knowledge comes from the LORD All-Powerful, who has such great wisdom.

29¹The LORD said: Jerusalem, city of David, the place of my altar, you are in for trouble! Celebrate your festivals year after year.

²I will still make you suffer, and your people will cry when I make an altar of you.

³I will surround you and prepare to attack from all sides.

⁴From deep in the earth, you will call out for help with only a faint whisper.

⁵Then your cruel enemies will suddenly be swept away like dust in a storm.

⁶I, the LORD All-Powerful, will come to your rescue with a thundering earthquake and a fiery whirlwind.

⁷Every brutal nation that attacks Jerusalem and makes it suffer will disappear like a dream when night is over.

⁸Those nations that attack Mount Zion will suffer from hunger and thirst. They will dream of food and drink but wake up weary and hungry and thirsty as ever.

⁹Be shocked and stunned, you prophets! Refuse to see. Get drunk and stagger, but not from wine.

¹⁰The LORD has made you drowsy; he put you into a deep sleep and covered your head.

¹¹Now his message is like a sealed letter to you. Some of you say, We can't read it, because it's sealed.

¹²Others say, We can't read it, because we don't know how to read.

¹³The Lord has said: These people praise me with their words, but they never really think about me. They worship me by repeating rules made up by humans.

¹⁴ So once again I will do things that shock and amaze them, and I will destroy the wisdom of those who claim to know and understand.

¹⁵ You are in for trouble, if you try to hide your plans from the LORD! Or if you think what you do in the dark can't be seen.

¹⁶ You have it all backwards. A clay dish doesn't say to the potter, You didn't make me. You don't even know how.

¹⁷ Soon the forest of Lebanon will become a field with crops, thick as a forest.

¹⁸ The deaf will be able to hear whatever is read to them; the blind will be freed from a life of darkness.

¹⁹ The poor and the needy will celebrate and shout because of the LORD, the holy God of Israel.

²⁰ All who are cruel and arrogant will be gone for ever. Those who live by crime will disappear,

²¹ together with everyone who tells lies in court and keeps innocent people from getting a fair trial.

²² The LORD who rescued Abraham has this to say about Jacob's descendants:

They will no longer be ashamed and disgraced.

²³When they see how great I have made their nation, they will praise and honour me, the holy God of Israel.

²⁴Everyone who is confused will understand, and all who have complained will obey my teaching.

30¹This is the LORD's message for his rebellious people: You follow your own plans instead of mine; you make treaties without asking me, and you keep on sinning.

²You trust Egypt for protection. So you refuse my advice and send messengers to Egypt to beg their king for help.

³You will be disappointed, completely disgraced for trusting Egypt.

⁴The king's power reaches from the city of Zoan as far south as Hanes.

⁵But Egypt can't protect you, and to trust that nation is useless and foolish.

⁶This is a message about the animals of the Southern Desert: you people carry treasures on donkeys and camels. You travel to a feeble nation through a troublesome desert filled with lions and flying fiery dragons.

⁷ Egypt can't help you! That's why I call that nation a helpless monster.

⁸ The LORD told me to write down his message for his people, so that it would be there for ever.

⁹ They have turned against the LORD and can't be trusted. They have refused his teaching

¹⁰ and have said to his messengers and prophets: Don't tell us what God has shown you and don't preach the truth. Just say what we want to hear, even if it's false.

¹¹ Stop telling us what God has said! We don't want to hear any more about the holy God of Israel.

¹² Now this is the answer of the holy God of Israel: You rejected my message, and you trust in violence and lies.

¹³ This sin is like a crack that makes a high wall quickly crumble

¹⁴ and shatter like a crushed bowl. There's not a piece left big enough to carry hot coals or to scoop up water.

¹⁵ The holy LORD God of Israel had told all of you, I will keep you safe if you turn back to me and calm down. I will make

you strong if you quietly trust me. Then you stubbornly

¹⁶said, No! We will safely escape on speedy horses. But those who chase you will be even faster.

¹⁷As few as five of them, or even one, will be enough to chase a thousand of you. Finally, all that will be left will be a few survivors as lonely as a flag pole on a barren hill.

¹⁸The LORD God is waiting to show how kind he is and to have pity on you. The LORD always does right; he blesses those who trust him.

¹⁹People of Jerusalem, you don't need to cry any more. The Lord is kind, and as soon as he hears your cries for help, he will come.

²⁰The Lord has given you trouble and sorrow as your food and drink. But now you will again see the Lord, your teacher, and he will guide you.

²¹Whether you turn to the right or to the left, you will hear a voice saying, This is the road! Now follow it.

²²Then you will treat your idols of silver and gold like rubbish; you will throw them away like filthy rags.

²³The Lord will send rain to water the seeds you have planted; your fields will produce more crops than you need, and your cattle will graze in open pastures.

²⁴Even the oxen and donkeys that plough your fields will be fed the finest grain.

²⁵On that day people will be slaughtered and towers destroyed, but streams of water will flow from high hills and towering mountains.

²⁶Then the LORD will bandage his people's injuries and heal the wounds he has caused. The moon will shine as bright as the sun, and the sun will shine seven times brighter than usual. It will be like the light of seven days all at once.

²⁷The LORD is coming from far away with his fiery anger and thick clouds of smoke. His angry words flame up like a destructive fire;

²⁸he breathes out a flood that comes up to the neck. He sifts the nations and destroys them. Then he puts a bridle in every foreigner's mouth and leads them to doom.

²⁹The LORD's people will sing as they do when they celebrate a religious

festival at night. The LORD is Israel's mighty rock, and his people will be as happy as they are when they follow the sound of flutes to the mountain where he is worshipped.

³⁰The LORD will get furious. His fearsome voice will be heard, his arm will be seen ready to strike, and his anger will be like a destructive fire, followed by thunderstorms and hailstones.

³¹When the Assyrians hear the LORD's voice and see him striking with his iron rod, they will be terrified.

³²He will attack them in battle, and each time he strikes them, it will be to the music of tambourines and harps.

³³Long ago the LORD got a place ready for burning the body of the dead king. The place for the fire is deep and wide, the wood is piled high, and the LORD will start the fire by breathing out flaming sulphur.

31 ¹You are in for trouble if you go to Egypt for help, or if you depend on an army of chariots or a powerful cavalry. Instead you should depend on and trust the holy LORD God of Israel.

²The LORD isn't stupid! He does what he promises, and he can bring doom. If you are cruel yourself, or help those who are evil, you will be destroyed.

³The Egyptians are mere humans. They aren't God. Their horses are made of flesh; they can't live for ever. When the LORD shows his power, he will destroy the Egyptians and all who depend on them. Together they will fall.

⁴The LORD All-Powerful said to me, I will roar and attack like a fearless lion not frightened by the shouts of shepherds trying to protect their sheep. That's how I will come down and fight on Mount Zion.

⁵I, the LORD All-Powerful, will protect Jerusalem like a mother bird circling over her nest.

⁶People of Israel, come back! You have completely turned from the LORD.

⁷The time is coming when you will throw away your idols of silver and gold, made by your sinful hands.

⁸The Assyrians will be killed, but not by the swords of humans. Their young men will try to escape, but they will be captured and forced into slavery.

⁹Their fortress will fall when terror strikes; their army officers will be frightened and run from the battle. This is what the LORD has said, the LORD whose fiery furnace is built on Mount Zion.

32¹ A king and his leaders will rule with justice.

²They will be a place of safety from stormy winds, a stream in the desert, and a rock that gives shade from the heat of the sun.

³Then everyone who has eyes will open them and see, and those who have ears will pay attention.

⁴All who are impatient will take time to think; everyone who stutters will talk clearly.

⁵Fools will no longer be highly respected, and crooks won't be given positions of honour.

⁶Fools talk foolishness. They always make plans to do sinful things, to lie about the LORD, to let the hungry starve, and to keep water from those who are thirsty.

⁷Cruel people tell lies they do evil things, and make cruel plans to destroy

the poor and needy, even when they beg for justice.

⁸But helpful people can always be trusted to make helpful plans.

⁹Listen to what I say, you women who are carefree and careless!

¹⁰You may not have worries now, but in about a year, the grape harvest will fail, and you will tremble.

¹¹Shake and shudder, you women without a care! Strip off your clothes put on sackcloth.

¹²Slap your breasts in sorrow because of what happened to the fruitful fields and vineyards,

¹³and to the happy homes in Jerusalem. The land of my people is covered with thorns.

¹⁴The palace will be deserted, the crowded city empty. Fortresses and towers will for ever become playgrounds for wild donkeys and pastures for sheep.

¹⁵When the Spirit is given to us from heaven, deserts will become orchards thick as fertile forests.

¹⁶Honesty and justice will prosper there,

¹⁷ and justice will produce lasting peace and security.

¹⁸ You, the LORD's people, will live in peace, calm and secure,

¹⁹ even if hailstones flatten forests and cities.

²⁰ You will have God's blessing, as you plant your crops beside streams, while your donkeys and cattle roam freely about.

33¹ You defeated my people. Now you're in for trouble! You've never been destroyed, but you will be destroyed; you've never been betrayed, but you will be betrayed. When you have finished destroying and betraying, you will be destroyed and betrayed in return.

² Please, LORD, be kind to us! We depend on you. Make us strong each morning, and come to save us when we are in trouble.

³ Nations scatter when you roar and show your greatness.

⁴ We attack our enemies like swarms of locusts; we take everything that belongs to them.

⁵ You, LORD, are above all others, and you live in the heavens. You

have brought justice and fairness to Jerusalem;

⁶you are the foundation on which we stand today. You always save us and give true wisdom and knowledge. Nothing means more to us than obeying you.

⁷Listen! Our bravest soldiers are running through the streets, screaming for help. Our messengers hoped for peace, but came home crying.

⁸No one travels any more; every road is empty. Treaties are broken, and no respect is shown to any who keep promises.

⁹Fields are dry and barren; Mount Lebanon wilts with shame. Sharon Valley is a desert; the forests of Bashan and Carmel have lost their leaves.

¹⁰But the LORD says, Now I will do something and be greatly praised.

¹¹Your deeds are straw that will be set on fire by your very own breath.

¹²You will be burnt to ashes like thorns in a fire.

¹³Everyone, both far and near, come, look at what I have done. See my mighty power!

¹⁴ Those terrible sinners on Mount Zion tremble as they ask in fear, How can we possibly live where a raging fire never stops burning?

¹⁵ But there will be rewards for those who live right and tell the truth, for those who refuse to take money by force or accept bribes, for all who hate murder and violent crimes.

¹⁶ They will live in a fortress high on a rocky cliff, where they will have food and plenty of water.

¹⁷ With your own eyes you will see the glorious King; you will see his kingdom reaching far and wide.

¹⁸ Then you will ask yourself, Where are those officials who terrified us and forced us to pay such heavy taxes?

¹⁹ You will never again have to see the proud people who spoke a strange and foreign language you could not understand.

²⁰ Look to Mount Zion where we celebrate our religious festivals. You will see Jerusalem, secure as a tent with pegs that cannot be pulled up and fastened with ropes that can never be broken.

²¹ Our wonderful LORD will be with us! There will be deep rivers and wide streams safe from enemy ships.

²² The LORD is our judge and our ruler; the LORD is our king and will keep us safe.

²³ But your nation is a ship with its rigging loose, its mast shaky, and its sail not spread. Some day even you who are lame will take everything you want from your enemies.

²⁴ The LORD will forgive your sins, and none of you will say, I feel ill.

34¹ Everyone of every nation, the entire earth, and all its creatures, come here and listen!

² The LORD is terribly angry with the nations; he has condemned them to be slaughtered.

³ Their dead bodies will be left to rot and stink; their blood will flow down the mountains.

⁴ Each star will disappear the sky will roll up like a scroll. Everything in the sky will dry up and wilt like leaves on a vine or fruit on a tree.

⁵ After the sword of the LORD has done what it wants to the skies above, it will

come down on Edom, the nation that the LORD has doomed for destruction.

⁶The sword of the LORD is covered with blood from lambs and goats, together with fat from kidneys of rams. This is because the LORD will slaughter many people and make a sacrifice of them in the city of Bozrah and everywhere else in Edom.

⁷Edom's leaders are wild oxen. They are powerful bulls, but they will die with the others. Their country will be soaked with their blood, and its soil made fertile with their fat.

⁸The LORD has chosen the year and the day, when he will take revenge and come to Zion's defence.

⁹Edom's streams will turn into tar and its soil into sulphur then the whole country will go up in flames.

¹⁰It will burn night and day and never stop smoking. Edom will be a desert, generation after generation; no one will ever travel through that land.

¹¹Owls, hawks, and wild animals will make it their home. God will leave it in ruins, merely a pile of rocks.

¹²Edom will be called Kingdom of Nothing. Its rulers will also be nothing.

¹³Its palaces and fortresses will be covered with thorns; only wolves and ostriches will make their home there.

¹⁴Wildcats and hyenas will hunt together, demons will scream to demons, and creatures of the night will live among the ruins.

¹⁵Owls will nest there to raise their young among its shadows, while families of vultures circle around.

¹⁶In The Book of the LORD you can search and find where it is written, The LORD brought together all his creatures by the power of his Spirit. Not one is missing.

¹⁷The LORD has decided where they each should live; they will be there for ever, generation after generation.

35¹Thirsty deserts will be glad; barren lands will celebrate and blossom with flowers.

²Deserts will bloom everywhere and sing joyful songs. They will be as majestic as Mount Lebanon, as glorious as Mount Carmel or Sharon

Valley. Everyone will see the wonderful splendour of the LORD our God.

³Here is a message for all who are weak, trembling, and worried: Cheer up! Don't be afraid. Your God is coming to punish your enemies. God will take revenge on them and rescue you.

⁴(35: 3)

⁵The blind will see, and the ears of the deaf will be healed.

⁶Those who were lame will leap around like deer; tongues once silent will begin to shout. Water will rush through the desert.

⁷Scorching sand will turn into a lake, and thirsty ground will flow with fountains. Grass will grow in wetlands, where packs of wild dogs once made their home.

⁸A good road will be there, and it will be named God's Sacred Highway. It will be for God's people; no one unfit to worship God will walk on that road. And no fools can travel on that highway.

⁹No lions or other wild animals will come near that road; only those the LORD has saved will travel there.

¹⁰The people the LORD has rescued will come back singing as they enter Zion. Happiness will be a crown they will always wear. They will celebrate and shout because all sorrows and worries will be gone far away.

36¹ Hezekiah had been king of Judah for fourteen years when King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded the country and captured every walled city ²except Jerusalem. The Assyrian king ordered his army commander to leave the city of Lachish and to take a large army to Jerusalem. The commander went there and stood on the road near the cloth makers' shops along the canal from the upper pool.

³Three of the king's highest officials came out of Jerusalem to meet him. One of them was Hilkiyah's son Eliakim, who was the prime minister. The other two were Shebna, assistant to the prime minister, and Joah son of Asaph, keeper of the government records.

⁴The Assyrian commander told them: I have a message for Hezekiah from the great king of Assyria. Ask Hezekiah why he feels so sure of himself.

⁵ Does he think he can plan and win a war with nothing but words? Who is going to help him, now that he has turned against the king of Assyria?

⁶ Is he depending on Egypt and its king? That's the same as leaning on a broken stick, and it will go right through his hand.

⁷ Is Hezekiah now depending on the LORD, your God? Didn't Hezekiah tear down all except one of the LORD's altars and places of worship? Didn't he tell the people of Jerusalem and Judah to worship at that one place?

⁸ The king of Assyria wants to make a bet with you people! He will give you two thousand horses, if you have enough troops to ride them.

⁹ How could you defeat even our lowest ranking officer, when you have to depend on Egypt for chariots and cavalry?

¹⁰ Don't forget that it was the LORD who sent me here with orders to destroy your nation!

¹¹ Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said, Sir, we don't want the people listening from the city wall to understand what you are

saying. So please speak to us in Aramaic instead of Hebrew.

¹²The Assyrian army commander answered, My king sent me to speak to everyone, not just to you leaders. These people will soon have to eat their own body waste and drink their own urine! And so will the three of you!

¹³Then, in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, he shouted out in Hebrew: Listen to what the great king of Assyria says!

¹⁴Don't be fooled by Hezekiah. He can't save you.

¹⁵Don't trust him when he tells you that the LORD will protect you from the king of Assyria.

¹⁶Stop listening to Hezekiah. Pay attention to my king. Surrender to him. He will let you keep your own vineyards, fig trees, and cisterns

¹⁷for a while. Then he will come and take you away to a country just like yours, where you can plant vineyards and raise your own grain.

¹⁸Hezekiah claims the LORD will save you. But don't be fooled by him. Were

any other gods able to defend their land against the king of Assyria?

¹⁹What happened to the gods of Hamath, Arpad, and Sepharvaim? Were the gods of Samaria able to protect their land against the Assyrian forces?

²⁰None of these gods kept their people safe from the king of Assyria. Do you think the LORD, your God, can do any better?

²¹Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah had been warned by King Hezekiah not to answer the Assyrian commander. So they tore their clothes in sorrow and reported to Hezekiah everything the commander had said.

²²(36: 21)

37¹As soon as Hezekiah heard the news, he tore off his clothes in sorrow and put on sackcloth. Then he went into the temple of the LORD.

²He told Prime Minister Eliakim, Assistant Prime Minister Shebna, and the senior priests to dress in sackcloth and tell me:

³Isaiah, these are difficult and disgraceful times. Our nation is like a

woman too weak to give birth, when it's time for her baby to be born.

⁴Please pray for those of us who are left alive. The king of Assyria sent his army commander to insult the living God. Perhaps the LORD heard what he said and will do something, if you will pray.

⁵When these leaders came to me,

⁶I told them that the LORD had this message for Hezekiah: I am the LORD. Don't worry about the insulting things that have been said about me by these messengers from the king of Assyria.

⁷I will upset him with rumours about what's happening in his own country. He will go back, and there I will make him die a violent death.

⁸Meanwhile the commander of the Assyrian forces heard that his king had left the town of Lachish and was now attacking Libnah. So he went there.

⁹About this same time, the king of Assyria learnt that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was on his way to attack him. Then the king of Assyria sent some messengers with this note for Hezekiah:

¹⁰Don't trust your God or be fooled by his promise to defend Jerusalem against me.

¹¹You have heard how we Assyrian kings have completely wiped out other nations. What makes you feel so safe?

¹²The Assyrian kings before me destroyed the towns of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and everyone from Eden who lived in Telassar. What good did their gods do them?

¹³The kings of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah have all disappeared.

¹⁴After Hezekiah had read the note from the king of Assyria, he took it to the temple and spread it out for the LORD to see.

¹⁵Then he prayed:

¹⁶LORD God All-Powerful of Israel, your throne is above the winged creatures. You created the heavens and the earth, and you alone rule the kingdoms of this world.

¹⁷Just look and see how Sennacherib has insulted you, the living God.

¹⁸It is true, our LORD, that Assyrian kings have turned nations into deserts.

¹⁹They destroyed the idols of wood and stone that the people of those nations had made and worshipped.

²⁰But you are our LORD and our God! We ask you to keep us safe from the Assyrian king. Then everyone in every kingdom on earth will know that you are the only LORD.

²¹I went to Hezekiah and told him that the LORD God of Israel had said: Hezekiah, you prayed to me about King Sennacherib of Assyria. Now this is what I say to that king: The people of Jerusalem hate and make fun of you; they laugh behind your back.

²²(37: 21)

²³Sennacherib, you cursed, shouted, and sneered at me, the holy God of Israel.

²⁴You let your officials insult me, the Lord. And here is what you have said about yourself, I led my chariots to the highest heights of Lebanon's mountains. I went deep into its forest, cutting down the best cedar and cypress trees.

²⁵I dried up every stream in the land of Egypt, and I drank water from wells I had dug.

²⁶Sennacherib, now listen to me, the LORD. I planned all this long ago. And you don't even know that I alone am the one who decided that you would do these things. I let you make ruins of fortified cities.

²⁷Their people became weak, terribly confused. They were like wild flowers or like tender young grass growing on a flat roof or like a field of grain before it matures.

²⁸I know all about you, even how fiercely angry you are with me.

²⁹I have seen your pride and the tremendous hatred you have for me. Now I will put a hook in your nose, a bit in your mouth, then I will send you back to where you came from.

³⁰Hezekiah, I will tell you what's going to happen. This year you will eat crops that grow on their own, and the next year you will eat whatever springs up where those crops grew. But the third year, you will plant grain and vineyards, and you will eat what you harvest.

³¹Those who survive in Judah will be like a vine that puts down deep roots and bears fruit.

³²I, the LORD All-Powerful, will see to it that some who live in Jerusalem will survive.

³³I promise that the king of Assyria won't get into Jerusalem, or shoot an arrow into the city, or even surround it and prepare to attack.

³⁴As surely as I am the LORD, he will return by the way he came and will never enter Jerusalem.

³⁵I will protect it for the sake of my own honour and because of the promise I made to my servant David.

³⁶The LORD sent an angel to the camp of the Assyrians, and he killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand of them all in one night. The next morning, the camp was full of dead bodies.

³⁷After this, King Sennacherib went back to Assyria and lived in the city of Nineveh.

³⁸One day he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, when his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, killed him with their swords. They escaped to the land of Ararat, and his son Esarhaddon became king.

38¹ About this time, Hezekiah got sick and was almost dead. So I went in and told him, The LORD says you won't ever get well. You are going to die, and so you had better start doing what needs to be done.

² Hezekiah turned towards the wall and prayed,

³ Don't forget that I have been faithful to you, LORD. I have obeyed you with all my heart, and I do whatever you say is right. After this, he cried hard.

⁴ Then the LORD sent me

⁵ with this message for Hezekiah: I am the LORD God, who was worshipped by your ancestor David. I heard you pray, and I saw you cry. I will let you live fifteen years more,

⁶ while I protect you and your city from the king of Assyria.

⁷ Now I will prove to you that I will keep my promise.

⁸ Do you see the shadow made by the setting sun on the stairway built for King Ahaz? I will make the shadow go back ten steps. Then the shadow went back ten steps.

⁹This is what Hezekiah wrote after he got well:

¹⁰I thought I would die during my best years and stay as a prisoner for ever in the world of the dead.

¹¹I thought I would never again see you, my LORD, or any of the people who live on this earth.

¹²My life was taken from me like the tent that a shepherd pulls up and moves. You cut me off like thread from a weaver's loom; you make a wreck of me day and night.

¹³Until morning came, I thought you would crush my bones just like a hungry lion; both night and day you make a wreck of me.

¹⁴I cry like a swallow; I mourn like a dove. My eyes are red from looking to you, LORD. I am terribly abused. Please come and help me.

¹⁵There's nothing I can say in answer to you, since you are the one who has done this to me. My life has turned sour; I will limp until I die.

¹⁶Your words and your deeds bring life to everyone, including me. Please make me healthy and strong again.

¹⁷It was for my own good that I had such hard times. But your love protected me from doom in the deep pit, and you turned your eyes away from my sins.

¹⁸No one in the world of the dead can thank you or praise you; none of those in the deep pit can hope for you to show them how faithful you are.

¹⁹Only the living can thank you, as I am doing today. Each generation tells the next about your faithfulness.

²⁰You, LORD, will save me, and every day that we live we will sing in your temple to the music of stringed instruments.

²¹I had told King Hezekiah's servants to put some mashed figs on the king's open sore, and he would get well.

²²Then Hezekiah asked for proof that he would again worship in the LORD's temple.

39¹Merodach Baladan, the son of Baladan, was now king of Babylonia. And when he learnt that Hezekiah was well, he sent messengers with letters and a gift for him.

²Hezekiah welcomed the messengers and showed them all the silver, the gold,

the spices, and the fine oils that were in his storehouse. He even showed them where he kept his weapons. Nothing in his palace or in his entire kingdom was kept hidden from them.

³I asked Hezekiah, Where did these men come from? What did they want? They came all the way from Babylonia, Hezekiah answered.

⁴What did you show them? I asked. Hezekiah answered, I showed them everything in my kingdom.

⁵Then I told Hezekiah: I have a message for you from the LORD All-Powerful.

⁶One day everything you and your ancestors have stored up will be taken to Babylonia. The LORD has promised that nothing will be left.

⁷Some of your own sons will be taken to Babylonia, where they will be disgraced and made to serve in the king's palace.

⁸Hezekiah thought, At least our nation will be at peace for a while. So he told me, The message you brought from the LORD is good.

40¹ Our God has said: Encourage my people! Give them comfort.

²Speak kindly to Jerusalem and announce: Your slavery is past; your punishment is over. I, the LORD, made you pay double for your sins.

³Someone is shouting: Clear a path in the desert! Make a straight road for the LORD our God.

⁴Fill in the valleys; flatten every hill and mountain. Level the rough and rugged ground.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD will appear for all to see. The LORD has promised this!

⁶Someone told me to shout, and I asked, What should I shout? We humans are merely grass, and we last no longer than wild flowers.

⁷At the LORD's command, flowers and grass disappear, and so do we.

⁸Flowers and grass fade away, but what our God has said will never change.

⁹There is good news for the city of Zion. Shout it as loud as you can from the highest mountain. Don't be afraid to shout to the towns of Judah, Your God is here!

¹⁰Look! The powerful LORD God is coming to rule with his mighty arm. He

brings with him what he has taken in war, and he rewards his people.

¹¹ The LORD cares for his nation, just as shepherds care for their flocks. He carries the lambs in his arms, while gently leading the mother sheep.

¹² Did any of you measure the ocean by yourself or stretch out the sky with your own hands? Did you put the soil of the earth in a bucket or weigh the hills and mountains on balance scales?

¹³ Has anyone told the LORD what he must do or given him advice?

¹⁴ Did the LORD ask anyone to teach him wisdom and justice? Who gave him knowledge and understanding?

¹⁵ To the LORD, all nations are merely a drop in a bucket or dust on balance scales; all the islands are but a handful of sand.

¹⁶ The cattle on Lebanon's mountains would not be enough to offer as a sacrifice to God, and the trees would not be enough for the fire.

¹⁷ God thinks of the nations as far less than nothing.

¹⁸ Who compares with God? Is anything like him?

¹⁹Is an idol at all like God? It is made of bronze with a thin layer of gold, and decorated with silver.

²⁰Or special wood may be chosen because it doesn't rot then skilled hands take care to make an idol that won't fall on its face.

²¹Don't you know? Haven't you heard? Isn't it clear that God created the world?

²²God is the one who rules the whole earth, and we who live here are merely insects. He spread out the heavens like a curtain or an open tent.

²³God brings down rulers and turns them into nothing.

²⁴They are like flowers freshly sprung up and starting to grow. But when God blows on them, they wilt and are carried off like straw in a storm.

²⁵The holy God asks, Who compares with me? Is anyone my equal?

²⁶Look at the evening sky! Who created the stars? Who gave them each a name? Who leads them like an army? The LORD is so powerful that none of the stars are ever missing.

²⁷You people of Israel, say, God pays no attention to us! He doesn't care if we

are treated unjustly. But how can you say that?

²⁸Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The LORD is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured.

²⁹The LORD gives strength to those who are weary.

³⁰Even young people get tired, then stumble and fall.

³¹But those who trust the LORD will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings; they will walk and run without getting tired.

41 ¹Be silent and listen, every island in the sea. Have courage and come near, every one of you nations. Let's settle this matter!

²Who appointed this ruler from the east? Who puts nations and kings in his power? His sword and his arrows turn them to dust blown by the wind.

³He goes after them so quickly that his feet barely touch the ground he doesn't even get hurt.

⁴Who makes these things happen? Who controls human events? I do! I am the

LORD. I was there at the beginning; I will be there at the end.

⁵Islands and foreign nations saw what I did and trembled as they came near.

⁶Worshippers of idols comfort each other, saying, Don't worry!

⁷Woodcarvers, goldsmiths, and other workers encourage one another and say, We've done a great job! Then they nail the idol down, so it won't fall over.

⁸Israel, you are my servant. I chose you, the family of my friend Abraham.

⁹From far across the earth I brought you here and said, You are my chosen servant. I haven't forgotten you.

¹⁰Don't be afraid. I am with you. Don't tremble with fear. I am your God. I will make you strong, as I protect you with my arm and give you victories.

¹¹Everyone who hates you will be terribly disgraced; those who attack will vanish into thin air.

¹²You will look around for those brutal enemies, but you won't find them because they will be gone.

¹³I am the LORD your God. I am holding your hand, so don't be afraid. I am here to help you.

¹⁴ People of Israel, don't worry, though others may say, Israel is only a worm! I am the holy God of Israel, who saves and protects you.

¹⁵ I will let you be like a log covered with sharp spikes. You will grind and crush every mountain and hill until they turn to dust.

¹⁶ A strong wind will scatter them in all directions. Then you will celebrate and praise me, your LORD, the holy God of Israel.

¹⁷ When the poor and needy are dying of thirst and cannot find water, I, the LORD God of Israel, will come to their rescue. I won't forget them.

¹⁸ I will make rivers flow on mountain peaks. I will send streams to fill the valleys. Dry and barren land will flow with springs and become a lake.

¹⁹ I will fill the desert with all kinds of trees cedars, acacias, and myrtles; olive and cypress trees; fir trees and pines.

²⁰ Everyone will see this and know that I, the holy LORD God of Israel, created it all.

²¹ I am the LORD, the King of Israel! Come, argue your case with me. Present your evidence.

²² Come near me, you idols. Tell us about the past, and we will think about it. Tell us about the future, so we will know what is going to happen.

²³ Prove that you are gods by making your predictions come true. Do something good or evil, so we can be amazed and terrified.

²⁴ You idols are nothing, and you are powerless. To worship you would be disgusting.

²⁵ I, the LORD, appointed a ruler in the north; now he comes from the east to honour my name. He tramples kings like mud, as potters trample clay.

²⁶ Did any of you idols predict what would happen? Did any of you get it right? None of you told about this or even spoke a word.

²⁷ I was the first to tell the people of Jerusalem, Look, it's happening! I was the one who announced this good news to Zion.

²⁸ None of these idols are able to give advice or answer questions.

²⁹They are nothing, and they can do nothing they are less than a passing breeze.

42¹ Here is my servant! I have made him strong. He is my chosen one; I am pleased with him. I have given him my Spirit, and he will bring justice to the nations.

²He won't shout or yell or call out in the streets.

³He won't break off a bent reed or put out a dying flame, but he will make sure that justice is done.

⁴He won't stop or give up until he brings justice everywhere on earth, and people in foreign nations long for his teaching.

⁵I am the LORD God. I created the heavens like an open tent above. I made the earth and everything that grows on it. I am the source of life for all who live on this earth, so listen to what I say.

⁶I chose you to bring justice, and I am here at your side. I selected and sent you to bring light and my promise of hope to the nations.

⁷You will give sight to the blind; you will set prisoners free from dark dungeons.

⁸My name is the LORD! I won't let idols or humans share my glory and praise.

⁹Everything has happened just as I said it would; now I will announce what will happen next.

¹⁰Tell the whole world to sing a new song to the LORD! Tell those who sail the ocean and those who live far away to join in the praise.

¹¹Tell the tribes of the desert and everyone in the mountains to celebrate and sing.

¹²Let them announce his praises everywhere.

¹³The LORD is marching out like an angry soldier, shouting with all his might while attacking his enemies.

¹⁴For a long time, I, the LORD, have held my temper; now I will scream and groan like a woman giving birth.

¹⁵I will destroy the mountains and what grows on them; I will dry up rivers and ponds.

¹⁶I will lead the blind on roads they have never known; I will guide them on paths they have never travelled. Their road is dark and rough, but I will give

light to keep them from stumbling. This is my solemn promise.

¹⁷Everyone who worships idols as though they were gods will be terribly ashamed.

¹⁸You people are deaf and blind, but the LORD commands you to listen and to see.

¹⁹No one is as blind or deaf as his messenger, his chosen servant,

²⁰who sees and hears so much, but pays no attention.

²¹The LORD always does right, and so he wanted his Law to be greatly praised.

²²But his people were trapped and imprisoned in holes with no one to rescue them. All they owned had been taken, and no one was willing to give it back.

²³Why won't his people ever learn to listen?

²⁴Israel sinned and refused to obey the LORD or follow his instructions. So the LORD let them be robbed of everything they owned.

²⁵He was furious with them and punished their nation with the fires of war. Still they paid no attention.

They didn't even care when they were surrounded and scorched by flames.

43¹ Descendants of Jacob, I, the LORD, created you and formed your nation. Israel, don't be afraid. I have rescued you. I have called you by name; now you belong to me.

² When you cross deep rivers, I will be with you, and you won't drown. When you walk through fire, you won't be burnt or scorched by the flames.

³ I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, the God who saves you. I gave up Egypt, Ethiopia, and the region of Seba in exchange for you.

⁴ To me, you are very dear, and I love you. That's why I gave up nations and people to rescue you.

⁵ Don't be afraid! I am with you. From both east and west I will bring you together.

⁶ I will say to the north and to the south, Free my sons and daughters! Let them return from distant lands.

⁷ They are my people I created each of them to bring honour to me.

⁸The LORD said: Bring my people together. They have eyes and ears, but they can't see or hear.

⁹Tell everyone of every nation to gather around. None of them can honestly say, We told you so! If someone heard them say this, then tell us about it now.

¹⁰My people, you are my witnesses and my chosen servant. I want you to know me, to trust me, and understand that I alone am God. I have always been God; there can be no others.

¹¹I alone am the LORD; only I can rescue you.

¹²I promised to save you, and I kept my promise. You are my witnesses that no other god did this. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹³I am God now and for ever. No one can snatch you from me or stand in my way.

¹⁴I, the LORD, will rescue you! I am Israel's holy God, and this is my promise: For your sake, I will send an army against Babylon to drag its people away, crying as they go.

¹⁵I am the LORD, your holy God, Israel's Creator and King.

¹⁶I am the one who cut a path through the mighty ocean.

¹⁷I sent an army to chase you with chariots and horses; now they lie dead, unable to move. They are like an oil lamp with the flame snuffed out.

¹⁸The LORD said: Forget what happened long ago! Don't think about the past.

¹⁹I am creating something new. There it is! Do you see it? I have put roads in deserts, streams in thirsty lands.

²⁰Every wild animal honours me, even jackals and owls. I provide water in deserts streams in thirsty lands for my chosen people.

²¹I made them my own nation, so they would praise me.

²²I, the LORD, said to Israel: You have become weary, but not from worshipping me.

²³You have not honoured me by sacrificing sheep or other animals. And I have not burdened you with demands for sacrifices or sweet-smelling incense.

²⁴You have not brought delicious spices for me or given me the best part of your

sacrificed animals. Instead, you burden me down with your terrible sins.

²⁵ But I wipe away your sins because of who I am. And so, I will forget the wrongs you have done.

²⁶ Meet me in court! State your case and prove that you are right.

²⁷ Your earliest ancestor and all your leaders rebelled against me.

²⁸ That's why I don't allow your priests to serve me; I let Israel be destroyed and your people disgraced.

44¹ People of Israel, I have chosen you as my servant.

² I am your Creator. You were in my care even before you were born. Israel, don't be terrified! You are my chosen servant, my very favourite.

³ I will bless the thirsty land by sending streams of water; I will bless your descendants by giving them my Spirit.

⁴ They will spring up like grass or like willow trees near flowing streams.

⁵ They will worship me and become my people. They will write my name on the back of their hands.

⁶ I am the LORD All-Powerful, the first and the last, the one and only God.

Israel, I have rescued you! I am your King.

⁷ Can anyone compare with me? If so, let them speak up and tell me now. Let them say what has happened since I made my nation long ago, and let them tell what is going to happen.

⁸ Don't tremble with fear! Didn't I tell you long ago? Didn't you hear me? I alone am God no one else is a mighty rock.

⁹ The LORD said: Those people who make idols are nothing themselves, and the idols they treasure are just as worthless. Worshipers of idols are blind, stupid, and foolish.

¹⁰ Why make an idol or an image that can't do a thing?

¹¹ Everyone who makes idols and all who worship them are mere humans, who will end up sadly disappointed. Let them face me in court and be terrified.

¹² A metalworker shapes an idol by using a hammer and heat from the fire. In his powerful hand he holds a hammer, as he pounds the metal into the proper shape. But he gets hungry and thirsty and loses his strength.

¹³ Some woodcarver measures a piece of wood, then draws an outline. The idol is carefully carved with each detail exact. At last it looks like a person and is placed in a temple.

¹⁴ Cedar, cypress, oak, or any tree from the forest may be chosen. Or even a pine tree planted by the woodcarver and watered by the rain.

¹⁵ Some of the wood is used to make a fire for heating or for cooking. One piece is made into an idol, then the woodcarver bows down and worships it.

¹⁶ He enjoys the warm fire and the meat that was roasted over the burning coals.

¹⁷ Afterwards, he bows down to worship the wooden idol. Protect me! he says. You are my god.

¹⁸ Those who worship idols are stupid and blind!

¹⁹ They don't have enough sense to say to themselves, I made a fire with half of the wood and cooked my bread and meat on it. Then I made something worthless with the other half. Why worship a block of wood?

²⁰ How can anyone be stupid enough to trust something that can be burnt to

ashes? No one can save themselves like that. Don't they realize that the idols they hold in their hands are not really gods?

²¹ People of Israel, you are my servant, so remember all of this. Israel, I created you, and you are my servant. I won't forget you.

²² Turn back to me! I have rescued you and swept away your sins as though they were clouds.

²³ Tell the heavens and the earth to start singing! Tell the mountains and every tree in the forest to join in the song! The LORD has rescued his people; now they will worship him.

²⁴ Israel, I am your LORD. I am your source of life, and I have rescued you. I created everything from the sky above to the earth below.

²⁵ I make liars of false prophets and fools of fortune-tellers. I take human wisdom and turn it into nonsense.

²⁶ I will make the message of my prophets come true. They are saying, Jerusalem will be filled with people, and the LORD will rebuild the towns of Judah.

²⁷I am the one who commands the sea and its streams to run dry.

²⁸I am also the one who says, Cyrus will lead my people and obey my orders. Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt.

45 ¹The LORD said to Cyrus, his chosen one: I have taken hold of your right hand to help you capture nations and remove kings from power. City gates will open for you; not one will stay closed.

²As I lead you, I will level mountains and break the iron bars on bronze gates of cities.

³I will give you treasures hidden in dark and secret places. Then you will know that I, the LORD God of Israel, have called you by name.

⁴Cyrus, you don't even know me! But I have called you by name and highly honoured you because of Israel, my chosen servant.

⁵Only I am the LORD! There are no other gods. I have made you strong, though you don't know me.

⁶Now everyone from east to west will learn that I am the LORD. No other gods are real.

⁷I create light and darkness, happiness and sorrow. I, the LORD, do all of this.

⁸Tell the heavens to send down justice like showers of rain. Prepare the earth for my saving power to sprout and produce justice that I, the LORD, create.

⁹The LORD said: Israel, you have no right to argue with your Creator. You are merely a clay pot shaped by a potter. The clay doesn't ask, Why did you make me this way? Where are the handles?

¹⁰Children don't have the right to demand of their parents, What have you done to make us what we are?

¹¹I am the LORD, the Creator, the holy God of Israel. Do you dare question me about my own nation or about what I have done?

¹²I created the world and covered it with people; I stretched out the sky and filled it with stars.

¹³I have done the right thing by placing Cyrus in power, and I will make the roads easy for him to follow. I am the LORD All-Powerful! Cyrus will rebuild my city and set my people free without being paid a thing. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁴My people, I, the LORD, promise that the riches of Egypt and the treasures of Ethiopia will belong to you. You will force into slavery those tall people of Seba. They will bow down and say, The only true God is with you; there are no other gods.

¹⁵People of Israel, your God is a mystery, though he alone can save.

¹⁶Anyone who makes idols will be confused and terribly disgraced.

¹⁷But Israel, I, the LORD, will always keep you safe and free from shame.

¹⁸The LORD alone is God! He created the heavens and made a world where people can live, instead of creating an empty desert. The LORD alone is God; there are no others.

¹⁹The LORD did not speak in a dark secret place or command Jacob's descendants to search for him in vain. The LORD speaks the truth, and this is what he says

²⁰to every survivor from every nation: Gather around me! Learn how senseless it is to worship wooden idols or pray to helpless gods.

²¹ Why don't you get together and meet me in court? Didn't I tell you long ago what would happen? I am the only God! There are no others. I bring about justice, and have the power to save.

²² I invite the whole world to turn to me and be saved. I alone am God! No others are real.

²³ I have made a solemn promise, one that won't be broken: everyone will bow down and worship me.

²⁴ They will admit that I alone can bring about justice. Everyone who is angry with me will be terribly ashamed and will turn to me.

²⁵ I, the LORD, will give victory and great honour to the people of Israel.

46 ¹ The LORD said: The gods Bel and Nebo are down on their knees, as wooden images of them are carried away on weary animals.

² They are down on their knees to rescue the heavy load, but the images are still taken to a foreign country.

³ You survivors in Israel, listen to me, the LORD. Since the day you were born, I have carried you along.

⁴I will still be the same when you are old and grey, and I will take care of you. I created you. I will carry you and always keep you safe.

⁵Can anyone compare with me? Is anyone my equal?

⁶Some people hire a goldsmith and give silver and gold to be formed into an idol for them to worship.

⁷They carry the idol on their shoulders, then put it on a stand, but it cannot move. They call out to the idol when they are in trouble, but it doesn't answer, and it cannot help.

⁸Now keep this in mind, you sinful people. And don't ever forget it.

⁹I alone am God! There are no other gods; no one is like me. Think about what happened many years ago.

¹⁰From the very beginning, I told what would happen long before it took place. I kept my word

¹¹and brought someone from a distant land to do what I wanted. He attacked from the east, like a hawk swooping down. Now I will keep my promise and do what I planned.

¹²You people are stubborn and far from being safe, so listen to me.

¹³I will soon come to save you. I am not far away and will waste no time; I take pride in Israel and will save Jerusalem.

47 ¹The LORD said: City of Babylon, you are delicate and untouched, but that will change. Surrender your royal power and sit in the dust.

²Start grinding grain! Take off your veil. Strip off your fine clothes and cross over rivers.

³You will suffer the shame of going naked, because I will take revenge, and no one can escape.

⁴I am the LORD All-Powerful, the holy God of Israel. I am their Saviour.

⁵Babylon, be silent! Sit in the dark. No longer will nations accept you as their queen.

⁶I was angry with my people. So I let you take their land and bring disgrace on them. You showed them no mercy, but were especially cruel to those who were old.

⁷You thought that you would be queen for ever. You didn't care what you did; it

never entered your mind that you might get caught.

⁸You think that you alone are all-powerful, that you won't be a widow or lose your children. All you care about is pleasure, but listen to what I say.

⁹Your magic powers and charms will suddenly fail, then you will be a widow and lose your children.

¹⁰You hid behind evil like a shield and said, No one can see me! You were fooled by your wisdom and your knowledge; you felt sure that you alone were in full control.

¹¹But without warning, disaster will strike and your magic charms won't help at all.

¹²Keep using your magic powers and your charms as you have always done. Perhaps just perhaps you will frighten somebody!

¹³You have worn yourself out, asking for advice from those who study the stars and tell the future month after month. Go and ask them how to be saved from what will happen.

¹⁴People who trust the stars are as helpless as straw in a flaming fire. No

one can even keep warm, sitting by a fire that feeds only on straw.

¹⁵These are the fortune-tellers you have done business with all your life. But they don't know where they are going, and they can't save you.

48¹ People of Israel, you come from Jacob's family and the tribe of Judah. You claim to worship me, the LORD God of Israel, but you are lying.

²You call Jerusalem your home and say you depend on me, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel.

³Long ago I announced what was going to be, then without warning, I made it happen.

⁴I knew you were stubborn and hard-headed.

⁵And I told you these things, so that when they happened you would not say, The idols we worship did this.

⁶You heard what I said, and you have seen it happen. Now admit that it's true! I will show you secrets you have never known.

⁷Today I am doing something new, something you cannot say you have heard before.

⁸You have never been willing to listen to what I say; from the moment of your birth, I knew you would rebel.

⁹I, the LORD, am true to myself; I will be praised for not punishing and destroying you.

¹⁰I tested you in hard times just as silver is refined in a heated furnace.

¹¹I did this because of who I am. I refuse to be dishonoured or share my praise with any other god.

¹²Israel, my chosen people, listen to me. I alone am the LORD, the first and the last.

¹³With my own hand I created the earth and stretched out the sky. They obey my every command.

¹⁴Gather around me, all of you! Listen to what I say. Did any of your idols predict this would happen? Did they say that my friend would do what I want done to Babylonia?

¹⁵I was the one who chose him. I have brought him this far, and he will be successful.

¹⁶Come closer and listen! I have never kept secret the things I have said, and I was here before time began. By the

power of his Spirit the LORD God has sent me

¹⁷with this message: People of Israel, I am the holy LORD God, the one who rescues you. For your own good, I teach you, and I lead you along the right path.

¹⁸How I wish that you had obeyed my commands! Your success and good fortune would then have overflowed like a flooding river.

¹⁹Your nation would be blessed with more people than there are grains of sand along the seashore. And I would never have let your country be destroyed.

²⁰Now leave Babylon! Celebrate as you go. Be happy and shout for everyone to hear, The LORD has rescued his servant Israel!

²¹He led us through the desert and made water flow from a rock to satisfy our thirst.

²²But the LORD has promised that none who are evil will live in peace.

49¹Everyone, listen, even you foreign nations across the sea. The LORD chose me and gave me a name before I was born.

²He made my words pierce like a sharp sword or a pointed arrow; he kept me safely hidden in the palm of his hand.

³The LORD said to me, Israel, you are my servant; and because of you I will be highly honoured.

⁴I said to myself, I'm completely worn out; my time has been wasted. But I did it for the LORD God, and he will reward me.

⁵Even before I was born, the LORD God chose me to serve him and to lead back the people of Israel. So the LORD has honoured me and made me strong.

⁶Now the LORD says to me, It isn't enough for you to be merely my servant. You must do more than lead back survivors from the tribes of Israel. I have placed you here as a light for other nations; you must take my saving power to everyone on earth.

⁷Israel, I am the holy LORD God, the one who rescues you. You are slaves of rulers and of a nation who despises you. Now this is what I promise: kings and rulers will honour you by kneeling at your feet. You can trust me! I am your

LORD, the holy God of Israel, and you are my chosen ones.

⁸This is what the LORD says: I will answer your prayers because I have set a time when I will help by coming to save you. I have chosen you to take my promise of hope to other nations. You will rebuild the country from its ruins, then people will come and settle there.

⁹You will set prisoners free from dark dungeons to see the light of day. On their way home, they will find plenty to eat, even on barren hills.

¹⁰They won't go hungry or get thirsty; they won't be bothered by the scorching sun or hot desert winds. I will be merciful while leading them along to streams of water.

¹¹I will level the mountains and make roads.

¹²Then my people will return from distant lands in the north and the west and from the city of Syene.

¹³Tell the heavens and the earth to celebrate and sing; command every mountain to join in the song. The LORD's people have suffered, but he has shown mercy and given them comfort.

¹⁴The people of Zion said, The LORD has turned away and forgotten us.

¹⁵The LORD answered, Could a mother forget a child who nurses at her breast? Could she fail to love an infant who came from her own body? Even if a mother could forget, I will never forget you.

¹⁶A picture of your city is drawn on my hand. You are always in my thoughts!

¹⁷Your city will be built faster than it was destroyed those who attacked it will retreat and leave.

¹⁸Look around! You will see your people coming home. As surely as I live, I, the LORD, promise that your city with its people will be as lovely as a bride wearing her jewellery.

¹⁹Jerusalem is now in ruins! Nothing is left of the city. But it will be rebuilt and soon overcrowded; its cruel enemies will be gone far away.

²⁰Jerusalem is a woman whose children were born while she was in deep sorrow over the loss of her husband. Now those children will come and seek room in the crowded city,

²¹and Jerusalem will ask, Am I really their mother? How could I have given

birth when I was still mourning in a foreign land? Who raised these children? Where have they come from?

²²The LORD God says: I will soon give a signal for the nations to return your sons and your daughters to the arms of Jerusalem.

²³The kings and queens of those nations where they were raised will come and bow down. They will take care of you just like a slave taking care of a child. Then you will know that I am the LORD. You won't be disappointed if you trust me.

²⁴Is it possible to rescue victims from someone strong and cruel?

²⁵But the LORD has promised to fight on our side and to rescue our children from those strong and violent enemies.

²⁶He will make those cruel people dine on their own flesh and get drunk from drinking their own blood. Then everyone will know that the LORD is our Saviour; the powerful God of Israel has rescued his people.

50¹The LORD says, Children, I didn't divorce your mother or sell you to

pay debts; I divorced her and sold you because of your sins.

²I came and called out, but you didn't answer. Have I lost my power to rescue and save? At my command oceans and rivers turn into deserts; fish rot and stink for lack of water.

³I make the sky turn dark like the sackcloth you wear at funerals.

⁴The LORD God gives me the right words to encourage the weary. Each morning he awakens me eager to learn his teaching;

⁵he made me willing to listen and not rebel or run away.

⁶I let them beat my back and pull out my beard. I didn't turn aside when they insulted me and spat in my face.

⁷But the LORD God keeps me from being disgraced. So I refuse to give up, because I know God will never let me down.

⁸My protector is nearby; no one can stand here to accuse me of wrong.

⁹The LORD God will help me and prove I am innocent. My accusers will wear out like moth-eaten clothes.

¹⁰None of you respect the LORD or obey his servant. You walk in the dark instead of the light; you don't trust the name of the LORD your God.

¹¹Go ahead and walk in the light of the fires you have lit. But with his own hand, the LORD will punish you and make you suffer.

51 ¹If you want to do right and obey the LORD, follow Abraham's example. He was the rock from which you were chipped.

²God chose Abraham and Sarah to be your ancestors. The LORD blessed Abraham, and from that one man came many descendants.

³Though Zion is in ruins, the LORD will bring comfort, and the city will be as lovely as the garden of Eden that he provided. Then Zion will celebrate; it will be thankful and sing joyful songs.

⁴The LORD says: You are my people and nation! So pay attention to me. My teaching will cause justice to shine like a light for every nation.

⁵Those who live across the sea are eagerly waiting for me to rescue them. I

am strong and ready; soon I will come to save and to rule all nations.

⁶Look closely at the sky! Stare at the earth. The sky will vanish like smoke; the earth will wear out like clothes. Everyone on this earth will die like flies. But my victory will last; my saving power never ends.

⁷If you want to do right and to obey my teaching with all your heart, then pay close attention. Don't be discouraged when others insult you and say hurtful things.

⁸They will be eaten away like a moth-eaten coat. But my victory will last; my saving power will never end.

⁹Wake up! Do something, LORD. Be strong and ready. Wake up! Do what you did for our people long ago. Didn't you chop up Rahab the monster?

¹⁰Didn't you dry up the deep sea and make a road for your people to follow safely across?

¹¹Now those you have rescued will return to Jerusalem, singing on their way. They will be crowned with great happiness, never again to be burdened with sadness and sorrow.

¹²I am the LORD, the one who encourages you. Why are you afraid of mere humans? They dry up and die like grass.

¹³I spread out the heavens and laid foundations for the earth. But you have forgotten me, your LORD and Creator. All day long you were afraid of those who were angry and hoped to abuse you. Where are they now?

¹⁴Everyone crying out in pain will be quickly set free; they will be rescued from the power of death and never go hungry.

¹⁵I will help them because I am your God, the LORD All-Powerful, who makes the ocean roar.

¹⁶I have told you what to say, and I will keep you safe in the palm of my hand. I spread out the heavens and laid foundations for the earth. Now I say, Jerusalem, your people are mine.

¹⁷Jerusalem, wake up! Stand up! You've drunk too much from the cup filled with the LORD's anger. You have swallowed every drop, and you can't walk straight.

¹⁸Not one of your many children is there to guide you or to offer a helping hand.

¹⁹You have been destroyed by war and by famine; I cannot comfort you.

²⁰The LORD your God is angry, and on every street corner your children lie helpless, like deer trapped in nets.

²¹You are in trouble and drunk, but not from wine. So pay close attention

²²to the LORD your God, who defends you and says, I have taken from your hands the cup filled with my anger that made you drunk. You will never be forced to drink it again.

²³Instead I will give it to your brutal enemies, who treated you like dirt and walked all over you.

52¹Jerusalem, wake up! Stand up and be strong. Holy city of Zion, dress in your best clothes. Those foreigners who ruined your sacred city won't bother you again.

²Zion, rise from the dust! Free yourself from the rope around your neck.

³The LORD says: My people, you were sold, but not for money; now you will be set free, but not for a payment.

⁴Long ago you went to Egypt where you lived as foreigners. Then Assyria was cruel to you,

⁵and now another nation has taken you prisoner for no reason at all. Your leaders groan with pain, and day after day my own name is cursed.

⁶My people, you will learn who I am and who is speaking because I am here.

⁷What a beautiful sight! On the mountains a messenger announces to Jerusalem, Good news! You're saved. There will be peace. Your God is now King.

⁸Everyone on guard duty, sing and celebrate! Look! You can see the LORD returning to Zion.

⁹Jerusalem, rise from the ruins! Join in the singing. The LORD has given comfort to his people; he comes to your rescue.

¹⁰The LORD has shown all nations his mighty strength; now everyone will see the saving power of our God.

¹¹Leave the city of Babylon! Don't touch anything filthy. Wash yourselves. Be ready to carry back everything sacred that belongs to the LORD.

¹²You won't need to run. No one is chasing you. The LORD God of Israel will lead and protect you from enemy attacks.

¹³The LORD says: My servant will succeed! He will be given great praise and the highest honours.

¹⁴Many were horrified at what happened to him. But everyone who saw him was even more horrified because he suffered until he no longer looked human.

¹⁵My servant will make nations worthy to worship me; kings will be silent as they bow in wonder. They will see and think about things they have never seen or thought about before.

53¹Has anyone believed us or seen the mighty power of the LORD in action?

²Like a young plant or a root that sprouts in dry ground, the servant grew up obeying the LORD. He wasn't some handsome king. Nothing about the way he looked made him attractive to us.

³He was hated and rejected; his life was filled with sorrow and terrible suffering. No one wanted to look at

him. We despised him and said, He is a nobody!

⁴He suffered and endured great pain for us, but we thought his suffering was punishment from God.

⁵He was wounded and crushed because of our sins; by taking our punishment, he made us completely well.

⁶All of us were like sheep that had wandered off. We had each gone our own way, but the LORD gave him the punishment we deserved.

⁷He was painfully abused, but he did not complain. He was silent like a lamb being led to the butcher, as quiet as a sheep having its wool cut off.

⁸He was condemned to death without a fair trial. Who could have imagined what would happen to him? His life was taken away because of the sinful things my people had done.

⁹He wasn't dishonest or violent, but he was buried in a tomb of cruel and rich people.

¹⁰The LORD decided his servant would suffer as a sacrifice to take away the sin and guilt of others. Now the servant will

live to see his own descendants. He did everything the LORD had planned.

¹¹ By suffering, the servant will learn the true meaning of obeying the LORD. Although he is innocent, he will take the punishment for the sins of others, so that many of them will no longer be guilty.

¹² The LORD will reward him with honour and power for sacrificing his life. Others thought he was a sinner, but he suffered for our sins and asked God to forgive us.

54 ¹ Sing and shout, even though you have never had children! The LORD has promised that you will have more children than someone married for a long time.

² Make your tents larger! Spread out the tent pegs; fasten them firmly.

³ You and your descendants will take over the land of other nations. You will settle in towns that are now in ruins.

⁴ Don't be afraid or ashamed and don't be discouraged. You won't be disappointed. Forget how sinful you were when you were young; stop feeling ashamed for being left a widow.

⁵The LORD All-Powerful, the Holy God of Israel, rules all the earth. He is your Creator and husband, and he will rescue you.

⁶You were like a young wife, brokenhearted and crying because her husband had divorced her. But the LORD your God says, I am taking you back!

⁷I rejected you for a while, but with love and tenderness I will embrace you again.

⁸For a while, I turned away in furious anger. Now I will have mercy and love you for ever! I, your protector and LORD, make this promise.

⁹I once promised Noah that I would never again destroy the earth by a flood. Now I have promised that I will never again get angry and punish you.

¹⁰Every mountain and hill may disappear. But I will always be kind and merciful to you; I won't break my agreement to give your nation peace.

¹¹Jerusalem, you are sad and discouraged, tossed around in a storm. But I, the LORD, will rebuild your city with precious stones; for your foundation I will use blue sapphires.

¹²Your fortresses will be built of rubies, your gates of jewels, and your walls of gems.

¹³I will teach your children and make them successful.

¹⁴You will be built on fairness with no fears of injustice; every one of your worries will be taken far from you.

¹⁵I will never send anyone to attack your city, and you will make prisoners of those who do attack.

¹⁶Don't forget that I created metalworkers who make weapons over burning coals. I also created armies that can bring destruction.

¹⁷Weapons made to attack you won't be successful; words spoken against you won't hurt at all. My servants, Jerusalem is yours! I, the LORD, promise to bless you with victory.

55¹ If you are thirsty, come and drink water! If you don't have any money, come, eat what you want! Drink wine and milk without paying a penny.

²Why waste your money on what isn't really food? Why work hard for something that doesn't satisfy? Listen

carefully to me, and you will enjoy the very best foods.

³Pay close attention! Come to me and live. I will promise you the eternal love and loyalty that I promised David.

⁴I made him the leader and ruler of the nations; he was my witness to them.

⁵You will call out to nations you have never known. And they have never known you, but they will come running because I am the LORD, the holy God of Israel, and I have honoured you.

⁶Turn to the LORD! He can still be found. Call out to God! He is near.

⁷Give up your crooked ways and your evil thoughts. Return to the LORD our God. He will be merciful and forgive your sins.

⁸The LORD says: My thoughts and my ways are not like yours.

⁹Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours.

¹⁰Rain and snow fall from the sky. But they don't return without watering the earth that produces seeds to plant and grain to eat.

¹¹ That's how it is with my words.
They don't return to me without doing
everything I send them to do.

¹² When you are set free, you will
celebrate and travel home in peace.
Mountains and hills will sing as you pass
by, and trees will clap.

¹³ Cypress and myrtle trees will grow
in fields once covered by thorns. And
then those trees will stand as a lasting
witness to the glory of the LORD.

56 ¹ The LORD said: Be honest and
fair! Soon I will come to save
you; my saving power will be seen
everywhere on earth.

² I will bless everyone who respects the
Sabbath and refuses to do wrong.

³ Foreigners who worship me must not
say, The LORD won't let us be part of his
people. Men who are unable to become
fathers must no longer say, We are
dried-up trees.

⁴ To them, I, the LORD, say: Respect
the Sabbath, obey me completely, and
keep our agreement.

⁵ Then I will set up monuments in my
temple with your names written on them.
This will be much better than having

children, because these monuments will stand there for ever.

⁶Foreigners will follow me. They will love me and worship in my name; they will respect the Sabbath and keep our agreement.

⁷I will bring them to my holy mountain, where they will celebrate in my house of worship. Their sacrifices and offerings will always be welcome on my altar. Then my house will be known as a house of worship for all nations.

⁸I, the LORD, promise to bring together my people who were taken away, and let them join the others.

⁹Come from the forest, you wild animals! Attack and gobble up your victims.

¹⁰You leaders of Israel should be watchdogs, protecting my people. But you can't see a thing, and you never warn them. Dozing and daydreaming are all you ever do.

¹¹You stupid leaders are a pack of hungry and greedy dogs that never get enough. You are shepherds who ill-treat your own sheep for selfish gain.

¹²You say to each other, Let's drink till we're drunk! Tomorrow we'll do it again. We'll really enjoy ourselves.

57 ¹God's faithful people are dragged off and killed, and no one even cares. Evil sweeps them away,

²but in death they find peace for obeying God.

³You people are unfaithful! You go to fortune-tellers, and you worship idols. Now pay close attention!

⁴Who are you making fun of? Who are you sneering at? Look how your sins have made fools of you.

⁵All you think about is sex under those green trees where idols are worshipped. You sacrifice your children on altars built in valleys under rocky slopes.

⁶You have chosen to worship idols made of stone; you have given them offerings of wine and grain. Should I be pleased?

⁷You have spread out your beds on the tops of high mountains, where you sacrifice to idols.

⁸Even in your homes you have placed pagan symbols all around your huge beds. Yes, you have rejected me, sold

yourselves to your lovers, and gone to bed with them.

⁹You smear on olive oil and all kinds of perfume to worship the god Molech. You even seek advice from spirits of the dead.

¹⁰Though you tired yourself out by running after idols, you refused to stop. Your desires were so strong that they kept you going.

¹¹Did you forget about me and become unfaithful because you were more afraid of someone else? Have I been silent so long that you no longer fear me?

¹²You think you're so good, but I'll point out the truth.

¹³Ask your idols to save you when you are in trouble. Be careful though it takes only a faint breath to blow them over. But if you come to me for protection, this land and my holy mountain will always belong to you.

¹⁴The LORD says, Clear the road! Get it ready for my people.

¹⁵Our holy God lives for ever in the highest heavens, and this is what he says: Though I live high above in the

holy place, I am here to help those who are humble and depend only on me.

¹⁶My people, I won't stay angry and keep on accusing you. After all, I am your Creator. I don't want you to give up in complete despair.

¹⁷Your greed made me furious. That's why I punished you and refused to be found, while you kept returning to your old sinful ways.

¹⁸I know what you are like! But I will heal you, lead you, and give you comfort, until those who are mourning

¹⁹start singing my praises. No matter where you are, I, the LORD, will heal you and give you peace.

²⁰The wicked are a restless sea tossing up mud.

²¹But I, the LORD, have promised that none who are evil will live in peace.

58¹ Shout the message! Don't hold back. Say to my people Israel: You've sinned! You've turned against the LORD.

²Day after day, you worship him and seem eager to learn his teachings. You act like a nation that wants to do right by obeying his laws. You ask him about

justice, and say you enjoy worshipping the LORD.

³You wonder why the LORD pays no attention when you go without eating and act humble. But on those same days that you give up eating, you think only of yourselves and abuse your workers.

⁴You even get angry and ready to fight. No wonder God won't listen to your prayers!

⁵Do you think the LORD wants you to give up eating and to act as humble as a bent-over bush? Or to dress in sackcloth and sit in ashes? Is this really what he wants on a day of worship?

⁶I'll tell you what it really means to worship the LORD. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused!

⁷Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need; don't turn away your relatives.

⁸Then your light will shine like the dawning sun, and you will quickly be healed. Your honesty will protect you as you advance, and the glory of the LORD will defend you from behind.

⁹When you beg the LORD for help, he will answer, Here I am! Don't ill-treat others or falsely accuse them or say something cruel.

¹⁰Give your food to the hungry and care for the homeless. Then your light will shine in the dark; your darkest hour will be like the noonday sun.

¹¹The LORD will always guide you and provide good things to eat when you are in the desert. He will make you healthy. You will be like a garden that has plenty of water or like a stream that never runs dry.

¹²You will rebuild those houses left in ruins for years; you will be known as a builder and repairer of city walls and streets.

¹³But first, you must start respecting the Sabbath as a joyful day of worship. You must stop doing and saying whatever you please on this special day.

¹⁴Then you will truly enjoy knowing the LORD. He will let you rule from the highest mountains and bless you with the land of your ancestor Jacob. The LORD has spoken!

59¹ The LORD hasn't lost his powerful strength; he can still hear and answer prayers.

² Your sins are the roadblock between you and your God. That's why he doesn't answer your prayers or let you see his face.

³ Your talk is filled with lies and plans for violence; every finger on your hands is covered with blood.

⁴ You falsely accuse others and tell lies in court; sin and trouble are the names of your children.

⁵ You eat the deadly eggs of poisonous snakes, and more snakes crawl out from the eggs left to hatch. You weave spider's webs,

⁶ but you can't make clothes with those webs or hide behind them. You're sinful and brutal.

⁷ You hurry off to do wrong or murder innocent victims. All you think about is sin; you leave ruin and destruction wherever you go.

⁸ You don't know how to live in peace or to be fair with others. The roads you make are crooked; your followers cannot find peace.

⁹No one has come to defend us or to bring about justice. We hoped for a day of sunshine, but all we found was a dark, gloomy night.

¹⁰We feel our way along, as if we were blind; we stumble at midday, as if it were night. We can see no better than someone dead.

¹¹We growl like bears and mourn like doves. We hope for justice and victory, but they escape us.

¹²How often have we sinned and turned against you, the LORD God? Our sins condemn us! We have done wrong.

¹³We have rebelled and refused to follow you. Our hearts were deceitful, and so we lied; we planned to abuse others and turn our backs on you.

¹⁴Injustice is everywhere; justice seems far away. Truth is chased out of court; honesty is shoved aside.

¹⁵Everyone tells lies; those who turn from crime end up ruined. When the LORD noticed that justice had disappeared, he became very displeased.

¹⁶It disgusted him even more to learn that no one would do a thing about it.

So with his own powerful arm, he won victories for truth.

¹⁷Justice was the LORD's armour; saving power was his helmet; anger and revenge were his clothes.

¹⁸Now the LORD will get furious and do to his enemies, both near and far, what they did to his people.

¹⁹He will attack like a flood in a mighty storm. Nations in the west and the east will then honour and praise his wonderful name.

²⁰The LORD has promised to rescue the city of Zion and Jacob's descendants who turn from sin.

²¹The LORD says: My people, I promise to give you my Spirit and my message. These will be my gifts to you and your families for ever. I, the LORD, have spoken.

60¹Jerusalem, stand up! Shine! Your new day is dawning. The glory of the LORD shines brightly on you.

²The earth and its people are covered with darkness, but the glory of the LORD is shining upon you.

³Nations and kings will come to the light of your dawning day.

⁴The LORD said: Open your eyes! Look around! Crowds are coming. Your sons are on their way from distant lands; your daughters are being carried like little children.

⁵When you see this, your faces will glow; your hearts will pound and swell with pride. Treasures from across the sea and the wealth of nations will be brought to you.

⁶Your country will be covered with caravans of young camels from Midian and Ephah. The people of Sheba will bring gold and spices in praise of me, the LORD.

⁷Every sheep of Kedar will come to you; rams from Nebaioth will be yours as well. I will accept them as offerings and bring honour to my temple.

⁸What is that sailing by like clouds or like doves flying home?

⁹On those distant islands your people are waiting for me, the LORD. Seagoing ships lead the way to bring them home with their silver and gold. I, the holy LORD God of Israel, do this to honour your people, so they will honour me.

¹⁰The LORD said: Jerusalem, your city walls will be rebuilt by foreigners; their rulers will become your slaves. I punished you in my anger; now I will be kind and treat you with mercy.

¹¹Your gates will be open day and night to let the rulers of nations lead their people to you with all their treasures.

¹²Any nation or kingdom that refuses to serve you will be wiped out.

¹³Wood from Lebanon's best trees will be brought to you the pines, the firs, and the cypress trees. It will be used in my temple to make beautiful the place where I rest my feet.

¹⁴The descendants of enemies who hated and ill-treated you will kneel at your feet. They will say, You are Zion, the city of the LORD, the holy God of Israel.

¹⁵You were hated and deserted, rejected by everyone. But I will make you beautiful, a city to be proud of for all time to come.

¹⁶You will drain the wealth of kings and foreign nations. You will know that I, the mighty LORD God of Israel, have saved and rescued you.

¹⁷ I will bring bronze and iron in place of wood and stone; in place of bronze and iron, I will bring gold and silver. I will appoint peace and justice as your rulers and leaders.

¹⁸ Violence, destruction, and ruin will never again be heard of within your borders. Victory will be the name you give to your walls; Praise will be the name you give to your gates.

¹⁹ You won't need the light of the sun or the moon. I, the LORD your God, will be your eternal light and bring you honour.

²⁰ Your sun will never set or your moon go down. I, the LORD, will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will come to an end.

²¹ Your people will live right and always own the land; they are the trees I planted to bring praise to me.

²² Even the smallest family will be a powerful nation. I am the LORD, and when the time comes, I will quickly do all this.

61 ¹ The Spirit of the LORD God has taken control of me! The LORD has chosen and sent me to tell the oppressed the good news, to heal

the brokenhearted, and to announce freedom for prisoners and captives.

²This is the year when the LORD God will show kindness to us and punish our enemies. The LORD has sent me to comfort those who mourn,

³especially in Jerusalem. He sent me to give them flowers in place of their sorrow, olive oil in place of tears, and joyous praise in place of broken hearts. They will be called Trees of Justice, planted by the LORD to honour his name.

⁴Then they will rebuild cities that have been in ruins for many generations.

⁵They will hire foreigners to take care of their sheep and their vineyards.

⁶But they themselves will be priests and servants of the LORD our God. The treasures of the nations will belong to them, and they will be famous.

⁷They were terribly insulted and horribly ill-treated; now they will be greatly blessed and joyful for ever.

⁸I, the LORD, love justice! But I hate robbery and injustice. My people, I solemnly promise to reward you with an eternal agreement.

⁹Your descendants will be known in every nation. All who see them will realize that they have been blessed, by me, the LORD.

¹⁰I celebrate and shout because of my LORD God. His saving power and justice are the very clothes I wear. They are more beautiful than the jewellery worn by a bride or a groom.

¹¹The LORD will bring about justice and praise in every nation on earth, like flowers blooming in a garden.

62¹ Jerusalem, I will speak up for your good. I will never be silent till you are safe and secure, sparkling like a flame.

²Your great victory will be seen by every nation and king; the LORD will even give you a new name.

³You will be a glorious crown, a royal headband, for the LORD your God.

⁴Your name will no longer be Deserted and Childless, but Happily Married. You will please the LORD; your country will be his bride.

⁵Your people will take the land, just as a young man takes a bride. The LORD

will be pleased because of you, just as a husband is pleased with his bride.

⁶Jerusalem, on your walls I have stationed guards, whose duty it is to speak out day and night, without resting. They must remind the LORD

⁷and not let him rest till he makes Jerusalem strong and famous everywhere.

⁸The LORD has given his word and made this promise: Never again will I give to your enemies the grain and grapes for which you struggled.

⁹As surely as you harvest your grain and grapes, you will eat your bread with thankful hearts, and you will drink your wine in my temple.

¹⁰People of Jerusalem, open your gates! Repair the road to the city and clear it of stones; raise a banner to help the nations find their way.

¹¹Here is what the LORD has said for all the earth to hear: Soon I will come to save the city of Zion, and to reward you.

¹²Then you will be called, The LORD's Own People, The Ones He Rescued! Your city will be known as a good place to live and a city full of people.

63¹ Who is this coming from Bozrah in Edom with clothes stained red? Who is this hero marching in his glorious uniform? It's me, the LORD! I have won the battle, and I can save you!

² What are those red spots? Your clothes look stained from trampling on grapes.

³ I alone trampled the grapes! None of the nations helped. I trampled nations in my anger and stained my clothes with their blood.

⁴ I did this because I wanted to take revenge the time had come to rescue my people.

⁵ No one was there to help me or to give support; my mighty arm won the battle, strengthened by my anger.

⁶ In my fury I trampled on nations and made them drunk; their blood poured out everywhere on earth.

⁷ I will tell about the kind deeds the LORD has done. They deserve praise! The LORD has shown mercy to the people of Israel; he has been kind and good.

⁸ The LORD rescued his people, and said, They are mine. They won't betray me.

⁹It troubled the LORD to see them in trouble, and his angel saved them. The LORD was truly merciful, so he rescued his people. He took them in his arms and carried them all those years.

¹⁰Then the LORD's people turned against him and made his Holy Spirit sad. So he became their enemy and attacked them.

¹¹But his people remembered what had happened during the time of Moses. Didn't the LORD bring them and their leaders safely through the sea? Didn't he give them his Holy Spirit?

¹²The glorious power of the LORD marched beside Moses. The LORD will be praised for ever for dividing the sea.

¹³He led his people across like horses running wild without stumbling.

¹⁴His Spirit gave them rest, just as cattle find rest when led into a valley. The name of the LORD was praised for doing these things.

¹⁵Please, LORD, look down from your holy and glorious home in the heavens and see what's going on. Have you lost interest? Where is your power? Show that you care about us and have mercy!

¹⁶Our ancestors Abraham and Jacob have both rejected us. But you are still our Father; you have been our protector since ancient times.

¹⁷Why did you make us turn away from you, our LORD? Why did you make us want to disobey you? Please change your mind! We are your servants, your very own people.

¹⁸For a little while, your temple belonged to us; and now our enemies have torn it down.

¹⁹We act as though you had never ruled us or called us your people.

64¹Rip the heavens apart! Come down, LORD; make the mountains tremble.

²Be a spark that starts a fire causing water to boil. Then your enemies will know who you are; all nations will tremble because you are nearby.

³Your fearsome deeds have completely amazed us; even the mountains shake when you come down.

⁴You are the only God ever seen or heard of who works miracles for his followers.

⁵You help all who gladly obey and do what you want, but sin makes you angry. Only by your help can we ever be saved.

⁶We are unfit to worship you; each of our good deeds is merely a filthy rag. We dry up like leaves; our sins are storm winds sweeping us away.

⁷No one worships in your name or remains faithful. You have turned your back on us and let our sins melt us away.

⁸You, LORD, are our Father. We are nothing but clay, but you are the potter who moulded us.

⁹Don't be so furious or keep our sins in your thoughts for ever! Remember that all of us are your people.

¹⁰Every one of your towns has turned into a desert, especially Jerusalem.

¹¹Zion's glorious and holy temple where our ancestors praised you has been destroyed by fire. Our beautiful buildings are now a pile of ruins.

¹²When you see these things, how can you just sit there and make us suffer more?

65 ¹I, the LORD, was ready to answer even those who were not asking and to be found by those who

were not searching. To a nation that refused to worship me, I said, Here I am!

²All day long I have reached out to stubborn and sinful people going their own way.

³They keep making me angry by sneering at me, while offering sacrifices to idols in gardens and burning incense to them on bricks.

⁴They spend their nights hiding in burial caves; they eat the meat of pigs, cooked in sauces made of stuff unfit to eat.

⁵And then they say to others, Don't come near us! We're dedicated to God. Such people are like smoke, irritating my nose all day.

⁶I have written this down; I won't keep silent. I'll pay them back just as their sins deserve.

⁷I, the LORD, will make them pay for their sins and for those of their ancestors they have disgraced me by burning incense on mountains.

⁸Here is what the LORD says: A cluster of grapes that produces wine is worth

keeping! So, because of my servants, I won't destroy everyone.

⁹I have chosen the people of Israel and Judah, and I will bless them with many descendants. They will settle here in this land of mountains, and it will be theirs.

¹⁰My people will worship me. Then the coastlands of Sharon and the land as far as Achor Valley will turn into pasture land where cattle and sheep will feed and rest.

¹¹What will I, the LORD, do if any of you reject me and my holy mountain? What will happen to you for offering food and wine to the gods you call Good Luck and Fate?

¹²Your luck will end! I will see to it that you are slaughtered with swords. You refused to answer when I called out; you paid no attention to my instructions. Instead, you did what I hated, knowing it was wrong.

¹³I, the LORD God, will give food and drink to my servants, and they will celebrate. But all of you sinners will go hungry and thirsty, overcome with disgrace.

¹⁴My servants will laugh and sing, but you will be sad and cry out in pain.

¹⁵I, the LORD God, promise to see that you are killed and that my chosen servants use your names as curse words. But I will give new names to my servants.

¹⁶I am God! I can be trusted. Your past troubles are gone; I no longer think of them. When you pray for someone to receive a blessing, or when you make a promise, you must do it in my name. I alone am the God who can be trusted.

¹⁷I am creating new heavens and a new earth; everything of the past will be forgotten.

¹⁸Celebrate and be glad for ever! I am creating a Jerusalem, full of happy people.

¹⁹I will celebrate with Jerusalem and all its people; there will be no more crying or sorrow in that city.

²⁰No child will die in infancy; everyone will live to a ripe old age. Anyone a hundred years old will be considered young, and to die younger than that will be considered a curse.

²¹ My people will live in the houses they build; they will enjoy grapes from their own vineyards.

²² No one will take away their homes or vineyards. My chosen people will live to be as old as trees, and they will enjoy what they have earned.

²³ Their work won't be wasted, and their children won't die of dreadful diseases. I will bless their children and their grandchildren.

²⁴ I will answer their prayers before they finish praying.

²⁵ Wolves and lambs will graze together; lions and oxen will feed on straw. Snakes will eat only dust! They won't bite or harm anyone on my holy mountain. I, the LORD, have spoken!

66¹ The LORD said: Heaven is my throne; the earth is my footstool. What kind of house could you build for me? In what place will I rest?

² I have made everything; that's how it all came to be. I, the LORD, have spoken. The people I treasure most are the humble they depend only on me and tremble when I speak.

³You sacrifice oxen to me, and you commit murder; you sacrifice lambs to me and dogs to other gods; you offer grain to me and pigs' blood to idols; you burn incense to me and praise your idols. You have made your own choice to do these disgusting things that you enjoy so much.

⁴You refused to answer when I called out; you paid no attention to my instructions. Instead, you did what I hated, knowing it was wrong. Now I will punish you in a way you dread the most.

⁵If you tremble when the LORD speaks, listen to what he says: Some of your own people hate and reject you because of me. They make fun and say, Let the LORD show his power! Let us see him make you truly happy. But those who say these things will be terribly ashamed.

⁶Do you hear that noise in the city and those shouts coming from the temple? It is the LORD shouting as he punishes his enemies.

⁷Have you ever heard of a woman who gave birth to a child before having labour pains?

⁸Who ever heard of such a thing or imagined it could happen? Can a nation be born in a day or come to life in a second? Jerusalem is like a mother who gave birth to her children as soon as she was in labour.

⁹The LORD is the one who makes birth possible. And he will see that Zion has many more children. The LORD has spoken.

¹⁰If you love Jerusalem, celebrate and shout! If you were in sorrow because of the city, you can now be glad.

¹¹She will nurse and comfort you, just like your own mother, until you are satisfied. You will fully enjoy her wonderful glory.

¹²The LORD has promised: I will flood Jerusalem with the wealth of nations and make the city prosper. Zion will nurse you at her breast, carry you in her arms, and hold you in her lap.

¹³I will comfort you there like a mother comforting her child.

¹⁴When you see this happen, you will celebrate; your strength will return faster than grass can sprout. Then everyone will know that the LORD is present with

his servants, but he is angry with his enemies.

¹⁵The LORD will come down like a whirlwind with his flaming chariots. He will be terribly furious and punish his enemies with fire.

¹⁶The LORD's fiery sword will bring justice everywhere on this earth and execute many people.

¹⁷Some of you get yourselves ready and go to a garden to worship a foreign goddess. You eat the meat of pigs, lizards, and mice. But I, the LORD, will destroy you for this.

¹⁸I know everything you do and think! The time has now come to bring together the people of every language and nation and to show them my glory

¹⁹by proving what I can do. I will send the survivors to Tarshish, Pul, Lud, Meshech, Tubal, Javan, and to the distant islands. I will send them to announce my wonderful glory to nations that have never heard about me.

²⁰They will bring your relatives from the nations as an offering to me, the LORD. They will come on horses, chariots, wagons, mules, and camels

to Jerusalem, my holy mountain. It will be like the people of Israel bringing the right offering to my temple.

²¹ I promise that some of them will be priests and others will be helpers in my temple. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²² I also promise that you will always have descendants and will never be forgotten, just as the new heavens and the new earth that I create will last for ever.

²³ On the first day of each month and on each Sabbath, everyone will worship me. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²⁴ My people will go out and look at the dead bodies of those who turned against me. The worms there never die, the fire never stops burning, and the sight of those bodies will be disgusting to everyone.

Jeremiah

1 ¹ My name is Jeremiah. I am a priest, and my father Hilkiah and everyone else in my family are from Anathoth in the territory of the Benjamin tribe. This book contains the things that the LORD told me to say.

² The LORD first spoke to me in the thirteenth year that Josiah was king of Judah,

³ and he continued to speak to me during the rule of Josiah's son Jehoiakim. The last time the LORD spoke to me was in the fifth month of the eleventh year that Josiah's son Zedekiah was king. That was also when the people of Jerusalem were taken away as prisoners.

⁴ The LORD said:

⁵ Jeremiah, I am your Creator, and before you were born, I chose you to speak for me to the nations.

⁶ I replied, I'm not a good speaker, LORD, and I'm too young.

⁷ Don't say you're too young, the LORD answered. If I tell you to go and speak

to someone, then go! And when I tell you what to say, don't leave out a word!

⁸I promise to be with you and keep you safe, so don't be afraid.

⁹The LORD reached out his hand, then he touched my mouth and said, I am giving you the words to say,

¹⁰and I am sending you with authority to speak to the nations for me. You will tell them of doom and destruction, and of rising and rebuilding again.

¹¹The LORD showed me something in a vision. Then he asked, What do you see, Jeremiah? I answered, A branch of almonds that ripen early.

¹²That's right, the LORD replied, and I always rise early to keep a promise.

¹³Then the LORD showed me something else and asked, What do you see now? I answered, I see a pot of boiling water in the north, and it's about to spill out towards us.

¹⁴The LORD said: I will pour out destruction all over the land.

¹⁵Just watch while I send for the kings of the north. They will attack and capture Jerusalem and other towns, then set up their thrones at the gates of Jerusalem.

¹⁶I will punish my people, because they are guilty of turning from me to worship idols.

¹⁷Jeremiah, get ready! Go and tell the people what I command you to say. Don't be frightened by them, or I will make you terrified while they watch.

¹⁸My power will make you strong like a fortress or a column of iron or a wall of bronze. You will oppose all of Judah, including its kings and leaders, its priests and people.

¹⁹They will fight back, but they won't win. I, the LORD, give my word I won't let them harm you.

2¹The LORD told me
²to go to Jerusalem and tell everyone that he had said: When you were my young bride, you loved me and followed me through the barren desert.

³You belonged to me alone, like the first part of the harvest, and I severely punished those who ill-treated you.

⁴Listen, people of Israel,

⁵and I, the LORD, will speak. I was never unfair to your ancestors, but they left me and became worthless by following worthless idols.

⁶Your ancestors refused to ask for my help, though I had rescued them from Egypt and led them through a treacherous, barren desert, where no one lives or dares to travel.

⁷I brought you here to my land, where food is abundant, but you made my land filthy with your sins.

⁸The priests who teach my laws don't care to know me. Your leaders rebel against me; your prophets give messages from Baal and worship false gods.

⁹I will take you to court and accuse you and your descendants

¹⁰of a crime that no nation has ever committed before. Just ask anyone, anywhere, from the eastern deserts to the islands in the west. You will find that no nation has ever abandoned its gods even though they were false. I am the true and glorious God, but you have rejected me to worship idols.

¹¹ (2: 10)

¹²Tell the heavens to tremble with fear!

¹³You, my people, have sinned in two ways you have rejected me, the source of life-giving water, and you've tried to

collect water in cracked and leaking pits dug in the ground.

¹⁴People of Israel, you weren't born slaves; you were captured in war.

¹⁵Enemies roared like lions and destroyed your land; towns lie burnt and empty.

¹⁶Soldiers from the Egyptian towns of Memphis and Tahpanhes have cracked your skulls.

¹⁷It's all your own fault! You stopped following me, the LORD your God,

¹⁸and you trusted the power of Egypt and Assyria.

¹⁹Your own sins will punish you, because it was a bitter mistake for you to reject me without fear of punishment. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken.

²⁰Long ago you left me and broke all ties between us, refusing to be my servant. Now you worship other gods by having sex on hilltops or in the shade of large trees.

²¹You were a choice grapevine, but now you produce nothing but small, rotten grapes.

²²The LORD said: People of Israel, you are stained with guilt, and no soap or bleach can wash it away.

²³You deny your sins and say, We aren't unclean. We haven't worshipped Baal. But think about what you do in Hinnom Valley. And you run back and forth like young camels, as you rush to worship one idol after another.

²⁴You are a female donkey sniffing the desert air, wanting to mate with just anyone. You are an easy catch!

²⁵Your shoes are worn out, and your throat is parched from running here and there to worship foreign gods. Stop! I shouted, but you replied, No! I love those gods too much.

²⁶You and your leaders are more disgraceful than thieves you and your kings, your priests and prophets

²⁷worship stone idols and sacred poles as if they had created you and had given you life. You have rejected me, but when you're in trouble, you cry to me for help.

²⁸Go and cry to the gods you made! There should be enough of them to save you, because Judah has as many gods as it has towns.

²⁹The LORD said to Israel: You accuse me of not saving you, but I say you have rebelled.

³⁰I tried punishing you, but you refused to come back to me, and like fierce lions you killed my prophets.

³¹Now listen to what I say! Did I abandon you in the desert or surround you with darkness? You are my people, yet you have told me, We'll do what we want, and we refuse to worship you!

³²A bride could not forget to wear her jewellery to her wedding, but you have forgotten me day after day.

³³You are so clever at finding lovers that you could give lessons to a prostitute.

³⁴You killed innocent people for no reason at all. And even though their blood can be seen on your clothes,

³⁵you claim to be innocent, and you want me to stop being angry with you. So I'll take you to court, and we'll see who is right.

³⁶When Assyria let you down, you ran to Egypt, but you'll find no help there,

³⁷and you will leave in great sadness. I won't let you find help from those you trust.

3¹ The LORD said to the people of Israel: If a divorced woman marries, can her first husband ever marry her again? No, because this would pollute the land. But you have more gods than a prostitute has lovers. Why should I take you back?

² Just try to find one hilltop where you haven't gone to worship other gods by having sex. You sat beside the road like a robber in ambush, except you offered yourself to every passer-by. Your sins of unfaithfulness have polluted the land.

³ So I, the LORD, refused to let the spring rains fall. But just like a prostitute, you still have no shame for what you have done.

⁴ You call me your father or your long-lost friend;

⁵ you beg me to stop being angry, but you won't stop sinning.

⁶ When Josiah was king, the LORD said: Jeremiah, the kingdom of Israel was like an unfaithful wife who became a prostitute on the hilltops and in the shade of large trees.

⁷ I knew that the kingdom of Israel had been unfaithful and committed many

sins, yet I still hoped she might come back to me. But she didn't, so I divorced her and sent her away. Her sister, the kingdom of Judah, saw what happened, but she wasn't worried in the least, and I watched her become unfaithful like her sister.

⁸(3: 7)

⁹The kingdom of Judah wasn't sorry for being a prostitute, and she didn't care that she had made both herself and the land unclean by worshipping idols of stone and wood.

¹⁰And worst of all, the people of Judah pretended to come back to me.

¹¹Even the people of Israel were honest enough not to pretend.

¹²Jeremiah, shout towards the north: Israel, I am your LORD come back to me! You were unfaithful and made me furious, but I am merciful, and so I will forgive you.

¹³Just admit that you rebelled and worshipped foreign gods under large trees everywhere.

¹⁴You are unfaithful children, but you belong to me. Come home! I'll take one

or two of you from each town and clan and bring you to Zion.

¹⁵Then I'll appoint wise rulers who will obey me, and they will care for you like shepherds.

¹⁶You will increase in numbers, and there will be no need to remember the sacred chest or to make a new one.

¹⁷The whole city of Jerusalem will be my throne. All nations will come here to worship me, and they will no longer follow their stubborn, evil hearts.

¹⁸Then, in countries to the north, you people of Judah and Israel will be reunited, and you will return to the land I gave your ancestors.

¹⁹I have always wanted to treat you as my children and give you the best land, the most beautiful on earth. I wanted you to call me Father and not turn from me.

²⁰But instead, you are like a wife who broke her wedding vows. You have been unfaithful to me. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²¹The LORD said: Listen to the noise on the hilltops! It's the people of Israel, weeping and begging me to answer their

prayers. They forgot about me and chose the wrong path.

²²I will tell them, Come back, and I will cure you of your unfaithfulness. They will answer, We will come back, because you are the LORD our God.

²³On hilltops, we worshipped idols and made loud noises, but it was all for nothing only you can save us.

²⁴Since the days of our ancestors when our nation was young, that shameful god Baal has taken our crops and livestock, our sons and daughters.

²⁵We have rebelled against you just like our ancestors, and we are ashamed of our sins.

4¹The LORD said: Israel, if you really want to come back to me, get rid of those disgusting idols.

²Make promises only in my name, and do what you promise! Then all nations will praise me, and I will bless them.

³People of Jerusalem and Judah, don't be so stubborn! Your hearts have become hard, like unploughed ground where thorn bushes grow.

⁴With all your hearts, keep the agreement I made with you. But if you

are stubborn and keep on sinning, my anger will burn like a fire that cannot be put out.

⁵The LORD said: Sound the trumpets, my people. Warn the people of Judah, Run for your lives! Head for Jerusalem or another walled town! Jeremiah, tell them I'm sending disaster from the north.

⁶(4: 5)

⁷An army will come out, like a lion from its den. It will destroy nations and leave your towns empty and in ruins.

⁸Then I said to the people of Israel, Put on sackcloth! Mourn and cry out, The LORD is still angry with us.

⁹The LORD said, When all this happens, the king and his officials, the prophets and the priests will be shocked and terrified.

¹⁰I said, You are the LORD God. So why have you fooled everyone, especially the people of Jerusalem? Why did you promise peace, when a knife is at our throats?

¹¹When disaster comes, the LORD will tell you people of Jerusalem, I am sending a storm from the desert not a

welcome breeze. And it will sweep you away as punishment for your sins.

¹² (4:11)

¹³ Look! The enemy army swoops down like an eagle; their cavalry and chariots race faster than storm clouds blown by the wind. Then you will answer, We are doomed!

¹⁴ But Jerusalem, there is still time for you to be saved. Wash the evil from your hearts and stop making sinful plans,

¹⁵ before a message of disaster arrives from the hills of Ephraim and the town of Dan.

¹⁶ The LORD said, Tell the nations that my people have rebelled against me. And so an army will come from far away to surround Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁷ (4:16)

¹⁸ People of Judah, your hearts will be in pain, but it's your own fault that you will be punished.

¹⁹ I can't stand the pain! My heart pounds, as I twist and turn in agony. I hear the signal trumpet and the battle cry of the enemy, and I cannot be silent.

²⁰I see the enemy defeating us time after time, leaving everything in ruins. Even my own home is destroyed in a moment.

²¹How long will I see enemy flags and hear their trumpets?

²²I heard the LORD say, My people ignore me. They are foolish children who do not understand that they will be punished. All they know is how to sin.

²³After this, I looked around. The earth was barren, with no form of life. The sun, moon, and stars had disappeared.

²⁴The mountains were shaking;

²⁵no people could be seen, and all the birds had flown away.

²⁶Farmland had become a desert, and towns were in ruins. The LORD's fierce anger had done all of this.

²⁷The LORD said: I have made my decision, and I won't change my mind. This land will be destroyed, although not completely. The sky will turn dark, and the earth will mourn.

²⁸(4: 27)

²⁹Enemy cavalry and archers shout their battle cry. People run for their lives

and try to find safety among trees and rocks. Every town is empty.

³⁰Jerusalem, your land has been wiped out. But you act like a prostitute and try to win back your lovers, who now hate you. You can put on a red dress, gold jewellery, and eye shadow, but it's no use your lovers are out to kill you!

³¹I heard groaning and crying. Was it a woman giving birth to her first child? No, it was Jerusalem. She was gasping for breath and begging for help. I'm dying! she said. They have murdered me.

5¹The LORD said to me: Search Jerusalem for honest people who try to be faithful. If you can find even one, I'll forgive the whole city.

²Everyone breaks promises made in my name.

³I answered, I know that you look for truth. You punished your people for their lies, but in spite of the pain, they became more stubborn and refused to turn back to you.

⁴Then I thought to myself, These common people act like fools, and they have never learnt what the LORD their God demands of them.

⁵I'll go and talk to the leaders. They know what God demands. But even they had decided not to obey the LORD.

⁶The people have rebelled and rejected the LORD too many times. So enemies will attack like lions from the forest or wolves from the desert. Those enemies will watch the towns of Judah, and like leopards they will tear to pieces whoever goes outside.

⁷The LORD said: People of Judah, how can I forgive you? I gave you everything, but you abandoned me and worshipped idols. You men go to prostitutes and are unfaithful to your wives.

⁸You are no better than animals, and you always want sex with someone else's wife.

⁹Why shouldn't I punish the people of Judah?

¹⁰I will tell their enemies, Go through my vineyard. Don't destroy the vines, but cut off the branches, because they are the people who don't belong to me.

¹¹In every way, Judah and Israel have been unfaithful to me.

¹²Their prophets lie and say, The LORD won't punish us. We will have peace and

plenty of food. They tell these lies in my name, so now they will be killed in war or starve to death.

¹³(5:12)

¹⁴I am the LORD God All-Powerful. Jeremiah, I will tell you exactly what to say. Your words will be a fire; Israel and Judah will be the fuel.

¹⁵People of Israel, I have made my decision. An army from a distant country will attack you. I've chosen an ancient nation, and you won't understand their language.

¹⁶All of them are warriors, and their arrows bring death.

¹⁷This nation will eat your crops and livestock; they will leave no fruit on your vines or trees. And although you feel safe behind thick walls, your towns will be destroyed and your children killed.

¹⁸The LORD said: Jeremiah, the enemy army won't kill everyone in Judah.

¹⁹And the people who survive will ask, Why did the LORD our God do such terrible things to us? Then tell them: I am the LORD, but you abandoned me and worshipped other gods in your own

land. Now you will be slaves in a foreign country.

²⁰Tell these things to each other, you people of Judah, you descendants of Jacob.

²¹You fools! Why don't you listen when I speak? Why can't you understand

²²that you should worship me with fear and trembling? I'm the one who made the shore to hold back the ocean. Waves may crash on the beach, but they can come no further.

²³You stubborn people have rebelled and turned your backs on me.

²⁴You refuse to say, Let's worship the LORD! He's the one who sends rain in spring and autumn and gives us a good harvest.

²⁵That's why I cannot bless you!

²⁶A hunter traps birds and puts them in a cage, but some of you trap humans and make them your slaves. You are evil, and you lie and cheat to make yourselves rich. You are powerful

²⁷(5: 26)

²⁸and prosperous, but you refuse to help the poor get the justice they deserve.

²⁹You need to be punished, and so I will take revenge.

³⁰Look at the terrible things going on in this country. I am shocked!

³¹Prophets give their messages in the name of a false god, my priests don't want to serve me, and you my own people like it this way! But on the day of disaster, where will you turn for help?

6¹ The LORD said: Run for your lives, people of Benjamin. Get out of Jerusalem. Sound a trumpet in Tekoa and light a signal fire in Beth-Haccherem. Soon you will be struck by disaster from the north.

²Jerusalem is a lovely pasture, but shepherds will surround it and divide it up, then let their flocks eat all the grass.

³(6: 2)

⁴Kings will tell their troops, If we reach Jerusalem in the morning, we'll attack at midday. But if we arrive later,

⁵we'll attack after dark and destroy its fortresses.

⁶I am the LORD All-Powerful, and I will command these armies to chop down trees and build a ramp up to the walls of

Jerusalem. People of Jerusalem, I must punish you for your injustice.

⁷ Evil pours from your city like water from a spring. Sounds of violent crimes echo within your walls; victims are everywhere, wounded and dying.

⁸ Listen to me, you people of Jerusalem and Judah. I will abandon you, and your land will become an empty desert.

⁹ I will tell your enemies to leave your nation bare like a vine stripped of grapes. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken.

¹⁰ I have told the people that you, LORD, will punish them, but they just laugh and refuse to listen.

¹¹ Your anger against Judah flames up inside me, and I can't hold it in much longer. The LORD answered: Don't hold back my anger! Let it sweep away everyone the children at play and all adults, young and old alike.

¹² I'll punish the people of Judah and give to others their houses and fields, as well as their wives. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹³ Everyone is greedy and dishonest, whether poor or rich. Even the prophets and priests cannot be trusted.

¹⁴All they ever offer to my deeply wounded people are empty hopes for peace.

¹⁵They should be ashamed of their disgusting sins, but they don't even blush. And so, when I punish Judah, they will end up on the ground, dead like everyone else. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁶The LORD said: My people, when you stood at the crossroads, I told you, Follow the road your ancestors took, and you will find peace. But you refused.

¹⁷I also sent prophets to warn you of danger, but when they sounded the alarm, you paid no attention.

¹⁸So I tell all nations on earth, Watch what I will do! My people ignored me and rejected my laws. They planned to do evil, and now the evil they planned will happen to them.

¹⁹(6: 18)

²⁰People of Judah, you bring me incense from Sheba and spices from distant lands. You offer sacrifices of all kinds. But why bother? I hate these gifts of yours!

²¹ So I will put stumbling blocks in your path, and everyone will die, including parents and children, neighbours and friends.

²² The LORD said, Look towards the north, where a powerful nation has prepared for war.

²³ Its well-armed troops are cruel and never show mercy. Their galloping horses sound like ocean waves pounding on the shore. This army will attack you, lovely Jerusalem.

²⁴ Then the people said, Just hearing about them makes us tremble with fear, and we twist and turn in pain like a woman giving birth.

²⁵ The LORD said, Don't work in your fields or walk along the roads. It's too dangerous. The enemy is well armed

²⁶ and attacks without warning. So mourn, my people, as though your only child had died. Wear clothes made of sackcloth and roll in the ash heap.

²⁷ The LORD said: Jeremiah, test my people as though they were metal.

²⁸ And you'll find they are hard like bronze and iron. They are stubborn rebels, always spreading lies.

²⁹ Silver can be purified in a fiery furnace, but my people are too wicked to be made pure, and so I have rejected them.

³⁰ (6: 29)

7¹ The LORD told me to stand by the gate of the temple and to tell the people who were going in that the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, had said: Pay attention, people of Judah! Change your ways and start living right, then I will let you keep on living in your own country.

² (7: 1)

³ (7: 1)

⁴ Don't fool yourselves! My temple is here in Jerusalem, but that doesn't mean I will protect you.

⁵ I will keep you safe only if you change your ways. Be fair and honest with each other.

⁶ Stop taking advantage of foreigners, orphans, and widows. Don't kill innocent people. And stop worshipping other gods.

⁷ Then I will let you enjoy a long life in this land I gave your ancestors.

⁸But just look at what is happening!
You put your trust in worthless lies.

⁹You steal and murder; you lie in court and are unfaithful in marriage. You worship idols and offer incense to Baal, when these gods have never done anything for you.

¹⁰And then you come into my temple and worship me! Do you think I will protect you so that you can go on sinning?

¹¹You are thieves, and you have made my temple your hide-out. But I've seen everything you have done.

¹²Go to Shiloh, where my sacred tent once stood. Take a look at what I did there. My people Israel sinned, and so I destroyed Shiloh!

¹³While you have been sinning, I have been trying to talk to you, but you refuse to listen.

¹⁴Don't think this temple will protect you. Long ago I told your ancestors to build it and worship me here, but now I have decided to tear it down, just as I destroyed Shiloh.

¹⁵And as for you, people of Judah, I'm going to send you away from my

land, just as I sent away the people of Ephraim and the other northern tribes.

¹⁶Jeremiah, don't pray for these people! I, the LORD, would refuse to listen.

¹⁷Do you see what the people of Judah are doing in their towns and in the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁸Children gather firewood, their fathers build fires, and their mothers mix dough to bake bread for the goddess they call the Queen of Heaven. They even offer wine sacrifices to other gods, just to insult me.

¹⁹But they are not only insulting me; they are also insulting themselves by doing these shameful things.

²⁰And now, I, the LORD All-Powerful, will flood Judah with my fiery anger until nothing is left—no people or animals, no trees or crops.

²¹The LORD told me to say to the people of Judah: I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, but I won't accept sacrifices from you. So don't even bother bringing them to me. You might as well just cook the meat for yourselves.

²²At the time I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I didn't command them to offer sacrifices to me.

²³Instead, I told them, If you listen to me and do what I tell you, I will be your God, you will be my people, and all will go well for you.

²⁴But your ancestors refused to listen. They were stubborn, and whenever I wanted them to go one way, they always went the other.

²⁵Ever since your ancestors left Egypt, I have been sending my servants the prophets to speak for me.

²⁶But you have ignored me and become even more stubborn and sinful than your ancestors ever were!

²⁷The LORD said: Jeremiah, no matter what you do, the people won't listen.

²⁸So you must say to them: People of Judah, I am the LORD your God, but you have refused to obey me, and you didn't change when I punished you. And now, you no longer even pretend to be faithful to me.

²⁹Shave your head bald and throw away the hair. Sing a funeral song on top

of a barren hill. You people have made me angry, and I have abandoned you.

³⁰You have disobeyed me by putting your disgusting idols in my temple, and now the temple itself is disgusting to me.

³¹At Topheth in Hinnom Valley you have built altars where you kill your children and burn them as sacrifices to other gods. I would never think of telling you to do this.

³²So watch out! Some day that place will no longer be called Topheth or Hinnom Valley. It will be called Slaughter Valley, because you will bury your dead there until you run out of room,

³³and then bodies will lie scattered on the ground. Birds and wild animals will come and eat, and no one will be around to scare them off.

³⁴When I have finished with your land, there will be deathly silence in the empty ruins of Jerusalem and the towns of Judah no happy voices, no sounds of parties or wedding celebrations.

8¹Then the bones of the dead kings of Judah and their officials will be dug up, along with the bones of the

priests, the prophets, and everyone else in Jerusalem

²who loved and worshipped the sun, moon, and stars. These bones will be scattered and left lying on the ground like rubbish, where the sun and moon and stars can shine on them.

³Some of you people of Judah will be left alive, but I will force you to go to foreign countries, and you will wish you were dead. I, the LORD God All-Powerful, have spoken.

⁴The LORD said: People of Jerusalem, when you stumble and fall, you get back up, and if you take a wrong road, you turn round and go back.

⁵So why do you refuse to come back to me? Why do you hold so tightly to your false gods?

⁶I listen carefully, but none of you admit that you've done wrong. Without a second thought, you run down the wrong road like cavalry troops charging into battle.

⁷Storks, doves, swallows, and thrushes all know when it's time to fly away for the winter and when to come back.

But you, my people, don't know what I demand.

⁸You say, We are wise because we have the teachings and laws of the LORD. But I say that your teachers have turned my words into lies!

⁹Your wise men have rejected what I say, and so they have no wisdom. Now they will be trapped and put to shame; they won't know what to do.

¹⁰I'll give their wives and fields to strangers. Everyone is greedy and dishonest, whether poor or rich. Even the prophets and priests cannot be trusted.

¹¹All they ever offer to my deeply wounded people are empty hopes for peace.

¹²They should be ashamed of their disgusting sins, but they don't even blush. And so, when I punish Judah, they will end up on the ground, dead like everyone else.

¹³I will wipe them out. They are vines without grapes; fig trees without figs or leaves. They have not done a thing that I told them! I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁴ The people of Judah say to each other, What are we waiting for? Let's run to a town with walls and die there. We rebelled against the LORD, and we were sentenced to die by drinking poison.

¹⁵ We had hoped for peace and a time of healing, but all we got was terror.

¹⁶ Our enemies have reached the town of Dan in the north, and the snorting of their horses makes us tremble with fear. The enemy will destroy Jerusalem and our entire nation. No one will survive.

¹⁷ Watch out! the LORD says. I'm sending poisonous snakes to attack you, and no one can stop them.

¹⁸ I'm burdened with sorrow and feel like giving up.

¹⁹ In a foreign land my people are crying. Listen! You'll hear them say, Has the LORD deserted Zion? Is he no longer its king? I hear the LORD reply, Why did you make me angry by worshipping useless idols?

²⁰ The people complain, Spring and summer have come and gone, but still the LORD hasn't rescued us.

²¹ My people are crushed, and so is my heart. I am horrified and mourn.

²²If medicine and doctors may be found in Gilead, why aren't my people healed?

9¹I wish that my eyes were fountains of tears, so I could cry day and night for my people who were killed.

²I wish I could go into the desert and find a hiding place from all who are treacherous and unfaithful to God.

³The LORD replied: Lies come from the mouths of my people, like arrows from a bow. With each dishonest deed their power increases, and not one of them will admit that I am God.

⁴Jeremiah, all your friends and relatives tell lies about you, so don't trust them.

⁵They wear themselves out, always looking for a new way to cheat their friends.

⁶Everyone takes advantage of everyone else, and no one will admit that I am God.

⁷And so I will purify the hearts of my people just as gold is purified in a furnace. I have no other choice.

⁸They say they want peace, but this lie is deadly, like an arrow that strikes when you least expect it.

⁹Give me one good reason not to punish them as they deserve. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken.

¹⁰I weep for the pasture land in the hill country. It's so barren and scorched that no one travels there. No cattle can be found there, and birds and wild animals have all disappeared.

¹¹I heard the LORD reply, When I have finished, Jerusalem and the towns of Judah will be piles of ruins where only jackals live.

¹²I said to the LORD, None of us can understand why the land has become like an uncrossable desert. Won't you explain why?

¹³The LORD said: I destroyed the land because the people disobeyed me and rejected my laws and teachings.

¹⁴They were stubborn and worshipped Baal, just as their ancestors did.

¹⁵So I, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, promise them poison to eat and drink.

¹⁶I'll scatter them in foreign countries that they and their ancestors have never even heard of. Finally, I will send enemy soldiers to kill every last one of them.

¹⁷ The LORD All-Powerful said, Send for the women who are paid to weep at funerals, especially the women who can cry the loudest.

¹⁸ The people answered, Let them come quickly and cry for us, until our own eyes are flooded with tears.

¹⁹ Now those of us on Zion cry, We are ruined! We can't stand the shame. Our homes have been destroyed, and we must leave our land.

²⁰ We ask you women to pay attention to what the LORD says. We will teach you a funeral song that you can teach your daughters and friends:

²¹ We were in our fortress, but death sneaked in through our windows. It even struck down children at play and our strongest young men.

²² The LORD has told us the ground will be covered with dead bodies, like stalks of ungathered grain or like manure.

²³ The LORD says: Don't boast about your wisdom or strength or wealth.

²⁴ If you feel you must boast, then have enough sense to boast about worshipping me, the LORD. What I like

best is showing kindness, justice, and mercy to everyone on earth.

²⁵Some day I will punish the nations of Egypt, Edom, Ammon, and Moab, and the tribes of the desert. The men of these nations are circumcised, but they don't worship me. And it's the same with you people of Judah. Your bodies are circumcised, but your hearts are unchanged.

²⁶(9: 25)

10¹The LORD said: Listen to me, you people of Israel. Don't follow the customs of those nations who become frightened when they see something strange happen in the sky.

²(10: 1)

³Their religion is worthless! They chop down a tree, carve the wood into an idol,
⁴cover it with silver and gold, and then nail it down so it won't fall over.

⁵An idol is no better than a scarecrow. It can't speak, and it has to be carried, because it can't walk. Why worship an idol that can't help or harm you?

⁶Our LORD, great and powerful, you alone are God.

⁷You are King of the nations. Everyone should worship you. No human anywhere on earth is wiser than you.

⁸Idols are worthless, and anyone who worships them is a fool!

⁹Idols are made by humans. A carver shapes the wood. A metalworker hammers out a covering of gold from Uphaz or of silver from Tarshish. Then the idol is dressed in blue and purple clothes.

¹⁰You, LORD, are the only true and living God. You will rule for all time. When you are angry the earth shakes, and nations are destroyed.

¹¹You told me to say that idols did not create the heavens and the earth, and that you, the LORD, will destroy every idol.

¹²With your wisdom and power you created the earth and spread out the heavens.

¹³The waters in the heavens roar at your command. You make clouds appear you send the winds from your storehouse and make lightning flash in the rain.

¹⁴ People who make idols are so stupid! They will be disappointed, because their false gods are not alive.

¹⁵ Idols are merely a joke, and when the time is right, they will be destroyed.

¹⁶ But you, Israel's God, created all things, and you chose Israel to be your very own. Your name is the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁷ I said to the people of Judah, Gather your things; you are surrounded.

¹⁸ The LORD said these troubles will lead to your capture, and he will throw you from this land like a stone from a sling.

¹⁹ The people answered, We are wounded and doomed to die. Why did we say we could stand the pain?

²⁰ Our homes are destroyed; our children are dead. No one is left to help us find shelter.

²¹ But I told them, Our leaders were stupid failures, because they refused to listen to the LORD. And so we've been scattered like sheep.

²² Sounds of destruction rumble from the north like distant thunder. Soon our towns will be ruins where jackals live.

²³I know, LORD, that we humans are not in control of our own lives.

²⁴Correct me, as I deserve, but not in your anger, or I will be dead.

²⁵Our enemies refuse to admit that you are God or to worship you. They have wiped out our people and left our nation lying in ruins. So get angry and sweep them away!

11 ¹The LORD God told me to say to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: I, the LORD, am warning you that I will put a curse on anyone who doesn't keep the agreement I made with Israel. So pay attention to what it says.

²(11:1)

³(11:1)

⁴My commands haven't changed since I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, a nation that seemed like a blazing furnace where iron ore is melted. I told your ancestors that if they obeyed my commands, I would be their God, and they would be my people.

⁵Then I did what I had promised and gave them this wonderful land, where you now live. Yes, LORD, I replied, that's true.

⁶Then the LORD told me to say to everyone in the streets of Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah: Pay attention to the commands in my agreement with you.

⁷Ever since I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I have been telling your people to obey me. But you and your ancestors

⁸have always been stubborn. You have refused to listen, and instead you have done whatever your sinful hearts have desired. You have not kept the agreement we made, so I will make you suffer every curse that goes with it.

⁹The LORD said to me: Jeremiah, the people of Judah and Jerusalem are plotting against me.

¹⁰They have sinned in the same way their ancestors did, by turning from me and worshipping other gods. The northern kingdom of Israel broke the agreement I made with your ancestors, and now the southern kingdom of Judah has done the same.

¹¹Here is what I've decided to do. I will bring suffering on the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and no one will escape.

They will beg me to help, but I won't listen to their prayers.

¹²Then they will offer sacrifices to their other gods and ask them for help. After all, the people of Judah have more gods than towns, and more altars for Baal than there are streets in Jerusalem. But those gods won't be able to rescue the people of Judah from disaster.

¹³(11:12)

¹⁴Jeremiah, don't pray for these people or beg me to rescue them. If you do, I won't listen, and I certainly won't listen if they pray!

¹⁵Then the LORD told me to say to the people of Judah: You are my chosen people, but you have no right to be here in my temple, doing such terrible things. The sacrifices you offer me won't protect you from disaster, so stop celebrating.

¹⁶Once you were like an olive tree covered with fruit. But soon I will send a noisy mob to break off your branches and set you on fire.

¹⁷I am the LORD All-Powerful. You people of Judah were like a tree that I had planted, but you have made me angry by offering sacrifices to Baal, just

as the northern kingdom did. And now I'm going to pull you up by the roots.

¹⁸Some people plotted to kill me. And like a lamb being led to the butcher, I knew nothing about their plans. But then the LORD told me that they had planned to chop me down like a tree fruit and all so that no one would ever remember me again.

¹⁹(11:18)

²⁰I prayed, LORD All-Powerful, you always do what is right, and you know every thought. So I trust you to help me and to take revenge.

²¹Then the LORD said: Jeremiah, some men from Anathoth say they will kill you, if you keep on speaking for me.

²²But I will punish them. Their young men will die in battle, and their children will starve to death.

²³And when I have finished, no one from their families will be left alive.

12¹Whenever I complain to you, LORD, you are always fair. But now I have questions about your justice. Why is life easy for sinners? Why are they successful?

²You plant them like trees; you let them prosper and produce fruit. Yet even when they praise you, they don't mean it.

³But you know, LORD, how faithful I've always been, even in my thoughts. So drag my enemies away and butcher them like sheep!

⁴How long will the ground be dry and the pasture lands parched? The birds and animals are dead and gone. And all this happened because the people are so sinful. They even boast, God can't see the sins we commit.

⁵Jeremiah, if you get tired in a race against people, how can you possibly run against horses? If you fall in open fields, what will happen in the forest along the River Jordan?

⁶Even your own family has turned against you. They act friendly, but don't trust them. They're out to get you, and so is everyone else.

⁷I loved my people and chose them as my very own. But now I will reject them and hand them over to their enemies.

⁸My people have turned against me and roar at me like lions. That's why I hate them.

⁹My people are like a hawk surrounded and attacked by other hawks. Tell the wild animals to come and eat their fill.

¹⁰My beautiful land is ruined like a field or a vineyard trampled by shepherds and stripped bare by their flocks.

¹¹Every field I see lies barren, and no one cares.

¹²A destroying army marches along desert roads and attacks everywhere. They are my deadly sword; no one is safe from them.

¹³My people, you planted wheat, but because I was furious, I let only weeds grow. You wore yourselves out for nothing!

¹⁴The LORD said: I gave this land to my people Israel, but enemies around it have attacked and robbed it. So I will uproot them from their own countries just as I will uproot Judah from its land.

¹⁵But later, I will have pity on these nations and bring them back to their own lands.

¹⁶They once taught my people to worship Baal. But if they admit I am the only true God, and if they let my people teach them how to worship me, these nations will also become my people.

¹⁷However, if they don't listen to me, I will uproot them from their lands and completely destroy them. I, the LORD, have spoken.

13¹The LORD told me, Go and buy a pair of linen shorts. Wear them for a while, but don't wash them.

²So I bought a pair of shorts and put them on.

³Then the LORD said,

⁴Take off the shorts. Go to Parah and hide the shorts in a crack between some large rocks.

⁵And that's what I did.

⁶Some time later the LORD said, Go back and get the shorts.

⁷I went back and dug the shorts out of their hiding place, but the cloth had rotted, and the shorts were ruined.

⁸Then the LORD said:

⁹Jeremiah, I will use Babylonia to destroy the pride of the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰The people of Judah are evil and stubborn. So instead of listening to me, they do whatever they want and even worship other gods. When I have finished with these people, they will be good for nothing, just like this pair of shorts.

¹¹These shorts were tight around your waist, and that's how tightly I held on to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. I wanted them to be my people. I wanted to make them famous, so that other nations would praise and honour me, but they refused to obey me.

¹²The LORD said: Jeremiah, tell the people of Judah, The LORD God of Israel orders you to fill your wine jars with wine. They will answer, Of course we fill our wine jars with wine! Why are you telling us something we already know?

¹³Then say to them: I am the LORD, and what I'm going to do will make everyone in Judah and Jerusalem appear to be full of wine. And the worst ones will be the kings of David's family and the priests and the prophets.

¹⁴Then I will smash them against each other like jars. I will have no pity on the

young or the old, and they will all be destroyed. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁵ People of Judah, don't be too proud to listen to what the LORD has said.

¹⁶ You hope for light, but God is sending darkness. Evening shadows already deepen in the hills. So return to God and confess your sins to him before you trip and fall.

¹⁷ If you are too proud to listen, I will weep alone. Tears will stream from my eyes when the LORD's people are taken away as prisoners.

¹⁸ The LORD told me to tell you that your king and his mother must surrender their thrones and remove their crowns.

¹⁹ The cities in the Southern Desert are surrounded; no one can get in or out. Everyone in Judah will be taken away.

²⁰ Jerusalem, you were so proud of ruling the people of Judah. But where are they now? Look north, and you will see your enemies approaching.

²¹ You once trusted them to help, but now I'll let them rule you. What do you say about that? You will be in pain like a woman giving birth.

²² Do you know why your clothes were torn off and you were abused? It was because of your terrible sins.

²³ Can you ever change and do what's right? Can people change the colour of their skin, or can a leopard remove its spots? If so, then perhaps you can change and learn to do right.

²⁴ I will scatter you, just as the desert wind blows husks from grain tossed in the air.

²⁵ I won't change my mind. I, the LORD, have spoken. You rejected me and worshipped false gods.

²⁶ You were married to me, but you were unfaithful. You even became a prostitute by worshipping disgusting gods on hilltops and in fields. So I'll rip off your clothes and leave you naked and ashamed for everyone to see. You are doomed! Will you ever be worthy to worship me again?

²⁷ (13: 26)

14¹ When there had been no rain for a long time, the LORD told me to say to the people:

² Judah and Jerusalem weep as the land dries up.

³Rulers send their servants to the storage pits for water. But there's none to be found; they return in despair with their jars still empty.

⁴There has been no rain, and farmers feel sick as they watch cracks appear in the dry ground.

⁵A deer gives birth in a field, then abandons her newborn fawn and leaves in search of grass.

⁶Wild donkeys go blind from starvation. So they stand on barren hilltops and sniff the air, hoping to smell green grass.

⁷Our terrible sins may demand that we be punished. But if you rescue us, LORD, everyone will see how great you are.

⁸You're our only hope; you alone can save us now. You help us one day, but you're gone the next.

⁹Did this disaster take you by surprise? Are you a warrior with your hands tied? You have chosen us, and your temple is here. Don't abandon us!

¹⁰My people, you love to wander away; you don't even try to stay close to me. So now I will reject you and punish you for your sins. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹¹ The LORD said, Jeremiah, don't ask me to help these people.

¹² They may even go without eating and offer sacrifices to please me and to give thanks. But when they cry out for my help, I won't listen, and I won't accept their sacrifices. Instead, I'll send war, starvation, and disease to wipe them out.

¹³ I replied, The other prophets keep telling everyone that you won't send starvation or war, and that you're going to give us peace.

¹⁴ The LORD answered: They claim to speak for me, but they're lying! I didn't even speak to them, much less choose them to be my prophets. Their messages come from worthless dreams, useless fortune-telling, and their own imaginations.

¹⁵ Those lying prophets say there will be peace and plenty of food. But I say that those same prophets will die from war and hunger.

¹⁶ And everyone who listens to them will be killed, just as they deserve. Their dead bodies will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem, because their

families will also be dead, and no one will be left to bury them.

¹⁷Jeremiah, go and tell the people how you feel about all this. So I told them: Tears will flood my eyes both day and night, because my nation suffers from a deadly wound.

¹⁸In the fields I see the bodies of those killed in battle. And in the towns I see crowds dying of hunger. But the prophets and priests go about their business, without understanding what has happened.

¹⁹Have you rejected Judah, LORD? Do you hate Jerusalem? Why did you strike down Judah with a fatal wound? We had hoped for peace and a time of healing, but all we got was terror.

²⁰We and our ancestors are guilty of rebelling against you.

²¹If you save us, it will show how great you are. Don't let our enemies disgrace your temple, your beautiful throne. Don't forget that you promised to rescue us.

²²Idols can't send rain, and showers don't fall by themselves. Only you control the rain, so we put our trust in you, the LORD our God.

15¹ The LORD said to me: Even if Moses and Samuel were here, praying with you, I wouldn't change my mind. So send the people of Judah away.

² And when they ask where they are going, tell them that I, the LORD, have said: Some of you are going to die of horrible diseases. Others are going to die in war or from starvation. The rest will be led away to a foreign country.

³ I will punish you in four different ways: You will be killed in war and your bodies dragged off by dogs, your flesh will be eaten by birds, and your bones will be chewed on by wild animals.

⁴ This punishment will happen because of the horrible things your King Manasseh did. And you will be disgusting to all nations on earth.

⁵ People of Jerusalem, who will feel sorry for you? Will anyone bother to ask if you are well?

⁶ My people, you abandoned me and walked away. I am tired of showing mercy; that's why I'll destroy you

⁷ by scattering you like straw blown by the wind. I will punish you with sorrow

and death, because you refuse to change your ways.

⁸There will be more widows in Judah than grains of sand on a beach. A surprise attack at midday! And the mothers in Jerusalem mourn for their children.

⁹A mother is in deep despair and struggles for breath. Her daylight has turned to darkness she has suffered the loss of her seven sons. I will kill anyone who survives. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁰I wish I had never been born! I'm always in trouble with everyone in Judah. I never lend or borrow money, but everyone curses me just the same.

¹¹Then the LORD replied, I promise to protect you, and when disaster comes, even your enemies will beg you for help.

¹²The LORD told me to say: People of Judah, just as you can't break iron mixed with bronze, you can't defeat the enemies who will attack from the north.

¹³I will give them everything you own, because you have sinned everywhere in your country.

¹⁴My anger is a fire that cannot be put out, so I will make you slaves of your enemies in a foreign land.

¹⁵You can see how I suffer insult after insult, all because of you, LORD. Don't be so patient with my enemies; take revenge on them before they kill me.

¹⁶When you spoke to me, I was glad to obey, because I belong to you, the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁷I don't go to parties and have a good time. Instead, I keep to myself, because you have filled me with your anger.

¹⁸I am badly injured and in constant pain. Are you going to disappoint me, like a stream that goes dry in the heat of summer?

¹⁹Then the LORD told me: Stop talking like a fool! If you turn back to me and speak my message, I will let you be my prophet once again. I hope the people of Judah will accept what you say. But you can ignore their threats,

²⁰because I am making you strong, like a bronze wall. They are evil and violent, but when they attack, I will be there to rescue you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²¹ (15: 20)

16¹ The LORD said to me:

² Jeremiah, don't get married and have children. Judah is no place to raise a family.

³ I'll tell you what's going to happen to children and their parents here.

⁴ They will die of horrible diseases and of war and starvation. No one will give them a funeral or bury them, and their bodies will be food for the birds and wild animals. And what's left will lie on the ground like manure.

⁵ When someone dies, don't visit the family or show any sorrow. I will no longer love or bless or have any pity on the people of Judah.

⁶ Rich and poor alike will die and be left unburied. No one will mourn and show their sorrow by cutting themselves or shaving their heads.

⁷ No one will bring food and wine to help comfort those who are mourning the death of their father or mother.

⁸ Don't even set foot in a house where there is eating and drinking and celebrating.

⁹Warn the people of Judah that I, the LORD All-Powerful, will put an end to all their parties and wedding celebrations.

¹⁰They will ask, Why has the LORD our God threatened us with so many disasters? Have we done something wrong or sinned against him?

¹¹Then tell them I have said: People of Judah, your ancestors turned away from me; they rejected my laws and teachings and started worshipping other gods.

¹²And you have done even worse! You are stubborn, and instead of obeying me, you do whatever evil comes to your mind.

¹³So I will throw you into a land that you and your ancestors know nothing about, a place where you will have to worship other gods both day and night. And I won't feel the least bit sorry for you.

¹⁴A time will come when you will again worship me. But you will no longer call me the Living God who rescued Israel from Egypt.

¹⁵Instead, you will call me the Living God who rescued you from that country in the north and from the other countries

where I had forced you to go. Some day I will bring you back to this land that I gave your ancestors.

¹⁶But for now, I am sending enemies who will catch you like fish and hunt you down like wild animals in the hills and the caves.

¹⁷I can see everything you are doing, even if you try to hide your sins from me.

¹⁸I will punish you double for your sins, because you have made my own land disgusting. You have filled it with lifeless idols that remind me of dead bodies.

¹⁹I prayed to the LORD: Our LORD, you are the one who gives me strength and protects me like a fortress when I am in trouble. People will come to you from distant nations and say, Our ancestors worshipped false and useless gods,

²⁰worthless idols made by human hands.

²¹Then the LORD replied, That's why I will teach them about my power, and they will know that I am the true God.

17¹ The LORD said: People of Judah, your sins cannot be erased. They are written on your hearts like words

chiselled in stone or carved on the corners of your altars.

²One generation after another has set up pagan altars and worshipped the goddess Asherah everywhere in your country on hills and mountains, and under large trees. So I'll take everything you own, including your altars, and give it all to your enemies.

³(17:2)

⁴You will lose the land that I gave you, and I will make you slaves in a foreign country, because you have made my anger blaze up like a fire that won't stop burning.

⁵I, the LORD, have put a curse on those who turn from me and trust in human strength.

⁶They will dry up like a bush in salty desert soil, where nothing can grow.

⁷But I will bless those who trust me.

⁸They will be like trees growing beside a stream trees with roots that reach down to the water, and with leaves that are always green. They bear fruit every year and are never worried by a lack of rain.

⁹You people of Judah are so deceitful that you even fool yourselves, and you can't change.

¹⁰But I know your deeds and your thoughts, and I will make sure you get what you deserve.

¹¹You cheated others, but everything you gained will fly away, like birds hatched from stolen eggs. Then you will discover what fools you are.

¹²Our LORD, your temple is a glorious throne that has stood on a mountain from the beginning.

¹³You are a spring of water giving Israel life and hope. But if the people reject what you have told me, they will be swept away like words written in dust.

¹⁴You, LORD, are the one I praise. So heal me and rescue me! Then I will be completely well and perfectly safe.

¹⁵The people of Judah say to me, Jeremiah, you claimed to tell us what the LORD has said. So why hasn't it come true?

¹⁶Our LORD, you chose me to care for your people, and that's what I have done. You know everything I have said,

and I have never once asked you to punish them.

¹⁷ I trust you for protection in times of trouble, so don't frighten me.

¹⁸ Keep me from failure and disgrace, but make my enemies fail and be disgraced. Send destruction to make their worst fears come true.

¹⁹ The LORD said: Jeremiah, stand at each city gate in Jerusalem, including the one the king uses, and speak to him and everyone else. Tell them I have said: I am the LORD, so pay attention.

²⁰ (17: 19)

²¹ If you value your lives, don't do any work on the Sabbath. Don't carry anything through the city gates or through the door of your house, or anywhere else. Keep the Sabbath day sacred! I gave this command to your ancestors, but they were stubborn and refused to obey or to be corrected. But if you obey,

²² (17: 21)

²³ (17: 21)

²⁴ (17: 21)

²⁵ then Judah and Jerusalem will always be ruled by kings from David's family.

The king and his officials will ride through these gates on horses or in chariots, and the people of Judah and Jerusalem will be with them. There will always be people living in Jerusalem,

²⁶and others will come here from the nearby villages, from the towns of Judah and Benjamin, from the hill country and the foothills to the west, and from the Southern Desert. They will bring sacrifices to please me and to give me thanks, as well as offerings of grain and incense.

²⁷But if you keep on carrying things through the city gates on the Sabbath and keep treating it as any other day, I will set fire to these gates and burn down the whole city, including the fortresses.

18¹The LORD told me,
²Go to the pottery shop, and when you get there, I will tell you what to say to the people.

³I went there and saw the potter making clay pots on his pottery wheel.

⁴And whenever the clay would not take the shape he wanted, he would change his mind and form it into some other shape.

⁵Then the LORD told me to say:

⁶People of Israel, I, the LORD, have power over you, just as a potter has power over clay.

⁷If I threaten to uproot and shatter an evil nation

⁸and that nation turns from its evil, I will change my mind.

⁹If I promise to make a nation strong,

¹⁰but its people start disobeying me and doing evil, then I will change my mind and not help them at all.

¹¹So listen to me, people of Judah and Jerusalem! I have decided to strike you with disaster, and I won't change my mind unless you stop sinning and start living right.

¹²But I know you won't listen. You might as well answer, We don't care what you say. We have made plans to sin, and we are going to be stubborn and do what we want!

¹³So I, the LORD, command you to ask the nations, and find out if they have ever heard of such a horrible sin as what you have done.

¹⁴The snow on Lebanon's mountains never melts away, and the streams there never run dry.

¹⁵But you, my people, have turned from me to burn incense to worthless idols. You have left the ancient road to follow an unknown path where you stumble over idols.

¹⁶Your land will be ruined, and every passer-by will look at it with horror and make insulting remarks.

¹⁷When your enemies attack, I will scatter you like dust blown by an eastern wind. Then, on that day of disaster, I will turn my back on you.

¹⁸Some of the people said, Let's get rid of Jeremiah! We will always have priests to teach us God's laws, as well as wise people to give us advice, and prophets to speak the LORD's messages. So, instead of listening to Jeremiah any longer, let's accuse him of a crime.

¹⁹Please, LORD, answer my prayer. Make my enemies stop accusing me of evil.

²⁰I tried to help them, but they are paying me back by digging a pit to trap

me. I even begged you not to punish them.

²¹ But now I am asking you to let their children starve or be killed in war. Let women lose their husbands and sons to disease and violence.

²² These people have dug pits and set traps for me, LORD. Make them scream in fear when you send enemy troops to attack their homes.

²³ You know they plan to kill me. So get angry and punish them! Don't ever forgive their terrible crimes.

19¹ The LORD said: Jeremiah, go to the pottery shop and buy a clay jar. Then take along some of the city officials and leading priests

² and go to Hinnom Valley, just outside Potsherd Gate. Tell the people that I have said:

³ I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, and you kings of Judah and you people of Jerusalem had better pay attention. I am going to bring so much trouble on this valley that everyone who hears about it will be shocked.

⁴ The people of Judah stopped worshipping me and made this valley

into a place of worship for Baal and other gods that have never helped them or their ancestors or their kings. And they have committed murder here, burning their young, innocent children as sacrifices to Baal. I have never even thought of telling you to do that.

⁵ (19: 4)

⁶ So watch out! Some day this place will no longer be called Topheth or Hinnom Valley. It will be called Slaughter Valley!

⁷ You people of Judah and Jerusalem may have big plans, but here in this valley I'll ruin those plans. I'll let your enemies kill you, and I'll tell the birds and wild animals to eat your dead bodies.

⁸ I will turn Jerusalem into a pile of rubble, and every passer-by will be shocked and horrified and will make insulting remarks.

⁹ And while your enemies are trying to break through your city walls to kill you, the food supply will run out. You will become so hungry that you will eat the flesh of your friends and even of your own children.

¹⁰Jeremiah, as soon as you have said this, smash the jar while the people are watching.

¹¹Then tell them that I have also said: I am the LORD All-Powerful, and I warn you that I will shatter Judah and Jerusalem just like this jar that is broken beyond repair. You will bury your dead here in Topheth, but so many of you will die that there won't be enough room.

¹²I will make Jerusalem as unclean as Topheth, by filling the city with your dead bodies. I will do this because you and your kings have gone up to the roofs of your houses and burnt incense to the stars in the sky, as though they were gods. And you have given sacrifices of wine to foreign gods.

¹³(19:12)

¹⁴I went to Topheth, where I told the people what the LORD had said. Then I went to the temple courtyard and shouted to the people,

¹⁵Listen, everyone! Some time ago, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, warned you that he would bring disaster on Jerusalem and all nearby villages. But you were stubborn and refused to

listen. Now the LORD is going to bring the disaster he promised.

20¹ Pashhur son of Immer was a priest and the chief of temple security. He heard what I had said,

² and so he hit me. Then he had me arrested and put in chains at the Benjamin Gate in the LORD's temple.

³ The next day, when Pashhur let me go free, I told him that the LORD had said: No longer will I call you Pashhur. Instead, I will call you Afraid-of-Everything.

⁴ You will be afraid, and you will bring fear to your friends as well. You will see enemies kill them in battle. Then I will make the king of Babylonia take everyone in Judah prisoner, killing some and dragging the rest away to Babylonia.

⁵ He will clean out the royal treasury and take everything else of value from Jerusalem.

⁶ Pashhur, you are guilty of telling lies and claiming they were messages from me. That's why I will make the Babylonians take you, your family, and your friends as prisoners to Babylonia, where you will all die and be buried.

⁷ You tricked me, LORD, and I was really fooled. You are stronger than I am, and you have defeated me. People never stop sneering and insulting me.

⁸ You have let me announce only destruction and death. Your message has brought me nothing but insults and trouble.

⁹ Sometimes I tell myself not to think about you, LORD, or even mention your name. But your message burns in my heart and bones, and I cannot keep silent.

¹⁰ I heard the crowds whisper, Everyone is afraid. Now's our chance to accuse Jeremiah! All of my so-called friends are just waiting for me to make a mistake. They say, Perhaps Jeremiah can be tricked. Then we can overpower him and get even at last.

¹¹ But you, LORD, are a mighty soldier, standing at my side. Those troublemakers will fall down and fail terribly embarrassed, for ever ashamed.

¹² LORD All-Powerful, you test those who do right, and you know every heart and mind. I have told you my

complaints, so let me watch you take revenge on my enemies.

¹³I sing praises to you, LORD. You rescue the oppressed from the wicked.

¹⁴Put a curse on the day I was born! Don't bless my mother.

¹⁵Put a curse on the man who told my father, Good news! You have a son.

¹⁶May that man be like the towns you destroyed without pity. Let him hear shouts of alarm in the morning and battle cries at midday.

¹⁷He deserves to die for not killing me before I was born. Then my mother's body would have been my grave.

¹⁸Why did I have to be born? Was it just to suffer and die in shame?

21 ¹King Zedekiah of Judah sent for Pashhur son of Malchiah and for a priest named Zephaniah son of Maaseiah. Then he told them, Talk with Jeremiah for me. So they came to me and said,

²King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia has attacked Judah. Please ask the LORD to work miracles for our people, as he has done in the past, so that Nebuchadnezzar will leave us alone.

³I told them that the LORD God of Israel had told me to say to King Zedekiah: The Babylonians have surrounded Jerusalem and want to kill you and your people. You are asking me to save you, but you have made me furious. So I will stretch out my mighty arm and fight against you myself. Your army is using spears and swords to fight the Babylonians, but I will make your own weapons turn and attack you. I will send a horrible disease to kill many of the people and animals in Jerusalem, and there will be nothing left to eat. Finally, I will let King Nebuchadnezzar and his army fight their way to the centre of Jerusalem and capture everyone who is left alive, including you and your officials. But Nebuchadnezzar won't be kind or show any mercy; he will have you killed! I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁴(21: 3)

⁵(21: 3)

⁶(21: 3)

⁷(21: 3)

⁸Then I told them that the LORD had said: People of Jerusalem, I, the LORD, give you the choice of life or death.

⁹The Babylonian army has surrounded Jerusalem, so if you want to live, you must go out and surrender to them. But if you want to die because of hunger, disease, or war, then stay here in the city.

¹⁰I have decided not to rescue Jerusalem. Instead, I am going to let the king of Babylonia burn it to the ground. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹¹Pay attention, you who belong to the royal family. Each new day, make sure that justice is done, and rescue those who are being robbed. Or else my anger will flame up like a fire that never goes out.

¹²(21:11)

¹³Jerusalem, from your mountaintop you look out over the valleys and think you are safe. But I, the LORD, am angry,

¹⁴and I will punish you as you deserve. I'll set your palace on fire, and everything around you will go up in smoke.

22¹The LORD sent me to the palace of the king of Judah to speak to the king, his officials, and everyone else who was there. The LORD told me to say: I am the LORD, so pay attention!

You have been allowing people to cheat, rob, and take advantage of widows, orphans, and foreigners who live here. Innocent people have become victims of violence, and some of them have even been killed. But now I command you to do what is right and see that justice is done. Rescue everyone who has suffered from injustice.

² (22: 1)

³ (22: 1)

⁴ If you obey me, the kings from David's family will continue to rule Judah from this palace. They and their officials will ride in and out on their horses or in their chariots.

⁵ But if you ignore me, I promise in my own name that this palace will lie in ruins.

⁶ Listen to what I think about it: the palace of Judah's king is as glorious as Gilead or Lebanon's highest peaks. But it will be as empty as a ghost town when I'm through with it.

⁷ I'll send troops to tear it apart, and its beautiful cedar beams will be used for firewood.

⁸ People from different nations will pass by and ask, Why did the LORD do this to such a great city as Jerusalem?

⁹ Others will answer, It's because the people worshipped foreign gods and broke the agreement that the LORD their God had made with them.

¹⁰ The LORD said: King Josiah is dead, so don't cry for him. Instead, cry for his son King Jehoahaz, dragged off to another country, never to return.

¹¹ Jehoahaz became king of Judah after his father King Josiah died. But Jehoahaz was taken as a prisoner to a foreign country. Now I, the LORD, promise that he will die there without ever seeing his own land again.

¹² (22: 11)

¹³ The LORD told me to say: King Jehoiakim, you are doomed! You built a palace with large rooms upstairs. You put in big windows and used cedar panelling and red paint. But you were unfair and forced the builders to work without pay.

¹⁴ (22: 13)

¹⁵ More cedar in your palace doesn't make you a better king than your father Josiah. He always did right he gave

justice to the poor and was honest.
That's what it means to truly know me.
So he lived a comfortable life and always
had enough to eat and drink.

¹⁶ (22: 15)

¹⁷ But all you think about is how to
cheat or abuse or murder some innocent
victim.

¹⁸ Jehoiakim, no one will cry at your
funeral. They won't turn to each other
and ask, Why did our great king have to
die?

¹⁹ You will be given a burial fit for
a donkey; your body will be dragged
outside the city gates and tossed in the
dust. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²⁰ The LORD told me to say: People of
Jerusalem, the nations you trusted have
been crushed. Go to Lebanon and weep;
cry in the land of Bashan and in Moab.

²¹ When times were good, I warned
you. But you ignored me, just as you
have done since Israel was young.

²² Now you will be disgraced because
of your sins. Your leaders will be swept
away by the wind, and the nations you
trusted will be captured and dragged to
a foreign country.

²³ Those who live in the palace panelled with cedar will groan with pain like women giving birth.

²⁴ King Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, even if you were the ring I wear as the sign of my royal power, I would still pull you from my finger.

²⁵ I would hand you over to the enemy you fear, to King Nebuchadnezzar and his army, who want to kill you.

²⁶ You and your mother were born in Judah, but I will throw both of you into a foreign country, where you will die,

²⁷ longing to return home.

²⁸ Jehoiachin, you are unwanted like a broken clay pot. So you and your children will be thrown into a country you know nothing about.

²⁹ Land of Judah, I am the LORD. Now listen to what I say!

³⁰ Erase the names of Jehoiachin's children from the royal records. He is a complete failure, and so none of them will ever be king. I, the LORD, have spoken.

23¹ The LORD said: You leaders of my people are like shepherds that kill and scatter the sheep.

²You were supposed to take care of my people, but instead you chased them away. So now I'll really take care of you, and believe me, you will pay for your crimes!

³I will bring the rest of my people home from the lands where I have scattered them, and they will grow into a mighty nation.

⁴I promise to choose leaders who will care for them like real shepherds. All my people will be there, and they will never again be frightened.

⁵Some day I will appoint an honest king from the family of David, a king who will be wise and rule with justice.

⁶As long as he is king, Israel will have peace, and Judah will be safe. The name of this king will be The LORD Gives Justice.

⁷A time will come when you will again worship me. But you will no longer call me the Living God who rescued Israel from Egypt.

⁸Instead, you will call me the Living God who rescued you from the land in the north and from all the other countries

where I had forced you to go. And you will once again live in your own land.

⁹When I think of the prophets, I am shocked, and I tremble like someone drunk, because of the LORD and his sacred words.

¹⁰Those unfaithful prophets misuse their power all over the country. So God turned the pasture lands into scorching deserts.

¹¹The LORD told me to say: You prophets and priests think so little of me, the LORD, that you even sin in my own temple!

¹²Now I will punish you with disaster, and you will slip and fall in the darkness. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹³The prophets in Samaria were disgusting to me, because they preached in the name of Baal and led my people astray.

¹⁴And you prophets in Jerusalem are even worse. You're unfaithful in marriage and never tell the truth. You even lead others to sin instead of helping them turn back to me. You and the people of Jerusalem are evil like Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹⁵You prophets in Jerusalem have spread evil everywhere. That's why I, the LORD, promise to give you bitter poison to eat and drink.

¹⁶The LORD said: Don't listen to the lies of these false prophets, you people of Judah! The message they preach is something they imagined; it did not come from me, the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁷These prophets go to people who refuse to respect me and who are stubborn and do whatever they want. The prophets tell them, The LORD has promised everything will be fine.

¹⁸But I, the LORD, tell you that these prophets have never attended a meeting of my council in heaven or heard me speak.

¹⁹They are evil! So in my anger I will strike them like a violent storm.

²⁰I won't calm down, until I have finished what I have decided to do. Some day you will understand exactly what I mean.

²¹I did not send these prophets or speak to them, but they ran to find you and to preach their message.

²²If they had been in a meeting of my council in heaven, they would have told you people of Judah to give up your sins and come back to me.

²³I am everywhere both near and far,

²⁴in heaven and on earth. There are no secret places where you can hide from me.

²⁵These unfaithful prophets claim that I have given them a dream or a vision, and then they tell lies in my name.

²⁶But everything they say comes from their own twisted minds. How long can this go on?

²⁷They tell each other their dreams and try to get my people to reject me, just as their ancestors left me and worshipped Baal.

²⁸Their dreams and my truth are as different as straw and wheat. But when prophets speak for me, they must say only what I have told them.

²⁹My words are a powerful fire; they are a hammer that shatters rocks.

³⁰These unfaithful prophets claim I give them their dreams, but it isn't true. I didn't choose them to be my prophets, and yet they babble on and on, speaking

in my name, while stealing words from each other. And when my people hear these liars, they are led astray instead of being helped. So I warn you that I am now the enemy of these prophets. I, the LORD, have spoken.

³¹ (23: 30)

³² (23: 30)

³³ The LORD said to me: Jeremiah, when a prophet or a priest or anyone else comes to you and asks, Does the LORD have news for us? tell them, You people are a nuisance to the LORD, and he will get rid of you.

³⁴ If any of you say, Here is news from the LORD, I will punish you and your families, even if you are a prophet or a priest.

³⁵ Instead, you must ask your friends and relatives, What answer did the LORD give? or What has the LORD said?

³⁶ It seems that you each have your own news! So if you say, Here is news from the LORD, you are twisting my words into a lie. Remember that I am your God, the LORD All-Powerful.

³⁷ If you go to a prophet, it's all right to ask, What answer did the LORD give

to my question? or What has the LORD said?

³⁸But if you disobey me and say, Here is news from the LORD,

³⁹I will pick you up and throw you far away. And I will abandon this city of Jerusalem that I gave to your ancestors.

⁴⁰You will never be free from your shame and disgrace.

24¹The LORD spoke to me in a vision after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia had come to Judah and taken King Jehoiachin, his officials, and all the skilled workers back to Babylonia. In this vision I saw two baskets of figs in front of the LORD's temple.

²One basket was full of very good figs that ripened early, and the other was full of rotten figs that were not fit to eat.

³Jeremiah, the LORD asked, what do you see? Figs, I said. Some are very good, but the others are too rotten to eat.

⁴Then the LORD told me to say:

⁵People of Judah, the good figs stand for those of you I sent away as exiles to Babylonia,

⁶where I am watching over them. Then some day I will bring them back to this land. I will plant them, instead of uprooting them, and I will build them up, rather than tearing them down.

⁷I will give them a desire to know me and to be my people. They will want me to be their God, and they will turn back to me with all their heart.

⁸The rotten figs stand for King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, and all the others who were not taken away to Babylonia, whether they stayed here in Judah or went to live in Egypt.

⁹I will punish them with a terrible disaster, and everyone on earth will tremble when they hear about it. I will force the people of Judah to go to foreign countries, where they will be cursed and insulted.

¹⁰War and hunger and disease will strike them, until they finally disappear from the land that I gave them and their ancestors.

25¹In the fourth year that Jehoiakim was king of Judah, which was the first year that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylonia, the LORD told me to speak

to the people of Judah and Jerusalem.
So I told them:

²(25:1)

³For twenty-three years now, ever since the thirteenth year that Josiah was king, I have been telling you what the LORD has told me. But you have not listened.

⁴The LORD has sent prophets to you time after time, but you refused to listen.

⁵They told you that the LORD had said: Change your ways! If you stop doing evil, I will let you stay for ever in this land that I gave your ancestors.

⁶I don't want to harm you. So don't make me angry by worshipping idols and other gods.

⁷But you refused to listen to my prophets. So I, the LORD, say that you have made me angry by worshipping idols, and you are the ones who were hurt by what you did.

⁸You refused to listen to me,

⁹and now I will let you be attacked by nations from the north, and especially by my servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia. You and other nearby nations will be destroyed and left in ruins

for ever. Everyone who sees what has happened will be shocked, but they will still make fun of you.

¹⁰I will put an end to your parties and wedding celebrations; no one will grind grain or be here to light the lamps at night.

¹¹This country will be as empty as a desert, because I will make all of you the slaves of the king of Babylonia for seventy years.

¹²When that time is up, I will punish the king of Babylonia and his people for everything they have done wrong, and I will turn that country into a wasteland for ever.

¹³My servant Jeremiah has told you what I said I will do to Babylonia and to the other nations, and he wrote it all down in this book. I will do everything I threatened.

¹⁴I will pay back the Babylonians for every wrong they have done. Great kings from many other nations will conquer the Babylonians and force them to be slaves.

¹⁵The LORD God of Israel showed me a vision in which he said, Jeremiah, here

is a cup filled with the wine of my anger. Take it and make every nation drink some.

¹⁶They will vomit and act mad, because of the war this cup of anger will bring to them.

¹⁷I took the cup from the LORD's hand, and I went to the kings of the nations and made each of them drink some.

¹⁸I started with Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, and the king and his officials were removed from power in disgrace. Everyone still makes insulting jokes about them and uses their names as curse words.

¹⁹The second place I went was Egypt, where everyone had to drink from the cup, including the king and his officials, the other government workers, the rest of the Egyptians,

²⁰and all the foreigners who lived in the country. Next I went to the king of Uz, and then to the four kings of Philistia, who ruled from Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and what was left of Ashdod.

²¹Then I went to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon,

²²and to the kings of Tyre, Sidon, and their colonies across the sea.

²³After this, I went to the kings of Dedan, Tema, Buz, the tribes of the Arabian Desert,

²⁴(25: 23)

²⁵Zimri, Elam, Media,

²⁶and the countries in the north, both near and far. I went to all the countries on earth, one after another, and finally to Babylonia.

²⁷The LORD had said I must tell each king, The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, commands you to drink from this cup that is full of the wine of his anger. It will make you so drunk that you will vomit. And when the LORD sends war against the nations, you will be completely defeated.

²⁸The LORD told me that if any of them refused to drink from the cup, I must tell them that he had said, I, the LORD All-Powerful, command you to drink.

²⁹Starting with my own city of Jerusalem, everyone on earth will suffer from war. So there is no way I will let you escape unharmed.

³⁰The LORD told me to say: From my sacred temple I will roar like thunder, while I trample my people and everyone else as though they were grapes.

³¹My voice will be heard everywhere on earth, accusing nations of their crimes and sentencing the guilty to death.

³²The LORD All-Powerful says: You can see disaster spreading from far across the earth, from nation to nation like a horrible storm.

³³When it strikes, I will kill so many people that their bodies will cover the ground like manure. No one will be left to bury them or to mourn.

³⁴The LORD's people are his flock, and you leaders were the shepherds. But now it's your turn to be butchered like sheep. You'll shatter like fine pottery dropped on the floor. So roll on the ground, crying and mourning.

³⁵You have nowhere to run, nowhere to hide.

³⁶Listen to the cries of the shepherds, as the LORD's burning anger turns peaceful meadows into barren deserts. The LORD has abandoned his people like a lion leaving its den.

³⁷ (25: 36)

³⁸ (25: 36)

26¹ Soon after Jehoiakim became king of Judah, the LORD said:

²Jeremiah, I have a message for everyone who comes from the towns of Judah to worship in my temple. Go to the temple courtyard and speak every word that I tell you.

³Perhaps the people will listen this time. And if they stop doing wrong, I will change my mind and not punish them for their sins.

⁴Tell them that I have said: You have refused to listen to me and to obey my laws and teachings.

⁵Again and again I have sent my servants the prophets to preach to you, but you ignored them as well. Now I am warning you that if you don't start obeying me straight away,

⁶I will destroy this temple, just as I destroyed the town of Shiloh. Then everyone on earth will use the name Jerusalem as a curse word.

⁷The prophets, the priests, and everyone else in the temple heard what I said,

⁸and as soon as I finished, they all crowded around me and started shouting, Why did you preach that the LORD will destroy this temple, just as he destroyed Shiloh? Why did you say that Jerusalem will be empty and lie in ruins? You ought to be put to death for saying such things in the LORD's name! Then they had me arrested.

⁹(26: 8)

¹⁰The royal officers heard what had happened, and they came from the palace to the new gate of the temple to be the judges at my trial.

¹¹While they listened, the priests and the prophets said to the crowd, All of you have heard Jeremiah prophesy that Jerusalem will be destroyed. He deserves the death penalty.

¹²Then I told the judges and everyone else: The LORD himself sent me to tell you about the terrible things he will do to you, to Jerusalem, and to the temple. But if you change your ways and start obeying the LORD, he will change his mind.

¹³(26: 12)

¹⁴You must decide what to do with me. Just do whatever you think is right.

¹⁵But if you put me to death, you and everyone else in Jerusalem will be guilty of murdering an innocent man, because everything I preached came from the LORD.

¹⁶The judges and the other people told the priests and prophets, Since Jeremiah only told us what the LORD our God had said, we don't think he deserves to die.

¹⁷Then some of the leaders from other towns stepped forward. They told the crowd that

¹⁸years ago when Hezekiah was king of Judah, a prophet named Micah from the town of Moresheth had said: I, the LORD All-Powerful, say Jerusalem will be ploughed under and left in ruins. Thorns will cover the mountain where the temple now stands.

¹⁹Then the leaders continued: No one put Micah to death for saying that. Instead, King Hezekiah prayed to the LORD with fear and trembling and asked him to have mercy. Then the LORD decided not to destroy Jerusalem, even though he had already said he would.

People of Judah, if Jeremiah is killed, we will bring a terrible disaster on ourselves.

²⁰After these leaders finished speaking, an important man named Ahikam son of Shaphan spoke up for me as well. And so, I wasn't handed over to the crowd to be killed. While Jehoiakim was still king of Judah, a man named Uriah son of Shemaiah left his home town of Kiriath-Jearim and came to Jerusalem. Uriah was one of the LORD's prophets, and he was saying the same things about Judah and Jerusalem that I had been saying. And when Jehoiakim and his officials and military officers heard what Uriah said, they tried to arrest him, but he escaped to Egypt. So Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Achbor and some other men after Uriah, and they brought him back. Then Jehoiakim had Uriah killed and his body dumped in a common burial pit.

²¹ (26: 20)

²² (26: 20)

²³ (26: 20)

²⁴ (26: 20)

27 ¹Not long after Zedekiah became king of Judah, the LORD told me:

Jeremiah, make a wooden yoke with leather straps, and place it on your neck.

² (27: 1)

³ Then send a message to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. Some officials from these countries are in Jerusalem, meeting with Zedekiah.

⁴ So order them to tell their kings that I have said: I am the All-Powerful LORD God of Israel,

⁵ and with my power I created the earth, its people, and all animals. I decide who will rule the earth,

⁶ and I have chosen my servant King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia to rule all nations, including yours. I will even let him rule the wild animals. All nations will be slaves of Nebuchadnezzar, his son, and his grandson. Then many nations will join together, and their kings will be powerful enough to make slaves of the Babylonians.

⁷ (27: 6)

⁸ This yoke stands for the power of King Nebuchadnezzar, and I will destroy any nation that refuses to obey him. Nebuchadnezzar will attack, and many

will die in battle or from hunger and disease.

⁹You might have people in your kingdom who claim they can tell the future by magic or by talking with the dead or by dreams or messages from a god. But don't pay attention if any of them tell you not to obey Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁰If you listen to such lies, I will have you dragged far from your country and killed.

¹¹But if you and your nation are willing to obey Nebuchadnezzar, I will let you stay in your country, and your people will continue to live and work on their farms.

¹²After I had spoken to the officials from the nearby kingdoms, I went to King Zedekiah and told him the same thing. Then I said: Zedekiah, if you and the people of Judah want to stay alive, you must obey Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.

¹³But if you refuse, then you and your people will die from war, hunger, and disease, just as the LORD has warned.

¹⁴Your prophets have told you that you don't need to obey Nebuchadnezzar, but don't listen to their lies.

¹⁵Those prophets claim to be speaking for the LORD, but he didn't send them. They are lying! If you do what they say, he will have both you and them dragged off to another country and killed. The LORD has spoken.

¹⁶When I finished talking to the king, I went to the priests and told them that the LORD had said: Don't listen to the prophets when they say that very soon the Babylonians will return the things they took from my temple. Those prophets are lying!

¹⁷If you choose to obey the king of Babylonia, you will live. But if you listen to those prophets, this whole city will be nothing but a pile of rubble.

¹⁸If I really had spoken to those prophets, they would know what I am going to do. Then they would be begging me not to let everything else be taken from the temple and the king's palace and the rest of Jerusalem.

¹⁹After all, when Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiachin to Babylonia as a

prisoner, he didn't take everything of value from Jerusalem. He left the bronze pillars, the huge bronze bowl called the Sea, and the moveable bronze stands in the temple, and he left a lot of other valuable things in the palace and in the rest of Jerusalem. But now I, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, say that all these things

²⁰ (27: 19)

²¹ (27: 19)

²² will be taken to Babylonia, where they will remain until I decide to bring them back to Jerusalem. I, the LORD, have spoken.

28¹ Later that same year, in the fifth month of the fourth year that Zedekiah was king, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur from Gibeon came up to me in the temple. And while the priests and others in the temple were listening,

² he told me that the LORD had said: I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, and I will smash the yoke that Nebuchadnezzar put on the necks of the nations to make them his slaves.

³And within two years, I will bring back to Jerusalem everything that he took from my temple and carried off to Babylonia.

⁴King Jehoiachin and the other people who were taken from Judah to Babylonia will be allowed to come back here as well. All this will happen because I will smash the power of the king of Babylonia!

⁵The priests and the others were still standing there, so I said:

⁶Hananiah, I hope the LORD will do exactly what you said. I hope he does bring back everything the Babylonians took from the temple, and that our people who were taken to Babylonia will be allowed to return home.

⁷But let me remind you and everyone else

⁸that long before we were born, prophets were saying powerful kingdoms would be struck by war, disaster, and disease.

⁹Now you are saying we will have peace. We will just have to wait and see if that is really what the LORD has said.

¹⁰ Hananiah grabbed the wooden yoke from my neck and smashed it.

¹¹ Then he said, The LORD says this is the way he will smash the power Nebuchadnezzar has over the nations, and it will happen in less than two years. I left the temple,

¹² and a little while later, the LORD told me

¹³ to go back and say to Hananiah: I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel. You smashed a wooden yoke, but I will replace it with one made of iron. I will put iron yokes on all the nations, and they will have to do what King Nebuchadnezzar commands. I will even let him rule the wild animals.

¹⁴ (28: 13)

¹⁵ Hananiah, I have never sent you to speak for me. And yet you have talked my people into believing your lies and rebelling against me. So now I will send you! I'll send you right off the face of the earth! You will die before this year is over.

¹⁶ (28: 15)

¹⁷ Two months later, Hananiah died.

29¹ I had been left in Jerusalem when King Nebuchadnezzar took many of the people of Jerusalem and Judah to Babylon as prisoners, including King Jehoiachin, his mother, his officials, and the metal workers and others in Jerusalem who were skilled in making things. So I wrote a letter to the prophets, the priests, the leaders, and the rest of our people in Babylon.

² (29:1)

³ I gave the letter to Elasah and Gemariah, two men that King Zedekiah of Judah was sending to Babylon to talk with Nebuchadnezzar. In the letter, I wrote

⁴ that the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, had said: I had you taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. Now I tell you

⁵ to settle there and build houses. Plant gardens and eat what you grow in them.

⁶ Get married and have children, then help your sons find wives and help your daughters find husbands, so they can have children as well. I want your numbers to grow, not to get smaller.

⁷ Pray for peace in Babylon and work hard to make it prosperous. The more

successful that nation is, the better off you will be.

⁸Some of your people there in Babylonia are fortune-tellers, and you have asked them to tell you what will happen in the future. But they will only lead you astray. And don't let the prophets fool you, either. They speak in my name, but they are liars. I have not spoken to them.

⁹(29: 8)

¹⁰After Babylonia has been the strongest nation for seventy years, I will be kind and bring you back to Jerusalem, just as I have promised.

¹¹I will bless you with a future filled with hope a future of success, not of suffering.

¹²You will turn back to me and ask for help, and I will answer your prayers.

¹³You will worship me with all your heart, and I will be with you

¹⁴and accept your worship. Then I will gather you from all the nations where I scattered you, and you will return to Jerusalem.

¹⁵ You feel secure, because you think I have sent prophets to speak for me in Babylonia.

¹⁶ But I have been sending prophets to the people of Judah for a long time, and the king from David's family and the people who are left in Jerusalem and Judah still don't obey me. So I, the LORD All-Powerful, will keep attacking them with war and hunger and disease, until they are as useless as rotten figs. I will force them to leave the land, and all nations will be disgusted and shocked at what happens to them. The nations will sneer and make fun of them and use the names Judah and Jerusalem as curse words. And you have not obeyed me, even though

¹⁷ (29: 16)

¹⁸ (29: 16)

¹⁹ (29: 16)

²⁰ I had you taken from Jerusalem to Babylonia. But you had better listen to me now.

²¹ You think Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah are prophets because they claim to speak for me. But they are lying! I haven't told them

anything. They are also committing other horrible sins in your community, such as sleeping with the wives of their friends. So I will hand them over to King Nebuchadnezzar, who will put them to death while the rest of you watch. And in the future, when you want to put a curse on someone, you will say, I pray that the LORD will kill you in the same way the king of Babylonia burnt Zedekiah and Ahab to death!

²² (29: 21)

²³ (29: 21)

²⁴ The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, told me what would happen to Shemaiah, who was one of our people in Babylonia. After my letter reached Babylonia, Shemaiah wrote letters to the people of Jerusalem, including the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, and the other priests. The letter to Zephaniah said:

²⁵ (29: 24)

²⁶ After the death of Jehoiada the priest, the LORD chose you to be the priest in charge of the temple security force. You know that anyone who acts mad and pretends to be a prophet should

be arrested and put in chains and iron collars.

²⁷ Jeremiah from the town of Anathoth is pretending to be a prophet there in Jerusalem, so why haven't you punished him?

²⁸ He even wrote a letter to the people here in Babylonia, saying we would be here a long time. He told us to build homes and to plant gardens and grow our own food.

²⁹ When Zephaniah received Shemaiah's letter, he read it to me.

³⁰ Then the LORD told me what to write in a second letter

³¹ to the people of Judah who had been taken to Babylonia. In this letter, I wrote that the LORD had said: I, the LORD, have not chosen Shemaiah to be one of my prophets, and he has misled you by telling lies in my name.

³² He has even talked you into disobeying me. So I will punish Shemaiah. He and his descendants won't live to see the good things I will do for my people. I, the LORD, have spoken.

30¹ The LORD God of Israel said, Jeremiah, get a scroll and write down everything I have told you.

² (30: 1)

³ Some day I will let my people from both Israel and Judah return to the land I gave their ancestors.

⁴ Then the LORD told me to say to Israel and Judah: I, the LORD, hear screams of terror, and there is no peace.

⁵ (30: 4)

⁶ Can men give birth? Then why do I see them looking so pale and clutching their stomachs like women in labour?

⁷ My people, soon you will suffer worse than ever before, but I will save you.

⁸ Now you are slaves of other nations, but I will break the chains and smash the yokes that keep you in slavery.

⁹ Then you will be my servants, and I will choose a king for you from the family of David.

¹⁰ Israel, you belong to me, so don't be afraid. You deserved to be punished; that's why I scattered you in distant nations. But I am with you, and some day I will destroy those nations. Then I will bring you and your descendants

back to your land, where I will protect you and give you peace. Then your fears will be gone. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹¹ (30: 10)

¹² The LORD said: My people, you are wounded and near death.

¹³ You are accused of a crime with no one to defend you, and you are covered with sores that no medicine can cure.

¹⁴ Your friends have forgotten you; they don't care any more. Even I have acted like an enemy. And because your sins are horrible and countless, I will be cruel as I punish you. So don't bother to cry out for relief from your pain.

¹⁵ (30: 14)

¹⁶ But if your enemies try to rob or destroy you, I will rob and destroy them, and they will be led as captives to foreign lands.

¹⁷ No one wants you as a friend or cares what happens to you. But I will heal your injuries, and you will get well.

¹⁸ The LORD said: Israel, I will be kind to you and let you come home. Jerusalem now lies in ruins, but you will rebuild it, complete with a new palace.

¹⁹Other nations will respect and honour you. Your homes will be filled with children, and you will celebrate, singing praises to me.

²⁰It will be just like old times. Your nation will worship me, and I will punish anyone who abuses you.

²¹One of your own people will become your ruler. And when I invite him to come near me at the place of worship, he will do so. No one would dare to come near without being invited.

²²You will be my people, and I will be your God. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²³I am furious! And like a violent storm I will strike those who do wrong.

²⁴I won't calm down until I have finished what I have decided to do. Some day, you will understand what I mean.

31 ¹The LORD said: Israel, I promise that some day all your tribes will again be my people, and I will be your God.

²In the desert I was kind to those who escaped death. I gave them peace, and when the time is right, I'll do the same for you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

³Some time ago, the LORD appeared to me and told me to say: Israel, I will always love you; that's why I've been so patient and kind.

⁴You are precious to me, and so I will rebuild your nation. Once again you will dance for joy and play your tambourines.

⁵You will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria and enjoy the grapes.

⁶Some day those who guard the hill country of Ephraim will shout, Let's go to Zion and worship the LORD our God.

⁷The LORD says: Celebrate and sing for Israel, the greatest of nations. Offer praises and shout, Come and rescue your people, LORD! Save what's left of Israel.

⁸I, the LORD, will bring my people back from Babylonia and everywhere else on earth. The blind and the lame will be there. Expectant mothers and women about to give birth will come and be part of that great crowd.

⁹They will weep and pray as I bring them home. I will lead them to streams of water. They will walk on a level road and not stumble. I am a father to Israel, my favourite children.

¹⁰Listen to me, you nations nearby or across the sea. I scattered the people of Israel, but I will gather them again. I will protect them like a shepherd guarding a flock;

¹¹I will rescue them from enemies who could overpower them.

¹²My people will come to Mount Zion and celebrate; their faces will glow because of my blessings. I'll give them grain, grapes, and olive oil, as well as sheep and cattle. Israel will be prosperous and grow like a garden with plenty of water.

¹³Young women and young men, together with the elderly, will celebrate and dance, because I will comfort them and turn their sorrow into happiness.

¹⁴I will bless my people with more food than they need, and the priests will enjoy the choice cuts of meat. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁵In Ramah a voice is heard, crying and weeping loudly. Rachel mourns for her children and refuses to be comforted, because they are dead.

¹⁶But I, the LORD, tell you to dry your tears. Some day your children will come

home from the enemy's land. Then all you have done for them will be greatly rewarded. So don't lose hope. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁷ (31:16)

¹⁸ The people of Israel moan and say to me, We were like wild bulls, but you, LORD, broke us, and we learnt to obey. You are our God please let us come home.

¹⁹ When we were young, we strayed and sinned, but then we realized what we had done. We are ashamed and disgraced and want to return to you.

²⁰ People of Israel, you are my own dear children. Don't I love you best of all? Though I often make threats, I want you to be near me, so I will have mercy on you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²¹ With rock piles and signposts, mark the way home, my dear people. It is the same road by which you left.

²² Will you ever decide to be faithful? I will make sure that some day things will be different, as different as a woman protecting a man.

²³ The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, said: I promise to set the people

of Judah free and to lead them back to their home towns. And when I do, they will once again say, We pray that the LORD will bless his home, the sacred hill in Jerusalem where his temple stands.

²⁴The people will live in Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah. Some will be farmers, and others will be shepherds.

²⁵Those who feel tired and worn out will find new life and energy,

²⁶and when they sleep, they will wake up refreshed.

²⁷Some day, Israel and Judah will be my field where my people and their livestock will grow.

²⁸In the past, I took care to uproot them, to tear them down, and to destroy them. But when that day comes, I will take care to plant them and help them grow.

²⁹No longer will anyone go around saying, Sour grapes eaten by parents leave a sour taste in the mouths of their children.

³⁰When that day comes, only those who eat sour grapes will get the sour taste, and only those who sin will be put to death.

³¹ The LORD said: The time will surely come when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah.

³² It will be different from the agreement I made with their ancestors when I led them out of Egypt. Although I was their God, they broke that agreement.

³³ Here is the new agreement that I, the LORD, will make with the people of Israel: I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

³⁴ No longer will they have to teach one another to obey me. I, the LORD, promise that all of them will obey me, ordinary people and rulers alike. I will forgive their sins and forget the evil things they have done.

³⁵ I am the LORD All-Powerful. I command the sun to give light each day, the moon and stars to shine at night, and ocean waves to roar.

³⁶ I will never forget to give those commands, and I will never let Israel stop being a nation. I, the LORD, have spoken.

³⁷ Can you measure the heavens? Can you explore the depths of the earth?

That's how hard it would be for me to reject Israel for ever, even though they have sinned. I, the LORD, have spoken.

³⁸The LORD said: Some day, Jerusalem will truly belong to me. It will be rebuilt with a boundary line running from Hananel Tower to Corner Gate.

³⁹From there, the boundary will go in a straight line to Gareb Hill, then turn towards Goah.

⁴⁰Even that disgusting Hinnom Valley will be sacred to me, and so will the eastern slopes that go down from Horse Gate into Kidron Valley. Jerusalem will never again be destroyed.

32¹The LORD spoke to me in the tenth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylonia.

²At that time, the Babylonian army had surrounded Jerusalem, and I was in the prison at the courtyard of the palace guards.

³Zedekiah had ordered me to be held there because I told everyone that the LORD had said: I am the LORD, and I

am about to let the king of Babylonia conquer Jerusalem.

⁴King Zedekiah will be captured and taken to King Nebuchadnezzar, who will speak with him face to face.

⁵Then Zedekiah will be led away to Babylonia, where he will stay until I have finished with him. So, if you people of Judah fight against the Babylonians, you will lose. I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁶Later, when I was in prison, the LORD said:

⁷Jeremiah, your cousin Hanamel, the son of your uncle Shallum, will visit you. He must sell his field near the town of Anathoth, and because you are his nearest relative, you have the right and the responsibility to buy it and keep it in the family.

⁸Hanamel came, just as the LORD had promised. And he said, Please buy my field near Anathoth in the territory of the Benjamin tribe. You have the right to buy it, and if you do, it will stay in our family. The LORD had told me to buy it

⁹from Hanamel, and so I did. The price was seventeen pieces of silver, and I weighed out the full amount on a scale.

¹⁰I had two copies of the bill of sale written out, each containing all the details of our agreement. Some witnesses and I signed the official copy, which was folded and tied, before being sealed shut with hot wax. Then I gave Hanamel the silver.

¹¹ (32: 10)

¹²And while he, the witnesses, and all the other Jews sitting in the courtyard were still watching, I gave both copies to Baruch son of Neriah.

¹³I told Baruch that the LORD had said: Take both copies of this bill of sale, one sealed shut and the other open, and put them in a clay jar so they will last a long time.

¹⁴ (32: 13)

¹⁵I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, and I promise you that people will once again buy and sell houses, farms, and vineyards in this country.

¹⁶Then I prayed:

¹⁷LORD God, you stretched out your mighty arm and made the sky and the earth. You can do anything.

¹⁸You show kindness for a thousand generations, but you also punish people

for the sins of their parents. You are the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁹With great wisdom you make plans, and with your great power you do all the mighty things you planned. Nothing we do is hidden from your eyes, and you reward or punish us as we deserve.

²⁰You are famous because you worked miracles in Egypt, and you are still working them in Israel and in the rest of the world as well.

²¹You terrified the Egyptians with your miracles, and you reached out your mighty arm and rescued your people Israel from Egypt.

²²Then you gave Israel this land rich with milk and honey, just as you had promised our ancestors.

²³But when our ancestors took over the land, they did not obey you. And now you have punished Israel with disaster.

²⁴Jerusalem is under attack, and we suffer from hunger and disease. The Babylonians have already built earth ramps up to the city walls, and you can see that Jerusalem will be captured just as you said.

²⁵ So why did you tell me to get some witnesses and buy a field with my silver, when Jerusalem is about to be captured by the Babylonians?

²⁶ The LORD explained:

²⁷ Jeremiah, I am the LORD God. I rule the world, and I can do anything!

²⁸ It is true that I am going to let King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia capture Jerusalem.

²⁹ The Babylonian army is already attacking, and they will capture the city and set it on fire. The people of Jerusalem have made me angry by going up to the flat roofs of their houses and burning incense to Baal and offering wine sacrifices to other gods. Now these houses will be burnt to the ground!

³⁰ The kings and the officials, the priests and the prophets, and everyone else in Israel and Judah have turned from me and made me angry by worshipping idols. Again and again I have tried to teach my people to obey me, but they refuse to be corrected. I am going to get rid of Jerusalem, because its people have done nothing but evil.

³¹ (32: 30)

³² (32: 30)

³³ (32: 30)

³⁴ They have set up disgusting idols in my temple, and now it isn't a fit place to worship me.

³⁵ And they led Judah into sin by building places to worship Baal in Hinnom Valley, where they also sacrificed their sons and daughters to the god Molech. I have never even thought of telling them to commit such disgusting sins.

³⁶ Jeremiah, what you said is true. The people of Jerusalem are suffering from hunger and disease, and so the king of Babylonia will be able to capture Jerusalem.

³⁷ I am angry with the people of Jerusalem, and I will scatter them in foreign countries. But some day I will bring them back here and let them live in safety.

³⁸ They will be my people, and I will be their God.

³⁹ I will make their thoughts and desires pure. Then they will realize that, for their own good and the good of their children, they must worship only me. They will

even be afraid to turn away from me. I will make an agreement with them that will never end, and I won't ever stop doing good things for them. With all my heart I promise that they will be planted in this land once again.

⁴⁰ (32: 39)

⁴¹ (32: 39)

⁴² Even though I have brought disaster on the people, I will some day do all these good things for them.

⁴³ Jeremiah, when you bought the field, you showed that fields will some day be bought and sold again. You say that this land has been conquered by the Babylonians and has become a desert, emptied of people and animals.

⁴⁴ But some day, people will again spend their silver to buy fields everywhere in the territory of Benjamin, the region around Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, and in the hill country, the foothills to the west, and the Southern Desert. Buyers and sellers and witnesses will sign and seal the bills of sale for the fields. It will happen, because I will give this land back to my people. I, the LORD, have spoken.

33¹ I was still being held prisoner in the courtyard of the palace guards when the LORD told me: I am the LORD, and I created the whole world.

² (33: 1)

³ Ask me, and I will tell you things that you don't know and can't find out.

⁴ Many of the houses in Jerusalem and some of the buildings at the royal palace have been torn down to be used in repairing the walls to keep out the Babylonian attackers. Now there are empty spaces where the buildings once stood. But I am furious, and these spaces will be filled with the bodies of the people I kill. The people of Jerusalem will cry out to me for help, but they are evil, and I will ignore their prayers.

⁵ (33: 4)

⁶ Then some day, I will heal this place and my people as well, and let them enjoy unending peace.

⁷ I will give this land to Israel and Judah once again, and I will make them as strong as they were before.

⁸ They sinned and rebelled against me, but I will forgive them and take away their guilt.

⁹When that happens, all nations on earth will see the good things I have done for Jerusalem, and how I have given it complete peace. The nations will celebrate and praise and honour me, but they will also tremble with fear.

¹⁰Jeremiah, you say that this land is a desert without people or animals, and for now, you are right. The towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem are deserted, and people and animals are nowhere to be seen. But some day you will hear

¹¹happy voices and the sounds of parties and wedding celebrations. And when people come to my temple to offer sacrifices to thank me, you will hear them say: We praise you, LORD All-Powerful! You are good to us, and your love never fails. The land will once again be productive.

¹²Now it is empty, without people or animals. But when that time comes, shepherds will take care of their flocks in pastures near every town in the hill country, in the foothills to the west, in the Southern Desert, in the land of the Benjamin tribe, and around Jerusalem

and the towns of Judah. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹³ (33: 12)

¹⁴ The LORD said: I made a wonderful promise to Israel and Judah, and the days are coming when I will keep it.

¹⁵ I promise that the time will come when I will appoint a king from the family of David, a king who will be honest and rule with justice.

¹⁶ In those days, Judah will be safe; Jerusalem will have peace and will be named, The LORD Gives Justice.

¹⁷ The king of Israel will be one of David's descendants,

¹⁸ and there will always be priests from the Levi tribe serving at my altar and offering sacrifices to please me and to give thanks.

¹⁹ Then the LORD told me:

²⁰ I, the LORD, have an agreement with day and night, so they always come at the right time. You can't break the agreement I made with them,

²¹ and you can't break the agreements I have made with David's family and with the priests from the Levi tribe who serve

at my altar. A descendant of David will always rule as king of Israel,

²²and there will be more descendants of David and of the priests from the Levi tribe than stars in the sky or grains of sand on the beach.

²³The LORD also said:

²⁴You've heard foreigners insult my people by saying, The LORD chose Israel and Judah, but now he has rejected them, and they are no longer a nation.

²⁵Jeremiah, I will never break my agreement with the day and the night or let the sky and the earth stop obeying my commands.

²⁶In the same way, I will never reject the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or break my promise that they will always have a descendant of David as their king. I will be kind to my people Israel, and they will be successful again.

34¹ King Nebuchadnezzar had a large army made up of people from every kingdom in his empire. He and his army were attacking Jerusalem and all the nearby towns, when the LORD told me

²to say to King Zedekiah: I am the LORD, and I am going to let Nebuchadnezzar capture this city and burn it down.

³You will be taken prisoner and brought to Nebuchadnezzar, and he will speak with you face to face. Then you will be led away to Babylonia.

⁴Zedekiah, I promise that you won't die in battle.

⁵You will die a peaceful death. People will mourn when you die, and they will light bonfires in your honour, just as they did for your ancestors, the kings who ruled before you.

⁶I went to Zedekiah and told him what the LORD had said.

⁷Meanwhile, the king of Babylonia was trying to break through the walls of Lachish, Azekah, and Jerusalem, the only three towns of Judah that had not been captured.

⁸King Zedekiah, his officials, and everyone else in Jerusalem made an agreement to free all Hebrew men and women who were slaves. No Jew would keep another as a slave. And so, all the Jewish slaves were given their freedom.

⁹ (34: 8)

¹⁰ (34: 8)

¹¹ But those slave owners changed their minds and forced their former slaves back into slavery.

¹² That's when the LORD told me to say to the people:

¹³ I am the LORD God of Israel, and I made an agreement with your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, where they had been slaves.

¹⁴ As part of this agreement, you must let a Hebrew slave go free after six years of service. Your ancestors did not obey me,

¹⁵ but you decided to obey me and do the right thing by setting your Hebrew slaves completely free. You even went to my temple, and in my name you made an agreement to set them free. But you have abused my name, because you broke your agreement and forced your former slaves back into slavery.

¹⁶ (34: 15)

¹⁷ You have disobeyed me by not giving your slaves their freedom. So I will give you freedom the freedom to die in battle or from disease or hunger. I will make

you disgusting to all other nations on earth.

¹⁸You asked me to be a witness when you made the agreement to set your slaves free. And as part of the ceremony you cut a calf into two parts, then walked between the parts. But you people of Jerusalem have broken that agreement as well as my agreement with Israel. So I will do to you what you did to that calf.

¹⁹I will let your enemies take all of you prisoner, including the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the royal officials, the priests, and everyone else who walked between the two parts of the calf. These enemies will kill you and leave your bodies lying on the ground as food for birds and wild animals.

²⁰ (34: 19)

²¹ These enemies are King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia and his army. They have stopped attacking Jerusalem, but they want to kill King Zedekiah and his high officials. So I will command them to return and attack again. This time they will conquer the city and burn it down, and they will capture Zedekiah and his officials. I will

also let them destroy the towns of Judah, so that no one can live there any longer.

²² (34: 21)

35 ¹ When Jehoiakim was king of Judah, the LORD told me,

² Go to the Rechabite clan and invite them to meet you in one of the side rooms of the temple. When they arrive, offer them a drink of wine.

³ So I went to Jaazaniah, the leader of the clan, and I invited him and all the men of his clan.

⁴ I brought them into the temple courtyard and took them upstairs to a room belonging to the prophets who were followers of Hanan son of Igdaiah. It was next to a room belonging to some of the officials, and that room was over the one belonging to Maaseiah, a priest who was one of the high officials in the temple.

⁵ I set out some large bowls full of wine together with some cups, and then I said to the Rechabites, Have some wine!

⁶ But they answered: No! The ancestor of our clan, Jonadab son of Rechab, made a rule that we must obey. He said, Don't ever drink wine

⁷ or build houses or plant crops and vineyards. Instead, you must always live in tents and move from place to place. If you obey this command, you will live a long time.

⁸ Our clan has always obeyed Jonadab's command. To this very day, we and our wives and sons and daughters don't drink wine or build houses or plant vineyards or crops. And we have lived in tents,

⁹ (35: 8)

¹⁰ (35: 8)

¹¹ except now we have to live inside Jerusalem because Nebuchadnezzar has taken over the countryside with his army from Babylonia and Syria.

¹² Then the LORD told me to say to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: I, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, want you to learn a lesson

¹³ (35: 12)

¹⁴ from the Rechabite clan. Their ancestor Jonadab told his descendants never to drink wine, and to this very day they have obeyed him. But I have spoken to you over and over, and you haven't obeyed me!

¹⁵You refused to listen to my prophets, who kept telling you, Stop doing evil and worshipping other gods! Start obeying the LORD, and he will let you live in this land he gave your ancestors.

¹⁶The Rechabites have obeyed the command of their ancestor Jonadab, but you have not obeyed me,

¹⁷your God. I am the LORD All-Powerful, and I warned you about the terrible things that would happen to you if you did not listen to me. You have ignored me, so now disaster will strike you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁸Then the LORD told me to say to the Rechabite clan: I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel. You have obeyed your ancestor Jonadab,

¹⁹so I promise that your clan will be my servants and will never die out.

36¹During the fourth year that Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king of Judah, the LORD said to me, Jeremiah,

²since the time Josiah was king, I have been speaking to you about Israel, Judah, and the other nations. Now, get a scroll and write down everything I have told you,

³ then read it to the people of Judah. Perhaps they will stop sinning when they hear what terrible things I plan for them. And if they turn to me, I will forgive them.

⁴ I sent for Baruch son of Neriah and asked him to help me. I repeated everything the LORD had told me, and Baruch wrote it all down on a scroll.

⁵ Then I said, Baruch, the officials refuse to let me go into the LORD's temple,

⁶ so you must go instead. Wait for the next holy day when the people of Judah come to the temple to pray and to go without eating. Then take this scroll to the temple and read it aloud.

⁷ The LORD is furious, and if the people hear how he is going to punish them, perhaps they will ask to be forgiven.

⁸ In the ninth month of the fifth year that Jehoiakim was king, the leaders set a day when everyone who lived in Jerusalem or who was visiting here had to pray and go without eating. So Baruch took the scroll to the upper courtyard of the temple. He went over to the side of the courtyard and stood in a covered area near New Gate, where he read the

scroll aloud. This covered area belonged to Gemariah, one of the king's highest officials.

⁹ (36: 8)

¹⁰ (36: 8)

¹¹ Gemariah's son Micaiah was there and heard Baruch read what the LORD had said.

¹² When Baruch finished reading, Micaiah went down to the palace. His father Gemariah was in the officials' room, meeting with the rest of the king's officials, including Elishama, Delaiah, Elnathan, and Zedekiah.

¹³ Micaiah told them what he had heard Baruch reading to the people.

¹⁴ Then the officials sent Jehudi and Shelemiah to tell Baruch, Bring us that scroll. When Baruch arrived with the scroll,

¹⁵ the officials said, Please sit down and read it to us, which he did.

¹⁶ After they heard what was written on the scroll, they were worried and said to each other, The king needs to hear this! Turning to Baruch, they asked,

¹⁷ Did someone tell you what to write on this scroll?

¹⁸Yes, Jeremiah did, Baruch replied. I wrote down just what he told me.

¹⁹The officials said, You and Jeremiah must go into hiding, and don't tell anyone where you are.

²⁰The officials put the scroll in Elishama's room and went to see the king, who was in one of the rooms where he lived and worked during the winter. It was the ninth month of the year, so there was a fire burning in the fireplace, and the king was sitting nearby. After the officials told the king about the scroll, he sent Jehudi to get it. Then Jehudi started reading the scroll to the king and his officials.

²¹ (36: 20)

²² (36: 20)

²³But every time Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king would tell him to cut them off with his penknife and throw them in the fire. Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah begged the king not to burn the scroll, but he ignored them, and soon there was nothing left of it. The king and his servants listened to what was written on

the scroll, but they were not afraid, and they did not tear their clothes in sorrow.

²⁴ (36: 23)

²⁵ (36: 23)

²⁶ The king told his son Jerahmeel to take Seraiah and Shelemiah and to go and arrest Baruch and me. But the LORD kept them from finding us.

²⁷ I had told Baruch what to write on that first scroll, but King Jehoiakim had burnt it. So the LORD told me

²⁸ to get another scroll and write down everything that had been on the first one.

²⁹ Then he told me to say to King Jehoiakim: Not only did you burn Jeremiah's scroll, you had the nerve to ask why he had written that the king of Babylonia would attack and ruin the land, killing all the people and even the animals.

³⁰ So I, the LORD, promise that you will be killed and your body thrown out on the ground. The sun will beat down on it during the day, and the frost will settle on it at night. And none of your descendants will ever be king of Judah.

³¹ You, your children, and your servants are evil, and I will punish all of you. I warned you and the people of Judah and Jerusalem that I would bring disaster, but none of you have listened. So now you are doomed!

³² After the LORD finished speaking to me, I got another scroll and gave it to Baruch. Then I told him what to write, so this second scroll would contain even more than was on the scroll Jehoiakim had burnt.

37 ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia had removed Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim from being the king of Judah and had made Josiah's son Zedekiah king instead.

² But Zedekiah, his officials, and everyone else in Judah ignored everything the LORD had told me.

³ Later, the Babylonian army attacked Jerusalem, but they left after learning that the Egyptian army was headed in this direction. One day, Zedekiah sent Jehucal and the priest Zephaniah to talk with me. At that time, I was free to go wherever I wanted, because I had not yet been put in prison. Jehucal and

Zephaniah said, Jeremiah, please pray to the LORD our God for us.

⁴ (37: 3)

⁵ (37: 3)

⁶ Then the LORD told me to send them back to Zedekiah with this message: Zedekiah, you wanted Jeremiah to ask me, the LORD God of Israel, what is going to happen. So I will tell you. The king of Egypt and his army came to your rescue, but soon they will go back to Egypt.

⁷ (37: 6)

⁸ Then the Babylonians will return and attack Jerusalem, and this time they will capture the city and set it on fire.

⁹ Don't fool yourselves into thinking that the Babylonians will leave as they did before.

¹⁰ Even if you could defeat their entire army, their wounded survivors would still be able to leave their tents and set Jerusalem on fire.

¹¹ The Babylonian army had left because the Egyptian army was on its way to help us.

¹² So I decided to leave Jerusalem and go to the territory of the Benjamin tribe to claim my share of my family's land.

¹³ I was leaving Jerusalem through Benjamin Gate, when I was stopped by Irijah, the officer in charge of the soldiers at the gate. He said, Jeremiah, you're under arrest for trying to join the Babylonians.

¹⁴ I'm not trying to join them! I answered. But Irijah wouldn't listen, and he took me to the king's officials.

¹⁵ They were angry and ordered the soldiers to beat me. Then I was taken to the house that belonged to Jonathan, one of the king's officials. It had been turned into a prison, and I was kept in a basement room. After I had spent a long time there,

¹⁶ (37: 15)

¹⁷ King Zedekiah secretly had me brought to his palace, where he asked, Is there any message for us from the LORD? Yes, there is, Your Majesty, I replied. The LORD is going to let the king of Babylonia capture you.

¹⁸ Then I continued, Your Majesty, why have you put me in prison? Have I

committed a crime against you or your officials or the nation?

¹⁹Have you locked up the prophets who lied to you and said that the king of Babylonia would never attack Jerusalem?

²⁰Please, don't send me back to that prison at Jonathan's house. If you do, I will die.

²¹King Zedekiah had me taken to the prison cells in the courtyard of the palace guards. He told the soldiers to give me a loaf of bread from one of the bakeries every day until the city ran out of grain.

38¹One day, Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jehucal, and Pashhur heard me tell the people of Judah

²that the LORD had said, If you stay here in Jerusalem, you will die in battle or from disease or hunger, and the Babylonian army will capture the city anyway. But if you surrender to the Babylonians, they will let you live.

³(38: 2)

⁴So the four of them went to the king and said, You should put Jeremiah to death, because he is making the soldiers and everyone else lose hope. He isn't

trying to help our people; he's trying to harm them.

⁵Zedekiah replied, Do what you want with him. I can't stop you.

⁶Then they took me back to the courtyard of the palace guards and let me down with ropes into the well that belonged to Malchiah, the king's son. There was no water in the well, and I sank down in the mud.

⁷Ebedmelech from Ethiopia was an official at the palace, and he heard what they had done to me. So he went to speak with King Zedekiah, who was holding court at Benjamin Gate.

⁸(38: 7)

⁹Ebedmelech said, Your Majesty, Jeremiah is a prophet, and those men were wrong to throw him into a well. And when Jerusalem runs out of food, Jeremiah will starve to death down there.

¹⁰Zedekiah answered, Take thirty of my soldiers and pull Jeremiah out before he dies.

¹¹Ebedmelech and the soldiers went to the palace and got some rags from the

room under the treasury. He used ropes to lower them into the well.

¹²Then he said, Put these rags under your arms so the ropes won't hurt you. After I had done that,

¹³the men pulled me out. And from then on, I was kept in the courtyard of the palace guards.

¹⁴King Zedekiah had me brought to his private entrance to the temple, and he said, I'm going to ask you something, and I want to know the truth.

¹⁵Why? I replied. You won't listen, and you might even have me killed!

¹⁶He said, I swear in the name of the living LORD our Creator that I won't have you killed. No one else can hear what we say, and I won't let anyone kill you.

¹⁷Then I told him that the LORD had said: Zedekiah, I am the LORD God All-Powerful, the God of Israel. I promise that if you surrender to King Nebuchadnezzar's officers, you and your family won't be killed, and Jerusalem won't be burnt down.

¹⁸But if you don't surrender, I will let the Babylonian army capture Jerusalem

and burn it down, and you will be taken prisoner.

¹⁹Zedekiah answered, I can't surrender to the Babylonians. I'm too afraid of the Jews who have already joined them. The Babylonians might hand me over to those Jews, and they would torture me.

²⁰I said, If you will just obey the LORD, the Babylonians won't hand you over to those Jews. You will be allowed to live, and all will go well for you.

²¹But the LORD has shown me that if you refuse to obey,

²²then the women of your palace will be taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar's officials. And those women will say to you: Friends you trusted led you astray. Now you're trapped in mud, and those friends you trusted have all turned away.

²³The Babylonian army will take your wives and children captive, you will be taken as a prisoner to the King of Babylonia, and Jerusalem will be burnt down.

²⁴Zedekiah said, Jeremiah, if you tell anyone what we have talked about, you might lose your life.

²⁵ And I'm sure that if my officials hear about our meeting, they will ask you what we said to each other. They might even threaten to kill you if you don't tell them.

²⁶ So if they question you, tell them you were begging me not to send you back to the prison at Jonathan's house, because going back there would kill you.

²⁷ The officials did come and question me about my meeting with the king, and I told them exactly what he had ordered me to say. They never spoke to me about the meeting again, since no one had heard us talking.

²⁸ I was held in the courtyard of the palace guards until the day Jerusalem was captured.

39¹ In the tenth month of the ninth year that Zedekiah was king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army began their attack on Jerusalem. They kept the city surrounded for a year and a half. Then, on the ninth day of the fourth month of the eleventh year that Zedekiah was king, they broke through the city walls. After Jerusalem was captured, Nebuchadnezzar's highest

officials, including Nebo Sarsechim and Nergal Sharezer from Simmagir, took their places at Middle Gate to show they were in control of the city.

² (39: 1)

³ (39: 1)

⁴ When King Zedekiah and his troops saw that Jerusalem had been captured, they tried to escape from the city that same night. They went to the king's garden, where they slipped through the gate between the two city walls and headed towards the valley of the River Jordan.

⁵ But the Babylonian troops caught up with them near Jericho. They arrested Zedekiah and took him to the town of Riblah in the land of Hamath, where Nebuchadnezzar put him on trial, then found him guilty

⁶ and gave orders for him to be punished. Zedekiah's sons were killed there in front of him, and so were the leaders of Judah's ruling families.

⁷ His eyes were put out, and he was put in chains, so he could be dragged off to Babylonia.

⁸Meanwhile, the Babylonian army had burnt the houses in Jerusalem, including the royal palace, and they had broken down the city walls.

⁹Nebuzaradan, the Babylonian officer in charge of the guards, led away everyone from the city as prisoners, even those who had deserted to Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁰Only the poorest people who owned no land were left behind in Judah, and Nebuzaradan gave them fields and vineyards.

¹¹Nebuchadnezzar had given the following orders to Nebuzaradan:

¹²Find Jeremiah and keep him safe. Take good care of him and do whatever he asks.

¹³Nebuzaradan, Nebushazban, Nergal Sharezer, and the other officers of King Nebuchadnezzar

¹⁴sent some of their troops to bring me from the courtyard of the royal palace guards. They put me in the care of Gedaliah son of Ahikam and told him to take me to my home. And so I was allowed to stay with the people who remained in Judah.

¹⁵While I was a prisoner in the courtyard of the palace guard, the LORD told me to say

¹⁶to Ebedmelech from Ethiopia: I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel. I warned everyone that I would bring disaster, not prosperity, to this city. Now very soon I will do what I said, and you will see it happen.

¹⁷But because you trusted me, I will protect you from the officials of Judah, and when Judah is struck by disaster, I will rescue you and keep you alive. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁸(39:17)

40¹I was led away in chains along with the people of Judah and Jerusalem who were being taken to Babylonia. Nebuzaradan was the officer in charge of the guard, and when we stopped at Ramah, the LORD made him set me free.

²Nebuzaradan said: Jeremiah, the LORD your God warned your people that he would bring disaster on this land.

³But they continued to rebel against him, and now he has punished them just as he threatened.

⁴Today I am taking the chains off your wrists and setting you free! If you want to, you can come with me to Babylonia, and I will see that you are taken care of. Or if you decide to stay here, you can go wherever you wish.

⁵King Nebuchadnezzar has chosen Gedaliah to rule Judah. You can live near Gedaliah, and he will provide for you, or you can live anywhere else you want. Nebuzaradan gave me a supply of food, then let me leave.

⁶I decided to stay with the people of Judah, and I went to live near Gedaliah in Mizpah.

⁷Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, together with Johanan and Jonathan, the two sons of Kareah, had been officers in Judah's army. And so had Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah from Maacah. They and their troops had been stationed outside Jerusalem and had not been captured. They heard that Gedaliah had been chosen to rule Judah, and that the poorest men, women, and children had not been taken away to Babylonia.

So they went to Mizpah and met with their new ruler.

⁸(40: 7)

⁹Gedaliah told them, There's no need to be afraid of the Babylonians. Everything will be fine, if we live peacefully and obey King Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁰I will stay here at Mizpah and meet with the Babylonian officials on each of their visits. But you must go back to your towns and bring in the harvest, then store the wine, olive oil, and dried fruit.

¹¹Earlier, when the Babylonians had invaded Judah, many of the Jews escaped to Moab, Ammon, Edom, and several other countries. But these Jews heard that the king of Babylonia had appointed Gedaliah as ruler of Judah, and that only a few people were left there. So the Jews in these other countries came back to Judah and helped with the grape and fruit harvest, which was especially large that year.

¹²(40: 11)

¹³One day, Johanan got together with some of the other men who had been army officers, and they came to Mizpah and met with Gedaliah.

¹⁴They said, Gedaliah, we came to warn you that King Baalis of Ammon hired Ishmael to murder you! Gedaliah refused to believe them,

¹⁵so Johanan went to Gedaliah privately and said, Let me kill Ishmael. No one will find out who did it. There are only a few people left in Judah, but they are depending on you. And if you are murdered, they will be scattered or killed.

¹⁶Gedaliah answered, Don't kill Ishmael! What you've said about him can't be true.

41 ¹But in the seventh month, Ishmael came to Mizpah with ten of his soldiers. He had been one of the king's officials and was a member of the royal family. Ishmael and his men were invited to eat with Gedaliah.

²During the meal, Ishmael and his soldiers killed Gedaliah, the man chosen as ruler of Judah by the king of Babylonia.

³Then they killed the Jews who were with Gedaliah, and they also killed the Babylonian soldiers who were there.

⁴The next day, the murders had still not been discovered,

⁵when eighty men came down the road towards Mizpah from the towns of Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. They were on their way to the temple to offer gifts of grain and incense to the LORD. They had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes, and cut themselves, because they were mourning.

⁶Ishmael went out of the town gate to meet them. He pretended to be weeping, and he asked them to come into Mizpah to meet with Gedaliah, the ruler of Judah.

⁷But after they were inside the town, Ishmael ordered his soldiers to kill them and throw their bodies into a well.

⁸He let ten of the men live, because they offered to give him supplies of wheat, barley, olive oil, and honey they had hidden in a field.

⁹The well that he filled with bodies had been dug by King Asa of Judah to store rainwater, because he was afraid that King Baasha of Israel might surround Mizpah and keep the people from getting to their water supply.

¹⁰ Nebuzaradan, King Nebuchadnezzar's officer in charge of the guard, had left King Zedekiah's daughters and many other people at Mizpah, and he had put Gedaliah in charge of them. But now Ishmael took them all prisoner and led them towards Ammon, on the other side of the River Jordan.

¹¹ Johanan and the other army officers heard what Ishmael had done.

¹² So they and their troops chased Ishmael and caught up with him at the large pit at Gibeon.

¹³ When Ishmael's prisoners saw Johanan and the officers, they were happy

¹⁴ and turned round and ran towards Johanan.

¹⁵ But Ishmael and eight of his men escaped and went to Ammon.

¹⁶ Johanan and the officers had rescued the women, children, and royal officials whom Ishmael had taken prisoner after killing Gedaliah. Johanan led the people from Gibeon

¹⁷ towards Egypt. They wanted to go there, because they were afraid of what the Babylonians would do when

they found out that Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, the ruler appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar. On the way to Egypt, we stopped at the town of Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem.

¹⁸(41:17)

42¹Johanan, Jezaniah, the other army officers, and everyone else in the group, came to me

²and said, Please pray to the LORD your God for us. Judah used to have many people, but as you can see, only a few of us are left.

³Ask the LORD to tell us where he wants us to go and what he wants us to do.

⁴All right, I answered, I will pray to the LORD your God, and I will tell you everything he says.

⁵They answered, The LORD himself will be our witness that we promise to do whatever he says,

⁶even if it isn't what we want to do. We will obey the LORD so that all will go well for us.

⁷Ten days later, the LORD gave me an answer for

⁸Johanan, the officers, and the other people. So I called them together

⁹and told them that the LORD God of Israel had said: You asked Jeremiah to pray and find out what you should do.

¹⁰I am sorry that I had to punish you, and so I now tell you to stay here in Judah, where I will plant you and build you up, instead of tearing you down and uprooting you.

¹¹Don't be afraid of the King of Babylonia. I will protect you from him,

¹²and I will even force him to have mercy on you and give back your farms.

¹³But you might keep on saying, We won't stay here in Judah, and we won't obey the LORD our God.

¹⁴We are going to Egypt, where there is plenty of food and no danger of war.

¹⁵People of Judah, you survived when the Babylonian army attacked. Now you are planning to move to Egypt, and if you do go, this is what will happen.

¹⁶You are afraid of war, starvation, and disease here in Judah, but they will follow you to Egypt and kill you there. None of you will survive the disasters I will send.

¹⁷ (42: 16)

¹⁸I, the LORD, was angry with the people of Jerusalem and punished them. And if you go to Egypt, I will be angry and punish you the same way. You will never again see your homeland. People will be horrified at what I do to you, and they will use the name of your city as a curse word.

¹⁹I told the people: You escaped the disaster that struck Judah, but now the LORD warns you to stay away from Egypt.

²⁰You asked me to pray and find out what the LORD our God wants you to do, and you promised to obey him. But that was a terrible mistake,

²¹because now that I have given you the LORD's answer, you refuse to obey him.

²²And so, you will die in Egypt from war, hunger, and disease.

43¹I told the people everything the LORD had told me.

²But Azariah, Johanan and some other arrogant men said to me, You're lying! The LORD didn't tell you to say that we shouldn't go to Egypt.

³Baruch son of Neriah must have told you to say that. He wants the Babylonians to capture us, so they can take us away to Babylonia or even kill us.

⁴Johanan, the other army officers, and everyone else refused to stay in Judah in spite of the LORD's command.

⁵So Johanan and the officers led us away towards Egypt. The group that left Judah included those who had been scattered in other countries and who had then come back to live in Judah.

⁶Baruch and I and others in the group had been staying with Gedaliah, because Nebuzaradan, the Babylonian officer in charge of the guard, had ordered him to take care of the king's daughters and quite a few men, women, and children.

⁷The people disobeyed the LORD and went to Egypt. The group had settled in Tahpanhes,

⁸when the LORD told me:

⁹Jeremiah, carry some large stones to the entrance of the government building in Tahpanhes. Bury the stones underneath the brick pavement and be sure the Jews are watching.

¹⁰Then tell them that I, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, have sent for my servant, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia. I will bring him here and make him set up his throne and his royal tent over these stones that I told you to bury.

¹¹He will attack Egypt and kill many of its people; others will die of disease or be dragged away as prisoners.

¹²I will let him set Egypt's temples on fire, and he will either burn or carry off their idols. He will destroy the sacred monuments at the temple of the sun-god. Then Nebuchadnezzar will pick the land clean, just like a shepherd picking the lice off his clothes. And he will return safely home.

¹³(43: 12)

44¹The LORD told me to speak with the Jews who were living in the towns of Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis in northern Egypt, and also to those living in southern Egypt. He told me to tell them:

²I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel. You saw how I destroyed

Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. They lie empty and in ruins today,

³because the people of Judah made me angry by worshipping gods that had never helped them or their ancestors.

⁴Time after time I sent my servants the prophets to tell the people of Judah how much I hated their disgusting sins. The prophets warned them to stop sinning,

⁵but they refused to listen and would not stop worshipping other gods.

⁶Finally, my anger struck like a raging flood, and today Jerusalem and the towns of Judah are nothing but empty ruins.

⁷Why do you now insist on heading for another disaster? A disaster that will destroy not only you, but also your children and babies.

⁸You have made me angry by worshipping idols and burning incense to other gods after you came here to Egypt. You will die such a disgusting death, that other nations will use the name of Judah as a curse word.

⁹When you were living in Jerusalem and Judah, you followed the example of

your ancestors in doing evil things, just like your kings and queens.

¹⁰Even now, your pride keeps you from respecting me and obeying the laws and teachings I gave you and your ancestors.

¹¹I, the LORD All-Powerful, have decided to wipe you out with disasters.

¹²There were only a few of you left in Judah, and you decided to go to Egypt. But you will die such horrible deaths in war or from starvation, that people of other countries will use the name of Judah as a curse word.

¹³I punished Jerusalem with war, hunger, and disease, and that's how I will punish you.

¹⁴None of you will survive. You may hope to return to Judah some day, but only a very few of you will escape death and be able to go back.

¹⁵A large number of Jews from both northern and southern Egypt listened to me as I told them what the LORD had said. Most of the men in the crowd knew that their wives often burnt incense to other gods. So they and their wives shouted:

¹⁶Jeremiah, what do we care if you speak in the LORD's name? We refuse to listen!

¹⁷We have promised to worship the goddess Astarte, the Queen of Heaven, and that is exactly what we are going to do. We will burn incense and offer sacrifices of wine to her, just as we, our ancestors, our kings, and our leaders did when we lived in Jerusalem and the other towns of Judah. We had plenty of food back then. We were well off, and nothing bad ever happened to us.

¹⁸But since the time we stopped burning incense and offering wine sacrifices to her, we have been dying from war and hunger.

¹⁹Then the women said, When we lived in Judah, we worshipped the Queen of Heaven and offered sacrifices of wine and special loaves of bread shaped like her. Our husbands knew what we were doing, and they approved of it.

²⁰Then I told the crowd:

²¹Don't you think the LORD knew that you and your ancestors, your leaders and kings, and the rest of the people were burning incense to other gods

in Jerusalem and everywhere else in Judah?

²²And when he could no longer put up with your disgusting sins, he placed a curse on your land and turned it into a desert, as it is today.

²³This disaster happened because you worshipped other gods and rebelled against the LORD by refusing to obey him or follow his laws and teachings.

²⁴Then I told the men and their wives, that the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, had said: Here in Egypt you still keep your promises to burn incense and offer sacrifices of wine to the so-called Queen of Heaven.

²⁵ (44: 24)

²⁶Keep these promises! But let me tell you what will happen. As surely as I am the LORD God, I swear that I will never again accept any promises you make in my name.

²⁷Instead of watching over you, I will watch for chances to harm you. Some of you will die in war, and others will starve to death.

²⁸Only a few will escape and return to Judah. Then everyone who went to

live in Egypt will know that when I say something will happen, it will no matter what you say.

²⁹And here is how you will know that I will keep my threats to punish you in Egypt.

³⁰I will hand over King Hophra of Egypt to those who want to kill him, just as I handed Zedekiah over to Nebuchadnezzar, who wanted to kill him.

45¹In the fourth year that Jehoiakim was king of Judah, Baruch wrote down everything I had told him.

²Then later, the LORD God of Israel told me to say to Baruch:

³You are moaning and blaming me, the LORD, for your troubles and sorrow, and for being so tired that you can't even rest.

⁴But all over the earth I am tearing down what I built and pulling up what I planted.

⁵I am bringing disaster everywhere, so don't even think about making any big plans for yourself. However, I promise that wherever you go, I will at least protect you from death. I, the LORD, have spoken.

46¹ The LORD often told me what to say about the different nations of the world.

² In the fourth year that Jehoiakim was king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia defeated King Neco of Egypt in a battle at the city of Carchemish near the River Euphrates. And here is what the LORD told me to say about the Egyptian army:

³ It's time to go into battle! So grab your shields,

⁴ saddle your horses, and polish your spears. Put on your helmets and armour, then take your positions.

⁵ I can see the battle now you are defeated and running away, never once looking back. Terror is all around.

⁶ You are strong and run fast, but you can't escape. You fall in battle near the River Euphrates.

⁷ What nation is this, that rises like the River Nile overflowing its banks?

⁸ It is Egypt, rising with a roar like a raging river and saying, I'll flood the earth, destroying cities, and killing everyone in them.

⁹Go ahead, Egypt. Tell your chariots and cavalry to attack and fight hard. Order your troops to march out, with Ethiopians and Libyans carrying shields, and the Lydians armed with bows and arrows.

¹⁰But the LORD All-Powerful will win this battle and take revenge on his enemies. His sword will eat them and drink their blood until it is full. They will be killed in the north near the River Euphrates, as a sacrifice to the LORD.

¹¹Egypt, no medicine can heal you, not even the soothing lotion from Gilead.

¹²All nations have heard you weep; you are disgraced, and they know it. Your troops fall to the ground, stumbling over each other.

¹³When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia was on his way to attack Egypt, the LORD sent me with a warning for every Egyptian town, but especially for Migdol, Memphis, and Tahpanhes. He said I must tell them: Prepare to defend yourselves! Everywhere in your nation, people are dying in war.

¹⁴(46:13)

¹⁵I have struck down your mighty god Apis and chased him away.

¹⁶Your soldiers stumble over each other and say, Get up! The enemy will kill us, unless we can escape to our own land.

¹⁷Give the king of Egypt this new name, Talks-Big-Does-Nothing.

¹⁸Egypt, I am the true king, the LORD All-Powerful, and as surely as I live, those enemies who attack will tower over you like Mount Tabor among the hills or Mount Carmel by the sea.

¹⁹You will be led away captive, so pack a few things to bring with you. Your capital, Memphis, will lie empty and in ruins.

²⁰An enemy from the north will attack you, beautiful Egypt, like a fly biting a cow.

²¹The foreign soldiers you hired will turn and run. But they are doomed, like well-fed calves being led to the butcher.

²²The enemy army will go forward like a swarm of locusts. Your troops will feel helpless, like a snake in a forest when men with axes start chopping down trees. It can only hiss and try to escape.

²³(46: 22)

²⁴Your people will be disgraced and captured by the enemy from the north.

²⁵I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel. Soon I will punish the god Amon of Thebes and the other Egyptian gods, the Egyptian kings, the people of Egypt, and everyone who trusts in the Egyptian power.

²⁶I will hand them over to King Nebuchadnezzar and his army. But I also promise that Egypt will some day have people living here again, just as it had before. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²⁷The LORD said: Israel, don't be afraid. Some day I will bring you home from foreign lands. You and your descendants will live in peace and safety, with nothing to fear.

²⁸So don't be afraid, even though now you deserve to be punished and have been scattered among other nations. But when I destroy them, I will protect you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

47¹ Before the king of Egypt attacked the town of Gaza, the LORD told me to say to the Philistines:

²I, the LORD, tell you that your land will be flooded with an army from the north.

It will destroy your towns and sweep you away, moaning and screaming.

³When you hear the thunder of horses and chariots, your courage will vanish, and parents will abandon their own children.

⁴You refugees from Crete, your time has now come, and I will destroy you. None of you will be left to help the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

⁵The Anakim who survive in Gaza and Ashkelon will mourn for you by shaving their heads and sitting in silence. You ask how long will I continue to attack you with my sword, then you tell me to put it away and leave you alone.

⁶(47:5)

⁷But how can my sword rest, when I have commanded it to attack Ashkelon and the coast?

48¹The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, told me to say to the nation of Moab: The town of Nebo is doomed; Kiriathaim will be captured and disgraced, and even its fortress will be left in ruins.

²No one honours you, Moab. In Heshbon, enemies make plans to end

your life. My sword will leave only silence in your town named Quiet.

³The people of Horonaim will cry for help, as their town is attacked and destroyed.

⁴Moab will be shattered! Your children will sob

⁵and cry on their way up to the town of Luhith; on the road to Horonaim they will tell of disasters.

⁶Run for your lives! Head into the desert like a wild donkey.

⁷You thought you could be saved by your power and wealth, but you will be captured along with your god Chemosh, his priests, and officials.

⁸Not one of your towns will escape destruction. I have told your enemies, Wipe out the valley and the flat lands of Moab.

⁹Spread salt on the ground to kill the crops. Leave its towns in ruins, with no one living there.

¹⁰I want you to kill the Moabites, and if you let them escape, I will put a curse on you.

¹¹Moab, you are like wine left to settle undisturbed, never poured from jar to

jar. And so, your nation continues to prosper and improve.

¹²But now, I will send enemies to pour out the wine and smash the jars!

¹³Then you will be ashamed, because your god Chemosh cannot save you, just as Bethel could not help the Israelites.

¹⁴You claim that your soldiers are strong and brave.

¹⁵But I am the LORD, the all-powerful King, and I promise that enemies will overpower your towns. Even your best warriors will die in the battle.

¹⁶It won't be long now disaster will hit Moab!

¹⁷I will order the nearby nations to mourn for you and say, Isn't it sad? Moab ruled others, but now its glorious power has been shattered.

¹⁸People in the town of Dibon, you will be honoured no more, so have a seat in the dust. Your walls will be torn down when the enemies attack.

¹⁹You people of Aroer, wait beside the road, and when refugees run by, ask them, What happened?

²⁰They will answer, Moab has been defeated! Weep with us in shame. Tell

everyone at the River Arnon that Moab is destroyed.

²¹ I will punish every town that belongs to Moab, but especially Holon, Jahzah, Mephaath, Dibon, Nebo, Beth-Diblathaim, Kiriathaim, Beth-Gamul, Beth-Meon, Kerioth, and Bozrah.

²² (48: 21)

²³ (48: 21)

²⁴ (48: 21)

²⁵ My decision is final your army will be crushed, and your power broken.

²⁶ People of Moab, you claim to be stronger than I am. Now I will tell other nations to make you drunk and to laugh while you collapse in your own vomit.

²⁷ You made fun of my people and treated them like criminals caught in the act.

²⁸ Now you must leave your towns and live like doves in the shelter of cliffs and canyons.

²⁹ I know about your pride, and how you strut and boast.

³⁰ But I also know boasting will never save you.

³¹ So I will cry and mourn for Moab and its town of Kir-Heres.

³² People of Sibmah, you were like a vineyard heavy with grapes, and with branches reaching north to the town of Jazer and west to the Dead Sea. But you have been destroyed, and so I will weep for you, as the people of Jazer weep for the vineyards.

³³ Harvest celebrations are gone from the orchards and farms of Moab. There are no happy shouts from people making wine.

³⁴ Weeping from Heshbon can be heard as far as Elealeh and Jahaz; cries from Zoar are heard in Horonaim and Eglath-Shelishiyah. And Nimrim Brook has run dry.

³⁵ I will get rid of anyone who burns incense to the gods of Moab or offers sacrifices at their shrines. I, the LORD, have spoken.

³⁶ In my heart I moan for Moab, like a funeral song played on a flute. I mourn for the people of the town of Kir-Heres, because their wealth is gone.

³⁷ The people of Moab mourn on the rooftops and in the streets. Men cut off their beards, people shave their heads; they make cuts on their hands and wear

sackcloth. And it's all because I, the LORD, have shattered Moab like a jar that no one wants.

³⁸ (48: 37)

³⁹ Moab lies broken! Listen to its people cry as they turn away in shame. Other nations are horrified at what happened, but still they laugh.

⁴⁰ Moab, an enemy swoops down like an eagle spreading its wings over your land.

⁴¹ Your cities and fortresses will be captured, and your warriors gripped by fear.

⁴² You are finished as a nation, because you dared oppose me, the LORD.

⁴³ Terror, pits, and traps are waiting for you.

⁴⁴ If you are terrified and run, you will fall into a pit; and if you crawl out of the pit, you'll get caught in a trap. The time has come for you to be punished.

⁴⁵ Near the city of Heshbon, where Sihon once ruled, tired refugees stand in shadows cast by the flames of their burning city. Soon, the towns on other hilltops, where those warlike people live, will also go up in smoke.

⁴⁶ People of Moab, you worshipped Chemosh, your god, but now you are done for, and your children are prisoners in a foreign country.

⁴⁷ Yet some day, I will bring your people back home. I, the LORD, have spoken.

49¹ The LORD has this to say about the nation of Ammon: The people of Israel have plenty of children to inherit their lands. So why have you worshippers of the god Milcom taken over towns and land belonging to the Gad tribe?

² Some day I will send an army to attack you in Rabbah, your capital city. It will be left in ruins, and the surrounding villages will lie in ashes. You took some of Israel's land, but on that day Israel will take yours!

³ Cry, people of Heshbon; your town will become a pile of rubble. You will turn here and there, but your path will be blocked. Put on sackcloth and mourn, you citizens of Rabbah, because the idol you worship will be taken to a foreign country, along with its priests and temple officials.

⁴ You rebellious Ammonites trust your wealth and ask, Who could attack us? But I warn you not to boast when your strength is fading.

⁵ I, the LORD All-Powerful, will send neighbouring nations to strike you with terror. You will be scattered, with no one to care for your refugees.

⁶ Yet some day, I will bring your people back home. I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁷ The LORD All-Powerful says about Edom: Wisdom and common sense have vanished from Teman. I will send disaster to punish you descendants of Esau, so anyone from Dedan had better turn round and run back home.

⁸ (49: 7)

⁹ People who harvest grapes leave some for the poor. Thieves who break in at night take only what they want.

¹⁰ But I will take everything that belongs to you, people of Edom, and I will uncover every place where you try to hide. Then you will die, and so will your children, relatives, and neighbours.

¹¹ But I can be trusted to care for your orphans and widows.

¹²Even those nations that don't deserve to be punished will have to drink from the cup of my anger. So how can you possibly hope to escape?

¹³I, the LORD, swear in my own name that your city of Bozrah and all your towns will suffer a horrible fate. They will lie in ruins for ever, and people will use the name Bozrah as a curse word.

¹⁴I have sent a messenger to command the nations to prepare for war against you people of Edom.

¹⁵Your nation will be small, yet hated by other nations.

¹⁶Pride tricks you into thinking that other nations look at you with fear. You live along the cliffs and high in the mountains like the eagles, but I am the LORD, and I will bring you down.

¹⁷People passing by your country will be shocked and horrified to see a disaster

¹⁸as bad as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and towns nearby. The towns of Edom will be empty.

¹⁹I will attack you like a lion from the forest, attacking sheep in a meadow along the Jordan. In a moment the flock

runs, and the land is empty. Who will I choose to attack you? I will do it myself! No one can force me to fight or chase me away.

²⁰ Listen to my plans for you, people of Edom. Your children will be dragged off and your country destroyed.

²¹ The sounds of your destruction will reach the Red Sea and cause the earth to shake.

²² An enemy will swoop down to attack you, like an eagle spreading its wings and circling over Bozrah. Your warriors will be gripped by fear.

²³ The LORD says about Damascus: The towns of Hamath and Arpad have heard your bad news. They have lost hope, and worries roll over them like ocean waves.

²⁴ You people of Damascus have lost your courage, and in panic you turn to run, gripped by fear and pain.

²⁵ I once was pleased with your famous city. But now I warn you, Escape while you still can!

²⁶ Soon, even your best soldiers will lie dead in your streets. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken.

²⁷ I will set fire to your city walls and burn down the fortresses King Benhadad built.

²⁸ Here is what the LORD says about the Kedar tribe and the desert villages that were conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia: Listen, you people of Kedar and the other tribes of the eastern desert. I have told Nebuchadnezzar to attack and destroy you.

²⁹ His fearsome army will surround you, taking your tents and possessions, your sheep and camels.

³⁰ Run and hide, you people of the desert who live in villages! Nebuchadnezzar has big plans for you.

³¹ You have no city walls and no neighbours to help, yet you think you're safe so I told him to attack.

³² Then your camels and large herds will be yours no longer. People of the Arabian Desert, disaster will strike you from every side, and you will be scattered everywhere on earth.

³³ Only jackals will live where your villages once stood. I, the LORD, have spoken.

³⁴Not long after Zedekiah became king of Judah, the LORD told me to say: People of Elam, I, the LORD All-Powerful, will kill the archers who make your army strong.

³⁵(49: 34)

³⁶Enemies will attack from all directions, and you will be led captive to every nation on earth.

³⁷Their armies will crush and kill you, and you will face the disaster that my anger brings.

³⁸Your king and his officials will die, and I will rule in their place. I, the LORD, have spoken.

³⁹But I promise that some day I will bring your people back to their land.

50¹The LORD told me to say: Announce what will happen and don't leave anything out. Raise the signal flags; shout so all nations can hear Babylon will be captured! Marduk, Babylon's god, will be ashamed and terrified, and his idols broken.

²(50: 1)

³The attack on the Babylonians will come from the north; they and their animals will run, leaving the land empty.

⁴The LORD said: People of Israel and Judah, when these things happen you will weep, and together you will return to your land and worship me, the LORD your God.

⁵You will ask the way to Zion and then come and join with me in making an agreement you won't break or forget.

⁶My people, you are lost sheep abandoned by their shepherds in the mountains. You don't even remember your resting place.

⁷I am your true pasture land, the one who gave hope to your ancestors. But you abandoned me, so when your enemies found you, they felt no guilt as they gobbled you up.

⁸Escape from Babylonia, my people. Get out of that country! Don't wait for anyone else.

⁹In the north I am bringing great nations together. They will attack Babylon and capture it. The arrows they shoot are like the best soldiers, always finding their target.

¹⁰Babylonia will be conquered, and its enemies will carry off everything they want.

¹¹ The LORD said: People of Babylonia, you were glad to rob my people. You had a good time, making more noise than horses and jumping around like calves threshing grain.

¹² The city of Babylon was like a mother to you. But it will be disgraced and become nothing but a barren desert.

¹³ My anger will destroy Babylon, and no one will live there. Everyone who passes by will be shocked to see what has happened.

¹⁴ Babylon has rebelled against me. Archers, take your places. Shoot all your arrows at Babylon.

¹⁵ Attack from every side! Babylon surrenders! The enemy tears down its walls and towers. I am taking my revenge by doing to Babylon what it did to other cities.

¹⁶ There is no one in Babylonia to plant or harvest crops. Even foreigners who lived there have left for their homelands, afraid of the enemy armies.

¹⁷ Israel is a flock of sheep scattered by hungry lions. The king of Assyria first gobbled Israel up. Then Nebuchadnezzar,

king of Babylonia, crunched on Israel's bones.

¹⁸I, the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, punished the king of Assyria, and I will also punish the king of Babylonia.

¹⁹But I will bring Israel back to its own land. The people will be like sheep eating their fill on Mount Carmel and in Bashan, in the hill country of Ephraim and in Gilead.

²⁰I will rescue a few people from Israel and Judah. I will forgive them so completely that their sin and guilt will disappear, never to be found.

²¹The LORD said: I have told the enemies of Babylonia, Attack the people of Merathaim and Pekod. Kill them all! Destroy their possessions!

²²Sounds of war and the noise of destruction can be heard.

²³Babylonia was a hammer pounding every country, but now it lies broken. What a shock to the nations of the world!

²⁴Babylonia challenged me, the LORD God All-Powerful, but that nation doesn't know it is caught in a trap that I set.

²⁵I've brought out my weapons, and with them I will put a curse on Babylonia.

²⁶ Come from far away, you enemies of Babylon! Pile up the grain from its storehouses, and destroy it completely, along with everything else.

²⁷ Kill the soldiers of Babylonia, because the time has come for them to be punished.

²⁸ The Babylonian army destroyed my temple, but soon I will take revenge. Then refugees from Babylon will tell about it in Zion.

²⁹ Attack Babylon, enemy archers; set up camp around the city, and don't let anyone escape. It challenged me, the holy God, so do to it what it did to other cities.

³⁰ People of Babylon, I, the LORD, promise that even your best soldiers will lie dead in the streets.

³¹ Babylon, you should be named, The Proud One. But the time has come when I, the LORD All-Powerful, will punish you.

³² You are proud, but you will stumble and fall, and no one will help you up. I will set your villages on fire, and everything around you will go up in flames.

³³You Babylonians were cruel to Israel and Judah. You took them captive, and now you refuse to let them go.

³⁴But I, the LORD All-Powerful, will rescue and protect them. I will bring peace to their land and trouble to yours.

³⁵I have declared war on you, your officials, and advisers.

³⁶This war will prove that your prophets are liars and fools. And it will frighten your warriors.

³⁷Then your chariot horses and the foreigners in your army will refuse to go into battle, and the enemy will carry away everything you treasure.

³⁸Your rivers and canals will dry up. All this will happen, because your land is full of idols, and they have made fools of you.

³⁹Never again will people live in your land only desert animals, jackals, and unclean birds.

⁴⁰I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the nearby towns, and I will destroy Babylon just as completely. No one will live there again.

⁴¹The LORD said: Far to the north, a nation and its allies have been

awakened. They are powerful and ready for war.

⁴²Bows and arrows and swords are in their hands. The soldiers are cruel and show no pity. The hoofbeats of their horses echo like ocean waves crashing against the shore. The army has lined up for battle and is coming to attack you, people of Babylon!

⁴³Ever since your king heard about this army, he has been weak with fear; he twists and turns in pain like a woman giving birth.

⁴⁴Babylon, I will attack you like a lion from the forest, attacking sheep in a meadow along the Jordan. In a moment the flock runs, and the land is empty. Who will I choose to attack you? I will do it myself! No one can force me to fight or chase me away.

⁴⁵Listen to my plans for you, people of Babylon. Your children will be dragged off, and your country destroyed.

⁴⁶The sounds of your destruction will be heard among the nations, and the earth will shake.

51 ¹I, the LORD, am sending a wind to destroy the people of Babylonia and Babylon, its capital.

²Foreign soldiers will come from every direction, and when the disaster is over, Babylonia will be empty and worthless.

³I will tell these soldiers, Attack quickly, before the Babylonians can string their bows or put on their armour. Kill their best soldiers and destroy their army!

⁴Their troops will fall wounded in the streets of Babylon.

⁵Everyone in Israel and Judah is guilty. But I, the LORD All-Powerful, their holy God, have not abandoned them.

⁶Get out of Babylon! Run for your lives! If you stay, you will be killed when I take revenge on the city and punish it for its sins.

⁷Babylon was my golden cup, filled with the wine of my anger. The nations of the world got drunk on this wine and went insane.

⁸But suddenly, Babylon will fall and be destroyed. I, the LORD, told the foreigners who lived there, Weep for the city! Get medicine for its wounds; perhaps they will heal.

⁹The foreigners answered, We have already tried to treat Babylon's wounds, but they would not heal. Come on, let's all go home to our own countries. Nothing is left in Babylonia; everything is destroyed.

¹⁰The people of Israel said, Tell everyone in Zion! The LORD has taken revenge for what Babylon did to us.

¹¹I, the LORD, want Babylon destroyed, because its army destroyed my temple. So, you kings of Media, sharpen your arrows and pick up your shields.

¹²Raise the signal flag and attack the city walls. Post more guards. Command soldiers to watch the city and set up ambushes. I have made plans to destroy Babylon, and nothing will stop me.

¹³People of Babylon, you live along the River Euphrates and are surrounded by canals. You are rich, but now the time has come for you to die.

¹⁴I, the LORD All-Powerful, swear by my own life that enemy soldiers will fill your streets like a swarm of locusts. They will shout and celebrate their victory.

¹⁵ God used his wisdom and power to create the earth and spread out the heavens.

¹⁶ The waters in the heavens roar at his command. He makes clouds appear; he sends the wind from his storehouse and makes lightning flash in the rain.

¹⁷ People who make idols are stupid! They will be disappointed, because their false gods cannot breathe.

¹⁸ Idols are merely a joke, and when the time is right, they will be destroyed.

¹⁹ But the LORD, Israel's God, is all-powerful. He created everything, and he chose Israel to be his very own.

²⁰ The LORD said: Babylonia, you were my hammer; I used you to pound nations and break kingdoms,

²¹ to shatter cavalry and chariots,

²² as well as men and women, young and old,

²³ shepherds and their flocks, farmers and their oxen, and governors and leaders.

²⁴ But now, my people will watch, while I repay you for what you did to Zion.

²⁵ You destroyed the nations and seem strong as a mountain, but I am your

enemy. I might even grab you and roll you off a cliff. When I have finished, you'll only be a pile of scorched bricks.

²⁶Your stone blocks won't be reused for cornerstones or foundations, and I promise that for ever you will be a desert. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²⁷The LORD said: Signal the nations to get ready to attack. Raise a flag and blow a trumpet. Send for the armies of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. Choose a commander; let the cavalry attack like a swarm of locusts.

²⁸Tell the kings and governors, the leaders and the people of the kingdoms of the Medes to prepare for war!

²⁹The earth twists and turns in torment, because I have decided to make Babylonia a desert where no one can live, and I won't change my mind.

³⁰The Babylonian soldiers have lost their strength and courage. They stay in their fortresses, unable to fight, while the enemy breaks through the city gates, then sets their homes on fire.

³¹One messenger after another announces to the king, Babylon has been captured!

³²The enemy now controls the river crossings! The marshes are on fire! Your army has panicked!

³³I am the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, and I make this promise Soon Babylon will be levelled and packed down like a threshing place at harvest time.

³⁴The people of Jerusalem say, King Nebuchadnezzar made us panic. That monster stuffed himself with us and our treasures, leaving us empty he gobbled up what he wanted and spat out the rest.

³⁵The people of Babylonia harmed some of us and killed others. Now, LORD, make them pay!

³⁶My people, I am on your side, and I will take revenge on Babylon. I will cut off its water supply, and its stream will dry up.

³⁷Babylon will be a pile of rubble where only jackals live. People will laugh, but they will be afraid to walk among the ruins.

³⁸The Babylonians roar and growl like young lions.

³⁹And since they are hungry, I will give them a banquet. They will celebrate, get

drunk, then fall asleep, never to wake up!

⁴⁰I will lead them away to die, like sheep, lambs, and goats being led to the butcher.

⁴¹All nations now praise Babylon, but when it is captured, those same nations will be horrified.

⁴²Babylon's enemies will rise like ocean waves and flood the city.

⁴³Horrible destruction will strike the nearby towns. The land will become a barren desert, where no one can live or even travel.

⁴⁴I will punish Marduk, the god of Babylon, and make him vomit everything he gobbled up. Then nations will no longer bring him gifts, and Babylon's walls will crumble.

⁴⁵Get out of Babylon, my people, and run for your lives, before I strike the city in my anger!

⁴⁶Don't be afraid or lose hope, though year after year there are rumours of leaders fighting for control in the city of Babylon.

⁴⁷The time will come when I will punish Babylon's false gods. Everyone there

will die, and the whole nation will be disgraced,

⁴⁸when an army attacks from the north and brings destruction. Then the earth and the heavens and everything in them will celebrate.

⁴⁹Babylon must be overthrown, because it slaughtered the people of Israel and of many other nations.

⁵⁰My people, you escaped death when Jerusalem fell. Now you live far from home, but you should trust me and think about Jerusalem. Leave Babylon! Don't stay!

⁵¹You feel ashamed and disgraced, because foreigners have entered my sacred temple.

⁵²Soon I will send a war to punish Babylon's idols and leave its wounded people moaning everywhere.

⁵³Although Babylon's walls reach to the sky, the army I send will destroy that city. I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁵⁴The LORD said: Listen to the cries for help coming from Babylon. Everywhere in the country the sounds of destruction can be heard.

⁵⁵ The shouts of the enemy, like crashing ocean waves, will drown out Babylon's cries as I level the city.

⁵⁶ An enemy will attack and destroy Babylon. Its soldiers will be captured and their weapons broken, because I am a God who takes revenge against nations for what they do.

⁵⁷ I, the LORD All-Powerful, the true King, promise that the officials and advisers, the governors and leaders and the soldiers of Babylon will get drunk, fall asleep, and never wake up.

⁵⁸ The thick walls of that city will be torn down, and its huge gates burnt. Everything that nation worked so hard to gain will go up in smoke.

⁵⁹ During Zedekiah's fourth year as king of Judah, he went to Babylon. And Baruch's brother Seraiah went along as the officer in charge of arranging for places to stay overnight.

⁶⁰ Before they left, I wrote on a scroll all the terrible things that would happen to Babylon.

⁶¹ I gave the scroll to Seraiah and said: When you get to Babylon, read this scroll aloud,

⁶² then pray, Our LORD, you promised to destroy this place and make it into a desert where no people or animals will ever live.

⁶³ When you finish praying, tie the scroll to a rock and throw it in the River Euphrates. Then say,

⁶⁴ This is how Babylon will sink when the LORD destroys it. Everyone in the city will die, and it won't have the strength to rise again. Jeremiah's writing ends here.

52¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he was appointed king of Judah, and he ruled from Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother Hamutal was the daughter of Jeremiah from the town of Libnah.

² Zedekiah disobeyed the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done,

³ and it was Zedekiah who finally rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. The people of Judah and Jerusalem had made the LORD so angry that he finally turned his back on them. That's why horrible things were happening.

⁴ In Zedekiah's ninth year as king, on the tenth day of the tenth month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia led his

entire army to attack Jerusalem. The troops set up camp outside the city and built ramps up to the city walls.

⁵After a year and a half, all the food in Jerusalem was gone. Then on the ninth day of the fourth month,

⁶(52: 5)

⁷the Babylonian troops broke through the city wall. That same night, Zedekiah and his soldiers tried to escape through the gate near the royal garden, even though they knew the enemy had the city surrounded. They headed towards the Jordan valley,

⁸but the Babylonian troops caught up with them near Jericho. The Babylonians arrested Zedekiah, but his soldiers scattered in every direction.

⁹Zedekiah was taken to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where Nebuchadnezzar put him on trial and found him guilty.

¹⁰Zedekiah's sons and the officials of Judah were killed while he watched,

¹¹then his eyes were put out. He was put in chains, then dragged off to Babylon and kept in prison until he died.

¹²Jerusalem was captured during Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year as

king of Babylonia. About a month later, Nebuchadnezzar's officer in charge of the guards arrived in Jerusalem. His name was Nebuzaradan,

¹³and he burnt down the LORD's temple, the king's palace, and every important building in the city, as well as all the houses.

¹⁴Then he ordered the Babylonian soldiers to break down the walls around Jerusalem.

¹⁵He led away the people left in the city, including everyone who had become loyal to Nebuchadnezzar, the rest of the skilled workers, and even some of the poor people of Judah.

¹⁶Only the very poorest were left behind to work the vineyards and the fields.

¹⁷Nebuzaradan ordered his soldiers to go to the temple and take everything made of gold or silver, including bowls, fire pans, sprinkling bowls, pans, lampstands, dishes for incense, and the cups for wine offerings. The Babylonian soldiers took all the bronze things used for worship at the temple, including the pans for hot ashes, and the shovels,

lamp snuffers, sprinkling bowls, and dishes for incense. The soldiers also took everything else made of bronze, including the two columns that stood in front of the temple, the large bowl called the Sea, the twelve bulls that held it up, and the moveable stands. The soldiers broke these things into pieces so they could take them to Babylonia. There was so much bronze that it could not be weighed.

¹⁸ (52: 17)

¹⁹ (52: 17)

²⁰ (52: 17)

²¹ For example, the columns were about eight metres high and five metres around. They were hollow, but the bronze was about seventy-five millimetres thick.

²² Each column had a bronze cap over two metres high that was decorated with bronze designs. Some of these designs were like chains and others were like pomegranates.

²³ There were ninety-six pomegranates evenly spaced around each column, and a total of one hundred pomegranates were above the chains.

²⁴ Next, Nebuzaradan arrested Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah his assistant, and three temple officials.

²⁵ Then he arrested one of the army commanders, seven of King Zedekiah's personal advisers, and the officer in charge of gathering the troops for battle. He also found sixty more soldiers who were still in Jerusalem.

²⁶ Nebuzaradan led them to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where Nebuchadnezzar had them killed. The people of Judah no longer lived in their own country.

²⁷ (52: 26)

²⁸ Here is a list of the number of the people of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylonia as prisoners: In his seventh year as king, he took 3,023 people. In his eighteenth year as king, he took 832 from Jerusalem. In his twenty-third year as king, his officer Nebuzaradan took 745 people. So, Nebuchadnezzar took a total of 4,600 people from Judah to Babylonia.

²⁹ (52: 28)

³⁰ (52: 28)

³¹ Jehoiachin was a prisoner in Babylon for thirty-seven years. Then Evil

Merodach became king of Babylonia, and in the first year of his rule, on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, he let Jehoiachin out of prison.

³² Evil Merodach was kind to Jehoiachin and honoured him more than any of the other kings held prisoner there.

³³ Jehoiachin was allowed to wear ordinary clothes instead of a prison uniform, and he even ate at the king's table every day.

³⁴ As long as Jehoiachin lived, he was paid a daily allowance to buy whatever he needed.

Lamentations

1 ¹The prophet speaks: Jerusalem, once so crowded, lies deserted and lonely. This city that was known all over the world is now like a widow. This queen of the nations has been made a slave.

²Each night, bitter tears flood her cheeks. None of her former lovers are there to offer comfort; her friends have betrayed her and are now her enemies.

³The people of Judah are slaves, suffering in a foreign land, with no rest from sorrow. Their enemies captured them and were terribly cruel.

⁴The roads to Zion mourn because no one travels there to celebrate the festivals. The city gates are deserted; priests are weeping. Young women are raped; Zion is in sorrow!

⁵Enemies now rule the city and live as they please. The LORD has punished Jerusalem because of her awful sins; he has let her people be dragged away.

⁶Zion's glory has disappeared. Her leaders are like deer that cannot find

pasture; they are hunted down till their strength is gone.

⁷ Her people recall the good life that once was theirs; now they suffer and are scattered. No one was there to protect them from their enemies who sneered when their city was taken.

⁸ Jerusalem's horrible sins have made the city a joke. Those who once admired her now hate her instead she has been disgraced; she groans and turns away.

⁹ Her sins had made her filthy, but she wasn't worried about what could happen. And when Jerusalem fell, it was so tragic. No one gave her comfort when she cried out, Help! I'm in trouble, LORD! The enemy has won.

¹⁰ Zion's treasures were stolen. Jerusalem saw foreigners enter her place of worship, though the LORD had forbidden them to belong to his people.

¹¹ Everyone in the city groans while searching for food; they trade their valuables for barely enough scraps to stay alive. Jerusalem speaks: Jerusalem shouts to the LORD, Please look and see how miserable I am!

¹²No passer-by even cares. Why doesn't someone notice my terrible sufferings? You were fiercely angry, LORD, and you punished me worst of all.

¹³From heaven you sent a fire that burnt in my bones; you set a trap for my feet and made me turn back. All day long you leave me in shock from constant pain.

¹⁴You have tied my sins around my neck, and they weigh so heavily that my strength is gone. You have put me in the power of enemies too strong for me.

¹⁵You, LORD, have turned back my warriors and crushed my young heroes. Judah was a woman untouched, but you let her be trampled like grapes in a wine pit.

¹⁶Because of this, I mourn, and tears flood my eyes. No one is here to comfort or to encourage me; we have lost the war my people are suffering.

¹⁷The prophet speaks: Zion reaches out her hands, but no one offers comfort. The LORD has turned the neighbouring nations against Jacob's descendants. Jerusalem is merely a filthy rag to her neighbours.

¹⁸Jerusalem speaks: The LORD was right, but I refused to obey him. Now I ask all of you to look at my sufferings even my young people have been dragged away.

¹⁹I called out to my lovers, but they betrayed me. My priests and my leaders died while searching the city for scraps of food.

²⁰Won't you look and see how upset I am, our LORD? My stomach is in knots, and my heart is broken because I betrayed you. In the streets and at home, my people are slaughtered.

²¹Everyone heard my groaning, but no one offered comfort. My enemies know of the trouble that you have brought on me, and it makes them glad. Hurry and punish them, as you have promised.

²²Don't let their evil deeds escape your sight. Punish them as much as you have punished me because of my sins. I never stop groaning I've lost all hope!

2¹The prophet speaks: The Lord was angry! So he disgraced Zion though it was Israel's pride and his own place of rest. In his anger he threw Zion down from heaven to earth.

²The LORD had no mercy! He destroyed the homes of Jacob's descendants. In his anger he tore down every walled city in Judah; he toppled the nation together with its leaders, leaving them in shame.

³The Lord was so furiously angry that he wiped out the whole army of Israel by not supporting them when the enemy attacked. He was like a raging fire that swallowed up the descendants of Jacob.

⁴He attacked like an enemy with a bow and arrows, killing our loved ones. He has burnt to the ground the homes on Mount Zion.

⁵The Lord was like an enemy! He left Israel in ruins with its palaces and fortresses destroyed, and with everyone in Judah moaning and weeping.

⁶He shattered his temple like a hut in a garden; he completely wiped out his meeting place, and did away with festivals and Sabbaths in the city of Zion. In his fierce anger he rejected our king and priests.

⁷The Lord abandoned his altar and his temple; he let Zion's enemies capture her fortresses. Noisy shouts were heard

from the temple, as if it were a time of celebration.

⁸The LORD had decided to tear down the walls of Zion stone by stone. So he started destroying and did not stop until walls and fortresses mourned and trembled.

⁹Zion's gates have fallen face down on the ground; the bars that locked the gates are smashed to pieces. Her king and royal family are prisoners in foreign lands. Her priests don't teach, and her prophets don't have a message from the LORD.

¹⁰Zion's leaders are silent. They just sit on the ground, tossing dust on their heads and wearing sackcloth. Her young women can do nothing but stare at the ground.

¹¹My eyes are red from crying, my stomach is in knots, and I feel sick all over. My people are being wiped out, and children lie helpless in the streets of the city.

¹²A child begs its mother for food and drink, then blacks out like a wounded soldier lying in the street. The child slowly dies in its mother's arms.

¹³ Zion, how can I comfort you? How great is your pain? Lovely city of Jerusalem, how can I heal your wounds, gaping as wide as the sea?

¹⁴ Your prophets deceived you with false visions and lying messages they should have warned you to leave your sins and be saved from disaster.

¹⁵ Those who pass by shake their heads and sneer as they make fun and shout, What a lovely city you were, the happiest on earth, but look at you now!

¹⁶ Zion, your enemies curse you and snarl like wild animals, while shouting, This is the day we've waited for! At last, we've got you!

¹⁷ The LORD has done everything that he had planned and threatened long ago. He destroyed you without mercy and let your enemies boast about their powerful forces.

¹⁸ Zion, deep in your heart you cried out to the Lord. Now let your tears overflow your walls day and night. Don't ever lose hope or let your tears stop.

¹⁹ Get up and pray for help all through the night. Pour out your feelings to the Lord, as you would pour water out of a

jug. Beg him to save your people, who are starving to death at every street crossing.

²⁰Jerusalem speaks: Think about it, LORD! Have you ever been this cruel to anyone before? Is it right for mothers to eat their children, or for priests and prophets to be killed in your temple?

²¹My people, both young and old, lie dead in the streets. Because you were angry, my young men and women were brutally slaughtered.

²²When you were angry, LORD, you invited my enemies like guests for a party. No one survived that day; enemies killed my children, my own little ones.

3¹The prophet speaks: I have suffered much because God was angry.

²He chased me into a dark place, where no light could enter.

³I am the only one he punishes over and over again, without ever stopping.

⁴God caused my skin and flesh to waste away, and he crushed my bones.

⁵He attacked and surrounded me with hardships and trouble;

⁶he forced me to sit in the dark like someone long dead.

⁷ God built a fence around me that I cannot climb over, and he chained me down.

⁸ Even when I shouted and prayed for help, he refused to listen.

⁹ God put big rocks in my way and made me follow a crooked path.

¹⁰ God was like a bear or a lion waiting in ambush for me;

¹¹ he dragged me from the road, then tore me to shreds.

¹² God took careful aim and shot his arrows

¹³ straight through my heart.

¹⁴ I am a joke to everyone no one ever stops making fun of me.

¹⁵ God has turned my life sour.

¹⁶ He made me eat gravel and rubbed me in the earth.

¹⁷ I cannot find peace or remember happiness.

¹⁸ I tell myself, I am finished! I can't count on the LORD to do anything for me.

¹⁹ Just thinking of my troubles and my lonely wandering makes me miserable.

²⁰ That's all I ever think about, and I am depressed.

²¹ Then I remember something that fills me with hope.

²² The LORD's kindness never fails! If he had not been merciful, we would have been destroyed.

²³ The LORD can always be trusted to show mercy each morning.

²⁴ Deep in my heart I say, The LORD is all I need; I can depend on him!

²⁵ The LORD is kind to everyone who trusts and obeys him.

²⁶ It is good to wait patiently for the LORD to save us.

²⁷ When we are young, it is good to struggle hard

²⁸ and to sit silently alone, if this is what the LORD intends.

²⁹ Being rubbed in the earth can teach us a lesson;

³⁰ we can also learn from insults and hard knocks.

³¹ The Lord won't always reject us!

³² He causes a lot of suffering, but he also has pity because of his great love.

³³ The Lord doesn't enjoy sending grief or pain.

³⁴ Don't trample prisoners under your feet

³⁵ or cheat anyone out of what is rightfully theirs. God Most High sees everything,

³⁶ and he knows when you refuse to give someone a fair trial.

³⁷ No one can do anything without the Lord's approval.

³⁸ Good and bad each happen at the command of God Most High.

³⁹ We're still alive! We shouldn't complain when we are being punished for our sins.

⁴⁰ Instead, we should think about the way we are living, and turn back to the LORD.

⁴¹ When we lift our hands in prayer to God in heaven, we should offer him our hearts and say,

⁴² We've sinned! We've rebelled against you, and you haven't forgiven us!

⁴³ Anger is written all over you, as you pursue and slaughter us without showing pity.

⁴⁴ You are behind a wall of clouds that blocks out our prayers.

⁴⁵ You allowed nations to treat us like rubbish;

⁴⁶ our enemies curse us.

⁴⁷ We are terrified and trapped, caught and crushed.

⁴⁸ My people are destroyed! Tears flood my eyes,

⁴⁹ and they won't stop

⁵⁰ until the LORD looks down from heaven and helps.

⁵¹ I am horrified when I see what enemies have done to the young women of our city.

⁵² No one had reason to hate me, but I was hunted down like a bird.

⁵³ Then they tried to kill me by tossing me into a pit and throwing stones at me.

⁵⁴ Water covered my head I thought I was gone.

⁵⁵ From the bottom of the pit, I prayed to you, LORD.

⁵⁶ I begged you to listen. Help! I shouted. Save me! You answered my prayer

⁵⁷ and came when I was in need. You told me, Don't worry!

⁵⁸ You rescued me and saved my life.

⁵⁹ You saw them abuse me, LORD, so make things right.

⁶⁰ You know every plot they have made against me.

⁶¹ Yes, you know their insults and their evil plans.

⁶² All day long they attack with words and whispers.

⁶³ No matter what they are doing, they keep on mocking me.

⁶⁴ Pay them back for everything they have done, LORD!

⁶⁵ Put your curse on them and make them suffer.

⁶⁶ Get angry and go after them until not a trace is left under the heavens.

4¹ The prophet speaks: The purest gold is ruined and has lost its shine; jewels from the temple lie scattered in the streets.

² These are Zion's people, worth more than purest gold; yet they are counted worthless like dishes of clay.

³ Even jackals nurse their young, but my people are like ostriches that abandon their own.

⁴ Babies are so thirsty that their tongues are stuck to the roof of the mouth. Children go begging for food, but no one gives them any.

⁵All who ate expensive foods lie starving in the streets; those who grew up in luxury now sit on rubbish heaps.

⁶My nation was punished worse than the people of Sodom, whose city was destroyed in a flash without the help of human hands.

⁷The leaders of Jerusalem were purer than snow and whiter than milk; their bodies were healthy and glowed like jewels.

⁸Now they are blacker than tar, and no one recognizes them; their skin clings to their bones and is drier than firewood.

⁹Being killed with a sword is better than slowly starving to death.

¹⁰Life in the city is so bad that loving mothers have boiled and eaten their own children.

¹¹The LORD was so fiercely angry that he burnt the city of Zion to the ground.

¹²Not a king on this earth or the people of any nation believed enemies could break through her gates.

¹³Jerusalem was punished because her prophets and her priests had sinned and caused the death of innocent victims.

¹⁴Yes, her prophets and priests were covered with blood; no one would come near them, as they wandered from street to street.

¹⁵Instead, everyone shouted, Go away! Don't touch us! You're filthy and unfit to belong to God's people! So they had to leave and become refugees. But foreign nations told them, You can't stay here!

¹⁶The LORD is the one who sent them scattering, and he has forgotten them. No respect or kindness will be shown to the priests or leaders.

¹⁷Our eyes became weary, hopelessly looking for help from a nation that could not save us.

¹⁸Enemies hunted us down on every public street. Our time was up; our doom was near.

¹⁹They swooped down faster than eagles from the sky. They hunted for us in the hills and set traps to catch us out in the desert.

²⁰The LORD's chosen leader was our hope for survival! We thought he would keep us safe somewhere among the nations, but even he was caught in one of their traps.

²¹ You people of Edom can celebrate now! But your time will come to suffer and stagger around naked.

²² The people of Zion have paid for their sins, and the Lord will soon let them return home. But, people of Edom, you will be punished, and your sins exposed.

5¹ The people of Jerusalem pray: Our LORD, don't forget how we have suffered and been disgraced.

² Foreigners and strangers have taken our land and our homes.

³ We are like children whose mothers are widows.

⁴ The water we drink and the wood we burn cost far too much.

⁵ We are terribly ill-treated; we are worn out and can find no rest.

⁶ We had to surrender to Egypt and Assyria because we were hungry.

⁷ Our ancestors sinned, but they are dead, and we are left to pay for their sins.

⁸ Slaves are now our rulers, and there is no one to set us free.

⁹ We are in danger from brutal desert tribes; we must risk our lives just to bring in our crops.

¹⁰Our skin is scorched from fever and hunger.

¹¹On Zion and everywhere in Judah our wives and daughters are being raped.

¹²Our rulers are strung up by their arms, and our nation's advisers are treated shamefully.

¹³Young men are forced to do the work of slaves; boys must carry heavy loads of wood.

¹⁴Our leaders are not allowed to decide cases in court, and young people no longer play music.

¹⁵Our hearts are sad; instead of dancing, we mourn.

¹⁶Zion's glory has disappeared! And we are doomed because of our sins.

¹⁷We feel sick all over and can't even see straight;

¹⁸our city is in ruins, overrun by wild dogs.

¹⁹You will rule for ever, LORD! You are King for all time.

²⁰Why have you forgotten us for so long?

²¹Bring us back to you! Give us a fresh start.

²²Or do you despise us so much that
you don't want us?

Ezekiel

1 ¹ I am Ezekiel a priest and the son of Buzi. Five years after King Jehoiachin of Judah had been led away as a prisoner to Babylonia, I was living near the River Chebar among those who had been taken there with him. Then on the fifth day of the fourth month of the thirtieth year, the heavens suddenly opened. The LORD placed his hand upon me and showed me some visions.

² (1:1)

³ (1:1)

⁴ I saw a storm blowing in from the north. Lightning flashed from a huge cloud and lit up the whole sky with a dazzling brightness. The fiery centre of the cloud was as shiny as polished metal,

⁵ and in that centre I saw what looked like four living creatures. They were somewhat like humans,

⁶ except that each one had four faces and four wings.

⁷ Their legs were straight, but their feet looked like the hoofs of calves and sparkled like bronze.

⁸ Under each of their wings, these creatures had a human hand.

⁹ The four creatures were standing back-to-back with the tips of their wings touching. They moved together in every direction, without turning their bodies.

¹⁰ Each creature had the face of a human in front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of a bull on the left, and the face of an eagle at the back.

¹¹ Two wings of each creature were spread out and touched the wings of the creatures on either side. The other two wings of each creature were folded against its body.

¹² Wherever the four living creatures went, they moved together without turning their bodies, because each creature faced straight ahead.

¹³ The creatures were glowing like hot coals, and I saw something like a flaming torch moving back and forth among them. Lightning flashed from the torch every time its flame blazed up.

¹⁴The creatures themselves moved as quickly as sparks jumping from a fire.

¹⁵I then noticed that on the ground beside each of the four living creatures was a wheel,

¹⁶shining like chrysolite. Each wheel was exactly the same and had a second wheel that cut through the middle of it,

¹⁷so that they could move in any direction without turning.

¹⁸The rims of the wheels were large and had eyes all the way around them.

¹⁹The creatures controlled when and where the wheels movedthe wheels went wherever the four creatures went and stopped whenever they stopped. Even when the creatures flew in the air, the wheels were beside them.

²⁰ (1: 19)

²¹ (1: 19)

²²Above the living creatures, I saw something that was sparkling like ice, and it reminded me of a dome. Each creature had two of its wings stretched out towards the creatures on either side, with the other two wings folded against its body.

²³ (1: 22)

²⁴ Whenever the creatures flew, their wings roared like an ocean or a large army or even the voice of God All-Powerful. And whenever the creatures stopped, they folded their wings against their bodies.

²⁵ When the creatures stopped flapping their wings, I heard a sound coming from above the dome.

²⁶ I then saw what looked like a throne made of sapphire, and sitting on the throne was a figure in the shape of a human.

²⁷ From the waist up, it was glowing like metal in a hot furnace, and from the waist down it looked like the flames of a fire. The figure was surrounded by a bright light,

²⁸ as colourful as a rainbow that appears after a storm. I realized I was seeing the brightness of the LORD's glory! So I bowed with my face to the ground, and just then I heard a voice speaking to me.

2¹ The LORD said, Ezekiel, son of man, I want you to stand up and listen.

² After he said this, his Spirit took control of me and lifted me to my feet. Then the LORD said:

³Ezekiel, I am sending you to the people of Israel. They are just like their ancestors who rebelled against me and refused to stop.

⁴They are stubborn and hard-headed. But I, the LORD God, have chosen you to tell them what I say.

⁵Those rebels may not even listen, but at least they will know that a prophet has come to them.

⁶Don't be afraid of them or of anything they say. You may think you're in the middle of thorn bushes or scorpions. But be brave

⁷and preach my message to them, whether they choose to listen or not.

⁸Ezekiel, don't rebel against me, as they have done. Instead, listen to everything I tell you. And now, Ezekiel, open your mouth and eat what I am going to give you.

⁹Just then, I saw a hand stretched out towards me. And in it was a scroll.

¹⁰The hand opened the scroll, and both sides of it were filled with words of sadness, mourning, and grief.

3¹ The LORD said, Ezekiel, son of man, after you eat this scroll, go and speak to the people of Israel.

² He handed me the scroll and said, Eat this and fill your stomach with it. So I ate the scroll, and it tasted sweet as honey.

³ (3: 2)

⁴ The LORD said: Ezekiel, I am sending you to your own people.

⁵ They are Israelites, not strangers who speak a foreign language you can't understand. If I were to send you to foreign nations, they would listen to you.

⁶ (3: 5)

⁷ But the people of Israel will refuse to listen, because they have refused to listen to me. All of them are stubborn and hard-headed,

⁸ so I will make you as stubborn as they are.

⁹ You will be so determined to speak my message that nothing will stop you. I will make you hard like a diamond, and you'll have no reason to be afraid of those arrogant rebels.

¹⁰ Listen carefully to everything I say and then think about it.

¹¹ Then go to the people who were brought here to Babylonia with you and tell them you have a message from me, the LORD God. Do this, whether they listen to you or not.

¹² The Spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the LORD started to leave, I heard a loud, thundering noise behind me.

¹³ It was the sound made by the creatures' wings as they brushed against each other, and by the rumble of the wheels beside them.

¹⁴ Then the Spirit carried me away. The LORD's power had taken complete control of me, and I was both annoyed and angry.

¹⁵ When I was back with the others living at Abib Hill near the River Chebar, I sat among them for seven days, shocked at what had happened to me.

¹⁶ Seven days after I had seen the brightness of the LORD's glory, the LORD said:

¹⁷ Ezekiel, son of man, I have appointed you to stand watch for the people of Israel. So listen to what I say, then warn them for me.

¹⁸When I tell wicked people they will die because of their sins, you must warn them to turn from their sinful ways so they won't be punished. If you refuse, you are responsible for their death.

¹⁹However, if you do warn them, and they keep on sinning, they will die because of their sins, and you will be innocent.

²⁰Now suppose faithful people start sinning, and I decide to put stumbling blocks in their paths to make them fall. They deserve to die because of their sins. So if you refuse to warn them, I will forget about the times they were faithful, and I will hold you responsible for their death.

²¹But if you do warn them, and they listen to you and stop sinning, I will let them live. And you will be innocent.

²²The LORD took control of me and said, Stand up! Go into the valley, and I will talk with you there.

²³I immediately went to the valley, where I saw the brightness of the LORD's glory, just as I had seen near the River Chebar, and I bowed with my face to the ground.

²⁴ His Spirit took control of me and lifted me to my feet. Then the LORD said: Go back and lock yourself in your house!

²⁵ You will be tied up to keep you inside,

²⁶ and I will make you unable to talk or to warn those who have rebelled against me.

²⁷ But the time will come, when I will tell you what to say, and you will again be able to speak my message. Some of them will listen; others will be stubborn and refuse to listen.

4¹ The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, find a brick and sketch a picture of Jerusalem on it.

² Then prepare to attack the brick as if it were a real city. Build an earth mound and a ramp up to the top and surround the brick with enemy camps. On every side put large wooden poles as though you were going to break down the gate to the city.

³ Set up an iron pan like a wall between you and the brick. All this will be a warning for the people of Israel.

⁴ After that, lie down on your left side and stay there for three hundred and ninety days as a sign of Israel's

punishment one day for each year of its suffering.

⁵ (4: 4)

⁶ Then turn over and lie on your right side forty more days. That will be a sign of Judah's punishment one day for each year of its suffering.

⁷ The brick stands for Jerusalem, so attack it! Stare at it and shout angry warnings.

⁸ I will tie you up, so you can't leave until your attack has ended.

⁹ Get a large bowl. Then mix together wheat, barley, beans, lentils, and millet, and make some bread. This is what you will eat for the three hundred and ninety days you are lying down.

¹⁰ Eat only a small loaf of bread each day

¹¹ and drink only two large cups of water.

¹² Use dried human waste to start a fire, then bake the bread on the coals where everyone can watch you.

¹³ When I scatter the people of Israel among the nations, they will also have to eat food that is unclean, just as you must do.

¹⁴I said, LORD God, please don't make me do that! Never in my life have I eaten food that would make me unacceptable to you. I've never eaten anything that died a natural death or was killed by a wild animal or that you said was unclean.

¹⁵The LORD replied, Instead of human waste, I will let you bake your bread on a fire made from cow manure.

¹⁶Ezekiel, the people of Jerusalem will starve. They will have so little food and water that they will be afraid and hopeless.

¹⁷Everyone will be shocked at what is happening, and, because of their sins, they will die a slow death.

5¹The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, get a sharp sword and use it to cut off your hair and beard. Weigh the hair and divide it into three equal piles.

²After you attack the brick that stands for Jerusalem, burn one pile of your hair on the brick. Chop up the second pile and let the small pieces of hair fall around the brick. Throw the third pile into the wind, and I will strike it with my own sword.

³Keep a few of the hairs and wrap them in the hem of your clothes.

⁴Then pull out a few of those hairs and throw them in the fire, so they will also burn. This fire will spread, destroying everyone in Israel.

⁵I am the LORD God, and I have made Jerusalem the most important place in the world, and all other nations admire it.

⁶But the people of Jerusalem rebelled and refuse to obey me. They ignored my laws and have become even more sinful than the nations around them.

⁷So tell the people of Jerusalem: I am the LORD God! You have refused to obey my laws and teachings, and instead you have obeyed the laws of the surrounding nations. You have become more rebellious than any of them!

⁸Now all those nations will watch as I turn against you and punish you

⁹for your sins. Your punishment will be more horrible than anything I've ever done or will ever do again.

¹⁰Parents will be so desperate for food that they will eat their own children, and children will eat their parents. Those

who survive this horror will be scattered in every direction.

¹¹Your disgusting sins have made my temple unfit as a place to worship me. So I swear by my own life that I will turn my back on you and show you no pity.

¹²A third of you will die here in Jerusalem from disease or starvation. Another third will be killed in war. And I will scatter the last third of you in every direction, then track you down and kill you.

¹³You will feel my fierce anger until I have finished taking revenge. Then you will know that I, the LORD, was furious because of your disobedience.

¹⁴Every passer-by will laugh at your destruction. Foreign nations

¹⁵will insult you and make fun of you, but they will also be shocked and terrified at what I did in my anger.

¹⁶I will destroy your crops until you starve to death, and disasters will strike you like arrows.

¹⁷Starvation and wild animals will kill your children. I'll punish you with horrible diseases, and your enemies will

strike you down with their swords. I, the LORD, have spoken.

6¹ The LORD God said:

² Ezekiel, son of man, face the hills of Israel and tell them:

³ Listen, you mountains and hills, and every valley and gorge! I, the LORD, am about to turn against you and crush all the places where foreign gods are worshipped.

⁴ Every altar will be smashed, and in front of the idols I will put to death the people who worship them.

⁵ Dead bodies and bones will be lying around the idols and the altars.

⁶ Every town in Israel will be destroyed to make sure that each shrine, idol, and altar is smashed everything the Israelites made will be a pile of ruins.

⁷ All over the country, your people will die. And those who survive will know that I, the LORD, did these things.

⁸ I will let some of the people live through this punishment, but I will scatter them among the nations,

⁹ where they will be prisoners. And when they think of me, they will realize that they disgraced me by rebelling and

by worshipping idols. They will hate themselves for the evil things they did,
¹⁰and they will know that I am the LORD and that my warnings must be taken seriously.

¹¹The LORD God then said: Ezekiel, beat your fists together and stamp your feet in despair! Moan in sorrow, because the people of Israel have done disgusting things and now will be killed by enemy troops, or they will die from starvation and disease.

¹²Those who live far away will be struck with deadly diseases. Those who live nearby will be killed in war. And the ones who are left will starve to death. I will let loose my anger on them!

¹³These people used to offer incense to idols at altars built on hills and mountaintops and in the shade of large oak trees. But when they see dead bodies lying around those altars, they will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁴I will make their country a barren wasteland, from the Southern Desert to the town of Diblah in the north. Then they will know that I, the LORD, have done these things.

7 ¹The LORD God said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, tell the people of Israel that I am saying: Israel will soon come to an end! Your whole country is about to be destroyed

³as punishment for your disgusting sins. I, the LORD, am so angry

⁴that I will show no pity. I will punish you for the evil you've done, and you will know that I am the LORD.

⁵There's never been anything like the coming disaster.

⁶And when it comes, your life will be over.

⁷You people of Israel are doomed! Soon there will be panic on the mountaintops instead of celebration.

⁸I will let loose my anger and punish you for the evil things you've done. You'll get what you deserve.

⁹Your sins are so terrible, that you'll get no mercy from me. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have punished you.

¹⁰Disaster is near! Injustice and arrogance are everywhere,

¹¹and violent criminals run free. None of you will survive the disaster, and

everything you own and value will be shattered.

¹²The time is coming when everyone will be ruined. Buying and selling will stop,

¹³and people who sell property will never get it back, because all of you must be punished for your sins. And I won't change my mind!

¹⁴A signal has been blown on the trumpet, and weapons are prepared for battle. But no one goes to war, because in my anger I will strike down everyone in Israel.

¹⁵The LORD said to the people of Israel: War, disease, and starvation are everywhere! People who live in the countryside will be killed in battle, and those who live in towns will die from starvation or deadly diseases.

¹⁶Anyone who survives will escape into the hills, like doves who leave the valleys to find safety. All of you will moan because of your sins.

¹⁷Your hands will tremble, and your knees will go limp.

¹⁸You will put on sackcloth to show your sorrow, but terror will overpower

you. Shame will be written all over your faces, and you will shave your heads in despair.

¹⁹Your silver and gold will be thrown into the streets like rubbish, because those are the two things that led you into sin, and now they cannot save you from my anger. They are not even worth enough to buy food.

²⁰You took great pride in using your beautiful jewellery to make disgusting idols of foreign gods. So I will make your jewellery worthless.

²¹Wicked foreigners will rob and disgrace you.

²²They will break into my temple and leave it unfit as a place to worship me, but I will look away and let it happen.

²³Your whole country is in confusion! Murder and violence are everywhere in Israel,

²⁴so I will tell the most wicked nations to come and take over your homes. They will put an end to the pride you have in your strong army, and they will make your places of worship unfit to use.

²⁵You will be terrified and will desperately look for peace but there will be no peace.

²⁶One tragedy will follow another, and you'll hear only bad news. People will beg prophets to give them a message from me. Priests will stop teaching my Law, and wise leaders won't be able to give advice.

²⁷Even your king and his officials will lose hope and cry in despair. Your hands will tremble with fear. I will punish you for your sins and treat you the same way you have treated others. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

8¹Six years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, the leaders of Judah were meeting with me in my house. On the fifth day of the sixth month, the LORD God suddenly took control of me,

²and I saw something in the shape of a human. This figure was like fire from the waist down, and it was bright as polished metal from the waist up.

³It reached out what seemed to be a hand and grabbed my hair. Then in my

vision the LORD's Spirit lifted me into the sky and carried me to Jerusalem. The Spirit took me to the north gate of the temple's inner courtyard, where there was an idol that disgusted the LORD and made him furious.

⁴Then I saw the brightness of the glory of the God of Israel, just as I had seen it near the River Chebar.

⁵God said to me, Ezekiel, son of man, look north. And when I did, I saw that disgusting idol by the altar near the gate.

⁶God then said, Do you see the terrible sins of the people of Israel? Their sins are making my holy temple unfit as a place to worship me. Yet you will see even worse things than this.

⁷Next, I was taken to the entrance of the courtyard, where I saw a hole in the wall.

⁸God said, Make this hole bigger. And when I did, I realized it was a doorway.

⁹Go in, God said, and see what horrible and evil things the people are doing.

¹⁰Inside, I saw that the walls were covered with pictures of reptiles and disgusting, unclean animals, as well

as with idols that the Israelites were worshipping.

¹¹ Seventy Israelite leaders were standing there, including Jaazaniah son of Shaphan. Each of these leaders was holding an incense burner, and the smell of incense filled the room.

¹² God said, Ezekiel, do you see what horrible things Israel's leaders are doing in secret? They have filled their rooms with idols. And they say I can't see them, because they think I have already deserted Israel.

¹³ But I will show you something even worse than this.

¹⁴ He took me to the north gate of the temple, where I saw women mourning for the god Tammuz.

¹⁵ God asked me, Can you believe what these women are doing? But now I want to show you something worse.

¹⁶ I was then led into the temple's inner courtyard, where I saw about twenty-five men standing near the entrance, between the porch and the altar. Their backs were to the LORD's temple, and they were bowing down to the rising sun.

¹⁷ God said, Ezekiel, it's bad enough that the people of Judah are doing these disgusting things. But they have also spread violence and injustice everywhere in Israel and have made me very angry. They have disgraced and insulted me in the worst possible way.

¹⁸ So in my fierce anger, I will punish them without mercy and refuse to help them when they cry out to me.

9¹ After that, I heard the LORD shout, Come to Jerusalem, you men chosen to destroy the city. And bring your weapons!

² I saw six men come through the north gate of the temple, each one holding a deadly weapon. A seventh man dressed in a linen robe was with them, and he was carrying things to write with. The men went into the temple and stood by the bronze altar.

³ The brightness of God's glory then left its place above the statues of the winged creatures inside the temple and moved to the entrance. The LORD said to the man in the linen robe,

⁴ Walk through the city of Jerusalem and mark the forehead of anyone who is

truly upset and sad about the disgusting things that are being done here.

⁵He turned to the other six men and said, Follow him and put to death everyone who doesn't have a mark on their forehead. Show no mercy or pity! Kill men and women, parents and children. Begin here at my temple and be sure not to harm those who are marked. The men immediately killed the leaders who were standing there.

⁶(9: 5)

⁷Then the LORD said, Pollute the temple by piling the dead bodies in the courtyards. Now get busy! They left and started killing the people of Jerusalem.

⁸I was then alone, so I bowed down and cried out to the LORD, Why are you doing this? Are you so angry at the people of Jerusalem that everyone must die?

⁹The LORD answered, The people of Israel and Judah have done horrible things. Their country is filled with murderers, and Jerusalem itself is filled with violence. They think that I have deserted them, and that I can't see what they are doing.

¹⁰And so I will not have pity on them or forgive them. They will be punished for what they have done.

¹¹Just then, the man in the linen robe returned and said, I have done what you commanded.

10¹I saw the dome that was above the four winged creatures, and on it was the sapphire throne.

²The LORD said to the man in the linen robe, Walk among the four wheels beside the creatures and pick up as many hot coals as you can carry. Then scatter them over the city of Jerusalem. I watched him as he followed the LORD's instructions.

³The winged creatures were standing south of the temple when the man walked among them. A cloud filled the inner courtyard,

⁴and the brightness of the LORD's glory moved from above the creatures and stopped at the entrance of the temple. The entire temple was filled with his glory, and the courtyard was dazzling bright.

⁵The sound of the creatures' wings was as loud as the voice of God All-Powerful

and could even be heard in the outer courtyard.

⁶The man in the robe was now standing beside a wheel.

⁷One of the four creatures reached its hand into the fire among them and gave him some of the hot coals. The man took the coals and left.

⁸I noticed again that each of the four winged creatures had what looked like human hands under their wings,

⁹and I saw the four wheels near the creatures. These wheels were shining like chrysolite.

¹⁰Each wheel was exactly the same and had a second wheel that cut through the middle of it,

¹¹so that they could move in any direction without turning. The wheels moved together whenever the creatures moved.

¹²I also noticed that the wheels and the creatures' bodies, including their backs, their hands, and their wings, were covered with eyes.

¹³And I heard a voice calling these the wheels that spin.

¹⁴ Each of the winged creatures had four faces: the face of a bull, the face of a human, the face of a lion, and the face of an eagle.

¹⁵ These were the same creatures I had seen near the River Chebar. They controlled when and where the wheels moved the wheels went wherever the creatures went and stopped whenever they stopped. Even when the creatures flew in the air, the wheels stayed beside them.

¹⁶ (10: 15)

¹⁷ (10: 15)

¹⁸ Then I watched the brightness of the LORD's glory move from the entrance of the temple and stop above the winged creatures.

¹⁹ They spread their wings and flew into the air with the wheels at their side. They stopped at the east gate of the temple, and the LORD's glory was above them.

²⁰ I knew for certain that these were the same creatures I had seen beneath the LORD's glory near the River Chebar.

²¹ They had four wings with hands beneath them, and they had the same

four faces as those near the River. Each creature moved straight ahead without turning.

²²(10: 21)

11 ¹The LORD's Spirit lifted me up and took me to the east gate of the temple, where I saw twenty-five men, including the two leaders, Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah.

²The LORD said, Ezekiel, son of man, these men are making evil plans and giving dangerous advice to the people of Jerusalem.

³They say things like, Let's build more houses. This city is like a cooking pot over a fire, and we are the meat, but at least the pot keeps us from being burnt in the fire.

⁴So, Ezekiel, condemn them!

⁵The LORD's Spirit took control of me and told me to tell these leaders: I, the LORD God, know what you leaders are saying.

⁶You have murdered so many people that the city is filled with dead bodies!

⁷This city is indeed a cooking pot, but the bodies of those you killed are the

meat. And so I will force you to leave Jerusalem,

⁸and I'll send armies to attack you, just as you fear.

⁹Then you will be captured and punished by foreign enemies.

¹⁰You will be killed in your own country, but not before you realize that I, the LORD, have done these things.

¹¹You leaders claim to be meat in a cooking pot, but you won't be protected by this city. No, you will die at the border of Israel.

¹²You will realize that while you were following the laws of nearby nations, you were disobeying my laws and teachings. And I am the LORD!

¹³Before I finished speaking, Pelatiah dropped dead. I bowed down and cried out, Please, LORD God, don't kill everyone left in Israel.

¹⁴The LORD replied:

¹⁵Ezekiel, son of man, the people living in Jerusalem claim that you and the other Israelites who were taken to Babylonia are too far away to worship me. They also claim that the land of Israel now belongs only to them.

¹⁶But here is what I want you to tell the Israelites in Babylonia: It's true that I, the LORD God, have forced you out of your own country and made you live among foreign nations. But for now, I will be with you wherever you are, so that you can worship me.

¹⁷And some day, I will gather you from the nations where you are scattered and let you live in Israel again.

¹⁸When that happens, I want you to clear the land of all disgusting idols.

¹⁹Then I will take away your stubbornness and make you eager to be completely faithful to me. You will want to obey me

²⁰and all my laws and teachings. You will be my people, and I will be your God.

²¹But those who worship idols will be punished and get what they deserve. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

²²After the LORD had finished speaking, the winged creatures spread their wings and flew into the air, and the wheels were beside them. The brightness of the LORD's glory above them

²³left Jerusalem and stopped at a hill east of the city.

²⁴Then in my vision, the LORD's Spirit lifted me up and carried me back to the other exiles in Babylonia. The vision faded away,

²⁵and I told them everything the LORD had shown me.

12¹The LORD said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, you are living among rebellious people. They have eyes, but refuse to see; they have ears, but refuse to listen.

³So before it gets dark, here is what I want you to do. Pack a few things as though you were going to be taken away as a prisoner. Then go outside where everyone can see you and walk around from place to place. Perhaps as they watch, they will realize what rebels they are.

⁴After you have done this, return to your house. Later that evening leave your house as if you were going into exile.

⁵Dig through the wall of your house and crawl out, carrying the bag with you. Make sure everyone is watching.

⁶Lift the bag to your shoulders, and with your face covered, take it into the

darkness, so that you cannot see the land you are leaving. All this will be a warning for the people of Israel.

⁷I did everything the LORD had said. I packed a few things. Then as the sun was going down, and while everyone was watching, I dug a hole through one of the walls of my house. I pulled out my bag, then lifted it to my shoulders and left in the darkness.

⁸The next morning, the LORD

⁹reminded me that those rebellious people didn't even ask what I was doing.

¹⁰So he sent me back to tell them: The LORD God has a message for the leader of Jerusalem and everyone living there!

¹¹I have done these things to show them what will happen when they are taken away as prisoners.

¹²The leader of Jerusalem will lift his own bag to his shoulders at sunset and leave through a hole that the others have dug in the wall of his house. He will cover his face, so he can't see the land he is leaving.

¹³The LORD will spread out a net and trap him as he leaves Jerusalem. He will then be led away to the city of Babylon,

but will never see that place, even though he will die there.

¹⁴His own officials and troops will scatter in every direction, and the LORD will track them down and put them to death.

¹⁵The LORD will force the rest of the people in Jerusalem to live in foreign nations, where they will realize that he has done all these things.

¹⁶Some of them will survive the war, the starvation, and the deadly diseases. That way, they will be able to tell foreigners how disgusting their sins were, and that it was the LORD who punished them in this way.

¹⁷The LORD said:

¹⁸Ezekiel, son of man, shake with fear when you eat, and tremble when you drink.

¹⁹Tell the people of Israel that I, the LORD, say that some day everyone in Jerusalem will shake when they eat and tremble when they drink. Their country will be destroyed and left empty, because they have been cruel and violent.

²⁰Every town will lie in ruins, and the land will be a barren desert. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

²¹The LORD said:

²²Ezekiel, son of man, you've heard people in Israel use the saying, Time passes, and prophets are proved wrong.

²³Now tell the people that I, the LORD, am going to prove that saying wrong. No one will ever be able to use it again in Israel, because very soon everything I have said will come true!

²⁴The people will hear no more useless warnings and false messages.

²⁵I will give them my message, and what I say will certainly happen. Warn those rebels that the time has come for them to be punished. I, the LORD, make this promise.

²⁶Ezekiel, the people of Israel are also saying that your visions and messages are only about things in the future.

²⁷ (12: 26)

²⁸So tell them that my words will soon come true, just as I have warned. I, the LORD, have spoken.

13¹ The LORD said:

² Ezekiel, son of man, condemn the prophets of Israel who say they speak in my name, but who preach messages that come from their own imagination. Tell them it's time to hear my message.

³ I, the LORD God, say those lying prophets are doomed! They don't see visionsthey make up their own messages!

⁴ Israel's prophets are no better than jackals that hunt for food among the ruins of a city.

⁵ They don't warn the people about coming trouble or tell them how dangerous it is to sin against me.

⁶ Those prophets lie by claiming they speak for me, but I have not even chosen them to be my prophets. And they still think their words will come true.

⁷ They say they're preaching my messages, but they are full of liesI did not speak to them!

⁸ So I am going to punish those lying prophets for deceiving the people of Israel with false messages.

⁹I will turn against them and no longer let them belong to my people. They will not be allowed to call themselves Israelites or even to set foot in Israel. Then they will realize that I am the LORD God.

¹⁰Those prophets refuse to be honest. They tell my people there will be peace, even though there's no peace to be found. They are like workers who think they can fix a shaky wall by covering it with paint.

¹¹But when I send rainstorms, hailstones, and strong winds, the wall will surely collapse.

¹²People will then ask the workers why the paint didn't hold it up.

¹³That wall is the city of Jerusalem. And I, the LORD God, am so angry that I will send strong winds, rainstorms, and hailstones to destroy it.

¹⁴The lying prophets have tried to cover up the evil in Jerusalem, but I will tear down the city, all the way to its foundations. And when it collapses, those prophets will be killed, and everyone will know that I have done these things.

¹⁵The city of Jerusalem and its lying prophets will feel my fierce anger. Then I will announce that the city has fallen and that the lying prophets are dead,

¹⁶because they promised my people peace, when there was no peace. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

¹⁷The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, now condemn the women of Israel who preach messages that come from their own imagination.

¹⁸Tell them they're doomed! They wear magic charms on their wrists and scarves on their heads, then trick others into believing they can predict the future. They won't get away with telling those lies.

¹⁹They charge my people a few handfuls of barley and a couple of pieces of bread, and then give messages that are insulting to me. They use lies to sentence the innocent to death and to help the guilty go free. And my people believe them!

²⁰I hate the magic charms they use to trick people into believing their lies. I will rip those charms from their wrists and

set free the people they have trapped like birds.

²¹ I will tear the scarves from their heads and rescue my people from their power once and for all. Then they will know that I am the LORD God.

²² They do things I would never do. They lie to good people and encourage them to do wrong, and they convince the wicked to keep sinning and ruin their lives.

²³ I will no longer let these women give false messages and use magic, and I will free my people from their control. Then they will know that I, the LORD, have done these things.

14¹ One day, some of Israel's leaders came to me and asked for a message from the LORD.

² While they were there, the LORD said:

³ Ezekiel, son of man, these men have started worshipping idols, though they know it will cause them to sin even more. So I refuse to give them a message!

⁴ Tell the people of Israel that if they sin by worshipping idols and then go to a prophet to find out what I say, I will give them the answer their sins deserve.

⁵When they hear my message, perhaps they will see that they need to turn back to me and stop worshipping those idols.

⁶Now, Ezekiel, tell everyone in Israel: I am the LORD God. Stop worshipping your disgusting idols and come back to me.

⁷Suppose one of you Israelites or a foreigner living in Israel rejects me and starts worshipping idols. If you then go to a prophet to find out what I say, I will answer

⁸by turning against you. I will make you a warning to anyone who might think of doing the same thing, and you will no longer belong to my people. Then you will know that I am the LORD and that you have sinned against me.

⁹If a prophet gives a false message, I am the one who caused that prophet to lie. But I will still reject him and cut him off from my people,

¹⁰and anyone who goes to that prophet for a message will be punished in the same way.

¹¹I will do this, so that you will come back to me and stop destroying yourselves with these disgusting sins.

So turn back to me! Then I will be your God, and you will be my people. I, the LORD God, make this promise.

¹²The LORD God said:

¹³Ezekiel, son of man, suppose an entire nation sins against me, and I punish it by destroying the crops and letting its people and livestock starve to death.

¹⁴Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were living in that nation, their faithfulness would not save anyone but themselves.

¹⁵Or suppose I punish a nation by sending wild animals to eat people and scare away every passer-by, so that the land becomes a barren desert.

¹⁶As surely as I live, I promise that even if these three men lived in that nation, their own children would not be spared. The three men would live, but the land would be an empty desert.

¹⁷Or suppose I send an enemy to attack a sinful nation and kill its people and livestock.

¹⁸If these three men were in that nation when I punished it, not even their children would be spared. Only the three men would live.

¹⁹And suppose I am so angry that I send a deadly disease to wipe out the people and livestock of a sinful nation.

²⁰Again, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were living there, I, the LORD, promise that the children of these faithful men would also die. Only the three of them would be spared.

²¹I am the LORD God, and I promise to punish Jerusalem severely. I will send war, starvation, wild animals, and deadly disease to slaughter its people and livestock.

²²And those who survive will be taken from their country and led here to Babylonia. Ezekiel, when you see how sinful they are, you will know why I did all these things to Jerusalem.

²³You will be convinced that I, the LORD God, was right in doing what I did.

15¹ Some time later, the LORD said:
²Ezekiel, son of man, what happens to the wood of a grapevine after the grapes have been picked? It isn't like other trees in the forest,

³because the wood of a grapevine can't be used to make anything, not even a small peg to hang things on.

⁴It can only be used as firewood. But after its ends are burnt and its middle is charred, it can't be used for anything.

⁵The wood is useless before it is burnt, and afterwards, it is completely worthless.

⁶I, the LORD God, promise that just as the wood of a grapevine is burnt as firewood,

⁷I will punish the people of Jerusalem with fire. Some of them have escaped one destruction, but soon they will be completely burnt. And when that happens, you, Ezekiel, will know that I am the LORD.

⁸I will make their country an empty wasteland, because they have not been loyal to me. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

16¹The LORD said:
²Ezekiel, son of man, remind the people of Jerusalem of their disgusting sins

³and tell them that I, the LORD God, am saying: Jerusalem, you were born in the country where Canaanites lived. Your father was an Amorite, and your mother was a Hittite.

⁴When you were born, no one cut you loose from your mother or washed your body. No one rubbed your skin with salt and olive oil, and wrapped you in warm blankets.

⁵Not one person loved you enough to do any of these things, and no one even felt sorry for you. You were despised, thrown into a field, and forgotten.

⁶I saw you lying there, rolling around in your own blood, and I couldn't let you die.

⁷I took care of you, like someone caring for a tender, young plant. You grew up to be a beautiful young woman with perfect breasts and long hair, but you were still naked.

⁸When I saw you again, you were old enough to have sex. So I covered your naked body with my own robe. Then I solemnly promised that you would belong to me and that I, the LORD God, would take care of you.

⁹I washed the blood off you and rubbed your skin with olive oil.

¹⁰I gave you the finest clothes and the most expensive robes, as well as sandals made from the best leather.

¹¹ I gave you bracelets, a necklace,

¹² a ring for your nose, some earrings,
and a beautiful crown.

¹³ Your jewellery was gold and silver,
and your clothes were made of only the
finest material and embroidered linen.
Your bread was baked from fine flour,
and you ate honey and olive oil. You
were as beautiful as a queen,

¹⁴ and everyone on earth knew it. I, the
LORD God, had helped you become a
lovely young woman.

¹⁵ You learnt that you were attractive
enough to have any man you wanted, so
you offered yourself to every passer-by.

¹⁶ You made shrines for yourself and
decorated them with some of your
clothes. That's where you took your
visitors to have sex with them. These
things should never have happened!

¹⁷ You made idols out of the gold and
silver jewellery I gave you, then you
sinned by worshipping those idols.

¹⁸ You dressed them in the clothes you
got from me, and you offered them the
olive oil and incense I gave you.

¹⁹ I supplied you with fine flour, olive
oil, and honey, but you sacrificed it all

as offerings to please those idols. I, the LORD God, watched this happen.

²⁰ But you did something even worse than that you sacrificed your own children to those idols!

²¹ You slaughtered my children, so you could offer them as sacrifices.

²² You were so busy sinning and being a prostitute that you refused to think about the days when you were young and were rolling around naked in your own blood.

²³ Now I, the LORD God, say you are doomed! Not only did you do these evil things,

²⁴ but you also built places on every street corner

²⁵ where you disgraced yourself by having sex with anyone who walked by. And you did that more and more every day!

²⁶ To make me angry, you even offered yourself to Egyptians, who were always ready to sleep with you.

²⁷ So I punished you by letting those greedy Philistine enemies take over some of your territory. But even they were offended by your disgusting behaviour.

²⁸You couldn't get enough sex, so you chased after Assyrians and slept with them. You still weren't satisfied,

²⁹so you went after Babylonians. But those merchants could not satisfy you either.

³⁰I, the LORD God, say that you were so disgusting that you would have done anything to get what you wanted.

³¹You had sex on every street corner, and when you finished, you refused to accept money. That's worse than being a prostitute!

³²You are nothing but an unfaithful wife who would rather have sex with strangers than with your own husband.

³³Prostitutes accept money for having sex, but you bribe men from everywhere to have sex with you.

³⁴You're not like other prostitutes. Men don't ask you for sex; you offer to pay them!

³⁵The LORD said: Jerusalem, you prostitute, listen to me.

³⁶You chased after lovers, then took off your clothes and had sex. You even worshipped disgusting idols and

sacrificed your own children as offerings to them.

³⁷ So I, the LORD God, will gather every one of your lovers, those you liked and those you hated. They will stand around you, and I will rip off your clothes and let all those lovers stare at your nakedness.

³⁸ I will find you guilty of being an unfaithful wife and a murderer, and in my fierce anger I will sentence you to death!

³⁹ Then I will hand you over to your lovers, who will tear down the places where you had sex. They will take your clothes and jewellery, leaving you naked and empty-handed.

⁴⁰ Your lovers and an angry mob will stone you to death; they will cut your dead body into pieces

⁴¹ and burn down your houses. Other women will watch these terrible things happen to you. I promise to stop you from being a prostitute and paying your lovers for sex.

⁴² Only then will I calm down and stop being angry and jealous.

⁴³ You made me furious by doing all these disgusting things and by forgetting

how I took care of you when you were young. Then you made things worse by acting like a prostitute. You must be punished! I, the LORD God, have spoken.

⁴⁴The LORD said: People will use this saying about you, Jerusalem: If the mother is bad, so is her daughter.

⁴⁵You are just like your mother, who hated her husband and her own children. You are also like your sisters, who hated their husbands and children. Your father was an Amorite, and your mother was a Hittite.

⁴⁶Your elder sister was Samaria, that city to your north with her nearby villages. Your younger sister was Sodom, that city to your south with her nearby villages.

⁴⁷You followed their way of life and their wicked customs, and soon you were more disgusting than they were.

⁴⁸As surely as I am the living LORD God, the people of Sodom and its nearby villages were never as sinful as you.

⁴⁹They were arrogant and spoilt; they had everything they needed and still refused to help the poor and needy.

⁵⁰They thought they were better than everyone else, and they did things I hate. And so I destroyed them.

⁵¹You people of Jerusalem have sinned twice as much as the people of Samaria. In fact, your evil ways have made both Sodom and Samaria look innocent.

⁵²So their punishment will seem light compared to yours. You will be disgraced and put to shame because of your disgusting sins.

⁵³The LORD said to Jerusalem: Some day I will bless Sodom and Samaria and their nearby villages. I will also bless you, Jerusalem.

⁵⁴Then you will be ashamed of how you've acted, and Sodom and Samaria will be relieved that they weren't as sinful as you.

⁵⁵When that day comes, you and Sodom and Samaria will once again be well off, and all nearby villages will be restored.

⁵⁶Jerusalem, you were so arrogant that you sneered at Sodom.

⁵⁷But now everyone has learnt how wicked you really are. The countries of Syria and Philistia, as well as your other

neighbours, hate you and make insulting remarks.

⁵⁸You must pay for all the vulgar and disgusting things you have done. I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁵⁹The LORD said: Jerusalem, you deserve to be punished, because you broke your promises and ignored our agreement.

⁶⁰But I remember the agreement I made with you when you were young, and so I will make you a promise that will last for ever.

⁶¹When you think about how you acted, you will be ashamed, especially when I return your sisters to you as daughters, even though this was not part of our agreement.

⁶²I will keep this solemn promise, and you will know that I am the LORD.

⁶³I will forgive you, but you will think about your sins and be too ashamed to say a word. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

17 ¹The LORD said:
²Ezekiel, son of man, tell the people of Israel the following story,

³so they will understand what I am saying to them: A large eagle with strong wings and beautiful feathers once flew to Lebanon. It broke the top branch off a cedar tree,

⁴then carried it to a nation of merchants and left it in one of their cities.

⁵The eagle also took seed from Israel and planted it in a fertile field with plenty of water, like a willow tree beside a stream.

⁶The seed sprouted and grew into a grapevine that spread over the ground. It had lots of leaves and strong, deep roots, and its branches grew upward towards the eagle.

⁷There was another eagle with strong wings and thick feathers. The roots and branches of the grapevine soon turned towards this eagle, hoping it would bring water for the soil.

⁸But the vine was already growing in fertile soil, where there was plenty of water to produce healthy leaves and large grapes.

⁹Now tell me, Ezekiel, do you think this grapevine will live? Or will the first eagle pull it up by its roots and pluck off the

grapes and let its new leaves die? The eagle could easily kill it without the help of a large and powerful army.

¹⁰The grapevine is strong and healthy, but as soon as the scorching desert wind blows, it will quickly wither.

¹¹The LORD said:

¹²Ezekiel, ask the rebellious people of Israel if they know what this story means. Tell them that the king of Babylonia came to Jerusalem, then he captured the king of Judah and his officials, and took them back to Babylon as prisoners.

¹³He chose someone from the family of Judah's king and signed a treaty with him, then made him swear to be loyal. He also led away other important citizens,

¹⁴so that the rest of the people of Judah would obey only him and never gain control of their own country again.

¹⁵But this new king of Judah later rebelled against Babylonia and sent officials to Egypt to get horses and troops. Will this king be successful in breaking the treaty with Babylonia? Or will he be punished for what he's done?

¹⁶As surely as I am the living LORD God, I swear that the king of Judah will die in Babylon, because he broke the treaty with the king of Babylonia, who appointed him king.

¹⁷Even the king of Egypt and his powerful army will be useless to Judah when the Babylonians attack and build earth ramps to invade the cities of Judah and kill its people.

¹⁸The king of Judah broke his own promises and ignored the treaty with Babylonia. And so he will be punished!

¹⁹He made a promise in my name and swore to honour the treaty. And now that he has broken that promise, my name is disgraced. He must pay for what he's done.

²⁰I will spread out a net to trap him. Then I will drag him to Babylon and see that he is punished for his unfaithfulness to me.

²¹His best troops will be killed in battle, and the survivors will be scattered in every direction. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²²Some day, I, the LORD, will cut a tender twig from the top of a cedar

tree, then plant it on the peak of Israel's tallest mountain, where it will grow strong branches and produce large fruit. All kinds of birds will find shelter under the tree, and they will rest in the shade of its branches.

²³ (17: 22)

²⁴ Every tree in the forest will know that I, the LORD, can bring down tall trees and help short ones grow. I dry up green trees and make dry ones green. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will keep my word.

18 ¹ The LORD said:

² Ezekiel, I hear the people of Israel using the old saying, Sour grapes eaten by parents leave a sour taste in the mouths of their children.

³ Now tell them that I am the LORD God, and as surely as I live, that saying will no longer be used in Israel.

⁴ The lives of all people belong to me parents as well as children. Only those who sin will be put to death.

⁵ Suppose there is a truly good man who always does what is fair and right.

⁶ He refuses to eat meat sacrificed to foreign gods at local shrines or to

worship Israel's idols. He doesn't have sex with someone else's wife or with a woman having her monthly period.

⁷He never cheats or robs anyone and always returns anything taken as security for a loan; he gives food and clothes to the poor

⁸and doesn't charge interest when lending money. He refuses to do anything evil; he is fair to everyone

⁹and faithfully obeys my laws and teachings. This man is good, and I promise he will live.

¹⁰But suppose this good man has an evil son who is violent and commits sins

¹¹his father never did. He eats meat at local shrines, has sex with someone else's wife,

¹²cheats the poor, and robs people. He keeps what is given to him as security for a loan. He worships idols, does disgusting things,

¹³and charges high interest when lending money. An evil man like that will certainly not live. He is the one who has done these horrible sins, so it's his own fault that he will be put to death.

¹⁴ But suppose this evil man has a son who sees his father do these things and refuses to act like him.

¹⁵ He doesn't eat meat at local shrines or worship Israel's idols, and he doesn't have sex with someone else's wife.

¹⁶ He never cheats or robs anyone and doesn't even demand security for a loan. He gives food and clothes to the poor

¹⁷ and refuses to do anything evil or to charge interest. And he obeys all my laws and teachings. Such a man will live. His own father sinned, but this good man will not be put to death for the sins of his father.

¹⁸ It is his father who will die for cheating and robbing and doing evil.

¹⁹ You may wonder why a son isn't punished for the sins of his father. It is because the son does what is right and obeys my laws.

²⁰ Only those who sin will be put to death. Children won't suffer for the sins of their parents, and parents won't suffer for the sins of their children. Good people will be rewarded for what they do, and evil people will be punished for what they do.

²¹ Suppose wicked people stop sinning and start obeying my laws and doing right. They won't be put to death.

²² All their sins will be forgiven, and they will live because they did right.

²³ I, the LORD God, don't like to see wicked people die. I enjoy seeing them turn from their sins and live.

²⁴ But when good people start sinning and doing disgusting things, will they live? No! All their good deeds will be forgotten, and they will be put to death because of their sins.

²⁵ You people of Israel accuse me of being unfair! But listen! I'm not unfair; you are!

²⁶ If good people start doing evil, they must be put to death, because they have sinned.

²⁷ And if wicked people start doing right, they will save themselves from punishment.

²⁸ They will think about what they've done and stop sinning, and so they won't be put to death.

²⁹ But you still say that I am unfair. You are the ones who have done wrong and are unfair!

³⁰I will judge each of you for what you've done. So stop sinning, or else you will certainly be punished.

³¹Give up your evil ways and start thinking pure thoughts. And be faithful to me! Do you really want to be put to death for your sins?

³²I, the LORD God, don't want to see that happen to anyone. So stop sinning and live!

19¹The LORD said: Ezekiel, sing a funeral song for two of Israel's leaders:

²Your mother was a brave lioness who raised her cubs among lions.

³She taught one of them to hunt, and he learnt to eat people.

⁴When the nations heard of him, they trapped him in a pit, then they used hooks to drag him to Egypt.

⁵His mother waited for him to return. But soon she lost all hope and raised another cub, who also became fierce.

⁶He hunted with other lions and learnt to eat people.

⁷He destroyed fortresses and ruined towns; his mighty roar terrified everyone.

⁸Nations plotted to kill him, and people came from everywhere to spread out a net and catch him in a trap.

⁹They put him in a cage and took him to Babylonia. The lion was locked away, so that his mighty roar would never again be heard on Israel's hills.

¹⁰Your mother was a vine growing near a stream. There was plenty of water, so she was filled with branches and with lots of fruit.

¹¹Her strong branches became symbols of authority, and she was taller than all other trees everyone could see how strong and healthy she was.

¹²But in anger, I pulled her up by the roots and threw her to the ground, where the scorching desert wind dried out her fruit. Her strong branches wilted and burnt up.

¹³Then she was planted in a hot, dry desert,

¹⁴where her stem caught fire, and flames burnt her branches and fruit. Not one strong branch is left; she is stripped bare. This funeral song must be sung with sorrow.

20¹ Seven years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, some of Israel's leaders came to me on the tenth day of the fifth month. They sat down and asked for a message from the LORD.

² Just then, the LORD God said:

³ Ezekiel, son of man, these leaders have come to find out what I want them to do. As surely as I live, I will not give them an answer of any kind.

⁴ Are you willing to warn them, Ezekiel? Then remind them of the disgusting sins of their ancestors.

⁵ Tell them that long ago I, the LORD God, chose Israel to be my own. I appeared to their ancestors in Egypt and made a solemn promise that I would be their God and the God of their descendants.

⁶ I swore that I would rescue them from Egypt and lead them to a land I had already chosen. This land was rich with milk and honey and was the most splendid land of all.

⁷ I told them to get rid of their disgusting idols and not to sin by worshipping the

gods of Egypt. I reminded them that I was the LORD their God,

⁸but they still rebelled against me. They refused to listen and kept on worshipping their idols and foreign gods. In my anger, I decided to punish the Israelites in Egypt.

⁹But that would have made me look like a liar, because I had already promised in front of everyone that I would lead them out of Egypt.

¹⁰So I brought them out and led them into the desert.

¹¹I gave them my laws and teachings, so they would know how to live right.

¹²And I commanded them to respect the Sabbath as a way of showing that they were holy and belonged to me.

¹³But the Israelites rebelled against me in the desert. They refused to obey my laws and teachings, and they treated the Sabbath like any other day. Then in my anger, I decided to destroy the Israelites in the desert once and for all.

¹⁴But that would have disgraced me, because many other nations had seen me bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

¹⁵ Instead, I told them in the desert that I would not lead them into the beautiful, fertile land I had promised.

¹⁶ I said this because they had not only ignored my laws and teachings, but had disgraced my Sabbath and worshipped idols.

¹⁷ Yet, I felt sorry for them and could not let them die in the desert.

¹⁸ So I warned the children not to act like their parents or follow their evil ways or worship their idols.

¹⁹ I reminded them that I was the LORD their God and that they should obey my laws and teachings.

²⁰ I told them to respect my Sabbath to show that they were my people and that I was the LORD their God.

²¹ But the children also rebelled against me. They refused to obey my laws and teachings, and they treated the Sabbath as any other day. I became angry and decided to punish them in the desert.

²² But I did not. That would have disgraced me in front of the nations that had seen me bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

²³ So I solemnly swore that I would scatter the people of Israel across the nations,

²⁴ because they had disobeyed my laws and ignored my teachings; they had disgraced my Sabbath and worshipped the idols their ancestors had made.

²⁵ I gave them laws that bring punishment instead of life,

²⁶ and I let them offer me unacceptable sacrifices, including their firstborn sons. I did this to horrify them and to let them know that I, the LORD, was punishing them.

²⁷ Ezekiel, tell the people of Israel that their ancestors also rejected and insulted me

²⁸ by offering sacrifices, incense, and wine to gods on every hill and under every large tree. I was very angry, because they did these things in the land I had given them!

²⁹ I asked them where they went to worship those gods, and they answered, At the local shrines. And those places of worship are still called shrines.

³⁰Then ask the Israelites why they are following the example of their wicked ancestors

³¹by worshipping idols and by sacrificing their own children as offerings. They commit these sins and still think they can ask me for a message. As surely as I am the living LORD God, I will give them no answer.

³²They may think they can be like other nations and get away with worshipping idols made of wood and stone. But that will never happen!

³³The LORD said to the people of Israel: As surely as I am the living LORD God, I will rule over you with my powerful arm. You will feel my fierce anger

³⁴and my power, when I gather you from the places where you are scattered

³⁵and lead you into a desert surrounded by nations. I will meet you there face to face. Then I will pass judgment on you

³⁶and punish you, just as I punished your ancestors in the desert near Egypt.

³⁷I will force each of you to obey the regulations of our solemn agreement.

³⁸I will separate the sinful rebels from the rest of you, and even though I will

bring them from the nations where they live in exile, they won't be allowed to return to Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

³⁹Go ahead and worship your idols for now, you Israelites, because soon I will no longer let you dishonour me by offering gifts to them. You will have no choice but to obey me!

⁴⁰When that day comes, everyone in Israel will worship me on Mount Zion, my holy mountain in Jerusalem. I will once again call you my own, and I will accept your sacred offerings and sacrifices.

⁴¹When I bring you home from the places where you are now scattered, I will be pleased with you, just as I am pleased with the smell of the smoke from your sacrifices. Every nation on earth will see that I am holy,

⁴²and you will know that I, the LORD, am the one who brought you back to Israel, the land I promised your ancestors.

⁴³Then you will remember your wicked sins, and you will hate yourselves for doing such horrible things. They have made you unacceptable to me,

⁴⁴ so you deserve to be punished. But I will treat you in a way that will bring honour to my name, and you will know that I am the LORD God.

⁴⁵ The LORD said,

⁴⁶ Ezekiel, son of man, turn towards the south and warn the forests

⁴⁷ that I, the LORD God, will start a fire that will burn up every tree, whether green or dry. Nothing will be able to put out the blaze of that fire as it spreads to the north and burns everything in its path.

⁴⁸ Everyone will know that I started it, and that it cannot be stopped.

⁴⁹ But I complained, LORD God, I don't want to do that! People already say I confuse them with my messages.

21 ¹ The LORD said:

² Ezekiel, son of man, condemn the places in Jerusalem where people worship. Warn everyone in Israel

³ that I am about to punish them. I will pull out my sword and have it ready to kill everyone, whether good or evil.

⁴ From south to north, people will die,

⁵ knowing that my sword will never be put away.

⁶Ezekiel, groan in sorrow and despair so that everyone can hear you.

⁷When they ask why you are groaning, tell them you have terrifying news that will make them faint and tremble in fear and lose all courage. These things will happen soon. I, the LORD God, make this promise!

⁸The LORD said:

⁹Ezekiel, son of man, tell the people of Jerusalem: I have sharpened my sword to slaughter you; it is shiny and will flash like lightning! Don't celebrate punishment is coming, because everyone has ignored my warnings.

¹⁰(21: 9)

¹¹My sword has been polished; it's sharp and ready to kill.

¹²Groan in sorrow, Ezekiel; the sword is drawn against my people and their leaders. They will die! So give up all hope.

¹³I am testing my people, and they can do nothing to stop me. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁴Ezekiel, warn my people, then celebrate my victory by clapping your hands. My vicious sword will attack again

and again, killing my people with every stroke.

¹⁵They will lose all courage and stumble with fear. My slaughtering sword is waiting at every gate, flashing and ready to kill.

¹⁶It will slash right and left, wherever the blade is pointed.

¹⁷Then I will stop being angry, and I will clap my hands in victory. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁸The LORD said:

¹⁹Ezekiel, son of man, mark two roads for the king of Babylonia to follow when he comes with his sword. The roads will begin at the same place, but be sure to put up a signpost where the two roads separate and go in different directions.

²⁰Clearly mark where the two roads lead. One goes to Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, and the other goes to Jerusalem, the fortified capital of Judah.

²¹When the Babylonian king stands at that signpost, he will decide which way to go by shaking his arrows, by asking his idols, and by carefully looking at the liver of a sacrificed animal.

²²His right hand will pull out the arrow marked Jerusalem. Then he will immediately give the signal to shout the battle cry, to build earth ramps to the top of the city walls, to break down its walls and gates with large wooden poles, and to kill the people.

²³Everyone in Jerusalem had promised to be loyal to Babylonia, and so none of them will believe that this could happen to them. But Babylonia's king will remind them of their sinful ways and warn them of their coming captivity.

²⁴Ezekiel, tell the people of Jerusalem and their ruler that I, the LORD God, am saying: Everything you do is wicked and shows how sinful you are. You are guilty and will be taken away as prisoners.

²⁵And now, you evil and wicked ruler of Israel, your day of final punishment is almost here.

²⁶I, the LORD God, command you to take off your royal turban and your crown, because everything will be different. Those who had no power will be put in charge, and those who now rule will become nobodies.

²⁷ I will leave Jerusalem in ruins when my chosen one comes to punish this city.

²⁸ The LORD God said: Ezekiel, son of man, the Ammonites have insulted Israel, so condemn them and tell them I am saying: A sword is drawn, ready to slaughter; it is polished and prepared to kill as fast as lightning.

²⁹ You wicked Ammonites see false visions and believe untrue messages. But your day of punishment is coming soon, and my sword will slaughter you!

³⁰ Your days of punishing others are over, so put your swords away. You will be punished in the land of your birth.

³¹ My furious anger will scorch you like fire, and I will hand you over to cruel men who are experts in killing.

³² You will be burnt and will die in your own land. Then you will be forgotten for ever. I, the LORD, have spoken.

22 ¹ Some time later, the LORD said: ² Ezekiel, son of man, are you ready to condemn Jerusalem? That city is filled with murderers, so remind the people of their sins

³ and tell them I am saying: Jerusalem, you have murdered many of your own

people and have worshipped idols. You will soon be punished!

⁴Those crimes have made you guilty, and the idols have made you unacceptable to me. So your final punishment is near. Other nations will laugh at you and make insulting remarks,

⁵and people far and near will make fun of your misery.

⁶Your own leaders use their power to murder.

⁷None of you honour your parents, and you cheat foreigners, orphans, and widows.

⁸You show no respect for my sacred places and treat the Sabbath just like any other day.

⁹Some of your own people tell lies, so that others will be put to death. Some of you eat meat sacrificed to idols at local shrines, and others never stop doing vulgar things.

¹⁰Men have sex with their father's wife or with women who are having their monthly period

¹¹ or with someone else's wife. Some men even sleep with their own daughter-in-law or half-sister.

¹² Others of you accept money to murder someone. Your own people charge high interest when making a loan to other Israelites, and they get rich by cheating. Worst of all, you have forgotten me, the LORD God.

¹³ I will shake my fist in anger at your violent crimes.

¹⁴ When I've finished with you, your courage will disappear, and you will be so weak that you won't be able to lift your hands. I, the LORD, have spoken and will not change my mind.

¹⁵ I will scatter you throughout every nation on earth and put a stop to your sinful ways.

¹⁶ You will be humiliated in the eyes of other nations. Then you will know that I, the LORD God, have done these things.

¹⁷ The LORD said:

¹⁸ Ezekiel, son of man, I consider the people of Israel as worthless as the leftover metal in a furnace after silver has been purified.

¹⁹ So I am going to bring them together in Jerusalem.

²⁰ I will be like a metalworker who collects that metal from the furnace and melts it down. I will collect the Israelites and blow on them with my fiery anger. They will melt inside the city of Jerusalem

²¹ (22: 20)

²² like silver in a furnace. Then they will know that I, the LORD, have punished them in my anger.

²³ The LORD said:

²⁴ Ezekiel, son of man, tell the people of Israel that their country is full of sin, and that I, the LORD, am furious!

²⁵ Their leaders are like roaring lions, tearing apart their victims. They put people to death, then steal everything of value. Husbands are killed, and many women are left as widows.

²⁶ The priests of Israel ignore my Law! Not only do they refuse to respect any of my sacred things, but they don't even teach the difference between what is sacred and what is ordinary, or between what is clean and what is unclean. They

treat my Sabbath like any other day, and so my own people no longer honour me.

²⁷ Israel's officials are like ferocious wolves, ripping their victims apart. They make a dishonest living by injuring and killing people.

²⁸ And then the prophets in Israel cover up these sins by giving false visions. I have never spoken to them, but they lie and say they have a message from me.

²⁹ The people themselves cheat and rob; they abuse the poor and take advantage of foreigners.

³⁰ I looked for someone to defend the city and to protect it from my anger, as well as to stop me from destroying it. But I found no one.

³¹ So in my fierce anger, I will punish the Israelites for what they have done, and they will know that I am furious. I, the LORD, have spoken.

23 ¹ The LORD said:
² Ezekiel, son of man, listen to this story about two sisters.

³ While they were young and living in Egypt, they became prostitutes.

⁴ The elder one was named Oholah, which stands for Samaria; the younger

one was Oholibah, which stands for Jerusalem. They became my wives and gave birth to my children.

⁵Even though Oholah was my wife, she continued to be a prostitute and chased after Assyrian lovers.

⁶She offered herself to soldiers in purple uniforms, to every handsome, high-ranking officer, and to cavalry troops.

⁷She had sex with all the important Assyrian officials and even worshipped their disgusting idols.

⁸Once she started doing these things in Egypt, she never stopped. Men slept with her, and she was always ready for sex.

⁹So I gave Oholah to the Assyrian lovers she wanted so badly.

¹⁰They ripped off her clothes, then captured her children and killed her. Women everywhere talked about what had happened to Oholah.

¹¹Oholibah saw all this, but she was more sinful and wanted sex more than her sister Oholah ever did.

¹²Oholibah also chased after good-looking Assyrian officers, uniformed soldiers, and cavalry troops.

¹³Just like her sister, she did vulgar things.

¹⁴But Oholibah behaved worse than her sister. Oholibah saw images of Babylonian men carved into walls and painted red.

¹⁵They had belts around their waists and large turbans on their heads, and they reminded her of Babylonian cavalry officers.

¹⁶As soon as she looked at them, she wanted to have sex with them. And so, she sent messengers to bring them to her.

¹⁷Men from Babylonia came and had sex with her so many times that she got disgusted with them.

¹⁸She let everyone see her naked body and didn't care if they knew she was a prostitute. That's why I turned my back on her, just as I had done with her elder sister.

¹⁹Oholibah didn't stop there, but became even more immoral and acted as she had back in Egypt.

²⁰She eagerly wanted to go to bed with Egyptian men, who were famous for their sexual powers.

²¹And she longed for the days when she was a young prostitute, when men enjoyed having sex with her.

²²The LORD God said: Oholibah, though you no longer want to be with your lovers, they will surround you like enemies, when I turn them against you.

²³I will gather all the handsome young officials and the high-ranking cavalry officers from Babylonia and Assyria, as well as from the Chaldean tribes of Pekod, Shoa, and Koa.

²⁴Their large armies will come from the north with chariots and wagons carrying weapons. They will wear shields and helmets and will surround you, and I will let them judge and sentence you according to their own laws.

²⁵I am angry with you, so I will let them be very cruel. They will cut off your nose and ears; they will kill your children and put to death anyone in your family who is still alive.

²⁶Your clothes and jewellery will be torn off.

²⁷ I will stop your wickedness and the prostitution you started back in Egypt. You will never want to think about those days again.

²⁸ I, the LORD God, am ready to hand you over to those hateful enemies that you find so disgusting.

²⁹ They will cruelly take away everything you have worked for and strip you naked. Then everyone will see you for the prostitute you really are. Your own vulgar sins

³⁰ have led to this. You were the one determined to have sex with men from other nations and to worship their idols.

³¹ You have turned out no better than your elder sister, and now you must drink from the cup filled with my anger.

³² I, the LORD God, gave your sister a large, deep cup filled with my anger. And when you drink from that cup, you will be mocked and insulted.

³³ You will end up drunk and devastated, because that cup is filled with horror and ruin.

³⁴ But you must drink every drop! Then smash the cup to pieces and use them to

cut your breasts in sorrow. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

³⁵ You have completely rejected me, and so I promise that you will be punished for the disgusting things you did as a prostitute.

³⁶ The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, it's time for you to tell Oholah and Oholibah that they are guilty. Remind them of their evil ways!

³⁷ They have been unfaithful by worshipping idols, and they have committed murder by sacrificing my own children as offerings to idols.

³⁸ They came into my temple that same day, and that made it unfit as a place to worship me. They have even stopped respecting the Sabbath.

³⁹ (23: 38)

⁴⁰ They sent messengers to attract men from far away. When those men arrived, the two sisters took baths and put on eye shadow and jewellery.

⁴¹ They sat on a fine couch, and in front of them was a table for the olive oil and incense that had belonged to me.

⁴² Their room was always filled with a noisy crowd of drunkards brought in

from the desert. These men gave the women bracelets and beautiful crowns,
⁴³and I noticed that the men were eager to have sex with these women, though they were exhausted from being prostitutes.

⁴⁴In fact, the men had sex over and over with Oholah and Oholibah, the two sinful sisters.

⁴⁵But good men will some day accuse those two of murder and of being unfaithful, because they are certainly guilty.

⁴⁶So I, the LORD God, now say to these sisters: I will call together an angry mob that will abuse and rob you.

⁴⁷They will stone you to death and cut you to pieces; they will kill your children and burn down your houses.

⁴⁸I will get rid of sinful prostitution in this country, so that women everywhere will be warned not to act as you have.

⁴⁹You will be punished for becoming prostitutes and for worshipping idols, and you will know that I am the LORD God.

24¹ Nine years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led

away as prisoners to Babylonia, the LORD spoke to me on the tenth day of the tenth month. He said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, write down today's date, because the king of Babylonia has just begun attacking the city of Jerusalem.

³Then tell my rebellious people: Pour water in a cooking pot and set it over a fire.

⁴Throw in the legs and shoulders of your finest sheep and put in the juicy bones. Pile wood underneath the pot, and let the meat and bones boil until they are done.

⁵(24: 4)

⁶These words mean that Jerusalem is doomed! The city is filled with murderers and is like an old, rusty pot. The meat is taken out piece by piece, and no one cares what happens to it.

⁷The people of Jerusalem murdered innocent people in the city and didn't even try to cover up the blood that flowed out on the hard ground.

⁸But I have seen that blood, and it cries out for me to take revenge.

⁹I, the LORD God, will punish that city of violence! I will make a huge pile of firewood,

¹⁰so bring more wood and light it. Cook the meat and boil away the broth to let the bones scorch.

¹¹Then set the empty pot over the hot coals until it is red-hot. That will clean the pot and burn off the rust.

¹²I've tried everything else. Now the rust must be burnt away.

¹³Jerusalem is so full of sin and evil that I can't get it clean, even though I have tried. It will stay filthy until I let loose my fierce anger against it.

¹⁴That time will certainly come! And when it does, I won't show the people of Jerusalem any pity or change my mind. They must be punished for the evil they have done. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

¹⁵The LORD said,

¹⁶Ezekiel, son of man, I will suddenly take the life of the person you love most. But I don't want you to complain or cry.

¹⁷Mourn in silence and don't show that you are grieving. Don't remove your turban or take off your sandals; don't

cover your face to show your sorrow, or eat the food that mourners eat.

¹⁸One morning, I was talking with the people as usual, and by sunset my wife was dead. The next day I did what the LORD told me,

¹⁹and when people saw me, they asked, Why aren't you mourning for your wife?

²⁰I answered: The LORD God says

²¹he is ready to destroy the temple in which you take such pride and which makes you feel so safe. Your children who now live in Jerusalem will be killed.

²²Then you will do the same things I have done. You will leave your face uncovered and refuse to eat the food that mourners usually eat.

²³You won't take off your turbans and your sandals. You won't cry or mourn, but all day long you will go around groaning because of your sins.

²⁴I am a warning sign everything I have done, you will also do. And then you will know the LORD God has made these things happen.

²⁵The LORD said, Ezekiel, I will soon destroy the temple that makes everyone

feel proud and safe, and I will take away their children as well.

²⁶On that same day, someone will escape from the city and come to tell you what has happened.

²⁷Then you will be able to speak again, and the two of you will talk. You will be a warning sign to the people, and they will know that I am the LORD.

25¹The LORD God said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, condemn the people of Ammon

³and tell them: You celebrated when my temple was destroyed, when Israel was defeated, and when my people were taken away as prisoners.

⁴Now I am going to let you be conquered by tribes from the eastern desert. They will set up their camps in your land and eat your fruit and drink your milk.

⁵Your capital city of Rabbah will be nothing but pasture land for camels, and the rest of the country will be pastures for sheep. Then you will know that I am the LORD God.

⁶You hated Israel so much that you clapped and shouted and celebrated.

⁷ And so I will hand you over to enemies who will rob you. I will completely destroy you. There won't be enough of your people left to be a nation ever again, and you will know that I, the LORD, have done these things.

⁸ The LORD God said, The people of Moab thought Judah was no different from any other nation.

⁹ So I will let Moab's fortress towns along its border be attacked, including Beth-Jeshimoth, Baal-Meon, and Kiriathaim.

¹⁰ The same eastern desert tribes that invade Ammon will invade Moab, and just as Ammon will be forgotten for ever,

¹¹ Moab will be punished. Then the people there will know that I am the LORD.

¹² The LORD God then said, The people of Edom are guilty of taking revenge on Judah.

¹³ So I will punish Edom by killing all its people and livestock. It will be an empty wasteland all the way from Teman to Dedan.

¹⁴ I will send my own people to take revenge on the Edomites by making

them feel my fierce anger. And when I punish them, they will know that I am the LORD God.

¹⁵The LORD God said, The cruel Philistines have taken revenge on their enemies over and over and have tried to destroy them.

¹⁶Now it's my turn to treat the Philistines as my enemies and to kill everyone living in their towns along the coast.

¹⁷In my fierce anger, I will take revenge on them. And when I punish them, they will know that I am the LORD.

26¹Eleven years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, the LORD spoke to me on the first day of the month. He said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, the people of the city of Tyre have celebrated Jerusalem's defeat by singing, Jerusalem has fallen! It used to be powerful, a centre of trade. Now the city is shattered, and we will take its place.

³Because the people of Tyre have sung that song, I have the following warning for them: I am the LORD God, and I am

now your enemy! I will send nations to attack you, like waves crashing against the shore.

⁴They will tear down your city walls and defence towers. I will sweep away the ruins until all that's left of you is a bare rock,

⁵where fishermen can dry their nets along the coast. I promise that you will be robbed

⁶and that the people who live in your towns along the coast will be killed. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁷King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia is the world's most powerful king, and I will send him to attack you. He will march from the north with a powerful army, including horses and chariots and cavalry troops.

⁸First, he will attack your towns along the coast and kill the people who live there. Then he will build earth ramps up to the top of your city walls and set up rows of shields around you.

⁹He will command some of his troops to use large wooden poles to beat down your walls, while others use iron rods to knock down your watchtowers.

¹⁰He will have so many horses that the dust they stir up will seem like a thick fog. And as his chariots and cavalry approach, even the walls will shake, especially when he proudly enters your ruined city.

¹¹His troops will ride through your streets, killing people left and right, and your strong columns will crumble to the ground.

¹²The troops will steal your valuable possessions; they will break down your walls, and crush your expensive houses. Then the stones and wood and all the remains will be dumped into the sea.

¹³You will have no reason to sing or play music on harps,

¹⁴because I will turn you into a bare rock where fishermen can dry their nets. And you will never rebuild your city. I, the LORD God, make this promise.

¹⁵The people of the nations up and down the coast will shudder when they hear your screams and moans of death.

¹⁶The kings will step down from their thrones, then take off their royal robes and fine clothes, and sit on the ground, trembling. They will be so shocked at the

news of your defeat that they will shake in fear

¹⁷and sing this funeral song: The great city beside the sea is destroyed! Its people once ruled the coast and terrified everyone there.

¹⁸But now Tyre is in ruins, and the people on the coast stare at it in horror and tremble in fear.

¹⁹I, the LORD God, will turn you into a ghost town. The ocean depths will rise over you

²⁰and carry you down to the world of the dead, where you will join people of ancient times and towns ruined long ago. You will stay there and never again be a city filled with people.

²¹You will die a horrible death! People will come looking for your city, but it will never be found. I, the LORD, have spoken.

27 ¹The LORD said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, sing a funeral song for Tyre,

³the city that is built along the sea and that trades with nations along the coast. Tell the people of Tyre that the following

message is from me: Tyre, you boast about your perfect beauty,

⁴and your control of the sea. You are a ship built to perfection.

⁵Builders used cypress trees from Mount Hermon to make your planks and a cedar tree from Lebanon for your tall mast.

⁶Oak trees from Bashan were shaped into oars; pine trees from Cyprus were cut for your deck, which was then decorated with strips of ivory.

⁷The builders used fine linen from Egypt for your sails, so everyone could see you. Blue and purple cloth from Cyprus was used to shade your deck.

⁸Men from Sidon and Arvad did the rowing, and your own skilled workers were the captains.

⁹Experienced men from Byblos repaired any damages. Sailors from all over shopped at the stores in your port.

¹⁰Brave soldiers from Persia, Lydia, and Libya served in your navy, protecting you with shields and helmets, and making you famous.

¹¹Your guards came from Arvad and Cilicia, and men from Gamad stood

watch in your towers. With their weapons hung on your walls, your beauty was complete.

¹² Merchants from southern Spain traded silver, iron, tin, and lead for your products.

¹³ The people of Greece, Tubal, and Meshech traded slaves and things made of bronze,

¹⁴ and those from Beth-Togarmah traded work horses, war horses, and mules.

¹⁵ You also did business with people from Rhodes, and people from nations along the coast gave you ivory and ebony in exchange for your goods.

¹⁶ Edom traded emeralds, purple cloth, embroidery, fine linen, coral, and rubies.

¹⁷ Judah and Israel gave you their finest wheat, best figs, honey, olive oil, and spices in exchange for your merchandise.

¹⁸ The people of Damascus saw what you had to offer and brought you wine from Helbon and wool from Zahar.

¹⁹ Vedan and Javan near Uzal traded you iron and spices.

²⁰ The people of Dedan supplied you with saddle blankets,

²¹ while people from Arabia and the rulers of Kedar traded lambs, sheep, and goats.

²² Merchants from Sheba and Raamah gave you excellent spices, precious stones, and gold in exchange for your products.

²³ You also did business with merchants from the cities of Haran, Canneh, Eden, Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad,

²⁴ and they gave you expensive clothing, purple and embroidered cloth, brightly-coloured rugs, and strong rope.

²⁵ Large, seagoing ships carried your goods wherever they needed to go. You were like a ship loaded with heavy cargo

²⁶ and sailing across the sea, but you were wrecked by strong eastern winds.

²⁷ Everything on board was lost your valuable cargo, your sailors and carpenters, merchants and soldiers.

²⁸ The shouts of your drowning crew were heard on the shore.

²⁹ Every ship is deserted; rowers and sailors and captains all stand on shore,

³⁰ mourning for you. They show their sorrow by putting dust on their heads and rolling in ashes;

³¹ they shave their heads and dress in sackcloth as they cry in despair.

³² In their grief they sing a funeral song for you: Tyre, you were greater than all other cities. But now you lie in silence at the bottom of the sea.

³³ Nations that received your merchandise were always pleased; kings everywhere got rich from your costly goods.

³⁴ But now you are wrecked in the deep sea, with your cargo and crew scattered everywhere.

³⁵ People living along the coast are shocked at the news. Their rulers are horrified, and terror is written across their faces.

³⁶ The merchants of the world can't believe what happened. Your death was gruesome, and you are gone for ever.

28 ¹ The LORD God said:

² Ezekiel, son of man, tell the king of Tyre that I am saying: You are so arrogant that you think you're a god and that the city of Tyre is your throne. You may claim to be a god, though you're nothing but a mere human.

³ You think you're wiser than Daniel and know everything.

⁴ Your wisdom has certainly made you rich, because you have storehouses filled with gold and silver.

⁵ You're a clever businessman and are extremely wealthy, but your wealth has led to arrogance!

⁶ You compared yourself to a god, so now I, the LORD God,

⁷ will make you the victim of cruel enemies. They will destroy all the possessions you've worked so hard to get.

⁸ Your enemies will brutally kill you, and the sea will be your only grave.

⁹ When you face your enemies, will you still claim to be a god? They will attack, and you will suffer like any other human.

¹⁰ Foreigners will kill you, and you will die the death of those who don't worship me. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹¹ The LORD said:

¹² Ezekiel, son of man, sing a funeral song for the king of Tyre and tell him I am saying: At one time, you were perfect, intelligent, and good-looking.

¹³You lived in the garden of Eden and wore jewellery made of brightly-coloured gems and precious stones. They were all set in gold and were ready for you on the day you were born.

¹⁴I appointed a winged creature to guard your home on my holy mountain, where you walked among gems that dazzled like fire.

¹⁵You were truly good from the time of your birth, but later you started doing wicked things.

¹⁶You traded with other nations and became more and more cruel and evil. So I forced you to leave my mountain, and the creature that had been your protector now chased you away from the gems.

¹⁷It was your good looks that made you arrogant, and you were so famous that you started acting like a fool. That's why I threw you to the ground and let other kings sneer at you.

¹⁸You have cheated so many other merchants that your places of worship are corrupt. So I set your city on fire and burnt it down. Now everyone sees only ashes where your city once stood,

¹⁹and the people of other nations are shocked. Your punishment was horrible, and you are gone for ever.

²⁰The LORD said:

²¹Ezekiel, son of man, condemn the city of Sidon

²²and tell its people: I, the LORD God, am your enemy! People will praise me when I punish you, and they will see that I am holy.

²³I will send deadly diseases to wipe you out, and I will send enemies to invade and surround you. Your people will be killed, and you will know that I am the LORD.

²⁴When that happens, the people of Israel will no longer have cruel neighbours that abuse them and make them feel as though they are in a field of thorns and briers. And the Israelites will know that I, the LORD God, have done these things.

²⁵The LORD God said: Some day I will gather the people of Israel from the nations where they are now scattered, and every nation will see that I am holy. The Israelites will once again live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob.

²⁶They will be safe and will build houses and plant vineyards. They will no longer be in danger, because I will punish their hateful neighbours. Israel will know that I am the LORD their God.

29¹Ten years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, the LORD spoke to me on the twelfth day of the tenth month. He said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, condemn the king of Egypt. Tell him and his people

³that I am saying: King of Egypt, you were like a giant crocodile lying in a river. You acted as though you owned the Nile and made it for yourself. But now I, the LORD God, am your enemy!

⁴I will put a hook in your jaw and pull you out of the water, and all the fish in your river will stick to your scaly body.

⁵I'll throw you and the fish into the desert, and your body will fall on the hard ground. You will be left unburied, and wild animals and birds will eat your flesh.

⁶Then everyone in Egypt will know that I am the LORD. You and your nation

refused to help the people of Israel and were nothing more than a broken stick.

⁷When they reached out to you for support, you broke in half, cutting their arms and making them fall.

⁸So I, the LORD God, will send troops to attack you, king of Egypt. They will kill your people and livestock,

⁹until your land is a barren desert. Then you will know that I have done these things. You claimed that you made the River Nile and control it.

¹⁰Now I am turning against you and your river. Your nation will be nothing but an empty wasteland all the way from the town of Migdol in the north to Aswan in the south, and as far as the border of Ethiopia.

¹¹No human or animal will even dare travel through Egypt, because no sign of life will be found there for forty years.

¹²It will be the most barren place on earth. Every city in Egypt will lie in ruins during those forty years, and I will scatter your people throughout the nations of the world.

¹³Then after those forty years have passed, I will bring your people back from the places where I scattered them.

¹⁴They will once again live in their homeland in southern Egypt. But they will be a weak kingdom

¹⁵and won't ever be strong enough to rule nations, as they did in the past.

¹⁶My own people Israel will never again depend on your nation. In fact, when the Israelites remember what happened to you Egyptians, they will realize how wrong they were to turn to you for help. Then the Israelites will know that I, the LORD God, did these things.

¹⁷Twenty-seven years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, the LORD spoke to me on the first day of the first month. He said:

¹⁸King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia has attacked the city of Tyre. He forced his soldiers to carry so many heavy loads that their heads were rubbed bald, and their shoulders were red and sore. Nebuchadnezzar and his army still could not capture the city.

¹⁹ So now I will hand over the nation of Egypt to him. He will take Egypt's valuable treasures and give them to his own troops.

²⁰ Egypt will be his reward, because he and his army have been following my orders. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

²¹ Ezekiel, when Egypt is defeated, I will make the people of Israel strong, and I will give you the power to speak to them. Then they will know that I, the LORD, have done these things.

30¹ The LORD said:

² Ezekiel, son of man, tell the people of Egypt that I am saying: Cry out in despair,

³ because you will soon be punished! That will be a time of darkness and doom for all nations.

⁴ Your own nation of Egypt will be attacked, and Ethiopia will suffer. You will be killed in battle, and your land will be robbed and left in ruins.

⁵ Soldiers hired from Ethiopia, Libya, Lydia, Arabia, Kub, as well as from Israel, will die in that battle.

⁶ All your allies will be killed, and your proud strength will crumble. People will

die from Migdol in the north to Aswan in the south. I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁷Your nation of Egypt will be the most deserted place on earth, and its cities will lie in complete ruin.

⁸I will set fire to your land, and anyone who defended your nation will die. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁹On the same day I destroy Egypt, I will send messengers to the Ethiopians to announce their coming destruction. They think they are safe, but they will be terrified.

¹⁰Your Egyptian army is very strong, but I will send King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia to completely defeat that army.

¹¹He and his cruel troops will invade and destroy your land and leave your dead bodies piled everywhere.

¹²I will dry up the River Nile, then sell the land to evil buyers. I will send foreigners to turn your entire nation into a barren desert. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹³The LORD said to the people of Egypt: All the idols and images you Egyptians worship in the city of Memphis will be

smashed. No one will be left to rule your nation, and terror will fill the land.

¹⁴The city of Pathros will be left in ruins, and Zoan will be burnt to the ground. Thebes, your capital city, will also be destroyed!

¹⁵The fortress city of Pelusium will feel my fierce anger, and all the troops stationed at Thebes will be slaughtered.

¹⁶I will set fire to your nation of Egypt! The city of Pelusium will be in anguish. Thebes will fall, and the people of Memphis will live in constant fear.

¹⁷The young soldiers in the cities of Heliopolis and Bubastis will die in battle, and the rest of the people will be taken prisoner.

¹⁸You were so proud of your nation's power, but when I crush that power and kill that pride, darkness will fall over the city of Tahpanhes. A dark, gloomy cloud will cover the land as you are being led away into captivity.

¹⁹When I've finished punishing Egypt, you will know that I am the LORD.

²⁰Eleven years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, the LORD spoke

to me on the seventh day of the first month. He said:

²¹ Ezekiel, son of man, I, the LORD, have defeated the king of Egypt! I broke his arm, and no one has wrapped it or put it in a sling, so that it could heal and get strong enough to hold a sword.

²² So tell him that I am now his worst enemy. I will break both his arms the good one and the broken one! His sword will drop from his hand for ever,

²³ and I will scatter the Egyptians all over the world.

²⁴ I will strengthen the power of Babylonia's king and give him my sword to use against Egypt. I will also make the wounded king of Egypt powerless, and he will moan in pain and die in front of the Babylonian king. Then everyone on earth will know that I am the LORD.

²⁵ (30: 24)

²⁶ I will force the Egyptians to live as prisoners in foreign nations, and they will know that I, the LORD, have punished them.

31 ¹ Eleven years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia,

the LORD spoke to me on the first day of the third month. He said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, tell the king of Egypt and his people that I am saying: You are more powerful than anyone on earth. Now listen to this.

³There was once a cedar tree in Lebanon with large, strong branches reaching to the sky.

⁴This tree had plenty of water to help it grow tall, and nearby streams watered the other trees in the forest.

⁵But this tree towered over those other trees, and its branches grew long and thick.

⁶Birds built nests in its branches, and animals were born beneath it. People from all nations lived in the shade of this strong tree.

⁷It had beautiful, long branches, and its roots found water deep in the soil.

⁸None of the cedar trees in my garden of Eden were as beautiful as this tree; no tree of any kind had such long branches.

⁹I, the LORD, gave this tree its beauty, and I helped the branches grow strong. All other trees in Eden wanted to be just like it.

¹⁰King of Egypt, now listen to what I, the LORD God, am saying about that tree: The tree grew so tall that it reached the sky and became very proud and arrogant.

¹¹So I, the LORD God, will reject the tree and hand it over to a foreign ruler, who will punish it for its wickedness.

¹²Cruel foreigners will chop it down and leave it wherever it falls. Branches and broken limbs will be scattered over the mountains and in the valleys. The people living in the shade of those branches will go somewhere else.

¹³Birds will then nest on the stump of the fallen tree, and wild animals will trample its branches.

¹⁴Never again will any tree dare to grow as tall as this tree, no matter how much water it has. Every tree must die, just as humans die and go down to the world of the dead.

¹⁵On the day this tree dies and goes to the world below, I, the LORD God, will command rivers and streams to mourn its death. Every underground spring of water and every river will stop flowing. The mountains in Lebanon will

be covered with darkness as a sign of their sorrow, and all the trees in the forest will wither.

¹⁶This tree will crash to the ground, and I will send it to the world below. Then the nations of the earth will tremble. The trees from Eden and the choice trees from Lebanon are now in the world of the dead, and they will be comforted when this tree falls.

¹⁷Those people who found protection in its shade will also be sent to the world below, where they will join the dead.

¹⁸King of Egypt, all these things will happen to you and your people! You were like this tree at one time taller and stronger than anyone on earth. But now you will be chopped down, just as every tree in the garden of Eden must die. You will be sent down to the world of the dead, where you will join the godless and the other victims of violent death. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

32¹Twelve years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, the LORD spoke to me on the first day of the twelfth month. He said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, condemn the king of Egypt and tell him I am saying: You act like a lion roaming the earth; but you are nothing more than a crocodile in a river, churning up muddy water with your feet.

³King of Egypt, listen to me. I, the LORD God, will catch you in my net and let a crowd of foreigners drag you to shore.

⁴I will throw you into an open field, where birds and animals will come to feed on your body.

⁵I will spread your rotting flesh over the mountains and in the valleys,

⁶and your blood will flow throughout the land and fill up the streams.

⁷I will cover the whole sky and every star with thick clouds, so that the sun and moon will stop shining.

⁸The heavens will become black, leaving your country in total darkness. I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁹Foreign nations you have never heard of will be shocked when I tell them how I destroyed you.

¹⁰They will be horrified, and when I flash my sword in victory on the day of

your death, their kings will tremble in the fear of what could happen to them.

¹¹ The king of Babylonia is coming to attack you, king of Egypt!

¹² Your soldiers will be killed by the cruellest army in the world, and everything you take pride in will be crushed.

¹³ I will slaughter your cattle that graze by the river, and no people or livestock will be left to muddy its water.

¹⁴ The water will be clear, and streams will be calm. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

¹⁵ Egypt will become a barren wasteland, and no living thing will ever survive there. Then you and your people will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁶ This is your warning, and it will be used as a funeral song by foreign women to mourn the death of your people. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

¹⁷ On the fifteenth day of that same month, the LORD said:

¹⁸ Ezekiel, son of man, mourn for the Egyptians and condemn them to the world of the dead, where they will

be buried beside the people of other powerful nations.

¹⁹Say to them: You may be more beautiful than the people of other nations, but you will also die and join the godless in the world below.

²⁰You cannot escape! The enemy's sword is ready to slaughter every one of you.

²¹Brave military leaders killed in battle will gladly welcome you and your allies into the world of the dead.

²²The graves of soldiers from Assyria are there. They once terrified people, but they were killed in battle and now lie deep in the world of the dead.

²³ (32: 22)

²⁴The graves of soldiers from Elam are there. The very sight of those godless soldiers once terrified their enemies and made them panic. But now they are disgraced and ashamed as they lie in the world of the dead, beside others who were killed in battle.

²⁵ (32: 24)

²⁶The graves of soldiers from Meshech and Tubal are there. These godless

soldiers who terrified people were all killed in battle.

²⁷ They were not given a proper burial like the heroes of long ago, who were buried with their swords under their heads and with their shields over their bodies. These were the heroes who made their enemies panic.

²⁸ You Egyptians will be cruelly defeated, and you will be buried beside these other godless soldiers who died in battle.

²⁹ The graves of kings and leaders from Edom are there. They were powerful at one time. Now they are buried in the world of the dead with other godless soldiers killed in battle.

³⁰ The graves of the rulers of the north are there, as well as those of the Sidonians. Their powerful armies once terrified enemies. Now they lie buried in the world of the dead, where they are disgraced like other soldiers killed in battle.

³¹ The LORD God says: When your king of Egypt sees all these graves, he and his soldiers will be glad they are not the only ones suffering.

³²I sent him to terrify people all over the earth. But he and his army will be killed and buried beside other godless soldiers in the world of the dead. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

33 ¹The LORD said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, warn your people by saying: Some day, I, the LORD, may send an enemy to invade a country. And suppose its people choose someone to stand watch

³and to sound a warning signal when the enemy is seen coming.

⁴If any of these people hear the signal and ignore it, they will be killed in battle. But it will be their own fault, because they could have escaped if they had paid attention.

⁵(33: 4)

⁶But suppose the person watching fails to sound the warning signal. The enemy will attack and kill some of the sinful people in that country, and I, the LORD, will hold that person responsible for their death.

⁷Ezekiel, I have appointed you to stand watch for the people of Israel. So listen to what I say, then warn them for me.

⁸When I tell wicked people they will die because of their sins, you must warn them to turn from their sinful ways. But if you refuse to warn them, you are responsible for their death.

⁹If you do warn them, and they keep sinning, they will die because of their sins, and you will be innocent.

¹⁰The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, the people of Israel are complaining that the punishment for their sins is more than they can stand. They have lost all hope for survival, and they blame me.

¹¹Tell them that as surely as I am the living LORD God, I don't like to see wicked people die. I enjoy seeing them turn from their sins and live. So if the Israelites want to live, they must stop sinning and turn back to me.

¹²Tell them that when good people start sinning, all the good they did in the past cannot save them from being punished. And remind them that when wicked people stop sinning, their past sins will be completely forgiven, and they won't be punished.

¹³Suppose I promise good people that they will live, then later they start

sinning and believe they will be saved by the good they did in the past. These people will certainly be put to death because of their sins. Their good deeds will be forgotten.

¹⁴ Suppose I warn wicked people that they will die because of their sins, and they stop sinning and start doing right.

¹⁵ For example, they need to return anything they have taken as security for a loan and anything they have stolen. Then if they stop doing evil and start obeying my Law, they will live.

¹⁶ Their past sins will be forgiven, and they will live because they have done right.

¹⁷ Ezekiel, your people accuse me of being unfair. But they are the ones who are unfair.

¹⁸ If good people start doing evil, they will be put to death, because they have sinned.

¹⁹ And if wicked people stop sinning and start doing right, they will save themselves from punishment.

²⁰ But the Israelites still think I am unfair. So warn them that they will be punished for what they have done.

²¹ Twelve years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, a refugee who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me on the fifth day of the tenth month. He told me that the city had fallen.

²² The evening before this man arrived at my house, the LORD had taken control of me. So when the man came to me the next morning, I could once again speak.

²³ Then the LORD said:

²⁴ Ezekiel, son of man, the people living in the ruined cities of Israel are saying, Abraham was just one man, and the LORD gave him this whole land of Israel. There are many of us, and so this land must be ours.

²⁵ So, Ezekiel, tell them I am saying: How can you think the land is still yours? You eat meat with blood in it and worship idols. You commit murder

²⁶ and spread violence throughout the land. Everything you do is wicked; you are even unfaithful in marriage. And you claim the land is yours!

²⁷ As surely as I am the living LORD God, you people in the ruined cities will be killed in battle. Those of you

living in the countryside will be eaten by wild animals, and those hiding in caves and on rocky cliffs will die from deadly diseases.

²⁸I will make the whole country an empty wasteland and crush the power in which you take such pride. Even the mountains will be bare, and no one will try to cross them.

²⁹I will punish you because of your sins, and I will turn your nation into a barren desert. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

³⁰The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, the people with you in Babylonia talk about you when they meet by the city walls or in the doorways of their houses. They say, Let's ask Ezekiel what the LORD has said today.

³¹So they all come and listen to you, but they refuse to do what you tell them. They claim to be faithful, but they are forever trying to cheat others out of their money.

³²They treat you as though you were merely singing love songs or playing music. They listen, but don't do anything you say.

³³ Soon they will be punished, just as you warned, and they will know that a prophet has been among them.

34 ¹ The LORD God said:
² Ezekiel, son of man, Israel's leaders are like shepherds taking care of my sheep, the people of Israel. But I want you to condemn these leaders and tell them: I, the LORD God, say you shepherds of Israel are doomed! You take care of yourselves while ignoring my sheep.

³ You drink their milk and use their wool to make your clothes. Then you butcher the best ones for food. But you don't take care of the flock!

⁴ You have never protected the weak ones or healed the sick ones or bandaged those that get hurt. You let them wander off and never look for those that get lost. You are cruel and mean to my sheep.

⁵ They strayed in every direction, and because there was no shepherd to watch them, they were attacked and eaten by wild animals.

⁶ So my sheep were scattered across the earth. They roamed on hills and

mountains, without anyone even bothering to look for them.

⁷ Now listen to what I, the living LORD God, am saying to you shepherds. My sheep have been attacked and eaten by wild animals, because you refused to watch them. You never went looking for the lost ones, and you fed yourselves without feeding my sheep.

⁸ (34: 7)

⁹ So I, the LORD, will punish you! I will rescue my sheep from you and never let you be their shepherd again or butcher them for food. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁰ (34: 9)

¹¹ The LORD God then said: I will look for my sheep and take care of them myself,

¹² just as a shepherd looks for lost sheep. My sheep have been lost since that dark and miserable day when they were scattered throughout the nations. But I will rescue them

¹³ and bring them back from the foreign nations where they now live. I will be their shepherd and will let them graze on Israel's mountains and in the valleys and fertile fields.

¹⁴They will be safe as they feed on grassy meadows and green hills.

¹⁵I promise to take care of them and keep them safe,

¹⁶to look for those that are lost and bring back the ones that wander off, to bandage those that are hurt and protect the ones that are weak. I will also slaughter those that are fat and strong, because I always do right.

¹⁷The LORD God said to his sheep, the people of Israel: I will carefully watch each one of you to decide which ones are the strong sheep and which ones are weak.

¹⁸Some of you eat the greenest grass, then trample down what's left when you finish. Others drink clean water, then step in the water to make the rest of it muddy.

¹⁹That means my other sheep have nothing fit to eat or drink.

²⁰So I, the LORD God, will separate you strong sheep from the weak.

²¹You strong ones have used your powerful horns to chase off those that are weak,

²²but I will rescue them and no longer let them be ill-treated. I will separate the good from the bad.

²³After that, I will give you a shepherd from the family of my servant King David. All of you, both strong and weak, will have the same shepherd, and he will take good care of you.

²⁴He will be your leader, and I will be your God. I, the LORD, have spoken.

²⁵The LORD God said: The people of Israel are my sheep, and I solemnly promise that they will live in peace. I will chase away every wild animal from the desert and the forest, so my sheep will not be afraid.

²⁶They will live around my holy mountain, and I will bless them by sending more than enough rain

²⁷to make their trees produce fruit and their crops grow. I will set them free from slavery and let them live safely in their own land. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

²⁸Foreign nations will never again rob them, and wild animals will no longer kill and eat them. They will have nothing to fear.

²⁹I will make their fields produce large amounts of crops, so they will never again go hungry or be laughed at by foreigners.

³⁰Then everyone will know that I protect my people Israel. I, the LORD, make this promise.

³¹They are my sheep; I am their God, and I take care of them.

35 ¹The LORD said:

²Ezekiel, son of man, condemn the people of Edom

³and say to them: I, the LORD God, am now your enemy! And I will turn your nation into an empty wasteland,

⁴leaving your towns in ruins. Your land will be a desert, and then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁵People of Edom, not only have you been Israel's longtime enemy, you simply watched when disaster wiped out its people as punishment for their sins.

⁶And so, as surely as I am the living LORD God, you are guilty of murder and must be put to death.

⁷I will destroy your nation and kill anyone who travels through it.

⁸Dead bodies will cover your mountains and fill up your valleys,

⁹and your land will lie in ruins for ever. No one will live in your towns ever again. You will know that I am the LORD.

¹⁰You thought the nations of Judah and Israel belonged to you, and that you could take over their territory. But I am their God,

¹¹and as surely as I live, I will punish you for treating my people with anger and hatred. Then they will know that I, the LORD, am punishing you!

¹²And you will finally realize that I heard you laugh at their destruction and say their land was yours to take.

¹³You even insulted me, but I heard it all.

¹⁴Everyone on earth will celebrate when I destroy you,

¹⁵just as you celebrated when Israel was destroyed. Your nation of Edom will be nothing but a wasteland. Then everyone will know that I am the LORD.

36¹The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, tell the mountains of Israel

² that I, the LORD God, am saying:
Your enemies sneered and said that you
mountains belonged to them.

³ They ruined and crushed you from
every side, and foreign nations captured
and made fun of you.

⁴ So all you mountains and hills,
streams and valleys, listen to what I will
do. Your towns may now lie in ruins, and
nations may laugh and insult you.

⁵ But in my fierce anger, I will turn
against those nations, and especially the
Edomites, because they laughed at you
the loudest and took over your pasture
lands.

⁶ You have suffered long enough, and,
I, the LORD God, am very angry! Nations
have insulted you,

⁷ so I will now insult and disgrace them.
That is my solemn promise.

⁸ Trees will grow on you mountains of
Israel and produce fruit for my people,
because they will soon come home.

⁹ I will take care of you by ploughing
your soil and planting crops on your
fertile slopes.

¹⁰The people of Israel will return and rebuild your ruined towns and live in them.

¹¹Children will be born, and animals will give birth to their young. You will no longer be deserted as you are now, but you will be covered with people and treated better than ever. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

¹²I will bring my people Israel home, and they will live on you mountains, because you belong to them, and your fertile slopes will never again let them starve.

¹³It's true that you have been accused of not producing enough food and of letting your people starve.

¹⁴But I, the LORD, promise that you won't hear other nations laugh and sneer at you ever again. From now on, you will always produce plenty of food for your people. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

¹⁵(36: 14)

¹⁶The LORD said:

¹⁷Ezekiel, son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own country, they made the land unclean by the

way they behaved, just as a woman's monthly period makes her unclean.

¹⁸They committed murders and worshipped idols, which made the land even worse. So in my anger, I punished my people

¹⁹and scattered them throughout the nations, just as they deserved.

²⁰Wherever they went, my name was disgraced, because foreigners insulted my people by saying I had forced them out of their own land.

²¹I care what those foreigners think of me,

²²so tell the Israelites that I am saying: You have disgraced my holy name among the nations where you now live. So you don't deserve what I'm going to do for you. I will lead you home to bring honour to my name

²³and to show foreign nations that I am holy. Then they will know that I am the LORD God. I have spoken.

²⁴I will gather you from the foreign nations and bring you home.

²⁵I will sprinkle you with clean water, and you will be clean and acceptable to me. I will wash away everything that

makes you unclean, and I will remove your disgusting idols.

²⁶I will take away your stubborn heart and give you a new heart and a desire to be faithful. You will have only pure thoughts,

²⁷because I will put my Spirit in you and make you eager to obey my laws and teachings.

²⁸You will once again live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

²⁹I will protect you from anything that makes you unclean. Your fields will overflow with grain, and no one will starve.

³⁰Your trees will be filled with fruit, and crops will grow in your fields, so that you will never again feel ashamed for not having enough food.

³¹You will remember your evil ways and hate yourselves for what you've done.

³²People of Israel, I'm not doing these things for your sake. You sinned against me, and you must suffer shame and disgrace for what you have done. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

³³After I have made you clean, I will let you rebuild your ruined towns and let you live in them.

³⁴Your land will be ploughed again, and nobody will be able to see that it was once barren.

³⁵Instead, they will say that it looks as beautiful as the garden of Eden. They won't see towns lying in ruins, but they will see your strong cities filled with people.

³⁶Then the nearby nations that survive will know that I am the one who rebuilt the ruined places and replanted the barren fields. I, the LORD, make this promise.

³⁷I will once again answer your prayers, and I will let your nation grow until you are like a large flock of sheep.

³⁸The towns that now lie in ruins will be filled with people, just as Jerusalem was once filled with sheep to be offered as sacrifices during a festival. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

37¹ Some time later, I felt the LORD's power take control of me, and his Spirit carried me to a valley full of bones.

²The LORD showed me all around, and everywhere I looked I saw bones that were dried out.

³He said, Ezekiel, son of man, can these bones come back to life? I replied, LORD God, only you can answer that.

⁴He then told me to say: Dry bones, listen to what the LORD is saying to you,

⁵I, the LORD God, will put breath in you, and once again you will live.

⁶I will wrap you with muscles and skin and breathe life into you. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁷I did what the LORD said, but before I finished speaking, I heard a rattling noise. The bones were coming together!

⁸I saw muscles and skin cover the bones, but they had no life in them.

⁹The LORD said: Ezekiel, now say to the wind, The LORD God commands you to blow from every direction and to breathe life into these dead bodies, so they can live again.

¹⁰As soon as I said this, the wind blew among the bodies, and they came back to life! They all stood up, and there were enough to make a large army.

¹¹ The LORD said: Ezekiel, the people of Israel are like dead bones. They complain that they are dried up and that they have no hope for the future.

¹² So tell them, I, the LORD God, promise to open your graves and set you free. I will bring you back to Israel,

¹³ and when that happens, you will realize that I am the LORD.

¹⁴ My Spirit will give you breath, and you will live again. I will bring you home, and you will know that I have kept my promise. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁵ The LORD said:

¹⁶ Ezekiel, son of man, get a stick and write on it, The kingdom of Judah. Then get another stick and write on it, The kingdom of Israel.

¹⁷ Hold these two sticks end to end, so they look like one stick.

¹⁸ And when your people ask you what this means,

¹⁹ tell them that I, the LORD, will join together the stick of Israel and the stick of Judah. I will hold them in my hand, and they will become one.

²⁰ Hold these two sticks where they can be seen by everyone

²¹ and then say: I, the LORD God, will gather the people of Israel and bring them home from the foreign nations where they now live.

²² I will make them into one nation and let them once again live in the land of Israel. Only one king will rule them, and they will never again be divided into two nations.

²³ They will no longer worship idols and do things that make them unacceptable to me. I will wash away their sin and make them clean, and I will protect them from everything that makes them unclean. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

²⁴ Their king will always come from the family of my servant King David and will care for them like a shepherd. The people of Israel will faithfully obey my laws. They and their descendants will live in the land I gave my servant Jacob, just as their ancestors did.

²⁵ (37: 24)

²⁶ I solemnly promise to bless the people of Israel with unending peace. I will protect them and let them become a

powerful nation. My temple will stand in Israel for all time,

²⁷ and I will live among my people and be their God.

²⁸ Every nation on earth will know that my temple is in Israel and that I have chosen the Israelites to be my people.

38 ¹ The LORD said:

² Ezekiel, son of man, condemn Gog, that wicked ruler of the kingdoms of Meshech and Tubal in the land of Magog. Tell him:

³ I, the LORD God, am your enemy,

⁴ and I will make you powerless! I will put a hook in your jaw and drag away both you and your large army. You command cavalry troops that wear heavy armour and carry shields and swords.

⁵ Your army includes soldiers from Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya,

⁶ as well as from Gomer and Beth-Togarmah in the north. Your army is enormous!

⁷ So keep your troops prepared to fight,

⁸ because in a few years, I will command you to invade Israel, a country that was ruined by war. It was deserted for a long

time, but its people have returned from the foreign nations where they once lived. The Israelites now live in peace in the mountains of their own land.

⁹But you and your army will attack them like a fierce thunderstorm and surround them like a cloud.

¹⁰When that day comes, I know that you will have an evil plan

¹¹to take advantage of Israel, that weak and peaceful country where people live safely inside towns that have no walls or gates or locks.

¹²You will rob the people in towns that were once a pile of rubble. These people lived as prisoners in foreign nations, but they have returned to Israel, the most important place in the world, and they own livestock and property.

¹³The people of Sheba and Dedan, along with merchants from villages in southern Spain, will be your allies. They will want some of the silver and gold, as well as the livestock and property that your army takes from Israel.

¹⁴I, the LORD God, know that when you see my people Israel living in peace,

¹⁵you will lead your powerful cavalry from your kingdom in the north.

¹⁶You will attack my people like a storm-cloud that covers their land. I will let you invade my country Israel, so that every nation on earth will know that I, the LORD, am holy.

¹⁷The LORD said to Gog: Long ago, I made my prophets warn the people of Israel that some day I would send an enemy to attack them. You, Gog, are that enemy, and that day is coming.

¹⁸When you invade Israel, I will become furious,

¹⁹and in my anger I will send a terrible earthquake to shake Israel.

²⁰Every living thing on earth will tremble in fear of meevery fish and bird, every wild animal and reptile, and every human. Mountains will crumble, cliffs will fall, and cities will collapse.

²¹I, the LORD, will make the mountains of Israel turn against you. Your troops will be so terrified that they will attack each other.

²²I will strike you with diseases and punish you with death. You and your

army will be pounded with rainstorms, hailstones, and burning sulphur.

²³I will do these things to show the world that I, the LORD, am holy.

39¹The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, condemn Gog and tell him: You are the ruler of Meshech and Tubal, but I, the LORD, am your enemy!

²I will turn you around and drag you from the north until you reach the mountains of Israel.

³I will knock the bow out of your left hand and the arrows out of your right hand,

⁴and you and your army will die on those mountains. Then birds and wild animals will eat the flesh

⁵of your dead bodies left lying in open fields. I, the LORD, have spoken.

⁶I will set fire to the land of Magog and to those nations along the coast that think they are so secure, and they will know that I am the LORD.

⁷My people Israel will know me, and they will no longer disgrace my holy name. Everyone on earth will know that I am the holy LORD God of Israel.

⁸The day is coming when these things will happen, just as I have promised.

⁹When that day comes, the people in the towns of Israel will collect the weapons of their dead enemies. They will use these shields, bows and arrows, spears, and clubs as firewood, and there will be enough to last for seven years.

¹⁰They will burn these weapons instead of gathering sticks or chopping down trees. That's how the Israelites will take revenge on those who robbed and abused them. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹¹The LORD said: After Gog has been destroyed, I will bury him and his army in Israel, in Travellers' Valley, east of the Dead Sea. That graveyard will be so large that it will block the way of anyone who tries to walk through the valley, which will then be known as The Valley of Gog's Army.

¹²The Israelites will spend seven months burying dead bodies and cleaning up their land.

¹³Everyone will help with the burial, and they will be honoured for this on the day the brightness of my glory is seen.

¹⁴After those seven months, the people will appoint a group of men to look for any dead bodies left unburied. This must be done for seven months to make sure that the land is no longer unclean.

¹⁵Whenever they find a human bone, they will set up a marker next to it. Then the gravediggers will bury it in The Valley of Gog's Army

¹⁶near the town of Gog's Army. After that, the land will be pure again.

¹⁷Ezekiel, son of man, I am going to hold a feast on Israel's mountains and offer sacrifices there. So invite all the birds and wild animals to come from every direction and eat the meat of sacrifices and drink the blood. The birds and animals

¹⁸will feast on the bodies of warriors and foreign rulers that I will sacrifice like sheep, goats, and bulls.

¹⁹I want the birds and animals to eat until they are full and drink until they are drunk.

²⁰They will come to my table and stuff themselves with the flesh of horses and warriors of every kind. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

²¹ The LORD said: When I punish the nations of the earth, they will see the brightness of my glory.

²² The people of Israel will know from then on that I am the LORD their God.

²³ Foreign nations will realize that the Israelites were forced to leave their own land because they sinned against me. I turned my back on my people and let enemies attack and kill them.

²⁴ Their lives were wicked and corrupt, and they deserved to be punished.

²⁵ Now I will show mercy to the people of Israel and bring them back from the nations where they are living. They are Jacob's descendants, so I will bless them and show that I am holy.

²⁶ They will live safely in their own land, but will be ashamed when they remember their evil ways and how they disgraced me.

²⁷ Foreign nations will watch as I take the Israelites from enemy lands and bring them back home, and those nations will see that I am holy.

²⁸ My people will realize that I, the LORD their God, sent them away as

prisoners and now will bring them back to their own land.

²⁹Never again will I turn my back on the people of Israel, and my Spirit will live in them. I, the LORD, have spoken.

40¹Twenty-five years after King Jehoiachin and the rest of us had been led away as prisoners to Babylonia, and fourteen years after the Babylonians had captured Jerusalem, the LORD's power took control of me on the tenth day of the first month. The LORD showed me some visions in which I was carried to the top of a high mountain in Jerusalem. I looked to the south and saw what looked like a city full of buildings.

²(40: 1)

³In my vision the LORD took me closer, and I saw a man who was sparkling like polished bronze. He was standing near one of the gates and was holding a tape measure in one hand and a measuring stick in the other.

⁴The man said, Ezekiel, son of man, pay close attention to everything I'm going to show you that's why you've been brought here. Listen carefully, because

you must tell the people of Israel what you see.

⁵The first thing I saw was an outer wall that completely surrounded the temple area. The man took his measuring stick, which was three metres long, and measured the wall; it was three metres high and three metres thick.

⁶Then he went to the east gate, where he walked up steps that led to a long passageway. On each side of this passageway were three guardrooms, which were three metres square, and they were separated by walls two and a half metres thick. The man measured the distance between the opening of the gate and the first guardroom, and it was three metres, the thickness of the outer wall. At the far end of this passageway, I saw an entrance room that faced the courtyard of the temple itself. There was also a distance of three metres between the last guardroom and the entrance room

⁷ (40: 6)

⁸at the end of the passageway. The man measured this room: it was four metres from the doorway to the opposite

wall, and the distance from the doorway to the wall on either side was one metre.

⁹ (40: 8)

¹⁰ The three guardrooms on each side of the passageway were the same size, and the walls that separated them were the same thickness.

¹¹ Next, the man measured the width of the passageway, and it was six and a half metres, but the two doors of the gate were only five metres wide.

¹² In front of the guardrooms, which were three metres square, was a railing about fifty centimetres high and fifty centimetres thick.

¹³ The man measured the distance from the back wall of one of these rooms to the same spot in the room directly across the passageway, and it was twelve and a half metres.

¹⁴ He measured the entrance room at the far end of the passageway, and it was ten metres wide.

¹⁵ Finally, he measured the total length of the passageway, from the outer wall to the entrance room, and it was twenty-five metres.

¹⁶The three walls in the guardrooms had small windows in them, just like the ones in the entrance room. The walls along the passageway were decorated with carvings of palm trees.

¹⁷The man then led me through the passageway and into the outer courtyard of the temple, where I saw thirty rooms built around the outside of the courtyard. These side rooms were built against the outer wall, and in front of them was a pavement that circled the courtyard.

¹⁸This was known as the lower pavement, and it was twenty-five metres wide.

¹⁹I saw the gates that led to the inner courtyard of the temple and noticed that they were higher than those leading to the outer courtyard. The man measured the distance between the outer and inner gates, and it was fifty metres.

²⁰Next, the man measured the north gate that led to the outer courtyard.

²¹This gate also had three guardrooms on each side of a passageway. The measurements of these rooms, the walls between them, and the entrance room at the far end of the passageway

were exactly the same as those of the east gate. The north gate was also twenty-five metres long and twelve and a half metres wide,

²²and the windows, the entrance room, and the carvings of palm trees were just like those in the east gate. The entrance room also faced the courtyard of the temple and had seven steps leading up to it.

²³Directly across the outer courtyard was a gate that led to the inner courtyard, just as there was for the east gate. The man measured the distance between the outer and inner gate, and it was fifty metres.

²⁴The man then took me to the south gate. He measured the walls and the entrance room of this gate, and the measurements were exactly the same as those of the other two gates.

²⁵There were windows in the guardrooms of this gate and in the entrance room, just like the others, and this gate was also twenty-five metres long and twelve and a half metres wide.

²⁶Seven steps led up to the gate; the entrance room was at the far

end of the passageway and faced the courtyard of the temple. Carvings of palm trees decorated the walls along the passageway.

²⁷ And directly across the outer courtyard was a gate on the south side of the inner courtyard. The man measured the distance between the outer and inner gate, and it was also fifty metres.

²⁸ We then went into the inner courtyard, through the gate on the south side of the temple. The man measured the gate, and it was the same size as the gates in the outer wall.

²⁹ In fact, everything along the passageway was also the same size, including the guardrooms, the walls separating them, the entrance room at the far end, and the windows. This gate, like the others, was twenty-five metres long and twelve and a half metres wide.

³⁰ (40: 29)

³¹ The entrance room of this gate faced the outer courtyard, and carvings of palm trees decorated the walls of the passageway. Eight steps led up to this gate.

³²Next, we went through the east gate to the inner courtyard. The man measured this gate, and it was the same size as the others.

³³The guardrooms, the walls separating them, and its entrance room had the same measurements as the other gates. The guardrooms and the entrance room had windows, and the gate was twenty-five metres long and twelve and a half metres wide.

³⁴The entrance room faced the outer courtyard, and the walls in the passageway were decorated with carvings of palm trees. Eight steps also led up to this gate.

³⁵Then the man took me to the north gate. He measured it, and it was the same size as the others,

³⁶including the guardrooms, the walls separating them, and the entrance room. There were also windows in this gate. It was twenty-five metres long and twelve and a half metres wide,

³⁷and like the other inner gates, its entrance room faced the outer courtyard, and its walls were decorated

with carvings of palm trees. Eight steps also led up to this gate.

³⁸ Inside the entrance room of the north gate, I saw four tables, two on each side of the room, where the animals to be sacrificed were killed. Just outside this room was a small building used for washing the animals before they were offered as sacrifices to please the LORD or sacrifices for sin or sacrifices to make things right.

³⁹ (40: 38)

⁴⁰ Four more tables were in the outer courtyard, two on each side of the steps leading into the entrance room.

⁴¹ So there was a total of eight tables, four inside and four outside, where the animals were killed,

⁴² and where the meat was placed until it was sacrificed on the altar. Next to the tables in the entrance room were four stone tables fifty centimetres high and seventy-five centimetres square; the equipment used for killing the animals was kept on top of these tables. All around the walls of this room was a seventy-five-millimetre shelf.

⁴³ (40: 42)

⁴⁴ The man then took me to the inner courtyard, where I saw two buildings, one beside the inner gate on the north and the other beside the inner gate on the south.

⁴⁵ He said, The building beside the north gate belongs to the priests who serve in the temple,

⁴⁶ and the building beside the south gate belongs to those who serve at the altar. All of them are descendants of Zadok and are the only Levites allowed to serve as the LORD's priests.

⁴⁷ Now the man measured the inner courtyard; it was fifty metres square. I also saw an altar in front of the temple.

⁴⁸ We walked to the porch of the temple, and the man measured the doorway of the porch: it was seven metres long, two and a half metres wide, and the distance from the doorway to the wall on either side was one and a half metres.

⁴⁹ The porch itself was ten metres by six metres, with steps leading up to it. There was a column on each side of these steps.

41 ¹ Next we went into the main room of the temple. The man

measured the doorway of this room: it was three metres wide,

² five metres long, and the distance from the doorway to the wall on either side was two and a half metres. The main room itself was twenty metres by ten metres.

³ Then the man walked to the far end of the temple's main room and said, Beyond this doorway is the most holy place. He first measured the doorway: it was one metre wide, three metres long, and the distance from the doorway to the wall on either side was three and a half metres. Then he measured the most holy place, and it was ten metres square.

⁴ (41: 3)

⁵ The man measured the wall of the temple, and it was three metres thick. Storage rooms two metres wide were built against the outside of the wall.

⁶ There were three levels of rooms, with thirty rooms on each level, and they rested on ledges that were attached to the temple walls, so that nothing was built into the walls.

⁷ The walls of the temple were thicker at the bottom than at the top, which

meant that the storage rooms on the top level were wider than those on the bottom level. Steps led from the bottom level, through the middle level, and into the top level.

⁸The temple rested on a stone base three metres high, which also served as the foundation for the storage rooms.

⁹The outside walls of the storage rooms were two and a half metres thick; there was nothing between these walls

¹⁰and the nearest buildings ten metres away.

¹¹One door led into the storage rooms on the north side of the temple, and another door led to those on the south side. The stone base extended two and a half metres beyond the outside wall of the storage rooms.

¹²I noticed another building: it faced the west end of the temple and was thirty-five metres wide, forty-five metres long, and had walls over two and a half metres thick.

¹³The man measured the length of the temple, and it was fifty metres. He then measured from the back wall of the temple, across the open space behind

the temple, to the back wall of the west building; it was fifty metres.

¹⁴The distance across the front of the temple, including the open space on either side, was also fifty metres.

¹⁵Finally, the man measured the length of the west building, including the side rooms on each end, and it was also fifty metres. The inside walls of the temple's porch and main room

¹⁶were panelled with wood all the way from the floor to the windows, while the doorways, the small windows, and the three side rooms were trimmed in wood.

¹⁷The panelling stopped just above the doorway. These walls were decorated

¹⁸with carvings of winged creatures and had a carving of a palm tree between the creatures. Each winged creature had two faces: a human face looking at the palm tree on one side, and a lion's face looking at the palm tree on the other side. These designs were carved into the panelling all the way around the two rooms.

¹⁹(41:18)

²⁰(41:18)

²¹ The doorframe to the temple's main room was in the shape of a rectangle. In front of the doorway to the most holy place was something that looked like

²² a wooden altar. It was one and a half metres high and one metre square, and its corners, its base, and its sides were made of wood. The man said, This is a reminder that the LORD is constantly watching over his temple.

²³ Both the doorway to the main room of the temple and the doorway to the most holy place had two doors,

²⁴ and each door had two sections that could fold open.

²⁵ The doors to the main room were decorated with carvings of winged creatures and palm trees just like those on the walls, and there was a wooden covering over the porch just outside these doors.

²⁶ The walls on each side of this porch had small windows and were also decorated with carvings of palm trees.

42¹ After the man and I left the temple and walked back to the outer courtyard, he showed me a set of rooms on the north side of the west

building. This set of rooms was fifty metres long and twenty-five metres wide.

²(42:1)

³On one side of them was the ten metres of open space that ran beside the temple, and on the other side was the pavement that circled the outer courtyard. The rooms were arranged in three levels

⁴with doors that opened towards the north, and in front of them was a passage five metres wide and fifty metres long.

⁵The rooms on the top level were narrower than those on the middle level, and the rooms on the middle level were narrower than those on the bottom level.

⁶The rooms on the bottom level supported those on the two upper levels, and so these rooms did not have columns like other buildings in the courtyard.

⁷To the north was a screening wall twenty-five metres long,

⁸(42:7)

⁹and at the east end of this wall was the door leading from the courtyard to these rooms. There was also a set of

rooms on the south side of the west building.

¹⁰(42: 9)

¹¹These rooms were exactly like those on the north side, and they also had a passage in front of them.

¹²The door to these rooms was at the east end of the wall that stood in front of them.

¹³The man then said to me: These rooms on the north and south sides of the temple are the sacred rooms where the LORD's priests will eat the most holy offerings. These offerings include the grain sacrifices, the sacrifices for sin, and the sacrifices to make things right.

¹⁴When the priests are ready to leave the temple, they must go through these rooms before they return to the outer courtyard. They must leave their sacred clothes in these rooms and put on ordinary clothes before going anywhere near other people.

¹⁵After the man had finished measuring the buildings inside the temple area, he took me back through the east gate and measured the wall around this area.

¹⁶He used his measuring stick to measure the east side of this wall; it was two hundred and fifty-five metres long.

¹⁷Then he measured the north side, the south side, and the west side of the wall, and they were each two hundred and fifty-five metres long,

¹⁸(42: 17)

¹⁹(42: 17)

²⁰and so the temple area was a perfect square. The wall around this area separated what was sacred from what was ordinary.

43¹The man took me back to the east gate of the temple,

²where I saw the brightness of the glory of Israel's God coming from the east. The sound I heard was as loud as ocean waves, and everything around was shining with the dazzling brightness of his glory.

³This vision was like the one I had seen when God came to destroy Jerusalem and like the one I had seen near the River Chebar. I immediately bowed with my face to the ground,

⁴and the LORD's glory came through the east gate and into the temple.

⁵The LORD's Spirit lifted me to my feet and carried me to the inner courtyard, where I saw that the LORD's glory had filled the temple.

⁶The man was standing beside me, and I heard the LORD say from inside the temple:

⁷Ezekiel, son of man, this temple is my throne on earth. I will live here among the people of Israel for ever. They and their kings will never again disgrace me by worshipping idols at local shrines or by setting up memorials to their dead kings.

⁸Israel's kings built their palaces so close to my holy temple that only a wall separated them from me. Then these kings disgraced me with their evil ways, and in my fierce anger I destroyed them.

⁹But if the people and their kings stop worshipping other gods and tear down those memorials, I will live among them for ever.

¹⁰The people of Israel must suffer shame for sinning against me, so tell them about my holy temple. Let them think about it,

¹¹ then if they are truly sorry, describe for them the design and shape of the temple, the gates, the measurements, and how the buildings are arranged. Explain the regulations about worshipping there, then write down these things, so they can study and obey them.

¹² The temple area on my holy mountain must be kept sacred! This is the most important law about the temple.

¹³ According to the official standards, the altar in the temple had the following measurements: around the bottom of the altar was a gutter fifty centimetres wide and fifty centimetres deep, with a twenty-five-centimetre ledge on the outer rim.

¹⁴ The altar rested on a base and had three sections, each one of them square. The bottom section was eight metres on each side and one metre high. The middle section was seven metres on each side and two metres high, and it had a twenty-five-centimetre rim around its outer edge. The top section, which was six metres on each side and two metres high, was the place where sacrifices

were burnt, and the four corners of the top section looked like the horns of a bull. The steps leading up to the altar were on the east side.

¹⁵ (43: 14)

¹⁶ (43: 14)

¹⁷ (43: 14)

¹⁸ The LORD God said: Ezekiel, son of man, after the altar is built, it must be dedicated by offering sacrifices on it and by splattering it with blood. Here is what you must do:

¹⁹ the priests of the Levi tribe from the family of Zadok the priest are the only ones who may serve in my temple this is my law. So give them a young bull to slaughter as a sacrifice for sin.

²⁰ Take some of the animal's blood and smear it on the four corners of the altar, some on the corners of the middle section, and some more on the rim around its edge. That will purify the altar and make it fit for offering sacrifices to me.

²¹ Then take the body of the bull outside the temple area and burn it at the special place.

²²The next day, a goat that has nothing wrong with it must be offered as a sacrifice for sin. Purify the altar with its blood, just as you did with the blood of the bull.

²³Then choose a young bull and a young ram that have nothing wrong with them,

²⁴and bring them to my temple. The priests will sprinkle salt on them and offer them as sacrifices to please me.

²⁵Each day for the next seven days, you must offer a goat and a bull and a ram as sacrifices for sin. These animals must have nothing wrong with them.

²⁶The priests will purify the altar during those days, so that it will be acceptable to me and ready to use.

²⁷From then on, the priests will use this altar to offer sacrifices to please me and sacrifices to ask my blessing. Then I will be pleased with the people of Israel. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

44¹The man took me back to the outer courtyard, near the east gate of the temple area. I saw that the doors to this gate were closed.

²The LORD said: I, the LORD God of Israel, came through this gate, so it must remain closed for ever! No one must ever use it.

³The ruler of Israel may come here to eat a sacrificial meal that has been offered to me, but he must use only the entrance room of this gate.

⁴Then the man took me through the north gate to the front of the temple. I saw that the brightness of the LORD's glory had filled the temple, and I immediately bowed with my face to the ground.

⁵The LORD said: Ezekiel, son of man, I am going to give you the laws for my temple. So pay attention and listen carefully to what kind of people are allowed to come in the temple, and what kind are not.

⁶Tell those rebellious people of Israel: I, the LORD God, command you to stop your evil ways!

⁷My temple has been disgraced, because you have let godless, stubborn foreigners come here when sacrifices are being offered to me. You have sinned and have broken our solemn agreement.

⁸Instead of following the proper ways to worship me, you have put foreigners in charge of worship at my temple.

⁹And so I, the LORD God, say that no godless foreigner who disobeys me will be allowed in my temple. This includes any foreigner living in Israel.

¹⁰The LORD said: Some of the Levites turned their backs on me and joined the other people of Israel in worshipping idols. So these Levites must be punished!

¹¹They will still be allowed to serve me as temple workers by guarding the gates and by killing the animals to be sacrificed and by helping the worshippers.

¹²But because these Levites served the people of Israel when they worshipped idols, I, the LORD God, promise that the Levites will be punished. They did not stop the Israelites from sinning,

¹³and now I will no longer let the Levites serve as my priests or come near anything sacred to me. They must suffer shame and disgrace for their disgusting sins.

¹⁴They will be responsible for all the hard work that must be done in the temple.

¹⁵The LORD said: The priests of the Levi tribe who are descendants of Zadok the priest were faithful to me, even when the rest of the Israelites turned away. And so, these priests will continue to serve as my priests and to offer the fat and the blood of sacrifices.

¹⁶They will come into my temple, where they will offer sacrifices at my altar and lead others in worship.

¹⁷When they come to the inner courtyard, they must wear their linen priestly clothes. My priests must never wear anything made of wool when they are on duty in this courtyard or in the temple.

¹⁸Even their turbans and underwear must be made of linen to keep my priests from sweating when they work.

¹⁹And before they leave to join the other people in the outer courtyard, they must take off their priestly clothes, then place them in the sacred rooms and put on their ordinary clothes. That way, no one will touch their sacred clothes and be harmed.

²⁰Priests must never shave their heads when they are mourning. But they must

keep their hair properly trimmed and not let it grow too long.

²¹ They must not drink wine before going to the inner courtyard.

²² A priest must not marry a divorced woman; he can marry only a virgin from Israel or the widow of another priest.

²³ Priests must teach my people the difference between what is sacred and what is ordinary, and between what is clean and what is unclean.

²⁴ They will make decisions in difficult legal cases, according to my own laws. They must also observe the religious festivals my Law requires and must always respect the Sabbath.

²⁵ Touching a dead body will make a person unclean. So a priest must not go near a dead body, unless it is one of his parents or children, or his brother or unmarried sister.

²⁶ If a priest touches a dead body, he is unclean and must go through a ceremony to make himself clean. Then seven days later,

²⁷ he must go to the inner courtyard of the temple and offer a sacrifice for sin. After that, he may once again serve

as my priest. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

²⁸I myself will provide for my priests, and so they won't receive any land of their own.

²⁹Instead, they will receive part of the grain sacrifices, as well as part of the sacrifices for sin and sacrifices to make things right. They will also be given everything in Israel that has been completely dedicated to me.

³⁰The first part of every harvest will belong to the priests. They will also receive part of all special gifts and offerings the Israelites bring to me. And whenever any of my people bake bread, they will give their first loaf as an offering to the priests, and I will bless the homes of the people when they do this.

³¹Priests must not eat any bird or animal that dies a natural death or that has been killed by a wild animal.

45¹The LORD said: When the land of Israel is divided among the twelve tribes, you must set aside an area that will belong to me. This sacred area

will be twelve and a half kilometres long and ten kilometres wide.

²The temple will be on a piece of land two hundred and fifty-five metres square, and the temple will be completely surrounded by an open space twenty-five metres wide.

³I will give half of my sacred land, a section twelve and a half kilometres long and five kilometres wide, to the priests who serve in the temple. Their houses will be in this half, as well as my temple, which is the most sacred place of all.

⁴(45: 3)

⁵I will give the other half of my land to the Levites who work in my temple, and the towns where they will live will be there.

⁶Next to my sacred land will be an area twelve and a half kilometres long and three kilometres wide. This will belong to the people of Israel and will include the city of Jerusalem.

⁷The LORD said: The regions west and east of my sacred land and the city of Jerusalem will belong to the ruler of Israel. He will be given the region between the western edge of my land

and the Mediterranean Sea, and between the eastern edge of my land and the River Jordan. This will mean that the length of his property will be the same as the sections of land given to the tribes. This property will belong to every ruler of Israel, so they will always be fair to my people and will let them live peacefully in the land given to their tribes.

⁸(45: 7)

⁹The LORD God said: You leaders of Israel have robbed and cheated my people long enough! I want you to stop sinning and start doing what is right and fair. You must never again force my people off their own land. I, the LORD, have spoken.

¹⁰So from now on, you must use honest weights and measures.

¹¹The ephah will be the standard dry measure, and the bath will be the standard liquid measure. Their size will be based on the homer, which will equal ten ephahs or ten baths.

¹²The standard unit of weight will be the shekel. One shekel will equal twenty gerahs, and sixty shekels will equal one mina.

¹³ Leaders of Israel, the people must bring you one sixtieth of their grain harvests as offerings to me.

¹⁴ They will also bring one per cent of their olive oil. These things will be measured according to the bath, and ten baths is the same as one homer or one cor.

¹⁵ Finally, they must bring one sheep out of every two hundred from their flocks. These offerings will be used as grain sacrifices, as well as sacrifices to please me and those to ask my blessing. I, the LORD, will be pleased with these sacrifices and will forgive the sins of my people.

¹⁶ The people of Israel will bring you these offerings.

¹⁷ But during New Moon Festivals, Sabbath celebrations, and other religious feasts, you leaders will be responsible for providing animals for the sacrifices, as well as the grain and wine. All these will be used for the sacrifices for sin, the grain sacrifices, the sacrifices to please me, and those to ask my blessing. I will be pleased and will forgive the sins of my people.

¹⁸The LORD God said: On the first day of the first month, a young bull that has nothing wrong with it must be offered as a sacrifice to purify the temple.

¹⁹The priest will take some blood from this sacrifice and smear it on the doorposts of the temple, as well as on the four corners of the altar and on the doorposts of the gates that lead into the inner courtyard.

²⁰The same ceremony must also be done on the seventh day of the month, so that anyone who sins accidentally or without knowing it will be forgiven, and so that my temple will remain holy.

²¹Beginning on the fourteenth day of the first month, and continuing for seven days, everyone will celebrate Passover and eat bread made without yeast.

²²On the first day, the ruler will bring a bull to offer as a sacrifice for his sins and for the sins of the people.

²³Each day of the festival he is to bring seven bulls and seven rams as sacrifices to please me, and he must bring a goat as a sacrifice for sin. These animals must have nothing wrong with them.

²⁴ He will also provide nine kilogrammes of grain and three litres of olive oil to be offered with each bull and each ram.

²⁵ The Festival of Shelters will begin on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and will continue for seven days. On each day of this festival, the ruler will provide the same number of animals that he did each day during Passover, as well as the same amount of grain and olive oil for the sacrifices.

46 ¹ The LORD said: The east gate of the inner courtyard must remain closed during the six working days of each week. But on the Sabbath and on the first day of the month, this gate will be opened.

² Israel's ruler will go from the outer courtyard into the entrance room of this gate and stand in the doorway while the priest offers sacrifices to ask my blessing and sacrifices to please me. The ruler will bow with his face to the ground to show that he has worshipped me. Then he will leave, and the gate will remain open until evening.

³ Each Sabbath and on the first day of each month, the people of Israel must

also come to the east gate and worship me.

⁴On the Sabbath, the ruler will bring six lambs and one ram to be offered as sacrifices to please me. There must be nothing wrong with any of these animals.

⁵With the ram, he is to offer nine kilogrammes of grain, and with each of the lambs, he can offer as much as he wants. He must also offer three litres of olive oil with every nine kilogrammes of grain.

⁶The ruler is to bring six lambs, a bull, and a ram to be offered as sacrifices at the New Moon Festival. There must be nothing wrong with any of these animals.

⁷With the bull and the ram, he is to offer nine kilogrammes of grain, and with each of the lambs, he can offer as much as he wants. He must also offer three litres of olive oil with every nine kilogrammes of grain.

⁸The ruler must come through the entrance room of the east gate and leave the same way.

⁹When my people come to worship me during any festival, they must always leave by the opposite gate from which

they came: those who come in the north gate must leave by the south gate, and those who come in the south gate must leave by the north gate.

¹⁰Their ruler will come in at the same time they do and leave at the same time they leave.

¹¹At all other festivals and celebrations, nine kilogrammes of grain will be offered with a bull, and nine kilogrammes will be offered with a ram. The worshippers can offer as much grain as they want with each lamb. Three litres of olive oil must be offered with every nine kilogrammes of grain.

¹²If the ruler voluntarily offers a sacrifice to please me or to ask my blessing, the east gate of the inner courtyard will be opened for him. He will offer his sacrifices just as he does on each Sabbath; then he will leave, and the gate will be closed.

¹³Each morning a year-old lamb that has nothing wrong with it must be offered as a sacrifice to please me.

¹⁴Along with it, two kilogrammes of fine flour mixed with a litre of olive oil

must be offered as a grain sacrifice. This law will never change

¹⁵ the lamb, the flour, and the olive oil will be offered to me every morning for all time.

¹⁶ The LORD God said: If the ruler of Israel gives some of his land to one of his children, it will belong to the ruler's child as part of the family property.

¹⁷ But if the ruler gives some of his land to one of his servants, the land will belong to the servant until the Year of Celebration, when it will be returned to the ruler. Only the ruler's children can keep what is given to them.

¹⁸ The ruler must never abuse my people by taking land from them. Any land he gives his children must already belong to him.

¹⁹ The man who was showing me the temple then took me back to the inner courtyard. We walked to the south side of the courtyard and stopped at the door to the sacred rooms that belonged to the priests. He showed me more rooms at the western edge of the courtyard

²⁰ and said, These are the kitchens where the priests must boil the meat to

be offered as sacrifices to make things right and as sacrifices for sin. They will also bake the grain for sacrifices in these kitchens. That way, these sacred offerings won't have to be carried through the outer courtyard, where someone could accidentally touch them and be harmed.

²¹ We went back to the outer courtyard and walked past the four corners.

²² At each corner I saw a smaller courtyard, twenty metres long and fifteen metres wide.

²³ Around the inside of these smaller courtyards was a low wall of stones, and against the wall were places to build fires.

²⁴ The man said, These are the kitchens where the temple workers will boil the meat that worshippers offer as sacrifices.

47 ¹ The man took me back to the temple, where I saw a stream flowing from under the entrance. It began in the south part of the temple, where it ran past the altar and continued east through the courtyard.

² We walked out of the temple area through the north gate and went around

to the east gate. I saw the small stream of water flowing east from the south side of the gate.

³The man walked east, then took out his measuring stick and measured five hundred metres downstream. He told me to wade through the stream there, and the water came up to my ankles.

⁴Then he measured another five hundred metres downstream, and told me to wade through it there. The water came up to my knees. Another five hundred metres downstream the water came up to my waist.

⁵Another five hundred metres downstream, the stream had become a river that could be crossed only by swimming.

⁶The man said, Ezekiel, son of man, pay attention to what you've seen. We walked to the river bank,

⁷where I saw dozens of trees on each side.

⁸The man said: This water flows eastwards to the valley of the River Jordan and empties into the Dead Sea, where it turns the salt water into fresh water.

⁹Wherever this water flows, there will be all kinds of animals and fish, because it will bring life and fresh water to the Dead Sea.

¹⁰From En-Gedi to Eneglaim, people will fish in the sea and dry their nets along the coast. There will be as many kinds of fish in the Dead Sea as there are in the Mediterranean Sea.

¹¹But the marshes along the shore will remain salty, so that people can use the salt from them.

¹²Fruit trees will grow all along this river and produce fresh fruit every month. The leaves will never dry out, because they will always have water from the stream that flows from the temple, and they will be used for healing people.

¹³The LORD God said to the people of Israel: When the land is divided among the twelve tribes of Israel, the Joseph tribe will receive two shares. Divide the land equally, because I promised your ancestors that this land would some day belong to their descendants. These are the borders of the land:

¹⁴(47:13)

¹⁵The northern border will begin at the Mediterranean Sea, then continue eastward to Hethlon, to Lebo-Hamath, then across to Zedad,

¹⁶Berothah, and Sibraim, which is on the border between the two kingdoms of Damascus and Hamath. The border will end at Hazer-Hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran.

¹⁷So the northern border will run between the Mediterranean Sea and Hazar-Enon, which is on the border between Damascus and Hamath.

¹⁸The eastern border will begin on the border between the two kingdoms of Hauran and Damascus. It will run south along the River Jordan, which separates the territories of Gilead and Israel, and it will end at the Dead Sea near the town of Tamar.

¹⁹The southern border will begin at Tamar, then run south-west to the springs near Meribath-Kadesh. It will continue along the Egyptian Gorge and will end at the Mediterranean Sea.

²⁰The western border will run north along the Mediterranean Sea to a point just west of Lebo-Hamath.

²¹ That is the land to be divided among the tribes of Israel.

²² It will belong to the Israelites and to any foreigners living among them whose children were born in Israel. These foreigners must be treated like any other Israelite citizen, and they will receive

²³ a share of the land given to the tribe where they live. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

48¹ The LORD said: Each tribe will receive a section of land that runs from the eastern border of Israel west to the Mediterranean Sea. The northern border of Israel will run along the towns of Hethlon and Lebo-Hamath, and will end at Hazar-Enon, which is on the border between the kingdoms of Damascus and Hamath. The tribes will receive their share of land in the following order, from north to south: Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah.

² (48: 1)

³ (48: 1)

⁴ (48: 1)

⁵ (48: 1)

⁶ (48: 1)

⁷ (48: 1)

⁸The LORD said: South of Judah's territory will be a special section of land. Its length will be twelve and a half kilometres, and its width will run from the eastern border of Israel west to the Mediterranean Sea. My temple will be in this section of land.

⁹An area in the centre of this land will belong to me. It will be twelve and a half kilometres long and ten kilometres wide.

¹⁰I, the LORD, will give half of my sacred land to the priests. Their share will be twelve and a half kilometres long and five kilometres wide, and my temple will be right in the middle.

¹¹Only priests who are descendants of Zadok will receive a share of this sacred land, because they remained faithful to me when the Levites and the rest of the Israelites started sinning.

¹²The land belonging to the priests will be the most sacred area and will lie south of the area that belongs to the Levites.

¹³I will give the other half of my sacred land to the Levites. Their share will also

be twelve and a half kilometres long and five kilometres wide,

¹⁴and they must never sell or trade any of this land; it is the best land and belongs to me.

¹⁵South of my sacred land will be a section twelve and a half kilometres long and three kilometres wide. It will not be sacred, but will belong to the people of Israel and will include the city of Jerusalem, together with its houses and pasture land.

¹⁶The city will be a square: each side will be two kilometres long,

¹⁷and an open area one hundred and twenty-five metres wide will surround the city.

¹⁸The land on the east and west sides of the city boundaries will be farmland for the people of Jerusalem; both sections will be five kilometres long and three kilometres wide.

¹⁹People from the city will farm the land, no matter which tribe they belong to.

²⁰And so the centre of this special section of land will be for my sacred land, as well as for the city and its property.

The land will be a square, twelve and a half kilometres on each side.

²¹ The regions east and west of this square of land will belong to the ruler of Israel. His property will run east to the River Jordan and west to the Mediterranean Sea. In the very centre of his property will be my sacred land, as well as the temple,

²² together with the share belonging to the Levites and the city of Jerusalem. The northern border of the ruler's property will be the land that belongs to Judah, and the southern border will be the land that belongs to Benjamin.

²³ The LORD God said: South of this special section will be the land that belongs to the rest of Israel's tribes. Each tribe will receive a section of land that runs from the eastern border of Israel west to the Mediterranean Sea. The tribes will receive their share of land in the following order, from north to south: Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad.

²⁴ (48: 23)

²⁵ (48: 23)

²⁶ (48: 23)

²⁷ (48: 23)

²⁸ Gad's southern border is also the southern border of Israel. It will begin at the town of Tamar, then run south-west to the springs near Meribath-Kadesh. It will continue along the Egyptian Gorge and end at the Mediterranean Sea.

²⁹ That's how the land of Israel will be divided among the twelve tribes. I, the LORD God, have spoken.

³⁰ The LORD said: The city of Jerusalem will have twelve gates, three on each of the four sides of the city wall. These gates will be named after the twelve tribes of Israel. The gates of Reuben, Judah, and Levi will be in the north; Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan will be in the east; Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun will be in the south; Gad, Asher, and Naphtali will be in the west. Each side of the city wall will be two kilometres long,

³¹ (48: 30)

³² (48: 30)

³³ (48: 30)

³⁴ (48: 30)

³⁵ and so the total length of the wall will be ten kilometres. The new name of the city will be The-LORD-Is-Here!

Daniel

1 ¹ In the third year that Jehoiakim was king of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia attacked Jerusalem.

² The Lord let Nebuchadnezzar capture Jehoiakim and take away some of the things used in God's temple. And when the king returned to Babylonia, he put these things in the temple of his own god.

³ One day the king ordered Ashpenaz, his highest palace official, to choose some young men from the royal family of Judah and from other leading Jewish families.

⁴ The king said, They must be healthy, handsome, clever, wise, educated, and fit to serve in the royal palace. Teach them how to speak and write our language

⁵ and give them the same food and wine that I am served. Train them for three years, and then they can become court officials.

⁶Four of the young Jews chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, all from the tribe of Judah.

⁷But the king's chief official gave them Babylonian names: Daniel became Belteshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshach, and Azariah became Abednego.

⁸Daniel made up his mind to eat and drink only what God had approved for his people to eat. And he asked the king's chief official for permission not to eat the food and wine served in the royal palace.

⁹God had made the official friendly and kind to Daniel.

¹⁰But the man still told him, The king has decided what you must eat and drink. And I am afraid he will kill me, if you eat something else and end up looking worse than the other young men.

¹¹The king's official had put a guard in charge of Daniel and his three friends. So Daniel said to the guard,

¹²For the next ten days, let us have only vegetables and water at mealtimes.

¹³When the ten days are up, compare how we look with the other young men, and decide what to do with us.

¹⁴The guard agreed to do what Daniel had asked.

¹⁵Ten days later, Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better than the young men who had been served food from the royal palace.

¹⁶After this, the guard let them eat vegetables instead of the rich food and wine.

¹⁷God made the four young men clever and wise. They read a lot of books and became well educated. Daniel could also tell the meaning of dreams and visions.

¹⁸At the end of the three-year period set by King Nebuchadnezzar, his chief palace official brought all the young men to him.

¹⁹The king interviewed them and discovered that none of the others were as outstanding as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they were given positions in the royal court.

²⁰From then on, whenever the king asked for advice, he found their wisdom was ten times better than that of any of his other advisers and magicians.

²¹Daniel served there until the first year of King Cyrus.

2¹ During the second year that Nebuchadnezzar was king, he had such horrible nightmares that he could not sleep.

² So he called in his counsellors, advisers, magicians, and wise men,

³ and said, I am disturbed by a dream that I don't understand, and I want you to explain it.

⁴ They answered in Aramaic, Your Majesty, we hope you live for ever! We are your servants. Please tell us your dream, and we will explain what it means.

⁵ But the king replied, No! I have made up my mind. If you don't tell me both the dream and its meaning, you will be chopped to pieces and your houses will be torn down.

⁶ However, if you do tell me both the dream and its meaning, you will be greatly rewarded and highly honoured. Now tell me the dream and explain what it means.

⁷ Your Majesty, they said, if you will only tell us your dream, we will interpret it for you.

⁸The king replied, You're just stalling for time,

⁹because you know what's going to happen if you don't come up with the answer. You've decided to make up a pack of lies, hoping I might change my mind. Now tell me the dream, and that will prove that you can interpret it.

¹⁰His advisers explained, Your Majesty, you are demanding the impossible! No king, not even the most famous and powerful, has ever ordered his advisers, magicians, or wise men to do such a thing.

¹¹It can't be done, except by the gods, and they don't live here on earth.

¹²This made the king so angry that he gave orders for every wise man in Babylonia to be put to death, including Daniel and his three friends.

¹³(2: 12)

¹⁴Arioach was the king's official in charge of putting the wise men to death. He was on his way to have it done, when Daniel very wisely went to him

¹⁵and asked, Why did the king give such cruel orders? After Arioach explained what had happened,

¹⁶ Daniel rushed off and said to the king, If you will just give me some time, I'll explain your dream.

¹⁷ Daniel returned home and told his three friends.

¹⁸ Then he said, Pray that the God who rules from heaven will be merciful and explain this mystery, so that we and the others won't be put to death.

¹⁹ In a vision one night, Daniel was shown the dream and its meaning. Then he praised the God who rules from heaven:

²⁰ Our God, your name will be praised for ever and for ever. You are all-powerful, and you know everything.

²¹ You control human events you give rulers their power and take it away, and you are the source of wisdom and knowledge.

²² You explain deep mysteries, because even the dark is light to you.

²³ You are the God who was worshipped by my ancestors. Now I thank you and praise you for making me wise and telling me the king's dream, together with its meaning.

²⁴ Daniel went back to Arioch, the official in charge of executing the wise men. Daniel said, Don't kill those men! Take me to the king, and I will explain the meaning of his dream.

²⁵ Arioch rushed Daniel to the king and announced, Your Majesty, I have found out that one of the men brought here from Judah can explain your dream.

²⁶ The king asked Daniel, Can you tell me my dream and what it means?

²⁷ Daniel answered: Your Majesty, not even the cleverest person in all the world can do what you are demanding.

²⁸ But the God who rules from heaven can explain mysteries. And while you were sleeping, he showed you what will happen in the future.

²⁹ (2: 28)

³⁰ However, you must realize that these mysteries weren't explained to me because I am cleverer than everyone else. Instead, it was done so that you would understand what you have seen.

³¹ Your Majesty, what you saw standing in front of you was a huge and terrifying statue, shining brightly.

³² Its head was made of gold, its chest and arms were silver, and from its waist down to its knees, it was bronze.

³³ From there to its ankles it was iron, and its feet were a mixture of iron and clay.

³⁴ As you watched, a stone was cut from a mountain but not by human hands. The stone struck the feet, completely shattering the iron and clay.

³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed and blown away without a trace, like husks of wheat at threshing time. But the stone became a tremendous mountain that covered the entire earth.

³⁶ That was the dream, and now I'll tell you what it means.

³⁷ Your Majesty, you are the greatest of kings, and God has highly honoured you with power

³⁸ over all humans, animals, and birds. You are the head of gold.

³⁹ After you are gone, another kingdom will rule, but it won't be as strong. Then it will be followed by a kingdom of bronze that will rule the whole world.

⁴⁰Next, a kingdom of iron will come to power, crushing and shattering everything.

⁴¹This fourth kingdom will be dividedit will be both strong and brittle, just as you saw that the feet and toes were a mixture of iron and clay.

⁴²(2: 41)

⁴³This kingdom will be the result of a marriage between kingdoms, but it will crumble, just as iron and clay don't stick together.

⁴⁴During the time of those kings, the God who rules from heaven will set up an eternal kingdom that will never fall. It will be like the stone that was cut from the mountain, but not by human handsthe stone that crushed the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. Your Majesty, in your dream the great God has told you what is going to happen, and you can trust this interpretation.

⁴⁵(2: 44)

⁴⁶King Nebuchadnezzar bowed low to the ground and worshipped Daniel. Then he gave orders for incense to be burnt and a sacrifice of grain to be offered in honour of Daniel.

⁴⁷ The king said, Now I know that your God is above all other gods and kings, because he gave you the power to explain this mystery.

⁴⁸ The king then presented Daniel with a lot of gifts; he promoted him to governor of Babylon Province and put him in charge of the other wise men.

⁴⁹ At Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to high positions in Babylon Province, and he let Daniel stay on as a palace official.

3¹ King Nebuchadnezzar ordered a gold statue to be built twenty-seven metres high and nearly three metres wide. He had it set up in Dura Valley near the city of Babylon,

² and he commanded his governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, and his other officials to come from everywhere in his kingdom to the dedication of the statue.

³ So all of them came and stood in front of it.

⁴ Then an official stood up and announced: People of every nation and race, now listen to the king's command!

⁵Trumpets, flutes, harps, and all other kinds of musical instruments will soon start playing. When you hear the music, you must bow down and worship the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

⁶Anyone who refuses will at once be thrown into a flaming furnace.

⁷As soon as the people heard the music, they bowed down and worshipped the gold statue that the king had set up.

⁸Some Babylonians used this as a chance to accuse the Jews to King Nebuchadnezzar.

⁹They said, Your Majesty, we hope you live for ever!

¹⁰You commanded everyone to bow down and worship the gold statue when the music played.

¹¹And you said that anyone who did not bow down and worship it would be thrown into a flaming furnace.

¹²Sir, you appointed three men to high positions in Babylon Province, but they have disobeyed you. Those Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refuse to worship your gods and the statue you have set up.

¹³ King Nebuchadnezzar was furious. So he sent for the three young men and said,

¹⁴ I hear that you refuse to worship my gods and the gold statue I have set up.

¹⁵ Now I am going to give you one more chance. If you bow down and worship the statue when you hear the music, everything will be all right. But if you don't, you will at once be thrown into a flaming furnace. No god can save you from me.

¹⁶ The three men replied, Your Majesty, we don't need to defend ourselves.

¹⁷ The God we worship can save us from you and your flaming furnace.

¹⁸ But even if he doesn't, we still won't worship your gods and the gold statue you have set up.

¹⁹ Nebuchadnezzar's face twisted with anger at the three men. And he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual.

²⁰ Next, he commanded some of his strongest soldiers to tie up the men and throw them into the flaming furnace.

²¹ The king wanted it done at that very moment. So the soldiers tied up

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and threw them into the flaming furnace with all their clothes still on, including their turbans. The fire was so hot that flames leaped out and killed the soldiers.

²² (3: 21)

²³ (3: 21)

²⁴ Suddenly the king jumped up and shouted, Weren't only three men tied up and thrown into the fire? Yes, Your Majesty, the people answered.

²⁵ But I see four men walking around in the fire, the king replied. None of them is tied up or harmed, and the fourth one looks like a god.

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar went closer to the flaming furnace and said to the three young men, You servants of the Most High God, come out at once! They came out,

²⁷ and the king's high officials, governors, and advisers all crowded around them. The men were not burnt, their hair wasn't scorched, and their clothes didn't even smell like smoke.

²⁸ King Nebuchadnezzar said: Praise their God for sending an angel to rescue his servants! They trusted their God and

refused to obey my commands. Yes, they chose to die rather than to worship or serve any god except their own.

²⁹And I won't allow people of any nation or race to say anything against their God. Anyone who does will be chopped up and their houses will be torn down, because no other god has such great power to save.

³⁰After this happened, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in Babylon Province.

4¹ King Nebuchadnezzar sent the following letter to the people of all nations and races on the earth: Greetings to all of you!

²I am glad to tell about the wonderful miracles God Most High has done for me.

³His miracles are mighty and marvellous. He will rule for ever, and his kingdom will never end.

⁴I was enjoying a time of peace and prosperity,

⁵when suddenly I had some horrifying dreams and visions.

⁶Then I commanded every wise man in Babylonia to appear in my court, so they could explain the meaning of my dream.

⁷After they arrived, I told them my dream, but they were not able to say what it meant.

⁸Finally, a young man named Daniel came in, and I told him the dream. The holy gods had given him special powers, and I had renamed him Belteshazzar after my own god.

⁹I said, Belteshazzar, not only are you the wisest of all advisers and counsellors, but the holy gods have given you special powers to solve the most difficult mysteries. So listen to what I dreamed and tell me what it means:

¹⁰In my sleep I saw a very tall tree in the centre of the world.

¹¹It grew stronger and higher, until it reached to heaven and could be seen from anywhere on earth.

¹²It was covered with leaves and heavy with fruit enough for all nations. Wild animals enjoyed its shade, birds nested in its branches, and all creatures on earth lived on its fruit.

¹³While I was in bed, having this vision, a holy angel came down from heaven

¹⁴and shouted: Chop down the tree and cut off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Make the animals leave its shade and send the birds flying from its branches.

¹⁵But leave its stump and roots in the ground, surrounded by grass and held by chains of iron and bronze. Make sure that this ruler lives like the animals out in the open fields, unprotected from the dew.

¹⁶Give him the mind of a wild animal for seven long years.

¹⁷This punishment is given at the command of the holy angels. It will show to all who live that God Most High controls all kingdoms and chooses for their rulers persons of humble birth.

¹⁸Daniel, that was the dream that none of the wise men in my kingdom were able to understand. But I am sure that you will understand what it means, because the holy gods have given you some special powers.

¹⁹For a while, Daniel was terribly confused and worried by what he was

thinking. But I said, Don't be bothered either by the dream or by what it means. Daniel replied: Your Majesty, I wish the dream had been against your enemies.

²⁰You saw a tree that grew so big and strong that it reached up to heaven and could be seen from anywhere on earth.

²¹Its leaves were beautiful, and it produced enough fruit for all living creatures; animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches.

²²Your Majesty, that tree is you. Your glorious reputation has reached heaven, and your kingdom covers the earth.

²³Then you saw a holy angel come down from heaven and say, Chop down the tree and destroy it! But leave its stump and roots in the ground, fastened there by a chain of iron and bronze. Let it stay for seven years out in the field with the wild animals, unprotected from the dew.

²⁴Your Majesty, God Most High has sent you this message, and it means

²⁵that you will be forced to live with the wild animals, far away from humans. You will eat grass like a wild animal and live outdoors for seven years, until you learn

that God Most High controls all earthly kingdoms and chooses their rulers.

²⁶ But he gave orders not to disturb the stump and roots. This is to show that you will be king once again, after you learn that the God who rules from heaven is in control.

²⁷ Your Majesty, please be willing to do what I say. Turn from your sins and start living right; have mercy on those who are ill-treated. Then all will go well with you for a long time.

²⁸ About twelve months later, I was walking on the flat roof of my royal palace and admiring the beautiful city of Babylon, when these things started happening to me. I was saying to myself, Just look at this wonderful capital city that I have built by my own power and for my own glory!

²⁹ (4: 28)

³⁰ (4: 28)

³¹ But before I could finish speaking, a voice from heaven interrupted: King Nebuchadnezzar, this kingdom is no longer yours.

³² You will be forced to live with the wild animals, away from people. For seven

years you will eat grass, as though you were an ox, until you learn that God Most High is in control of all earthly kingdoms and that he is the one who chooses their rulers.

³³This was no sooner said than done! I was forced to live like a wild animal; I ate grass and was unprotected from the dew. As time went by, my hair grew longer than eagle feathers, and my fingernails looked like the claws of a bird.

³⁴Finally, I prayed to God in heaven, and my mind was healed. Then I said: I praise and honour God Most High. He lives for ever, and his kingdom will never end.

³⁵To him the nations are far less than nothing; God controls the stars in the sky and everyone on this earth. When God does something, we cannot change it or even ask why.

³⁶At that time my mind was healed, and once again I became the ruler of my glorious kingdom. My advisers and officials returned to me, and I had greater power than ever before.

³⁷That's why I say: Praise and honour the King who rules from heaven!

Everything he does is honest and fair, and he can shatter the power of those who are proud.

5¹ One evening, King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his highest officials, and he drank wine with them.

² He got drunk and ordered his servants to bring in the gold and silver cups his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Belshazzar wanted the cups, so that he and all his wives and officials could drink from them.

³ When the gold cups were brought in, everyone at the banquet drank from them and praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

⁴ (5: 3)

⁵ Suddenly a human hand was seen writing on the plaster wall of the palace. The hand was just behind the lampstand, and the king could see it writing.

⁶ He was so frightened that his face turned pale, his knees started shaking, and his legs became weak.

⁷The king called in his advisers, who claimed they could talk with the spirits of the dead and understand the meanings found in the stars. He told them, The man who can read this writing and tell me what it means will become the third most powerful man in my kingdom. He will wear robes of royal purple and a gold chain around his neck.

⁸All of King Belshazzar's highest officials came in, but not one of them could read the writing or tell what it meant,

⁹and they were completely puzzled. Now the king was more afraid than ever before, and his face turned white as a ghost.

¹⁰When the queen heard the king and his officials talking, she came in and said: Your Majesty, I hope you live for ever! Don't be afraid or look so pale.

¹¹In your kingdom there is a man who has been given special powers by the holy gods. When your father Nebuchadnezzar was king, this man was known to be as clever, intelligent, and wise as the gods themselves. Your father put him in charge of all who claimed they

could talk with the spirits or understand the meanings in the stars or tell about the future.

¹²He also changed the man's name from Daniel to Belteshazzar. Not only is he wise and intelligent, but he can explain dreams and riddles and solve difficult problems. Send for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.

¹³When Daniel was brought in, the king said: So you are Daniel, one of the captives my father brought back from Judah!

¹⁴I was told that the gods have given you special powers and that you are intelligent and very wise.

¹⁵Neither my advisers nor the men who talk with the spirits of the dead could read this writing or tell me what it means.

¹⁶But I have been told that you understand everything and that you can solve difficult problems. Now then, if you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will become the third most powerful man in my kingdom. You will wear royal purple robes and have a gold chain around your neck.

¹⁷ Daniel answered: Your Majesty, I will read the writing and tell you what it means. But you may keep your gifts or give them to someone else.

¹⁸ Sir, the Most High God made your father a great and powerful man and brought him much honour and glory.

¹⁹ God did such great things for him that people of all nations and races shook with fear. Your father had the power of life or death over everyone, and he could honour or ruin anyone he chose.

²⁰ But when he became proud and stubborn, his glorious kingdom was taken from him.

²¹ His mind became like that of an animal, and he was forced to stay away from people and live with wild donkeys. Your father ate grass like an ox, and he slept outside where his body was soaked with dew. He was forced to do this until he learnt that the Most High God rules all kingdoms on earth and chooses their kings.

²² King Belshazzar, you knew all this, but you still refused to honour the Lord who rules from heaven.

²³ Instead, you turned against him and ordered the cups from his temple to be brought here, so that you and your wives and officials could drink wine from them. You praised idols made of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, even though they cannot see or hear or think. You refused to worship the God who gives you breath and controls everything you do.

²⁴ That's why he sent the hand to write this message on the wall.

²⁵ The words written there are mene, which means numbered, tekem, which means weighed, and parsin, which means divided. God has numbered the days of your kingdom and has brought it to an end. He has weighed you on his balance scales, and you fall short of what it takes to be king. So God has divided your kingdom between the Medes and the Persians.

²⁶ (5: 25)

²⁷ (5: 25)

²⁸ (5: 25)

²⁹ Belshazzar gave a command for Daniel to be made the third most

powerful man in his kingdom and to be given a purple robe and a gold chain.

³⁰That same night, the king was killed.

³¹Then Darius the Mede, who was sixty-two years old, took over his kingdom.

6¹Darius divided his kingdom into a hundred and twenty states and placed a governor in charge of each one.

²In order to make sure that his government was run properly, Darius put three other officials in charge of the governors. One of these officials was Daniel.

³And he did his work so much better than the other governors and officials that the king decided to let him govern the whole kingdom.

⁴The other men tried to find something wrong with the way Daniel did his work for the king. But they could not accuse him of anything wrong, because he was honest and faithful and did everything he was supposed to do.

⁵Finally, they said to one another, We will never be able to bring any charge against Daniel, unless it has to do with his religion.

⁶They all went to the king and said: Your Majesty, we hope you live for ever!

⁷All of your officials, leaders, advisers, and governors agree that you should make a law forbidding anyone to pray to any god or human except you for the next thirty days. Everyone who disobeys this law must be thrown into a pit of lions.

⁸Order this to be written and then sign it, so it cannot be changed, just as no written law of the Medes and Persians can be changed.

⁹So King Darius made the law and had it written down.

¹⁰Daniel heard about the law, but when he returned home, he went upstairs and prayed in front of the window that faced Jerusalem. In the same way that he had always done, he knelt down in prayer three times a day, giving thanks to God.

¹¹The men who had spoken to the king watched Daniel and saw him praying to his God for help.

¹²They went back to the king and said, Didn't you make a law that forbids anyone to pray to any god or human except you for the next thirty days? And

doesn't the law say that everyone who disobeys it will be thrown into a pit of lions? Yes, that's the law I made, the king agreed. And just like all written laws of the Medes and Persians, it cannot be changed.

¹³The men then told the king, That Jew named Daniel, who was brought here as a captive, refuses to obey you or the law that you ordered to be written. And he still prays to his god three times a day.

¹⁴The king was really upset to hear about this, and for the rest of the day he tried to think how he could save Daniel.

¹⁵At sunset the men returned and said, Your Majesty, remember that no written law of the Medes and Persians can be changed, not even by the king.

¹⁶So Darius ordered Daniel to be brought out and thrown into a pit of lions. But he said to Daniel, You have been faithful to your God, and I pray that he will rescue you.

¹⁷A stone was rolled over the pit, and it was sealed. Then Darius and his officials stamped the seal to show that no one should let Daniel out.

¹⁸All night long the king could not sleep. He did not eat anything, and he would not let anyone come in to entertain him.

¹⁹At daybreak the king got up and ran to the pit.

²⁰He was anxious and shouted, Daniel, you were faithful and served your God. Was he able to save you from the lions?

²¹Daniel answered, Your Majesty, I hope you live for ever!

²²My God knew that I was innocent, and he sent an angel to keep the lions from eating me. Your Majesty, I have never done anything to hurt you.

²³The king was relieved to hear Daniel's voice, and he gave orders for him to be taken out of the pit. Daniel's faith in his God had kept him from being harmed.

²⁴And the king ordered the men who had brought charges against Daniel to be thrown into the pit, together with their wives and children. But before they even reached the bottom, the lions ripped them to pieces.

²⁵King Darius then sent this message to all people of every nation and race in the world: Greetings to all of you!

²⁶I command everyone in my kingdom to worship and honour the God of Daniel. He is the living God, the one who lives for ever. His power and his kingdom will never end.

²⁷He rescues people and sets them free by working great miracles. Daniel's God has rescued him from the power of the lions.

²⁸All went well for Daniel while Darius was king, and even when Cyrus the Persian ruled.

7¹ Daniel wrote: In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylonia, I had some dreams and visions while I was asleep one night, and I wrote them down. The four winds were stirring up the mighty sea,

²(7: 1)

³when suddenly four powerful beasts came out of the sea. Each beast was different.

⁴The first was like a lion with the wings of an eagle. As I watched, its wings were pulled off. Then it was lifted to an upright position and made to stand on two feet, just like a human, and it was given a human mind.

⁵The second beast looked like a bear standing on its hind legs. It held three ribs in its teeth, and it was told, Attack! Eat all the flesh you want.

⁶The third beast was like a leopard except that it had four wings and four heads. It was given authority to rule.

⁷The fourth beast was stronger and more terrifying than the others. Its huge teeth were made of iron, and what it didn't grind with its teeth, it smashed with its feet. It was different from the others, and it had horns on its head ten of them.

⁸Just as I was thinking about these horns, a smaller horn appeared, and three of the other horns were pulled up by the roots to make room for it. This horn had the eyes of a human and a mouth that spoke with great pride.

⁹Daniel wrote: Thrones were set up while I was watching, and the Eternal God took his place. His clothing and his hair were white as snow. His throne was a blazing fire with fiery wheels,

¹⁰and flames were dashing out from all around him. Countless thousands were

standing there to serve him. The time of judgment began, and the books were opened.

¹¹ I watched closely to see what would happen to this smaller horn because of the arrogant things it was saying. Then before my very eyes, the fourth beast was killed and its body destroyed by fire.

¹² The other three beasts had their authority taken from them, but they were allowed to live a while longer.

¹³ As I continued to watch the vision that night, I saw what looked like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, and he was presented to the Eternal God.

¹⁴ He was crowned king and given power and glory, so that all people of every nation and race would serve him. He will rule for ever, and his kingdom is eternal, never to be destroyed.

¹⁵ Daniel wrote: I was terrified by these visions, and I didn't know what to think.

¹⁶ So I asked one of those standing there, and he explained,

¹⁷ The four beasts are four earthly kingdoms.

¹⁸But God Most High will give his kingdom to his chosen ones, and it will be theirs for ever and ever.

¹⁹I wanted to know more about the fourth beast, because it was so different and much more terrifying than the others. What was the meaning of its iron teeth and bronze claws and of its feet that smashed what the teeth and claws had not ground and crushed?

²⁰I also wanted to know more about all ten of those horns on its head. I especially wanted to know more about the one that took the place of three of the others the horn that had eyes and spoke with arrogance and seemed greater than the others.

²¹While I was looking, this horn attacked God's chosen ones and was winning the battle.

²²Then God Most High, the Eternal God, came and judged in favour of his chosen ones, because the time had arrived for them to be given the kingdom.

²³Then I was told by the one standing there: The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom to appear on earth. It will

be different from all the others it will trample the earth and crush it to pieces.

²⁴All ten of those horns are kings who will come from this kingdom, and one more will follow. This horn will be different from the others, and it will conquer three other kings.

²⁵This king will speak evil of God Most High, and he will be cruel to God's chosen ones. He will try to change God's Law and the sacred seasons. And he will be able to do this for a time, two times, and half a time.

²⁶But he will finally be judged, and his kingdom completely destroyed.

²⁷Then the greatest kingdom of all will be given to the chosen ones of God Most High. His kingdom will be eternal, and all others will serve and obey him.

²⁸That was what I saw and heard. I turned pale with fear and kept it all to myself.

8¹ Daniel wrote: In the third year of King Belshazzar of Babylonia, I had a second vision

²in which I was in Susa, the chief city of Babylonia's Elam Province. I was beside the River Ulai,

³when I looked up and saw a ram standing there with two horns on its head both of them were long, but the second one was longer than the first.

⁴The ram went charging towards the west, the north, and the south. No other animals were strong enough to oppose him, and nothing could save them from his power. So he did as he pleased and became even more powerful.

⁵I kept on watching and saw a goat come from the west and charge across the entire earth, without even touching the ground. Between his eyes was a powerful horn,

⁶and with tremendous anger the goat started towards the ram that I had seen beside the river.

⁷The goat was so fierce that its attack broke both horns of the ram, leaving him powerless. Then the goat trampled on the ram, and no one could do anything to help.

⁸After this, the goat became even more powerful. But at the peak of his power, his mighty horn was broken, and four other mighty horns took its place one

pointing to the north and one to the east, one to the south and one to the west.

⁹A little horn came from one of these, and its power reached to the south, the east, and even to the holy land.

¹⁰It became so strong that it attacked the stars in the sky, which were heaven's army. Then it threw some of them down to the earth and trampled on them.

¹¹It humiliated heaven's army and dishonoured its leader by keeping him from offering the daily sacrifices. In fact, it was so terrible that it even disgraced the temple and wiped out true worship. It also did everything else it wanted to do.

¹²(8: 11)

¹³Then one of the holy angels asked another, When will the daily sacrifices be offered again? What about this horrible rebellion? When will the temple and heaven's army no longer be trampled in the dust?

¹⁴The other answered, It will be two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings before the temple is dedicated and in use again.

¹⁵ Daniel wrote: I was trying to understand the meaning of the vision, when someone suddenly appeared there beside me.

¹⁶ And from beside the River Ulai, a voice like that of a human said, Gabriel, help him understand the vision.

¹⁷ Gabriel came over, and I fell to the ground in fear. Then he said, You are merely a human, but you need to understand that this vision is about the end of time.

¹⁸ While he was speaking, I fell face down in a deep sleep. But he lifted me to my feet

¹⁹ and said: Listen, and I will tell you what will happen at the end of time, when God has chosen to show his anger.

²⁰ The two horns of the ram are the kings of Media and Persia,

²¹ the goat is the kingdom of Greece, and the powerful horn between his eyes is the first of its kings.

²² After this horn is broken, four other kingdoms will appear, but they won't be as strong.

²³ When these rulers have become as evil as possible, their power will end,

and then a king who is dangerous and cannot be trusted will appear.

²⁴He will gain strength, but not on his own, and he will cause terrible destruction. He will wipe out powerful leaders and God's people as well.

²⁵His deceitful lies will make him so successful, that he will think he is really great. Suddenly he will kill many people, and he will even attack God, the Supreme Ruler. But God will crush him!

²⁶This vision about the evenings and mornings is true, but these things won't happen for a long time, so don't tell it to others.

²⁷After this, I was so worn out and weak that it was several days before I could get out of bed and go about my duties for the king. I was disturbed by this vision that made no sense to me.

9¹ Daniel wrote: Some years later, Darius the Mede, who was the son of Xerxes, had become king of Babylonia. And during his first year as king, I found out from studying the writings of the prophets that the LORD had said to Jeremiah, Jerusalem will lie in ruins for seventy years.

² (9: 1)

³ Then, to show my sorrow, I went without eating and dressed in sackcloth and sat in ashes. I confessed my sins and earnestly prayed to the LORD my God: Our Lord, you are a great and fearsome God, and you faithfully keep your agreement with those who love and obey you.

⁴ (9: 3)

⁵ But we have sinned terribly by rebelling against you and rejecting your laws and teachings.

⁶ We have ignored the message your servants the prophets spoke to our kings, our leaders, our ancestors, and everyone else.

⁷ Everything you do is right, our Lord. But still we suffer public disgrace because we have been unfaithful and have sinned against you. This includes all of us, both far and near the people of Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel, as well as those you dragged away to foreign lands,

⁸ and even our kings, our officials, and our ancestors.

⁹LORD God, you are merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against you

¹⁰and rejected your teachings that came to us from your servants the prophets.

¹¹Everyone in Israel has stubbornly refused to obey your laws, and so those curses written by your servant Moses have fallen upon us.

¹²You warned us and our leaders that Jerusalem would suffer the worst disaster in human history, and you did exactly as you had threatened.

¹³We have not escaped any of the terrible curses written by Moses, and yet we have refused to beg you for mercy and to remind ourselves of how faithful you have always been.

¹⁴And when you finally punished us with this horrible disaster, that was also the right thing to do, because we deserved it so much.

¹⁵Our Lord God, with your own mighty arm you rescued us from Egypt and made yourself famous to this very day, but we have sinned terribly.

¹⁶In the past, you treated us with such kindness, that we now beg you to stop being so terribly angry with Jerusalem. After all, it is your chosen city built on your holy mountain, even though it has suffered public disgrace because of our sins and those of our ancestors.

¹⁷I am your servant, Lord God, and I beg you to answer my prayers and bring honour to yourself by having pity on your temple that lies in ruins.

¹⁸Please show mercy to your chosen city, not because we deserve it, but because of your great kindness.

¹⁹Forgive us! Hurry and do something, not only for your city and your chosen people, but to bring honour to yourself.

²⁰Daniel wrote: I was still confessing my sins and those of all Israel to the LORD my God, and I was praying for the good of his holy mountain,

²¹when Gabriel suddenly came flying in at the time of the evening sacrifice. This was the same Gabriel I had seen in my vision,

²²and he explained: Daniel, I am here to help you understand the vision.

²³ God thinks highly of you, and at the very moment you started praying, I was sent to give you the answer.

²⁴ God has decided that for seventy weeks, your people and your holy city must suffer as the price of their sins. Then evil will disappear, and justice will rule for ever; the visions and words of the prophets will come true, and a most holy place will be dedicated.

²⁵ You need to realize that from the command to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Chosen Leader, it will be seven weeks and another sixty-two weeks. Streets will be built in Jerusalem, and a trench will be dug around the city for protection, but these will be difficult times.

²⁶ At the end of the sixty-two weeks, the Chosen Leader will be killed and left with nothing. A foreign ruler and his army will sweep down like a mighty flood, leaving both the city and the temple in ruins, and war and destruction will continue until the end, just as God has decided.

²⁷ For one week this foreigner will make a firm agreement with many people, and halfway through this week, he will

end all sacrifices and offerings. Then the Horrible Thing that causes destruction will be put there. And it will stay there until the time God has decided to destroy this one who destroys.

10¹ In the third year of Cyrus the king of Persia, a message came to Daniel from God, and it was explained in a vision. The message was about a horrible war, and it was true.

² Daniel wrote: For three weeks I was in sorrow.

³ I ate no fine food or meat, I drank no wine, and I put no olive oil on my face or hair.

⁴ Then, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, I was standing on the banks of the great River Tigris,

⁵ when I looked up and saw someone dressed in linen and wearing a solid gold belt.

⁶ His body was like a precious stone, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming fires, his arms and legs like polished bronze, and his voice like the roar of a crowd.

⁷ Although the people who were with me did not see the vision, they became

so frightened that they scattered and hid.

⁸Only I saw this great vision. I became weak and pale,

⁹and at the sound of his voice, I fell face down in a deep sleep.

¹⁰He raised me to my hands and knees

¹¹and then said, Daniel, your God thinks highly of you, and he has sent me. So stand up and pay close attention. I stood trembling, while the angel said:

¹²Daniel, don't be afraid! God has listened to your prayers since the first day you humbly asked for understanding, and he has sent me here.

¹³But the guardian angel of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, who is one of the strongest guardian angels, came to rescue me from the kings of Persia.

¹⁴Now I have come here to give you another vision about what will happen to your people in the future.

¹⁵While this angel was speaking to me, I stared at the ground, speechless.

¹⁶Then he appeared in human form and touched my lips. I said, Sir, this

vision has brought me great pain and has drained my strength.

¹⁷I am merely your servant. How can I possibly speak with someone so powerful, when I am almost too weak to get my breath?

¹⁸The angel touched me a second time and said, Don't be frightened! God thinks highly of you, and he intends this for your good, so be brave and strong. At this, I regained my strength and replied, Please speak! You have already made me feel much better.

¹⁹(10:18)

²⁰Then the angel said: Now do you understand why I have come? Soon I must leave to fight against the guardian angel of Persia. Then after I have defeated him, the guardian angel of Greece will attack me.

²¹I will tell you what is written in The Book of Truth. But first, you must realize that no one except Michael, the guardian angel of Israel, is on my side.

11¹ You also need to know that I protected and helped Darius the Mede in his first year as king.

²What I am going to tell you is certain to happen. Four kings will rule Persia, one after the other, but the fourth one will become much richer than the others. In fact, his wealth will make him so powerful that he will turn everyone against the kingdom of Greece.

³Then a mighty king will come to power and will be able to do whatever he pleases.

⁴But suddenly his kingdom will be crushed and scattered to the four corners of the earth, where four more kingdoms will rise. But these won't be ruled by his descendants or be as powerful as his kingdom.

⁵The king of the south will grow powerful. Then one of his generals will rebel and take over most of the kingdom.

⁶Years later the southern kingdom and the northern kingdom will make a treaty, and the daughter of the king of the south will marry the king of the north. But she will lose her power. Then she, her husband, their child, and the servants who came with her will all be killed. After this,

⁷ one of her relatives will become the ruler of the southern kingdom. He will attack the army of the northern kingdom and capture its fortresses.

⁸ Then he will carry their idols to Egypt, together with their precious treasures of silver and gold, but it will be a long time before he attacks the northern kingdom again. Some years later

⁹ the king of the north will invade the southern kingdom, but he will be forced back to his own country.

¹⁰ The sons of the king of the north will gather a huge army that will sweep down like a roaring flood, reaching all the way to the fortress of the southern kingdom.

¹¹ But this will make the king of the south angry, and he will defeat this large army from the north.

¹² The king of the south will feel proud because of the many thousands he has killed. But his victories won't last long,

¹³ because the king of the north will gather a larger and more powerful army than ever before. Then in a few years, he will start invading other countries.

¹⁴ At this time many of your own people will try to make this vision come true by

rebelling against the king of the south, but their rebellion will fail.

¹⁵Then the army from the north will surround and capture a fortress in the south, and not even the most experienced troops of the southern kingdom will be able to make them retreat.

¹⁶The king who invaded from the north will do as he pleases, and he will even capture and destroy the holy land.

¹⁷In fact, he will decide to invade the south with his entire army. Then he will attempt to make peace by giving the king of the south a bride from the northern kingdom, but this won't be successful.

¹⁸Afterwards, this proud king of the north will invade and conquer many of the nations along the coast, but a military leader will defeat him and make him lose his pride.

¹⁹He will retreat to his fortresses in his own country, but on the way he will be defeated and never again be seen.

²⁰The next king of the north will try to collect taxes for the glory of his kingdom. However, he will come to a sudden end

in some mysterious way, instead of in battle or because of someone's anger.

²¹ The successor of this king of the north will be a worthless nobody, who doesn't come from a royal family. He will suddenly appear and gain control of the kingdom by treachery.

²² Then he will destroy armies and remove God's chosen high priest.

²³ He will make a treaty, but he will be deceitful and break it, even though he has only a few followers.

²⁴ Without warning, he will successfully invade a wealthy province, which is something his ancestors never did. Then he will divide among his followers all of its treasures and property. But none of this will last very long.

²⁵ He will gather a large and powerful army, and with great courage he will attack the king of the south. The king of the south will meet him with a much stronger army, but he will lose the battle, because he will be betrayed

²⁶ by members of the royal court. He will be ruined, and most of his army will be slaughtered.

²⁷ The two kings will meet around a table and tell evil lies to each other. But their plans will fail, because God has already decided what will happen.

²⁸ Then the king of the north will return to his country with great treasures. But on the way, he will attack the religion of God's people and do whatever else he pleases.

²⁹ At the time God has decided, the king of the north will invade the southern kingdom again, but this time, things will be different.

³⁰ Ships from the west will come to attack him, and he will be discouraged. Then he will start back to his own country and take out his anger on the religion of God's faithful people, while showing kindness to those who are unfaithful.

³¹ He will send troops to pollute the temple and the fortress, and he will stop the daily sacrifices. Then he will set up that Horrible Thing that causes destruction.

³² The king will use deceit to win followers from those who are unfaithful to God, but those who remain faithful

will do everything possible to oppose him.

³³Wise leaders will instruct many of the people. But for a while, some of these leaders will either be killed with swords or burnt alive, or else robbed of their possessions and thrown into prison.

³⁴They will receive only a little help in their time of trouble, and many of their followers will be treacherous.

³⁵Some of those who are wise will suffer, so that God will make them pure and acceptable until the end, which will still come at the time he has decided.

³⁶This king will do as he pleases. He will proudly claim to be greater than any god and will insult the only true God. Indeed, he will be successful until God is no longer angry with his people.

³⁷This king will reject the gods his ancestors worshipped and the god preferred by women. In fact, he will put himself above all gods

³⁸and worship only the so-called god of fortresses, who was unknown to his ancestors. And he will honour it with gold, silver, precious stones, and other costly gifts.

³⁹With the help of this foreign god, he will capture the strongest fortresses. Everyone who worships this god will be put in a position of power and rewarded with wealth and land.

⁴⁰At the time of the end, the king of the south will attack the kingdom of the north. But its king will rush out like a storm with war chariots, cavalry, and many ships. Indeed, his forces will flood one country after another,

⁴¹and when they reach the holy land, tens of thousands will be killed. But the countries of Edom and Moab and the ruler of Ammon will escape.

⁴²The king of the north will invade many countries, including Egypt,

⁴³and he will take its rich treasures of gold and silver. He will also conquer Libya and Ethiopia.

⁴⁴But he will be alarmed by news from the east and the north, and he will become furious and cause great destruction.

⁴⁵After this, he will set up camp between the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Zion. Then he will be destroyed, and no one will be able to save him.

12¹ Michael, the chief of the angels, is the protector of your people, and he will come at a time of terrible suffering, the worst in all of history. And your people who have their names written in The Book will be protected.

² Many of those who lie dead in the ground will rise from death. Some of them will be given eternal life, and others will receive nothing but eternal shame and disgrace.

³ Everyone who has been wise will shine as bright as the sky above, and everyone who has led others to please God will shine like the stars.

⁴ Daniel, I now command you to keep the message of this book secret until the end of time, even though many people will go everywhere, searching for the knowledge to be found in it.

⁵ Daniel wrote: I looked around and saw two other people on this side of the river and one on the other side.

⁶ The angel who had spoken to me was dressed in linen and was standing upstream from them. So one of the two beside the river asked him, How long before these amazing things happen?

⁷ The angel then raised both hands towards heaven and said, In the name of the God who lives for ever, I solemnly promise that it will be a time, two times, and half a time. Everything will be over, when the suffering of God's holy people comes to an end.

⁸ I heard what the angel said, but I didn't understand. So I asked, Sir, how will it all end? The angel in my vision then replied:

⁹ Daniel, go about your business, because the meaning of this message will remain secret until the end of time.

¹⁰ Many people will have their hearts and lives made pure and clean, but those who are evil will keep on being evil and never understand. Only the wise will understand.

¹¹ There will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days from the time that the daily sacrifices are stopped, until someone sets up the Horrible Thing that causes destruction.

¹² God will bless everyone who patiently waits until one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days have gone by.

¹³So, Daniel, be faithful until the end!
You will rest, and at the end of time,
you will rise from death to receive your
reward.

Hosea

1 ¹I am Hosea son of Beerī. When Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah, and when Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel, the LORD spoke this message to me.

²The LORD said, Hosea, Israel has betrayed me like an unfaithful wife. Marry such a woman and have children by her.

³So I married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and we had a son.

⁴Then the LORD said, Hosea, name your son Jezreel, because I will soon punish the descendants of King Jehu of Israel for the murders he committed in Jezreel Valley. I will destroy his kingdom,

⁵and in Jezreel Valley I will break the power of Israel.

⁶Later, Gomer had a daughter, and the LORD said, Name her Lo-Ruhamah, because I will no longer have mercy and forgive Israel.

⁷ But I am the LORD God of Judah, and I will have mercy and save Judah by my own power not by wars and arrows or swords and cavalry.

⁸ After Gomer had stopped nursing Lo-Ruhamah, she had another son.

⁹ Then the LORD said, Name him Lo-Ammi, because these people are not mine, and I am not their God.

¹⁰ Some day it will be impossible to count the people of Israel, because there will be as many of them as there are grains of sand along the seashore. They are now called Not My People, but in the future they will be called Children of the Living God.

¹¹ Israel and Judah will unite and choose one leader. Then they will take back their land, and this will be a great day for Jezreel.

2¹ So let your brothers be called My People and your sisters be called Shown Mercy.

² Accuse! Accuse your mother! She is no longer my wife, and now I, the LORD, am not her husband. Beg her to give up prostitution and stop being unfaithful,

³or I will strip her naked like the day she was born. I will make her barren like a desert, and she will die of thirst.

⁴You children are the result of her unfaithfulness, and I'll show you no pity.

⁵Your mother was unfaithful. She was disgraceful and said, I'll run after my lovers. Everything comes from them my food and drink, my linen and wool, my olive oil and wine.

⁶I, the LORD, will build a fence of thorns to block her path.

⁷She will run after her lovers, but not catch them; she will search, but not find them. Then she will say, I'll return to my first husband. Life was better then.

⁸She didn't know that her grain, wine, and olive oil were gifts from me, as were the gold and silver she used in worshipping Baal.

⁹So I'll hold back the harvest of grain and grapes. I'll take back my wool and my linen that cover her body.

¹⁰Then I'll strip her naked in the sight of her lovers. No one can rescue her.

¹¹I'll stop Israel's celebrations no more New Moon Festivals, Sabbaths, or other feasts.

¹²She said, My lovers gave me vineyards and fig trees as payment for sex. Now I, the LORD, will ruin her vineyards and fig trees; they will become clumps of weeds eaten by wild animals.

¹³I'll punish her for the days she worshipped Baal and burnt incense to him. I'll punish her for the times she forgot about me and wore jewellery and rings to attract her lovers. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹⁴Israel, I, the LORD, will lure you into the desert and speak gently to you.

¹⁵I will return your vineyards, and then Trouble Valley will become Hopeful Valley. You will say Yes to me as you did in your youth, when leaving Egypt.

¹⁶I promise that from that day on, you will call me your husband instead of your master.

¹⁷I will no longer even let you mention the names of those pagan gods that you called Master.

¹⁸And I will agree to let you live in peace you will no longer be attacked by wild animals and birds or by weapons of war.

¹⁹I will accept you as my wife for ever, and instead of a bride price I will give you justice, fairness, love, kindness,

²⁰and faithfulness. Then you will truly know who I am.

²¹I will command the sky to send rain on the earth,

²²and it will produce grain, grapes, and olives in Jezreel Valley.

²³I will scatter the seeds and show mercy to Lo-Ruhamah. I will say to Lo-Ammi, You are my people, and they will answer, You are our God.

3¹ Once again the LORD spoke to me. And this time he said, Hosea, fall in love with an unfaithful woman who has a lover. Do this to show that I love the people of Israel, even though they worship idols and enjoy the offering cakes made with fruit.

²So I paid fifteen pieces of silver and about a hundred and fifty kilogrammes of grain for such a woman.

³Then I said, Now you are mine! You will have to remain faithful to me, though it will be a long time before we sleep together.

⁴It will also be a long time before Israel has a king or before sacrifices are offered at the temple or before there is any way to get guidance from God.

⁵But later, Israel will turn back to the LORD their God and to David their king. At that time they will come to the LORD with fear and trembling, and he will be good to them.

4¹ Israel, listen as the LORD accuses everyone in the land! No one is faithful or loyal or truly cares about God.

²Cursing, dishonesty, murder, robbery, unfaithfulness these happen all the time. Violence is everywhere.

³And so your land is a desert. Every living creature is dying people and wild animals, birds and fish.

⁴Don't accuse just anyone! Not everyone is at fault. My case is against you, the priests.

⁵You and the prophets will stumble day and night; I'll silence your mothers.

⁶You priests have rejected me, and my people are destroyed by refusing to obey. Now I'll reject you and forget your children, because you have forgotten my Law.

⁷By adding more of you priests, you multiply the number of people who sin. Now I'll change your pride into shame.

⁸You encourage others to sin, so you can stuff yourselves on their sin offerings.

⁹That's why I will punish the people for their deeds, just as I will punish you priests.

¹⁰Their food won't satisfy, and having sex at pagan shrines won't produce children. My people have rebelled

¹¹and have been unfaithful to me, their LORD. My people, you are foolish because of too much pleasure and too much wine.

¹²You expect wooden idols and other objects of wood to give you advice. Lusting for sex at pagan shrines has made you unfaithful to me, your God.

¹³You offer sacrifices on mountaintops and hills, under oak trees, and wherever good shade is found. Your own daughters and daughters-in-law sell themselves for sex.

¹⁴But I won't punish them. You men are to blame, because you go to prostitutes and offer sacrifices with them at pagan

shrines. Your own foolishness will lead to your ruin.

¹⁵Israel, you are unfaithful, but don't lead Judah to sin. Stop worshipping at Gilgal or at sinful Bethel. And stop making promises in my name the name of the living LORD.

¹⁶You are nothing more than a stubborn cow so stubborn that I, the LORD, cannot feed you like lambs in an open pasture.

¹⁷You people of Israel are charmed by idols. Leave them alone!

¹⁸You get drunk, then sleep with prostitutes; you would rather be vulgar than lead a decent life.

¹⁹And so you will be swept away in a whirlwind for sacrificing to idols.

5¹The LORD said: Listen, you priests! Pay attention, Israel! Listen, you members of the royal family. Justice was your duty. But at Mizpah and Mount Tabor you trapped the people.

²At the place of worship you were a treacherous pit, and I will punish you.

³Israel, I know all about you, and because of your unfaithfulness, I find you unacceptable.

⁴Your evil deeds are the reason you won't return to me, your LORD God. And your constant craving for sex keeps you from knowing me.

⁵Israel, your pride testifies to your guilt; it makes you stumble, and Judah stumbles too.

⁶You offer sheep and cattle as sacrifices to me, but I have turned away and refuse to be found.

⁷You have been unfaithful to me, your LORD; you have had children by prostitutes. So at the New Moon Festival, you and your crops will be destroyed.

⁸Give a warning on the trumpet! Let it be heard in Gibeah, Ramah, and sinful Bethel. Benjamin, watch out!

⁹I, the LORD, will punish and wipe out Israel. This is my solemn promise to every tribe of Israel.

¹⁰Judah's leaders are like crooks who move boundary markers; that's why I will flood them with my anger.

¹¹Israel was brutally crushed. They got what they deserved for worshipping useless idols.

¹²Now I, the LORD, will fill Israel with maggots and make Judah rot.

¹³When Israel and Judah saw their sickness and wounds, Israel asked help from Assyria and its mighty king. But the king cannot cure them or heal their wounds.

¹⁴So I'll become a fierce lion attacking Israel and Judah. I'll snatch and carry off what I want, and no one can stop me.

¹⁵Then I'll return to my temple until they confess their guilt and worship me, until they are desperate and beg for my help.

6¹Let's return to the LORD. He has torn us to shreds, but he will bandage our wounds and make us well.

²In two or three days he will heal us and restore our strength that we may live with him.

³Let's do our best to know the LORD. His coming is as certain as the morning sun; he will refresh us like rain renewing the earth in the springtime.

⁴People of Israel and Judah, what can I do with you? Your love for me disappears more quickly than mist or dew at sunrise.

⁵That's why I slaughtered you with the words of my prophets. That's why my judgments blazed like the dawning sun.

⁶I'd rather you were faithful and knew me than offered sacrifices.

⁷At a place named Adam, you betrayed me by breaking our agreement.

⁸Everyone in Gilead is evil; your hands are stained with the blood of victims.

⁹You priests are like a gang of robbers in ambush. On the road to Shechem you murder and commit other horrible crimes.

¹⁰I have seen a terrible thing in Israel you are unfaithful and unfit to worship me.

¹¹People of Judah, your time is coming too. I, the LORD, would like to make my nation prosper again

7¹ and to heal its wounds. But then I see the crimes in Israel and Samaria. Everyone is deceitful; robbers roam the streets.

²No one realizes that I have seen their sins surround them like a flood.

³The king and his officials take great pleasure in their sin and deceit.

⁴Everyone burns with desire they are like coals in an oven, ready to burst into flames.

⁵On the day their king was crowned, his officials got him drunk, and he joined in their foolishness.

⁶Their anger is a fire that smoulders all night, then flares up at dawn.

⁷They are flames destroying their leaders. And their kings are powerless; none of them trust me.

⁸The people of Israel have mixed with foreigners; they are a thin piece of bread scorched on one side.

⁹They don't seem to realize how weak and feeble they are; their hair has turned grey, while foreigners rule.

¹⁰I am the LORD, their God, but in all their troubles their pride keeps them from returning to me.

¹¹The LORD said: Israel is a senseless bird, fluttering back and forth between Egypt and Assyria.

¹²But I will catch them in a net as hunters trap birds; I threatened to punish them, and indeed I will.

¹³Trouble and destruction will be their reward for rejecting me. I would have rescued them, but they told me lies.

¹⁴They don't really pray to me; they just howl in their beds. They have

rejected me for Baal and slashed themselves, in the hope that Baal will bless their crops.

¹⁵I taught them what they know, and I made them strong. Now they plot against me

¹⁶and refuse to obey. They are more useless than a crooked arrow. Their leaders will die in war for saying foolish things. Egyptians will laugh at them.

8¹The LORD said: Sound a warning! Israel, you broke our agreement and ignored my teaching. Now an eagle is swooping down to attack my land.

²Israel, you say, We claim you, the LORD, as our God.

³But your enemies will chase you for rejecting our good agreement.

⁴You chose kings and leaders without consulting me; you made silver and gold idols that led to your downfall.

⁵City of Samaria, I'm angry because of your idol in the shape of a calf. When will you ever be innocent again?

⁶Someone from Israel built that idol for you, but only I am God. And so it will be smashed to pieces.

⁷If you scatter wind instead of wheat, you will harvest a whirlwind and have no wheat. Even if you harvest grain, enemies will steal it all.

⁸Israel, you are ruined, and now the nations consider you worthless.

⁹You are like a wild donkey that goes its own way. You've run off to Assyria and hired them as allies.

¹⁰You can bargain with nations, but I'll catch you anyway. Soon you will suffer abuse by kings and rulers.

¹¹Israel, you have built many altars where you offer sacrifices for sin. But these altars have become places for sin.

¹²My instructions for sacrifices were written in detail, but you ignored them.

¹³You sacrifice your best animals and eat the sacrificial meals, but I, the LORD, refuse your offerings. I will remember your sins and punish you. Then you will return to Egypt.

¹⁴Israel, I created you, but you forgot me. You and Judah built palaces and many strong cities. Now I will send fire to destroy your towns and fortresses.

9¹ Israel, don't celebrate or make noisy shouts like other nations.

You have been unfaithful to your God. Wherever grain is threshed, you behave like prostitutes because you enjoy the money you receive.

²But you will run short of grain and wine,

³and you will have to leave the land of the LORD. Some of you will go to Egypt; others will go to Assyria and eat unclean food.

⁴You won't be able to offer sacrifices of wine to the LORD. None of your sacrifices will please him they will be unclean like food offered to the dead. Your food will only be used to satisfy your hunger; none of it will be brought to the LORD's temple.

⁵You will no longer be able to celebrate the festival of the LORD.

⁶Even if you escape alive, you will end up in Egypt and be buried in Memphis. Your silver treasures will be lost among weeds; thorns will sprout in your tents.

⁷Israel, the time has come. You will get what you deserve, and you will know it. Prophets are fools, you say. And God's messengers are mad. Your terrible guilt has filled you with hatred.

⁸Israel, the LORD sent me to look after you. But you trap his prophets and flood his temple with your hatred.

⁹You are brutal and corrupt, as were the men of Gibeah. But God remembers your sin, and you will be punished.

¹⁰Israel, when I, the LORD, found you long ago it was like finding grapes in a barren desert or tender young figs. Then you worshipped Baal Peor, that disgusting idol, and you became as disgusting as the idol you loved.

¹¹And so, Israel, your glory will fly away like birds your women will no longer be able to give birth.

¹²Even if you do have children, I will take them all and leave you to mourn. I will turn away, and you will sink down in deep trouble.

¹³Israel, when I first met you, I thought of you as palm trees growing in fertile ground. Now you lead your people out, only to be slaughtered.

¹⁴Our LORD, do just one thing for your people make their women unable to have children or to nurse their babies.

¹⁵Israel, I first began to hate you because you did evil at Gilgal. Now I will

chase you out of my house. No longer will I love you; your leaders betrayed me.

¹⁶Israel, you are a vine with dried-up roots and fruitless branches. Even if you had more children and loved them dearly, I would slaughter them all.

¹⁷Israel, you disobeyed my God. Now he will force you to roam from nation to nation.

10¹You were a healthy vine covered with grapes. But the more grapes you grew, the more altars you built; the better off you became, the better shrines you set up for pagan gods.

²You are deceitful and disloyal. So you will pay for your sins, because the LORD will destroy your altars and images.

³We don't have a king, you will say. We don't fear the LORD. And what good are kings?

⁴Israel, you break treaties and don't keep promises; you turn justice into poisonous weeds where healthy plants should grow.

⁵All who live in Samaria tremble with concern for the idols at sinful Bethel. The idol there was the pride of the priests,

but it has been put to shame; now everyone will cry.

⁶It will be taken to Assyria and given to the great king. Then Israel will be disgraced for worshipping that idol.

⁷Like a twig in a stream, the king of Samaria will be swept away.

⁸The altars at sinful Bethel will be destroyed for causing Israel to sin; they will be overgrown with thorns and thistles. Then everyone will beg the mountains and hills to cover and protect them.

⁹Israel, you have never stopped sinning since that time at Gibeah. That's why you will be attacked at Gibeah.

¹⁰Your sins have doubled, and you are rebellious. Now I have decided to send nations to attack and put you in chains.

¹¹Once you were obedient like a calf that loved to thresh grain. But I will put a harness on your powerful neck; you and Judah must plough and cultivate the ground.

¹²Plough your fields, scatter seeds of justice, and harvest faithfulness. Worship me, the LORD, and I will send my saving power down like rain.

¹³You have planted evil, harvested injustice, and eaten the fruit of your lies. You trusted your own strength and your powerful forces.

¹⁴So war will break out, and your fortresses will be destroyed. Your enemies will do to you what Shalman did to the people of Beth-Arbel mothers and their children will be beaten to death against rocks.

¹⁵Bethel, this will be your fate because of your evil. Israel, at dawn your king will be killed.

11 ¹When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt.

²But as the saying goes, The more they were called, the more they rebelled. They never stopped offering incense and sacrifices to the idols of Baal.

³I took Israel by the arm and taught them to walk. But they would not admit that I was the one who had healed them.

⁴I led them with kindness and with love, not with ropes. I held them close to me; I bent down to feed them.

⁵But they trusted Egypt instead of returning to me; now Assyria will rule them.

⁶War will visit their cities, and their plans will fail.

⁷My people are determined to reject me for a god they think is stronger, but he can't help.

⁸Israel, I can't let you go. I can't give you up. How could I possibly destroy you as I did the towns of Admah and Zeboiim? I just can't do it. My feelings for you are much too strong.

⁹Israel, I won't lose my temper and destroy you again. I am the Holy God not merely a human being, and I won't stay angry.

¹⁰I, the LORD, will roar like a lion, and my children will return, trembling from the west.

¹¹They will come back, fluttering like birds from Egypt or like doves from Assyria. Then I will bring them back to their homes. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹²Israel is deceitful to me, their loyal and holy God; they surround me with lies, and Judah worships other gods.

12¹ All day long Israel chases wind from the desert; deceit and violence are found everywhere. Treaties are made with Assyria; olive oil is taken to Egypt.

² The LORD also brings charges against the people of Judah, the descendants of Jacob. He will punish them for what they have done.

³ Even before Jacob was born, he cheated his brother, and when he grew up, he fought against God.

⁴ At Bethel, Jacob wrestled with an angel and won; then with tears in his eyes, he asked for a blessing, and God spoke to us there.

⁵ God's name is the LORD, the LORD God All-Powerful.

⁶ So return to your God. Patiently trust him, and show love and justice.

⁷ Israel, you enjoy cheating and taking advantage of others.

⁸ You say to yourself, I'm rich! I earned it all on my own, without committing a sin.

⁹ Israel, I, the LORD, am still your God, just as I have been since the time you were in Egypt. Now I will force you to

live in tents once again, as you did in the desert.

¹⁰I spoke to the prophets often I spoke in visions. And so, I will send my prophets with messages of doom.

¹¹Gilead is terribly sinful and will end up ruined. Bulls are sacrificed in Gilgal on altars made of stones, but those stones will be scattered in every field.

¹²Jacob escaped to Syria where he tended sheep to earn himself a wife.

¹³I sent the prophet Moses to lead Israel from Egypt and to keep them safe.

¹⁴Israel, I will make you pay for your terrible sins and for insulting me.

13¹The LORD said: When your leaders spoke, everyone in Israel trembled and showed great respect. But you sinned by worshipping Baal, and you were destroyed.

²Now you continue to sin by designing and making idols of silver in the shape of calves. You are told to sacrifice to these idols yes, even to kiss them.

³And so, all of you will vanish like the mist or the dew of early morning, or husks of grain in the wind or smoke from a chimney.

⁴I, the LORD, have been your God since the time you were in Egypt. I am the only God you know, the only one who can save.

⁵I took care of you in a thirsty desert.

⁶I fed you till you were satisfied, then you became proud and forgot about me.

⁷Now I will attack like a lion, ambush you like a leopard,

⁸and rip you apart like a bear robbed of her cubs. I will gnaw on your bones, as though I were a lion or some other wild animal.

⁹Israel, you are done for. Don't expect help from me.

¹⁰You wanted a king and rulers. Where is your king now? What cities have rulers?

¹¹In my anger, I gave you a king; in my fury, I took him away.

¹²The LORD said: Israel, your terrible sins are written down and stored away.

¹³You are like a senseless child who refuses to be born at the proper time.

¹⁴Should I, the LORD, rescue you from death and the grave? No! I call death and the grave to strike you like a plague. I refuse to show mercy.

¹⁵No matter how much you prosper more than the other tribes, I, the LORD, will wipe you out, just as a scorching desert wind dries up streams of water. I will take away your precious treasures.

¹⁶Samaria will be punished for turning against me. It will be destroyed in war children will be beaten against rocks, and pregnant women will be ripped open.

14¹ Israel, return! Come back to the LORD, your God. Sin has made you fall.

²Return to the LORD and say, Please forgive our sins. Accept our good sacrifices of praise instead of bulls.

³Assyria can't save us, and chariots can't help. So we will no longer worship the idols we have made. Our LORD, you show mercy to orphans.

⁴Israel, you have rejected me, but my anger is gone; I will heal you and love you without limit.

⁵I will be like the dew then you will blossom like lilies and have roots like a tree.

⁶Your branches will spread with the beauty of an olive tree and with the aroma of Lebanon Forest.

⁷ You will rest in my shade, and your grain will grow. You will blossom like a vineyard and be famous as the wine from Lebanon.

⁸ Israel, give up your idols! I will answer your prayers and take care of you. I am that glorious tree, the source of your fruit.

⁹ If you are wise, you will know and understand what I mean. I am the LORD, and I lead you along the right path. If you obey me, we will walk together, but if you are wicked, you will stumble.

Joel

1 ¹I am Joel the son of Pethuel. And this is the message the LORD gave to me.

²Listen, you leaders and everyone else in the land. Has anything like this ever happened before?

³Tell our children! Let it be told to our grandchildren and their children too.

⁴Swarm after swarm of locusts has attacked our crops, eating everything in sight.

⁵Sober up, you drunkards! Cry long and loud; your wine supply is gone.

⁶A powerful nation with countless troops has invaded our land. They have the teeth and jaws of powerful lions.

⁷Our grapevines and fig trees are stripped bare; only naked branches remain.

⁸Grieve like a young woman mourning for the man she was to marry.

⁹Offerings of grain and wine are no longer brought to the LORD's temple. His servants, the priests, are deep in sorrow.

¹⁰Barren fields mourn; grain, grapes, and olives are scorched and shrivelled.

¹¹Mourn for our farms and our vineyards! There's no wheat or barley growing in our fields.

¹²Grapevines have dried up and so has every tree figs and pomegranates, date palms and apples. All happiness has faded away.

¹³Mourn, you priests who serve at the altar of my God. Spend your days and nights wearing sackcloth. Offerings of grain and wine are no longer brought to the LORD's temple.

¹⁴Tell the leaders and people to come together at the temple. Order them to go without eating and to pray sincerely.

¹⁵We are in for trouble! Soon the LORD All-Powerful will bring disaster.

¹⁶Our food is already gone; there's no more celebrating at the temple of our God.

¹⁷Seeds dry up in the ground; no harvest is possible. Our barns are in bad shape, with no grain to store in them.

¹⁸Our cattle wander aimlessly, moaning for lack of pasture, and sheep are suffering.

¹⁹I cry out to you, LORD. Grasslands and forests are eaten by the scorching heat.

²⁰Wild animals have no water because of you; rivers and streams are dry, and pastures are parched.

2¹ Sound the trumpet on Zion, the LORD's sacred hill. Warn everyone to tremble! The judgment day of the LORD is coming soon.

²It will be dark and gloomy with storm clouds overhead. Troops will cover the mountains like thunderclouds. No army this powerful has ever been gathered before or will ever be again.

³Fiery flames surround them; no one escapes. Before they invaded, the land was like Eden; now only a desert remains.

⁴They look like horses and charge like cavalry.

⁵They roar over mountains like noisy chariots, or a mighty army ready for battle. They are a forest fire that feasts on straw.

⁶The very sight of them is frightening.

⁷They climb over walls like warriors; they march in columns and never turn aside.

⁸They charge straight ahead, without pushing each other; even arrows and spears cannot make them retreat.

⁹They swarm over city walls and enter our homes; they crawl in through windows, just like thieves.

¹⁰They make the earth tremble and the heavens shake; the sun and moon turn dark, and stars stop shining.

¹¹The LORD God leads this army of countless troops, and they obey his commands. The day of his judgment is so terrible that no one can stand it.

¹²The LORD said: It isn't too late. You can still return to me with all your heart. Start crying and mourning! Go without eating.

¹³Don't rip your clothes to show your sorrow. Instead, turn back to me with broken hearts. I am merciful, kind, and caring. I don't easily lose my temper, and I don't like to punish.

¹⁴I am the LORD your God. Perhaps I will change my mind and treat you with mercy. Then you will be blessed

with enough grain and wine for offering sacrifices to me.

¹⁵Sound the trumpet on Zion! Call the people together. Show your sorrow by going without food.

¹⁶Make sure that everyone is fit to worship me. Bring adults, children, babies, and even bring newlyweds from their festivities.

¹⁷Tell my servants, the priests, to cry inside the temple and to offer this prayer near the altar: Save your people, LORD God! Don't let foreign nations make jokes about us. Don't let them laugh and ask, Where is your God?

¹⁸The LORD was deeply concerned about his land and had pity on his people.

¹⁹In answer to their prayers he said, I will give you enough grain, wine, and olive oil to satisfy your needs. No longer will I let you be insulted by the nations.

²⁰An army attacked from the north, but I will chase it into a scorching desert. There it will rot and stink from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean. The LORD works wonders

²¹ and does great things. So tell the soil to celebrate

²² and wild animals to stop being afraid. Grasslands are green again; fruit trees and fig trees are loaded with fruit. Grapevines are covered with grapes.

²³ People of Zion, celebrate in honour of the LORD your God! He is generous and has sent the autumn and spring rains in the proper seasons.

²⁴ Grain will cover your threshing places; jars will overflow with wine and olive oil.

²⁵ I, the LORD your God, will make up for the losses caused by those swarms and swarms of locusts I sent to attack you.

²⁶ My people, you will eat until you are satisfied. Then you will praise me for the wonderful things I have done. Never again will you be put to shame.

²⁷ Israel, you will know that I stand at your side. I am the LORD your God there are no other gods. Never again will you be put to shame.

²⁸ The LORD said: Later, I will give my Spirit to everyone. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men

will have dreams, and your young men will see visions.

²⁹In those days I will even give my Spirit to my servants, both men and women.

³⁰I will work wonders in the sky above and on the earth below. There will be blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

³¹The sun will turn dark, and the moon will be as red as blood before that great and terrible day when I appear.

³²Then the LORD will save everyone who faithfully worships him. He has promised there will be survivors on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and among them will be his chosen ones.

3¹At that time I, the LORD, will make Judah and Jerusalem prosperous again.

²Then in Judgment Valley I will bring together the nations that scattered my people Israel everywhere in the world, and I will bring charges against those nations. They divided up my land

³and gambled to see who would get my people; they sold boys and girls to pay for prostitutes and wine.

⁴You people of Tyre and Sidon and you Philistines, why are you doing this? Are you trying to get even with me? I'll strike back before you know what's happened.

⁵You've taken my prized possessions, including my silver and gold, and carried them off to your temples.

⁶You have dragged the people of Judah and Jerusalem from their land and sold them to the Greeks.

⁷But I'll make the people of Judah determined to come home, and what happened to them will happen to you.

⁸I'll hand over your sons and daughters to the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, who live far away. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁹Say to the nations: Get ready for war! Be eager to fight. Line up for battle and prepare to attack.

¹⁰Make swords out of ploughs and spears out of garden tools. Strengthen every weakling.

¹¹Hurry, all you nations! Come quickly. Ask the LORD to bring his warriors along.

¹²You must come now to Judgment Valley, where the LORD will judge the surrounding nations.

¹³They are a field of ripe crops. Bring in the harvest! They are grapes piled high. Start trampling them now! If our enemy's sins were wine, every jar would overflow.

¹⁴Crowds fill Decision Valley. The judgment day of the LORD will soon be here

¹⁵no light from the sun or moon, and stars no longer shine.

¹⁶From the heart of Jerusalem the LORD roars like a lion, shaking the earth and sky. But the LORD is a fortress, a place of safety for his people Israel.

¹⁷I am the LORD your God. And you will know I live on Zion, my sacred hill, because Jerusalem will be sacred, untouched by foreign troops.

¹⁸On that day, fruitful vineyards will cover the mountains. And your cattle and goats that graze on the hills will produce a lot of milk. Streams in Judah will never run dry; a stream from my house will flow in Acacia Valley.

¹⁹Egypt and Edom were cruel and brutal to Judah, without a reason. Now their countries will become a barren desert,

²⁰but Judah and Jerusalem will always have people.

²¹I, the LORD, live on Mount Zion. I will punish the guilty and defend the innocent.

Amos

- 1** ¹I am Amos. And I raised sheep near the town of Tekoa when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. Two years before the earthquake, the LORD gave me several messages about Israel,
- ²and I said: When the LORD roars from Jerusalem, pasture lands and Mount Carmel dry up and turn brown.
- ³The LORD said: I will punish Syria for countless crimes, and I won't change my mind. They dragged logs with spikes over the people of Gilead.
- ⁴Now I will burn down the palaces and fortresses of King Hazael and of King Benhadad.
- ⁵I will break through the gates of Damascus. I will destroy the people of Wicked Valley and the ruler of Beth-Eden. Then the Syrians will be dragged as prisoners to Kir. I, the LORD, have spoken!
- ⁶The LORD said: I will punish Philistia for countless crimes, and I won't change

my mind. They dragged off my people from town after town to sell them as slaves to the Edomites.

⁷That's why I will burn down the walls and fortresses of the city of Gaza.

⁸I will destroy the king of Ashdod and the ruler of Ashkelon. I will strike down Ekron, and that will be the end of the Philistines. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁹The LORD said: I will punish Phoenicia for countless crimes, and I won't change my mind. They broke their treaty and dragged off my people from town after town to sell them as slaves to the Edomites.

¹⁰That's why I will send flames to burn down the city of Tyre along with its fortresses.

¹¹The LORD said: I will punish Edom for countless crimes, and I won't change my mind. They killed their own relatives and were so terribly furious that they showed no mercy.

¹²Now I will send fire to wipe out the fortresses of Teman and Bozrah.

¹³The LORD said: I will punish Ammon for countless crimes, and I won't change

my mind. In Gilead they ripped open pregnant women, just to take the land.

¹⁴Now I will send fire to destroy the walls and fortresses of Rabbah. Enemies will shout and attack like a whirlwind.

¹⁵Ammon's king and leaders will be dragged away. I, the LORD, have spoken!

2¹The LORD said: I will punish Moab for countless crimes, and I won't change my mind. They made lime from the bones of the king of Edom.

²Now I will send fire to destroy the fortresses of Kerioth. Battle shouts and trumpet blasts will be heard as I destroy Moab

³with its king and leaders. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁴The LORD said: I will punish Judah for countless crimes, and I won't change my mind. They have rejected my teachings and refused to obey me. They were led astray by the same false gods their ancestors worshipped.

⁵Now I will send fire on Judah and destroy the fortresses of Jerusalem.

⁶The LORD said: I will punish Israel for countless crimes, and I won't change my mind. They sell honest people for money,

and the needy are sold for the price of sandals.

⁷They throw the poor to the ground and push aside those who are helpless. My holy name is dishonoured, because fathers and sons sleep with the same young women.

⁸They lie down beside altars on clothes taken as security for loans. And they drink wine in my temple, wine bought with the money they received from fines.

⁹Israel, the Amorites were there when you entered Canaan. They were tall as cedars and strong as oaks. But I wiped them out I destroyed their branches and their roots.

¹⁰I had rescued you from Egypt, and for forty years I had led you through the desert. Then I gave you the land of the Amorites.

¹¹I chose some of you to be prophets and others to be Nazirites. People of Israel, you know this is true. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹²But you commanded the prophets not to speak their message, and you pressured the Nazirites into drinking wine.

¹³And so I will crush you, just as a wagon full of grain crushes the ground.

¹⁴No matter how fast you run, you won't escape. No matter how strong you are, you will lose your strength and your life.

¹⁵Even if you are an expert with a bow and arrow, you will retreat. And you won't get away alive, not even if you run fast or ride a horse.

¹⁶You may be brave and strong, but you will run away, stripped naked. I, the LORD, have spoken!

3¹ People of Israel, I rescued you from Egypt. Now listen to my judgment against you.

²Of all nations on earth, you are the only one I have chosen. That's why I will punish you because of your sins.

³Can two people walk together without agreeing to meet?

⁴Does a lion roar in the forest unless it has caught a victim? Does it growl in its den unless it is eating?

⁵How can anyone catch a bird without using a net? Does a trap spring shut unless something is caught?

⁶Isn't the whole city frightened when the trumpet signals an attack? Isn't it the LORD who brings disaster on a city?

⁷Whatever the LORD God plans to do, he tells his servants, the prophets.

⁸Everyone is terrified when a lion roars and ordinary people become prophets when the LORD God speaks.

⁹Here is a message for the leaders of Philistia and Egypt tell everyone to come together on the hills of Samaria. Let them see the injustice and the lawlessness in that city.

¹⁰The LORD has said that they don't even know how to do right. They have become rich from violence and robbery.

¹¹And so the LORD God has sworn that they will be surrounded. Enemies will break through their defences and steal their treasures.

¹²The LORD has promised that only a few from Samaria will escape with their lives and with some broken pieces of their beds and couches. It will be like when a shepherd rescues two leg bones and part of a sheep's ear from the jaws of a lion.

¹³The LORD God All-Powerful told me to speak this message against Jacob's descendants:

¹⁴When I, the LORD, punish Israel for their sins, I will destroy the altars at Bethel. Even the corners of the altar will be left in the dust.

¹⁵I will tear down winter homes and summer homes. Houses decorated with ivory and all other mansions will be gone for ever. I, the LORD, have spoken!

4¹The LORD said: You women of Samaria are fat cows! You ill-treat and abuse the poor and needy, then you say to your husbands, Bring us more drinks!

²I, the LORD God, have sworn by my own name that your time is coming. Not one of you will be left you will be taken away by sharp hooks.

³You will be dragged through holes in your city walls, and you will be thrown towards Harmon. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁴The LORD said: Come to Bethel and Gilgal. Sin all you want! Offer sacrifices the next morning and bring a tenth of your crops on the third day.

⁵Bring offerings to show me how thankful you are. Gladly bring more offerings than I have demanded. You really love to do this. I, the LORD God, have spoken!

⁶I, the LORD, took away the food from every town and village, but still you rejected me.

⁷Three months before harvest, I kept back the rain. Sometimes I would let it fall on one town or field but not on another, and pastures dried up.

⁸People from two or three towns would go to a town that still had water, but it wasn't enough. Even then you rejected me. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁹I dried up your grain fields; your gardens and vineyards turned brown. Locusts ate your fig trees and olive orchards, but even then you rejected me. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹⁰I did terrible things to you, just as I did to Egypt I killed your young men in war; I let your horses be stolen, and I made your camp stink with dead bodies. Even then you rejected me. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹¹ I destroyed many of you, just as I did the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. You were a burning stick I rescued from the fire. Even then you rejected me. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹² Now, Israel, I myself will deal with you. Get ready to face your God!

¹³ I created the mountains and the wind. I let humans know what I am thinking. I bring darkness at dawn and step over hills. I am the LORD God All-Powerful!

5 ¹ Listen, nation of Israel, to my mournful message:

² you, dearest Israel, have fallen, never to rise again you lie deserted in your own land, with no one to help you up.

³ The LORD God has warned, From every ten soldiers only one will be left; from a thousand troops, only a hundred will survive.

⁴ The LORD keeps saying, Israel, turn back to me and you will live!

⁵ Don't go to Gilgal or Bethel or even to Beersheba. Gilgal will be dragged away, and Bethel will end up as nothing.

⁶ Turn back to the LORD, you descendants of Joseph, and you will live.

If you don't, the LORD will attack like fire. Bethel will burn to the ground, and no one can save it.

⁷You people are doomed! You twist the truth and trample on justice.

⁸But the LORD created the stars and put them in place. He turns darkness to dawn and daylight to darkness; he scoops up the ocean and empties it on the earth.

⁹God destroys mighty soldiers and strong fortresses.

¹⁰The LORD said: You people hate judges and honest witnesses;

¹¹you abuse the poor and demand heavy taxes from them. You have built expensive homes, but you won't enjoy them; you have planted vineyards, but you will get no wine.

¹²I am the LORD, and I know your terrible sins. You cheat honest people and take bribes; you rob the poor of justice.

¹³Times are so evil that anyone with good sense will keep quiet.

¹⁴If you really want to live, you must stop doing wrong and start doing right.

I, the LORD God All-Powerful, will then be on your side, just as you claim I am.

¹⁵ Choose good instead of evil! See that justice is done. Perhaps I, the LORD All-Powerful, will be kind to what's left of your people.

¹⁶ This is what the LORD has sworn: Noisy crying will be heard in every town and street. Even farmers will be told to mourn for the dead, together with those who are paid to mourn.

¹⁷ Your vineyards will be filled with crying and weeping, because I will punish you. I, the LORD, have spoken!

¹⁸ You look forward to the day when the LORD comes to judge. But you are in for trouble! It won't be a time of sunshine; all will be darkness.

¹⁹ You will run from a lion, only to meet a bear. You will escape to your house, rest your hand on the wall, and be bitten by a snake.

²⁰ The day when the LORD judges will be dark, very dark, without a ray of light.

²¹ I, the LORD, hate and despise your religious celebrations and your times of worship.

²²I won't accept your offerings or animal sacrifices not even your very best.

²³No more of your noisy songs! I won't listen when you play your harps.

²⁴But let justice and fairness flow like a river that never runs dry.

²⁵Israel, for forty years you wandered in the desert, without bringing offerings or sacrifices to me.

²⁶Now you will have to carry the two idols you made Sakkuth, the one you call king, and Kaiwan, the one you built in the shape of a star.

²⁷I will force you to march as captives beyond Damascus. I, the LORD God All-Powerful, have spoken!

6¹ Do you rulers in Jerusalem and in the city of Samaria feel safe and at ease? Everyone bows down to you, and you think you are better than any other nation. But you are in for trouble!

²Look what happened to the cities of Calneh, powerful Hamath, and Gath in Philistia. Are you greater than any of those kingdoms?

³You are cruel, and you forget the coming day of judgment.

⁴ You rich people lounge around on beds with ivory posts, while dining on the meat of your lambs and calves.

⁵ You sing foolish songs to the music of harps, and you make up new tunes, just as David used to do.

⁶ You drink all the wine you want and wear expensive perfume, but you don't care about the ruin of your nation.

⁷ So you will be the first to be dragged off as captives; your good times will end.

⁸ The LORD God All-Powerful has sworn by his own name: You descendants of Jacob make me angry by your pride, and I hate your fortresses. And so I will surrender your city and possessions to your enemies.

⁹ If only ten of you survive by hiding in a house you will still die.

¹⁰ As you carry out a corpse to prepare it for burial, your relative in the house will ask, Are there others? You will answer, No! Then your relative will reply, Be quiet! Don't dare mention the name of the LORD.

¹¹ At the LORD's command, houses great and small will be smashed to pieces.

¹²Horses can't gallop on rocks; oceans can't be ploughed. But you have turned justice and fairness into bitter poison.

¹³You celebrate the defeat of Lo-Debar and Karnaim, and you boast by saying, We did it on our own.

¹⁴But the LORD God All-Powerful will send a nation to attack you people of Israel. They will capture Lebo-Hamath in the north, Arabah Brook in the south, and everything in between.

7¹The LORD God showed me that he is going to send locusts to attack your crops. It will happen after the king has already been given his share of the grain and before the rest of the grain has been harvested.

²In my vision the locusts ate every crop in the land, and I said to the LORD, Forgive me for asking, but how can the nation survive? It's so weak.

³Then the LORD felt sorry and answered, I won't let it be destroyed.

⁴The LORD showed me that he is going to send a ball of fire to burn up everything on earth, including the sea.

⁵Then I said, Won't you please stop? How can our weak nation survive?

⁶Again the LORD felt sorry and answered, I won't let it be destroyed.

⁷The LORD showed me a vision of himself standing beside a wall and holding a string with a weight tied to the end of it. The string and weight had been used to measure the straightness of the wall.

⁸Then he asked, Amos, what do you see? A measuring line, I answered. The LORD said, I'm using this measuring line to show that my people Israel don't measure up, and I won't forgive them any more.

⁹Their sacred places will be destroyed, and I will send war against the nation of King Jeroboam.

¹⁰Amaziah the priest at Bethel sent this message to King Jeroboam of Israel, Amos is plotting against you in the very heart of Israel. Our nation cannot put up with his message for very long.

¹¹Here is what he is saying: Jeroboam will be put to death, and the people will be taken to a foreign country.

¹²Then Amaziah told me, Amos, take your visions and get out! Go back to

Judah and earn your living there as a prophet.

¹³Don't do any more preaching at Bethel. The king worships here at our national temple.

¹⁴I answered: I'm not a prophet! And I wasn't trained to be a prophet. I am a shepherd, and I take care of fig trees.

¹⁵But the LORD told me to leave my herds and preach to the people of Israel.

¹⁶And here you are, telling me not to preach!

¹⁷Now, listen to what the LORD says about you: Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, your sons and daughters will be killed in war, and your land will be divided among others. You will die in a country of foreigners, and the people of Israel will be dragged from their homeland.

8¹The LORD God showed me a basket of ripe fruit

²and asked, Amos, what do you see? A basket of ripe fruit, I replied. Then he said, This is the end for my people Israel. I won't forgive them again.

³Instead of singing in the temple, they will cry and weep. Dead bodies will be

everywhere. So keep silent! I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁴The LORD said: You people crush those in need and wipe out the poor.

⁵You say to yourselves, How much longer before the end of the New Moon Festival? When will the Sabbath be over? Our wheat is ready, and we want to sell it now. We can't wait to cheat and charge high prices for the grain we sell. We will use dishonest scales

⁶and mix dust in the grain. Those who are needy and poor don't have any money. We will make them our slaves for the price of a pair of sandals.

⁷I, the LORD, won't forget any of this, though you take great pride in your ancestor Jacob.

⁸Your country will tremble, and you will mourn. It will be like the River Nile that rises and overflows, then sinks back down.

⁹On that day, I, the LORD God, will make the sun go down at midday, and I will turn daylight into darkness.

¹⁰Your festivals and joyful singing will turn into sorrow. You will wear sackcloth and shave your heads, as you would at

the death of your only son. It will be a horrible day.

¹¹I, the LORD, also promise you a terrible shortage, but not of food and water. You will hunger and thirst to hear my message.

¹²You will search everywhere from north to south, from east to west. You will go all over the earth, seeking a message from me, the LORD. But you won't find one.

¹³Your beautiful young women and your young men will faint from thirst.

¹⁴You made promises in the name of Ashimah, the goddess of Samaria. And you made vows in my name at the shrines of Dan and Beersheba. But you will fall and never get up.

9¹I saw a vision of the LORD standing by the temple altar, and he said, Shake the columns until the tops fall loose, and the doorposts crumble. Then make the pieces fall on the people below. I will take a sword and kill anyone who escapes.

²If they dig deep into the earth or climb to the sky, I'll reach out and get them.

³If they escape to the peaks of Mount Carmel, I'll search and find them. And if they hide from me at the bottom of the ocean, I'll command a sea monster to bite them.

⁴I'll send a sword to kill them, wherever their enemies drag them off as captives. I'm determined to hurt them, not to help them.

⁵When the LORD God All-Powerful touches the earth, it melts, and its people mourn. God makes the earth rise and then fall, just like the River Nile.

⁶He built his palace in the heavens and let its foundations rest on the earth. He scoops up the ocean and empties it on the earth. His name is the LORD.

⁷Israel, I am the LORD God, and the Ethiopians are no less important to me than you are. I brought you out of Egypt, but I also brought the Philistines from Crete and the Arameans from Kir.

⁸My eyes have seen what a sinful nation you are, and I'll wipe you out. But I will leave a few of Jacob's descendants. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁹At my command, all of you will be sifted like grain. Israelites who remain

faithful will be scattered among the nations. And the others will be trapped like rubbish in a sieve.

¹⁰Some of you are evil, and you deny that you will ever get caught. But you will be killed.

¹¹In the future, I will rebuild David's fallen kingdom. I will build it from its ruins and set it up again, just as it used to be.

¹²Then you will capture Edom and the other nations that are mine. I, the LORD, have spoken, and my words will come true.

¹³You will have such a harvest that you won't be able to bring in all your wheat before ploughing time. You will have grapes left over from season to season; your fruitful vineyards will cover the mountains.

¹⁴I'll make Israel prosper again. You will rebuild your towns and live in them. You will drink wine from your own vineyards and eat the fruit you grow.

¹⁵I'll plant your roots deep in the land I have given you, and you won't ever be uprooted again. I, the LORD God, have spoken!

Obadiah

1 ¹The LORD God gave Obadiah a message about Edom, and this is what we heard: I, the LORD, have sent a messenger with orders for the nations to attack Edom.

²The LORD said to Edom: I will make you the weakest and most despised nation.

³You live in a mountain fortress, because your pride makes you feel safe from attack, but you are mistaken.

⁴I will still bring you down, even if you fly higher than an eagle or nest among the stars. I, the LORD, have spoken!

⁵If thieves break in at night, they steal only what they want. And people who harvest grapes always leave some unpicked. But, Edom, you are doomed!

⁶Everything you treasure most will be taken from you.

⁷Your allies can't be trusted. They will force you out of your own country. Your best friends will trick and trap you, even before you know it.

⁸Edom, when this happens, I, the LORD, will destroy all your marvellous wisdom.

⁹Warriors from the city of Teman will be terrified, and you descendants of Esau will be wiped out.

¹⁰You were cruel to your relatives, the descendants of Jacob. Now you will be destroyed, disgraced for ever.

¹¹You stood there and watched as foreigners entered Jerusalem and took what they wanted. In fact, you were no better than those foreigners.

¹²Why did you celebrate when such a dreadful disaster struck your relatives? Why were you so pleased when everyone in Judah was suffering?

¹³They are my people, and you were cruel to them. You went through their towns, sneering and stealing whatever was left.

¹⁴In their time of torment, you ambushed refugees and handed them over to their attackers.

¹⁵The day is coming when I, the LORD, will judge the nations. And, Edom, you will pay in full for what you have done.

¹⁶I forced the people of Judah to drink the wine of my anger on my sacred mountain. Soon the neighbouring nations must drink their fill then vanish without a trace.

¹⁷The LORD's people who escape will go to Mount Zion, and it will be holy. Then Jacob's descendants will capture the land of those who took their land.

¹⁸Israel will be a fire, and Edom will be straw going up in flames. The LORD has spoken!

¹⁹The people of Israel who live in the Southern Desert will take the land of Edom. Those who live in the hills will capture Philistia, Ephraim, and Samaria. And the tribe of Benjamin will conquer Gilead.

²⁰Those who return from captivity will control Phoenicia as far as Zarephath. Captives from Jerusalem who were taken to Sepharad will capture the towns of the Southern Desert.

²¹Those the LORD has saved will live on Mount Zion and rule over Edom. Then the kingdom will belong to the LORD.

Jonah

1 ¹ One day the LORD told Jonah, the son of Amittai,

² to go to the great city of Nineveh and say to the people, The LORD has seen your terrible sins. You are doomed!

³ Instead, Jonah ran from the LORD. He went to the seaport of Joppa and bought a ticket on a ship that was going to Spain. Then he got on the ship and sailed away to escape.

⁴ But the LORD made a strong wind blow, and such a bad storm came up that the ship was about to be broken to pieces.

⁵ The sailors were frightened, and they all started praying to their gods. They even threw the ship's cargo overboard to make the ship lighter. All this time, Jonah was down below deck, sound asleep.

⁶ The ship's captain went to him and said, How can you sleep at a time like this? Get up and pray to your God! Perhaps he will have pity on us and keep us from drowning.

⁷ Finally, the sailors got together and said, Let's ask our gods to show us who caused all this trouble. It turned out to be Jonah.

⁸ They started asking him, Are you the one who brought all this trouble on us? What business are you in? Where do you come from? What is your country? Who are your people?

⁹ Jonah answered, I'm a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.

¹⁰ When the sailors heard this, they were frightened, because Jonah had already told them he was running from the LORD. Then they said, Do you know what you have done?

¹¹ The storm kept getting worse, until finally the sailors asked him, What should we do with you to make the sea calm down?

¹² Jonah told them, Throw me into the sea, and it will calm down. I'm the cause of this terrible storm.

¹³ The sailors tried their best to row to the shore. But they could not do it, and the storm kept getting worse every minute.

¹⁴ So they prayed to the LORD, Please don't let us drown for taking this man's life. Don't hold us guilty for killing an innocent man. All this happened because you wanted it to.

¹⁵ Then they threw Jonah overboard, and the sea calmed down.

¹⁶ The sailors were so terrified that they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made all kinds of promises.

¹⁷ The LORD sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

2¹ From inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the LORD his God:

² When I was in trouble, LORD, I prayed to you, and you listened to me. From deep in the world of the dead, I begged for your help, and you answered my prayer.

³ You threw me down to the bottom of the sea. The water was churning all around; I was completely covered by your mighty waves.

⁴ I thought I was swept away from your sight, never again to see your holy temple.

⁵I was almost drowned by the swirling waters that surrounded me. Seaweed had wrapped around my head.

⁶I had sunk down below the underwater mountains; I knew that for ever, I would be a prisoner there. But, you, LORD God, rescued me from that pit.

⁷When my life was slipping away, I remembered you and in your holy temple you heard my prayer.

⁸All who worship worthless idols turn from the God who offers them mercy.

⁹But with shouts of praise, I will offer a sacrifice to you, my LORD. I will keep my promise, because you are the one with power to save.

¹⁰The LORD commanded the fish to vomit up Jonah on the shore. And it did.

3¹ Once again the LORD told Jonah² to go to that great city of Nineveh and preach his message of doom.

³Jonah obeyed the LORD and went to Nineveh. The city was so big that it took three days just to walk through it.

⁴After walking for a day, Jonah warned the people, Forty days from now, Nineveh will be destroyed!

⁵They believed God's message and set a time when they would go without eating to show their sorrow. Then everyone in the city, no matter who they were, dressed in sackcloth.

⁶When the king of Nineveh heard what was happening, he also dressed in sackcloth; he left the royal palace and sat in dust.

⁷Then he and his officials sent out an order for everyone in the city to obey. It said: None of you or your animals may eat or drink a thing. Each of you must wear sackcloth, and you must even put sackcloth on your animals. You must also pray to the LORD God with all your heart and stop being sinful and cruel. Perhaps God will change his mind and have mercy on us, so we won't be destroyed.

⁸(3: 7)

⁹(3: 7)

¹⁰When God saw that the people had stopped doing evil things, he had pity and did not destroy them as he had planned.

4¹Jonah was really upset and angry.
²So he prayed: Our LORD, I knew from the very beginning that you

wouldn't destroy Nineveh. That's why I left my own country and headed for Spain. You are a kind and merciful God, and you are very patient. You always show love, and you don't like to punish anyone, not even foreigners.

³Now let me die! I'd be better off dead.

⁴The LORD replied, What right do you have to be angry?

⁵Jonah then left through the east gate of the city and made a shelter to protect himself from the sun. He sat under the shelter, waiting to see what would happen to Nineveh.

⁶The LORD made a vine grow up to shade Jonah's head and protect him from the sun. Jonah was very happy to have the vine,

⁷but early the next morning the LORD sent a worm to chew on the vine, and the vine dried up.

⁸During the day the LORD sent a scorching wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head, making him feel faint. Jonah was ready to die, and he shouted, I wish I were dead!

⁹But the LORD asked, Jonah, do you have the right to be angry about the

vine? Yes, I do, he answered, and I'm angry enough to die.

¹⁰But the LORD said: You are concerned about a vine that you did not plant or take care of, a vine that grew up in one night and died the next.

¹¹In that city of Nineveh there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell right from wrong, and many cattle are also there. Don't you think I should be concerned about that big city?

Micah

1 ¹I am Micah from Moresheth. And this is the message about Samaria and Jerusalem that the LORD gave to me when Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were the kings of Judah.

²Listen, all of you! Earth and everything on it, pay close attention. The LORD God accuses you from his holy temple.

³And he will come down to crush underfoot every pagan altar.

⁴Mountains will melt beneath his feet like wax beside a fire. Valleys will vanish like water rushing down a ravine.

⁵This will happen because of the terrible sins of Israel, the descendants of Jacob. Samaria has led Israel to sin, and pagan altars at Jerusalem have made Judah sin.

⁶So the LORD will leave Samaria in ruins merely an empty field where vineyards are planted. He will scatter its stones and destroy its foundations.

⁷Samaria's idols will be smashed, and the wages of temple prostitutes will

be destroyed by fire. Silver and gold from those idols will then be used by foreigners as payment for prostitutes.

⁸Because of this tragedy, I go barefoot and naked. My crying and weeping sound like howling wolves or ostriches.

⁹The nation is fatally wounded. Judah is doomed. Jerusalem will fall.

¹⁰Don't tell it in Gath! Don't even cry. Instead, roll in the dust at Beth-Leaphrah.

¹¹Depart naked and ashamed, you people of Shaphir. The town of Bethazel mourns because no one from Zaanan went out to help.

¹²Everyone in Maroth hoped for the best, but the LORD sent disaster down on Jerusalem.

¹³Get the war chariots ready, you people of Lachish. You led Jerusalem into sin, just as Israel did.

¹⁴Now you will have to give a going-away gift to Moresheth. Israel's kings will discover that they cannot trust the town of Achzib.

¹⁵People of Mareshah, the LORD will send someone to capture your town.

Then Israel's glorious king will be forced to hide in Adullam Cave.

¹⁶Judah, shave your head as bald as a vulture and start mourning. Your precious children will be dragged off to a foreign country.

2¹Doomed! You're doomed! At night you lie in bed, making evil plans. And when morning comes, you do what you've planned because you have the power.

²You grab any field or house that you want; you cheat families out of homes and land.

³But here is what the LORD says: I am planning trouble for you. Your necks will be caught in a noose, and you will be disgraced in this time of disaster.

⁴When that happens, this sorrowful song will be sung about you: Ruined! Completely ruined! The LORD has taken our land and given it to traitors.

⁵And so you will never again own property among the LORD's people.

⁶Enough of your preaching! That's what you tell me. We won't be disgraced, so stop preaching!

⁷ Descendants of Jacob, is it right for you to claim that the LORD did what he did because he was angry? Doesn't he always bless those who do right?

⁸ My people, you have even stolen clothes right off the backs of your unsuspecting soldiers returning home from battle.

⁹ You take over lovely homes that belong to the women of my nation. Then you cheat their children out of the inheritance that comes from the LORD.

¹⁰ Get out of here, you crooks! You'll find no rest here. You're not fit to belong to the LORD's people, and you will be destroyed.

¹¹ The only prophet you want is a liar who will say, Drink and get drunk!

¹² I, the LORD, promise to bring together the people of Israel who have survived. I will gather them, just as a shepherd brings sheep together, and there will be many.

¹³ I will break down the gate and lead them out then I will be their king.

3¹ Listen to me, you rulers of Israel!
You know right from wrong,

²but you prefer to do evil instead of what is right. You skin my people alive. You strip off their flesh,

³break their bones, cook it all in a pot, and gulp it down.

⁴Some day you will beg the LORD to help you, but he will turn away because of your sins.

⁵You lying prophets promise security for anyone who gives you food, but disaster for anyone who refuses to feed you. Here is what the LORD says to you prophets:

⁶You will live in the dark, far from the sight of the sun, with no message from me.

⁷You prophets and fortune-tellers will all be disgraced, with no message from me.

⁸But the LORD has filled me with power and his Spirit. I have been given the courage to speak about justice and to tell you people of Israel that you have sinned.

⁹So listen to my message, you rulers of Israel! You hate justice and twist the truth.

¹⁰You make cruelty and murder a way of life in Jerusalem.

¹¹You leaders accept bribes for dishonest decisions. You priests and prophets teach and preach, but only for money. Then you say, The LORD is on our side. No harm will come to us.

¹²And so, because of you, Jerusalem will be ploughed under and left in ruins. Thorns will cover the mountain where the temple now stands.

4¹In the future, the mountain with the LORD's temple will be the highest of all. It will reach above the hills, and every nation will rush to it.

²People of many nations will come and say, Let's go up to the mountain of the LORD God of Jacob and worship in his temple. The LORD will teach us his Law from Jerusalem, and we will obey him.

³He will settle arguments between distant and powerful nations. They will beat their swords and their spears into rakes and shovels; they will never again make war or attack one another.

⁴Everyone will find rest beneath their own fig trees or grape vines, and they

will live in peace. This is a solemn promise of the LORD All-Powerful.

⁵Others may follow their gods, but we will always follow the LORD our God.

⁶The LORD said: At that time I will gather my people the lame and the outcasts, and all into whose lives I have brought sorrow.

⁷Then the lame and the outcasts will belong to my people and become a strong nation. I, the LORD, will rule them from Mount Zion for ever.

⁸Mount Zion in Jerusalem, guardian of my people, you will rule again.

⁹Jerusalem, why are you crying? Don't you have a king? Have your advisers gone? Are you suffering like a woman in childbirth?

¹⁰Keep on groaning with pain, you people of Jerusalem! If you escape from your city to the countryside, you will still be taken as prisoners to Babylonia. But later I will rescue you from your enemies.

¹¹Zion, because of your sins you are surrounded by many nations who say, We can hardly wait to see you disgraced.

¹² But they don't know that I, the LORD, have gathered them here to grind them like grain.

¹³ Smash them to pieces, Zion! I'll let you be like a bull with iron horns and bronze hoofs. Crush those nations and bring their wealth to me, the LORD of the earth.

5¹ Jerusalem, enemy troops have surrounded you; they have struck Israel's ruler in the face with a stick.

² Bethlehem Ephrath, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah. But the LORD will choose one of your people to rule the nation someone whose family goes back to ancient times.

³ The LORD will abandon Israel only until this ruler is born, and the rest of his family returns to Israel.

⁴ Like a shepherd taking care of his sheep, this ruler will lead and care for his people by the power and glorious name of the LORD his God. His people will live securely, and the whole earth will know his true greatness,

⁵ because he will bring peace. Let Assyria attack our country and our

palaces. We will counter-attack, led by a number of rulers

⁶whose strong army will defeat the nation of Assyria. Yes, our leaders will rescue us, if those Assyrians dare to invade our land.

⁷A few of Jacob's descendants survived and are scattered among the nations. But the LORD will let them cover the earth like dew and rain that refreshes the soil.

⁸At present they are scattered, but later they will attack, as though they were fierce lions pouncing on sheep. Their enemies will be torn to shreds, with no one to save them;

⁹they will be helpless, completely destroyed.

¹⁰The LORD said: At that time I will wipe out your cavalry and chariots,

¹¹as well as your cities and your fortresses.

¹²I will stop you from telling fortunes and practising witchcraft.

¹³You will no longer worship the idols or stone images you have made I will destroy them,

¹⁴ together with the sacred poles and even your towns.

¹⁵ I will become furious and take revenge on the nations that refuse to obey me.

6¹ The LORD said to his people: Come and present your case to the hills and mountains.

² Israel, I am bringing charges against you I call upon the mountains and the earth's firm foundation to be my witnesses.

³ My people, have I wronged you in any way at all? Please tell me.

⁴ I rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to be your leaders.

⁵ Don't forget the evil plans of King Balak of Moab or what Balaam son of Beor said to him. Remember how I, the LORD, saved you many times on your way from Acacia to Gilgal.

⁶ What offering should I bring when I bow down to worship the LORD God Most High? Should I try to please him by sacrificing calves a year old?

⁷ Will thousands of sheep or rivers of olive oil make God satisfied with

me? Should I sacrifice to the LORD my firstborn child as payment for my terrible sins?

⁸The LORD God has told us what is right and what he demands: See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.

⁹I am the LORD, and it makes sense to respect my power to punish. So listen to my message for the city of Jerusalem:

¹⁰You store up stolen treasures and use dishonest scales.

¹¹But I, the LORD, will punish you for cheating with weights and with measures.

¹²You rich people are violent, and everyone tells lies.

¹³Because of your sins, I will wound you and leave you ruined and defenceless.

¹⁴You will eat, but still be hungry; you will store up goods, but lose everything I, the LORD, will let it all be captured in war.

¹⁵You won't harvest what you plant or use the oil from your olive trees or drink the wine from grapes you grow.

¹⁶Jerusalem, this will happen because you followed the sinful example of kings

Omri and Ahab. Now I will destroy you and your property. Then the people of every nation will make fun and insult you.

7¹ I feel so empty inside like someone starving for grapes or figs, after the vines and trees have all been picked clean.

² No one is loyal to God; no one does right. Everyone is brutal and eager to deceive everyone else.

³ People co-operate to commit crime. Judges and leaders demand bribes, and rulers cheat in court.

⁴ The most honest of them is worse than a thorn patch. Your doom has come! Lookouts sound the warning, and everyone panics.

⁵ Don't trust anyone, not even your best friend, and be careful what you say to the one you love.

⁶ Sons refuse to respect their own fathers, daughters rebel against their own mothers, and daughters-in-law despise their mothers-in-law. Your family is now your enemy.

⁷ But I trust the LORD God to save me, and I will wait for him to answer my prayer.

⁸ My enemies, don't be glad because of my troubles! I may have fallen, but I will get up; I may be sitting in the dark, but the LORD is my light.

⁹ I have sinned against the LORD. And so I must endure his anger, until he comes to my defence. But I know that I will see him making things right for me and leading me to the light.

¹⁰ You, my enemies, said, The LORD God is helpless. Now each of you will be disgraced and put to shame. I will see you trampled like mud in the street.

¹¹ Towns of Judah, the day is coming when your walls will be rebuilt, and your boundaries enlarged.

¹² People will flock to you from Assyria and Egypt, from Babylonia and everywhere else.

¹³ Those nations will suffer disaster because of what they did.

¹⁴ Lead your people, LORD! Come and be our shepherd. Grasslands surround us, but we live in a forest. So lead us

to Bashan and Gilead, and let us find pasture as we did long ago.

¹⁵I, the LORD, will work miracles just as I did when I led you out of Egypt.

¹⁶Nations will see this and be ashamed because of their helpless armies. They will be in shock, unable to speak or hear,

¹⁷because of their fear of me, your LORD and God. Then they will come trembling, crawling out of their fortresses like insects or snakes, lapping up the dust.

¹⁸The people said: Our God, no one is like you. We are all that is left of your chosen people, and you freely forgive our sin and guilt. You don't stay angry for ever; you're glad to have pity

¹⁹and pleased to be merciful. You will trample on our sins and throw them in the sea.

²⁰You will keep your word and be faithful to Jacob and to Abraham, as you promised our ancestors many years ago.

Nahum

1 ¹I am Nahum from Elkosh. And this is the message that I wrote down about Nineveh.

²The LORD God demands loyalty. In his anger, he takes revenge on his enemies.

³The LORD is powerful, yet patient; he makes sure that the guilty are always punished. He can be seen in storms and in whirlwinds; clouds are the dust from his feet.

⁴At the LORD's command, oceans and rivers dry up. Bashan, Mount Carmel, and Lebanon wither, and their flowers fade.

⁵At the sight of the LORD, mountains and hills tremble and melt; the earth and its people shudder and shake.

⁶Who can stand the heat of his furious anger? It flashes out like fire and shatters stones.

⁷The LORD is good. He protects those who trust him in times of trouble.

⁸But like a roaring flood, the LORD chases his enemies into dark places and destroys them.

⁹So don't plot against the LORD! He wipes out his enemies, and they never revive.

¹⁰They are like drunkards overcome by wine, or like dry thorn bushes burning in a fire.

¹¹Assyria, one of your rulers has made evil plans against the LORD.

¹²But the LORD says, Assyria, no matter how strong you are, you are doomed! My people Judah, I have troubled you before, but I won't do it again.

¹³I'll snap your chains and set you free from the Assyrians.

¹⁴Assyria, this is what else the LORD says to you: Your name will be forgotten. I will destroy every idol in your temple, and I will send you to the grave, because you are worthless.

¹⁵Look towards the mountains, people of Judah! Here comes a messenger with good news of peace. Celebrate your festivals. Keep your promises to God.

Your evil enemies are destroyed and will never again invade your country.

2¹ Nineveh, someone is coming to attack and scatter you. Guard your fortresses! Watch the road! Be brave! Prepare for battle!

² Judah and Israel are like trees with branches broken by their enemies. But the LORD is going to restore their power and glory.

³ Nineveh, on this day of attack, your enemies' shields are red; their uniforms are crimson. Their horses prance, and their armoured chariots dart around like lightning or flaming torches.

⁴ (2: 3)

⁵ An officer gives a command. But his soldiers stumble, as they hasten to build a shelter to protect themselves against rocks thrown down from the city wall.

⁶ The river gates fly open, and panic floods the palace.

⁷ Nineveh is disgraced. The queen is dragged off. Her servant women mourn; they sound like doves, and they beat their breasts in sorrow.

⁸ Nineveh is like a pond with leaking water. Shouts of Stop! Don't go! can

be heard everywhere. But everyone is leaving.

⁹Enemy soldiers shout, The city is full of treasure and all kinds of wealth. Steal her silver! Grab her gold!

¹⁰Nineveh is doomed! Destroyed! Her people tremble with fear; their faces turn pale.

¹¹What happened to this city? They were safer there than powerful lions in a den, with no one to disturb them.

¹²These are the same lions that ferociously attacked their victims, then dragged away the flesh to feed their young.

¹³The LORD All-Powerful, is against you, Nineveh. God will burn your chariots and send an army to kill those young lions of yours. You will never again make victims of others or send messengers to threaten everyone on this earth.

3¹The LORD said: Doom to the crime capital! Nineveh, city of murder and treachery,

²here is your fate cracking whips, churning wheels; galloping horses, roaring chariots;

³cavalry attacking, swords and spears flashing; soldiers stumbling over piles of dead bodies.

⁴You were nothing more than a prostitute using your magical charms and witchcraft to attract and trap nations.

⁵But I, the LORD All-Powerful, am now your enemy. I will pull up your skirt and let nations and kingdoms stare at your nakedness.

⁶I will cover you with rubbish, treat you like trash, and rub you in the dirt.

⁷Everyone who sees you will turn away and shout, Nineveh is done for! Is anyone willing to mourn or to give her comfort?

⁸Nineveh, do you feel safer than the city of Thebes? The River Nile was its wall of defence.

⁹Thebes trusted the mighty power of Ethiopia and Egypt; the nations of Put and Libya were her allies.

¹⁰But she was captured and taken to a foreign country. Her children were murdered at every street corner. The members of her royal family were

auctioned off, and her high officials were bound in chains.

¹¹ Nineveh, now it's your turn! You will get drunk and try to hide from your enemy.

¹² Your fortresses are fig trees with ripe figs. Merely shake the trees, and fruit will fall into every open mouth.

¹³ Your army is weak. Fire has destroyed the crossbars on your city gates; now they stand wide open to your enemy.

¹⁴ Your city is under attack. Haul in extra water! Strengthen your defences! Start making bricks! Stir the mortar!

¹⁵ You will still go up in flames and be cut down by swords that will wipe you out like wheat attacked by grasshoppers. So, go ahead and increase like a swarm of locusts!

¹⁶ More merchants are in your city than there are stars in the sky but they are like locusts that eat everything, then fly away.

¹⁷ Your guards and your officials are swarms of locusts. On a chilly day they settle on a fence, but when the sun comes out, they take off to who-knows-where.

¹⁸King of Assyria, your officials and leaders sleep the eternal sleep, while your people are scattered in the mountains. Yes, your people are sheep without a shepherd.

¹⁹You're fatally wounded. There's no hope for you. But everyone claps when they hear this news, because your constant cruelty has caused them pain.

Habakkuk

1 ¹I am Habakkuk the prophet. And this is the message that the LORD gave me.

²Our LORD, how long must I beg for your help before you listen? How long before you save us from all this violence?

³Why do you make me watch such terrible injustice? Why do you allow violence, lawlessness, crime, and cruelty to spread everywhere?

⁴Laws cannot be enforced; justice is always the loser; criminals crowd out honest people and twist the laws around.

⁵Look and be amazed at what's happening among the nations! Even if you were told, you would never believe what's taking place now.

⁶I am sending the Babylonians. They are fierce and cruel marching across the land, conquering cities and towns.

⁷How fearsome and frightening. Their only laws and rules are the ones they make up.

⁸Their cavalry troops are faster than leopards, more ferocious than wolves hunting at sunset, and swifter than hungry eagles suddenly swooping down.

⁹They are eager to destroy, and they gather captives like handfuls of sand.

¹⁰They make fun of rulers and laugh at fortresses, while building earth mounds so they can capture cities.

¹¹Then suddenly they disappear like a gust of wind those sinful people who worship their own strength.

¹²Holy LORD God, mighty rock, you are eternal, and we are safe from death. You are using those Babylonians to judge and punish others.

¹³But you can't stand sin or wrong. So don't sit by in silence while they gobble up people who are better than they are.

¹⁴The people you put on this earth are like fish or reptiles without a leader.

¹⁵Then an enemy comes along and takes them captive with hooks and nets. It makes him so happy

¹⁶that he offers sacrifices to his fishing nets, because they make him rich and provide choice foods.

¹⁷ Will he keep hauling in his nets and destroying nations without showing mercy?

2¹ While standing guard on the watchtower, I waited for the LORD's answer, before explaining the reason for my complaint.

² Then the LORD told me: I will give you my message in the form of a vision. Write it clearly enough to be read at a glance.

³ At the time I have decided, my words will come true. You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting it will happen!

⁴ I, the LORD, refuse to accept anyone who is proud. Only those who live by faith are acceptable to me.

⁵ Wine is treacherous, and arrogant people are never satisfied. They are no less greedy than death itself they open their mouths as wide as the world of the dead and swallow everyone.

⁶ But they will be mocked with these words: You're doomed! You stored up stolen goods and cheated others of what belonged to them.

⁷ But without warning, those you owe will demand payment. Then you will become a frightened victim.

⁸ You robbed cities and nations everywhere on earth and murdered their people. Now those who survived will be as cruel to you.

⁹ You're doomed! You made your family rich at the expense of others. You even said to yourself, I'm above the law.

¹⁰ But you will bring shame on your family and ruin to yourself for what you did to others.

¹¹ The very stones and wood in your home will testify against you.

¹² You're doomed! You built a city on crime and violence.

¹³ But the LORD All-Powerful sends up in flames what nations and people work so hard to gain.

¹⁴ Just as water fills the sea, the land will be filled with people who know and honour the LORD.

¹⁵ You're doomed! You get your friends drunk, just to see them naked.

¹⁶ Now you will be disgraced instead of praised. The LORD will make you drunk,

and when others see you naked, you will lose their respect.

¹⁷You destroyed trees and animals on Mount Lebanon; you were ruthless to towns and people everywhere. Now you will be terrorized.

¹⁸What is an idol worth? It's merely a false god. Why trust a speechless image made from wood or metal by human hands?

¹⁹What can you learn from idols covered with silver or gold? They can't even breathe. Pity anyone who says to an idol of wood or stone, Get up and do something!

²⁰Let all the world be silent the LORD is present in his holy temple.

3¹ This is my prayer:
²I know your reputation, LORD, and I am amazed at what you have done. Please turn from your anger and be merciful; do for us what you did for our ancestors.

³You are the same Holy God who came from Teman and Paran to help us. The brightness of your glory covered the heavens, and your praises were heard everywhere on earth.

⁴Your glory shone like the sun, and light flashed from your hands, hiding your mighty power.

⁵Dreadful diseases and plagues marched in front and followed behind.

⁶When you stopped, the earth shook; when you stared, nations trembled; when you walked along your ancient paths, eternal mountains and hills crumbled and collapsed.

⁷The tents of desert tribes in Cushan and Midian were ripped apart.

⁸Our LORD, were you angry with the monsters of the deep? You attacked in your chariot and wiped them out.

⁹Your arrows were ready and obeyed your commands. You split the earth apart with rivers and streams;

¹⁰mountains trembled at the sight of you; rain poured from the clouds; ocean waves roared and rose.

¹¹The sun and moon stood still, while your arrows and spears flashed like lightning.

¹²In your furious anger, you trampled on nations

¹³to rescue your people and save your chosen one. You crushed a nation's ruler

and stripped his evil kingdom of its power.

¹⁴His troops had come like a storm, hoping to scatter us and glad to gobble us up. To them we were refugees in hiding but you smashed their heads with their own weapons.

¹⁵Then your chariots churned the waters of the sea.

¹⁶When I heard this message, I felt weak from fear, and my lips quivered. My bones seemed to melt, and I stumbled around. But I will patiently wait. Some day those vicious enemies will be struck by disaster.

¹⁷Fig trees may no longer bloom, or vineyards produce grapes; olive trees may be fruitless, and harvest time a failure; sheep pens may be empty, and cattle stalls vacant

¹⁸but I will still celebrate because the LORD God saves me.

¹⁹The LORD gives me strength. He makes my feet as sure as those of a deer, and he helps me stand on the mountains. To the music director: Use stringed instruments.

Zephaniah

1 ¹ I am Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the grandson of Gedaliah, the great-grandson of Amariah, and the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah. When Josiah son of Amon was king of Judah, the LORD gave me this message.

² I, the LORD, now promise to destroy everything on this earth

³ people and animals, birds and fish. Everyone who is evil will crash to the ground, and I will wipe out the entire human race.

⁴ I will reach out to punish Judah and Jerusalem nothing will remain of the god Baal; nothing will be remembered of his pagan priests.

⁵ Not a trace will be found of those who worship stars from their rooftops, or bow down to the god Milcom, while claiming loyalty to me, the LORD.

⁶ Nothing will remain of anyone who has turned away and rejected me.

⁷Be silent! I am the LORD God, and the time is near. I am preparing to sacrifice my people and to invite my guests.

⁸On that day I will punish national leaders and sons of the king, along with all who follow foreign customs.

⁹I will punish worshippers of pagan gods and cruel palace officials who abuse their power.

¹⁰I, the LORD, promise that on that day noisy crying will be heard from Fish Gate, New Town, and Upper Hills.

¹¹Everyone in Lower Hollow will mourn loudly, because merchants and money changers will be wiped out.

¹²I'll search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those people who sit there unworried while thinking, The LORD won't do anything, good or bad.

¹³Their possessions will be taken, their homes left in ruins. They won't get to live in the houses they build, or drink wine from the grapes in their own vineyards.

¹⁴The great day of the LORD is coming soon, very soon. On that terrible day, fearsome shouts of warriors will be heard everywhere.

¹⁵It will be a time of anger of trouble and torment, of disaster and destruction, of darkness and despair, of storm clouds and shadows,

¹⁶of trumpet calls and battle cries against fortified cities and mighty fortresses.

¹⁷The LORD warns everyone who has sinned against him, I'll strike you blind! Then your blood and your insides will gush out like vomit.

¹⁸Not even your silver or gold can save you on that day when I, the LORD, am angry. My anger will flare up like a furious fire scorching the earth and everyone on it.

2¹You disgraceful nation, gather around,

²before it's too late. The LORD has set a time when his fierce anger will strike like a storm and sweep you away.

³If you humbly obey the LORD, then come and worship him. If you do right and are humble, perhaps you will be safe on that day when the LORD turns loose his anger.

⁴Gaza and Ashkelon will be deserted and left in ruins. Ashdod will be emptied in broad daylight, and Ekron uprooted.

⁵To you people of Philistia who live along the coast, the LORD has this to say: I am now your enemy, and I'll wipe you out!

⁶Your coast will be changed into pasture land and sheep pens.

⁷The LORD God hasn't forgotten those survivors in Judah, and he will help them his people will take your land to use for pasture. And when evening comes, they will rest in houses at Ashkelon.

⁸The LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, said: I've heard Moab and Ammon insult my people and threaten their nation. And so, I swear by my very life that Moab and Ammon will end up like Sodom and Gomorrah covered with thorn bushes and salt pits for ever. Then my people who survive will take their land.

⁹(2: 8)

¹⁰This is how Moab and Ammon will at last be repaid for their pride and for sneering at the nation that belongs to me, the LORD All-Powerful.

¹¹ I will fiercely attack. Then every god on this earth will shrink to nothing, and everyone of every nation will bow down to me, right where they are.

¹² People of Ethiopia, the sword of the LORD will slaughter you!

¹³ The LORD will reach to the north to crush Assyria and overthrow Nineveh.

¹⁴ Herds of wild animals will live in its rubble; all kinds of desert owls will perch on its stones and hoot in the windows. Noisy ravens will be heard inside its buildings, stripped bare of cedar.

¹⁵ This is the glorious city that felt secure and said, I am the only one! Now it's merely ruins, a home for wild animals. Every passer-by simply sneers and makes vulgar signs.

3¹ Too bad for that disgusting, corrupt, and lawless city!

² For ever rebellious and rejecting correction, Jerusalem refuses to trust or obey the LORD God.

³ Its officials are roaring lions, its judges are wolves; in the evening they attack, by morning nothing is left.

⁴ Jerusalem's prophets are proud and not to be trusted. The priests have

disgraced the place of worship and abused God's Law.

⁵All who do evil are shameless, but the LORD does right and is always fair. With the dawn of each day, God brings about justice.

⁶The LORD wiped out nations and left fortresses crumbling in the dust. Their streets and towns were reduced to ruins and emptied of people.

⁷God felt certain that Jerusalem would learn to respect and obey him. Then he would hold back from punishing the city and not wipe it out. But everyone there was eager to start sinning again.

⁸The LORD said: Just wait for the day when I accuse you nations. I have decided on a day, when I will bring together every nation and kingdom and punish them all in my fiery anger. I will become furious and destroy the earth.

⁹I will purify each language and make those languages acceptable for praising me. Then, with hearts united, everyone will serve only me, the LORD.

¹⁰From across the rivers of Ethiopia, my scattered people, my true worshippers, will bring offerings to me.

¹¹ When that time comes, you won't rebel against me and be put to shame. I'll do away with those who are proud and arrogant. Never will any of them strut around on my holy mountain.

¹² But I, the LORD, won't destroy any of your people who are truly humble and turn to me for safety.

¹³ The people of Israel who survive will live right and refuse to tell lies. They will eat and rest with nothing to fear.

¹⁴ Everyone in Jerusalem and Judah, celebrate and shout with all your heart!

¹⁵ Zion, your punishment is over. The LORD has forced your enemies to turn and retreat. Your LORD is King of Israel and stands at your side; you don't have to worry about any more troubles.

¹⁶ Jerusalem, the time is coming, when it will be said to you: Don't be discouraged or grow weak from fear!

¹⁷ The LORD your God wins victory after victory and is always with you. He celebrates and sings because of you, and he will refresh your life with his love.

¹⁸ The LORD has promised: Your sorrow has ended, and you can celebrate.

¹⁹I will punish those who ill-treat you. I will bring together the lame and the outcasts, then they will be praised, instead of despised, in every country on earth.

²⁰I will lead you home, and with your own eyes you will see me bless you with all you once owned. Then you will be famous everywhere on this earth. I, the LORD, have spoken!

Haggai

1 ¹ On the first day of the sixth month of the second year that Darius was king of Persia, the LORD told Haggai the prophet to speak his message to the governor of Judah and to the high priest. So Haggai told Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua

² that the LORD All-Powerful had said to them and to the people: You say this isn't the right time to build a temple for me. But is it right for you to live in expensive houses, while my temple is a pile of ruins? Just look at what's happening.

³ (1: 2)

⁴ (1: 2)

⁵ (1: 2)

⁶ You harvest less than you plant, you never have enough to eat or drink, your clothes don't keep you warm, and your wages are stored in bags full of holes.

⁷ Think about what I have said!

⁸But first, go to the hills and get wood for my temple, so I can take pride in it and be worshipped there.

⁹You expected much, but received only a little. And when you brought it home, I made that little disappear. Why have I done this? It's because you hurry off to build your own houses, while my temple is still in ruins.

¹⁰That's also why the dew doesn't fall and your harvest fails.

¹¹And so, at my command everything will become barren your farmland and pastures, your vineyards and olive trees, your animals and you yourselves. All your hard work will be for nothing.

¹²Zerubbabel and Joshua, together with the others who had returned from exile in Babylonia, obeyed the LORD's message spoken by his prophet Haggai, and they started showing proper respect for the LORD.

¹³Haggai then told them that the LORD had promised to be with them.

¹⁴So the LORD God All-Powerful made everyone eager to work on his temple, especially Zerubbabel and Joshua.

¹⁵And the work began on the twenty-fourth day of that same month.

2¹On the twenty-first day of the next month, the LORD told Haggai the prophet to speak this message to Governor Zerubbabel, High Priest Joshua, and everyone else:

²(2: 1)

³Does anyone remember how glorious this temple used to be? Now it looks like nothing.

⁴But cheer up! Because I, the LORD All-Powerful, will be here to help you with the work,

⁵just as I promised your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt. Don't worry. My Spirit is here with you.

⁶Soon I will again shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

⁷I will shake the nations, and their treasures will be brought here. Then the brightness of my glory will fill this temple.

⁸All silver and gold belong to me,

⁹and I promise that this new temple will be more glorious than the first one. I will also bless this city with peace.

¹⁰On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, the LORD God All-Powerful told the prophet Haggai

¹¹to ask the priests for their opinion on the following matter:

¹²Suppose meat ready to be sacrificed to God is being carried in the folds of someone's clothing, and the clothing rubs against some bread or stew or wine or olive oil or any other food. Would those foods that were touched then become acceptable for sacrifice? Of course not, the priests answered.

¹³Then Haggai said, Suppose someone has touched a dead body and is considered unacceptable to worship God. If that person touches these foods, would they become unclean? Of course they would, the priests answered.

¹⁴So the LORD told Haggai to say: That's how it is with this entire nation. Everything you do and every sacrifice you offer is unacceptable to me.

¹⁵But from now on, things will get better. Before you started laying the foundation for the temple,

¹⁶you recalled what life was like in the past. When you wanted two hundred

kilogrammes of wheat, there were only a hundred, and when you wanted fifty jars of wine, there were only twenty.

¹⁷I made all your hard work useless by sending mildew, mould, and hail but you still did not return to me, your LORD.

¹⁸Today you have completed the foundation for my temple, so listen to what your future will be like.

¹⁹Although you have not yet harvested any grain, grapes, figs, pomegranates, or olives, I will richly bless you in the days ahead.

²⁰That same day the LORD spoke to Haggai again and said:

²¹Tell Governor Zerubbabel of Judah that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth

²²and wipe out kings and their kingdoms. I will overturn war chariots, and then cavalry troops will start slaughtering each other.

²³But tell my servant Zerubbabel that I, the LORD All-Powerful, have chosen him, and he will rule in my name.

Zechariah

1 ¹I am the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo. In the eighth month of the second year that Darius was king of Persia, the LORD told me to say:

²Israel, I, the LORD All-Powerful, was very angry with your ancestors. But if you people will return to me, I will turn and help you.

³(1: 2)

⁴Don't be stubborn like your ancestors. They were warned by the earlier prophets to give up their evil and turn back to me, but they paid no attention.

⁵Where are your ancestors now? Not even prophets live for ever.

⁶But my warnings and my words spoken by the prophets caught up with your ancestors. So they turned back to me and said, LORD All-Powerful, you have punished us for our sins, just as you had planned.

⁷On the twenty-fourth day of Shebat, which was the eleventh month of that

same year, the LORD spoke to me in a vision during the night: in a valley among myrtle trees, I saw someone on a red horse, with riders on red, brown, and white horses behind him.

⁸(1: 7)

⁹An angel was there to explain things to me, and I asked, Sir, who are these riders? I'll tell you, the angel answered.

¹⁰Straight away, the man standing among the myrtle trees said, These are the ones the LORD has sent to find out what's happening on earth.

¹¹Then the riders spoke to the LORD's angel, who was standing among the myrtle trees, and they said, We have gone everywhere and have discovered that the whole world is at peace.

¹²At this, the angel said, LORD All-Powerful, for seventy years you have been angry with Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. When are you ever going to have mercy on them?

¹³The LORD's answer was kind and comforting.

¹⁴So the angel told me to announce: I, the LORD All-Powerful, am very protective of Jerusalem.

¹⁵For a while I was angry with the nations, but now I am furious, because they have made things worse for Jerusalem and are not the least bit concerned.

¹⁶And so, I will have pity on Jerusalem. The city will be completely rebuilt, and my temple will stand again.

¹⁷I also promise that my towns will prosper Jerusalem will once again be my chosen city, and I will comfort the people of Zion.

¹⁸Next, I saw four animal horns.

¹⁹The angel who was sent to explain was there, and so I asked, What do these mean? His answer was, These horns are the nations that scattered the people of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, and took away their freedom. Then the LORD showed me four blacksmiths, and I asked, What are they going to do? He replied, They are going to terrify and crush those horns.

²⁰(1:19)

²¹(1:19)

2¹This time I saw someone holding a measuring line,

²and I asked, Where are you going? To measure Jerusalem, was the answer. To find out how wide and long it is.

³The angel who had spoken to me was leaving, when another angel came up to him

⁴and said, Hurry! Tell that man with the measuring line that Jerusalem won't have any boundaries. It will be too full of people and animals even to have a wall.

⁵The LORD himself has promised to be a protective wall of fire surrounding Jerusalem, and he will be its shining glory in the heart of the city.

⁶The LORD says to his people, Run! Escape from the land in the north, where I scattered you to the four winds.

⁷Leave Babylonia and hurry back to Zion.

⁸Then the glorious LORD All-Powerful ordered me to say to the nations that had raided and robbed Zion: Zion is as precious to the LORD as are his eyes. Whatever you do to Zion, you do to him.

⁹And so, he will put you in the power of your slaves, and they will raid and rob you. Then you will know that I am a prophet of the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁰City of Zion, sing and celebrate! The LORD has promised to come and live with you.

¹¹When he does, many nations will turn to him and become his people. At that time you will know that I am a prophet of the LORD All-Powerful.

¹²Then Judah will be his part of the holy land, and Jerusalem will again be his chosen city.

¹³Everyone, be silent! The LORD is present and moving about in his holy place.

3¹I was given another vision. This time Joshua the high priest was standing in front of the LORD's angel. And there was Satan, standing at Joshua's right side, ready to accuse him.

²But the LORD said, Satan, you are wrong. Jerusalem is my chosen city, and this man was rescued like a stick from a flaming fire.

³Joshua's clothes were filthy.

⁴So the angel told some of the people to remove Joshua's filthy clothes. Then he said to Joshua, This means you are forgiven. Now I will dress you in priestly clothes.

⁵I spoke up and said, Also put a clean priestly turban on his head. Then they dressed him in priestly clothes and put the turban on him, while the LORD's angel stood there watching.

⁶After this, the angel encouraged Joshua by telling him that the LORD All-Powerful had promised:

⁷If you truly obey me, I will put you in charge of my temple, including the courtyard around it, and you will be allowed to speak at any time with the angels standing beside me.

⁸Listen carefully, High Priest Joshua and all you other priests. You are a sign of things to come, because I am going to bring back my servant, the Chosen King.

⁹Joshua, I have placed in front of you a stone with seven sides. I will engrave something on that stone, and in a single day I will forgive this guilty country.

¹⁰Then each of you will live at peace and entertain your friends in your own vineyard and under your own fig trees.

4¹The angel who explained the visions woke me from what seemed like sleep.

²Then he asked, What do you see? A solid gold lampstand with an oil container above it, I answered. On the stand are seven lamps, each with seven flames.

³One olive tree is on the right side and another on the left of the oil container.

⁴But, sir, what do these mean?

⁵Then he asked, Don't you know? No sir, I replied.

⁶So the angel explained that it was the following message of the LORD to Zerubbabel: I am the LORD All-Powerful. So don't depend on your own power or strength, but on my Spirit.

⁷Zerubbabel, that mountain in front of you will be levelled to the ground. Then you will bring out the temple's most important stone and shout, God has been very kind.

⁸The LORD spoke to me again and said:

⁹Zerubbabel laid the foundation for the temple, and he will complete it. Then everyone will know that you were sent by me, the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁰Those who have made fun of this day of small beginnings will celebrate when they see Zerubbabel holding this important stone. Those seven lamps

represent my eyes the eyes of the LORD and they see everything on this earth.

¹¹ Then I asked the angel, What about the olive trees on each side of the lampstand? What do they represent?

¹² And what is the meaning of the two branches from which golden olive oil flows through the two gold pipes?

¹³ Don't you know? he asked. No sir, I don't, was my answer.

¹⁴ Then he told me, These branches are the two chosen leaders who stand beside the Lord of all the earth.

5¹ When I looked the next time, I saw a flying scroll,

² and the angel asked, What do you see? A flying scroll, I answered. About nine metres long and four and a half metres wide.

³ Then he told me: This scroll puts a curse on everyone in the land who steals or tells lies. The writing on one side tells about the destruction of those who steal, while the writing on the other side tells about the destruction of those who lie.

⁴ The LORD All-Powerful has said, I am sending this scroll into the house of

everyone who is a robber or tells lies in my name, and it will remain there until every piece of wood and stone in that house crumbles.

⁵Now the angel who was there to explain the visions came over and said, Look up and tell me what you see coming.

⁶I don't know what it is, was my reply. It's a big basket, he said. And it shows what everyone in the land has in mind.

⁷The lead cover of the basket was opened, and in the basket was a woman.

⁸This woman represents evil, the angel explained. Then he threw her back into the basket and slammed the heavy cover down tight.

⁹Straight after this I saw two women coming through the sky like storks with wings outstretched in the wind. Suddenly they lifted the basket into the air,

¹⁰and I asked the angel, Where are they taking the basket?

¹¹To Babylon, he answered, where they will build a house for the basket and set it down inside.

6¹ Finally, I looked up and saw four chariots coming from between two bronze mountains.

² The first chariot was pulled by red horses, and the second by black horses;

³ the third chariot was pulled by white horses, and the fourth by spotted grey horses.

⁴ Sir, I asked the angel. What do these stand for?

⁵ Then he explained, These are the four winds of heaven, and now they are going out, after presenting themselves to the Lord of all the earth.

⁶ The chariot with black horses goes towards the north, the chariot with white horses goes towards the west, and the one with spotted horses goes towards the south.

⁷ The horses came out eager to patrol the earth, and the angel told them, Start patrolling the earth. When they had gone on their way,

⁸ he shouted to me, Those that have gone to the country in the north will do what the LORD's Spirit wants them to do there.

⁹ The LORD said to me:

¹⁰Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah have returned from Babylonia. Collect enough silver and gold from them to make a crown. Then go with them to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah and put the crown on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak.

¹¹ (6: 10)

¹²Tell him that I, the LORD All-Powerful, say, Someone will reach out from here like a branch and build a temple for me. I will name him Branch, and he will rule with royal honours. A priest will stand beside his throne, and the two of them will be good friends.

¹³ (6: 12)

¹⁴This crown will be kept in my temple as a reminder and will be taken care of by Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah.

¹⁵When people from distant lands come and help build the temple of the LORD All-Powerful, you will know that the LORD is the one who sent me. And this will happen, if you truly obey the LORD your God.

7¹ On the fourth day of Chislev, the ninth month of the fourth year that

Darius was king of Persia, the LORD again spoke to me.

²It happened after the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer with Regem-Melech and his men to ask the priests in the LORD's temple and the prophets to pray for them. So they prayed, Should we mourn and go without eating during the fifth month, as we have done for many years?

³(7: 2)

⁴It was then that the LORD All-Powerful told me to say to everyone in the country, including the priests: For seventy years you have gone without eating during the fifth and seventh months of the year. But did you really do it for me?

⁵(7: 4)

⁶And when you eat and drink, isn't it for your own enjoyment?

⁷My message today is the same one I commanded the earlier prophets to speak to Jerusalem and its villages when they were prosperous, and when all of Judah, including the Southern Desert and the hill country, was filled with people.

⁸So once again, I, the LORD All-Powerful, tell you, See that justice is done and be kind and merciful to one another!

⁹(7: 8)

¹⁰Don't ill-treat widows or orphans or foreigners or anyone who is poor, and stop making plans to hurt each other.

¹¹But everyone who heard those prophets, stubbornly refused to obey. Instead, they turned their backs on everything my Spirit had commanded the earlier prophets to preach. So I, the LORD, became angry

¹²(7: 11)

¹³and said, You people paid no attention when I called out to you, and now I'll pay no attention when you call out to me.

¹⁴That's why I came with a whirlwind and scattered them among foreign nations, leaving their lovely country empty of people and in ruins.

8¹The LORD All-Powerful said to me:
²I love Zion so much that her enemies make me angry.

³I will return to Jerusalem and live there on Mount Zion. Then Jerusalem

will be known as my faithful city, and Zion will be known as my holy mountain.

⁴Very old people with walking sticks will once again sit around in Jerusalem,

⁵while boys and girls play in the streets.

⁶This may seem impossible for my people who are left, but it isn't impossible for me, the LORD All-Powerful.

⁷I will save those who were taken to lands in the east and the west,

⁸and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be their God, faithful to bring about justice.

⁹I am the LORD All-Powerful! So don't give up. Think about the message my prophets spoke when the foundation of my temple was laid.

¹⁰Before that time, neither people nor animals were rewarded for their work, and no one was safe anywhere, because I had turned them against each other.

¹¹My people, only a few of you are left, and I promise not to punish you as I did before.

¹²Instead, I will make sure that your crops are planted in peace and your

vineyards are fruitful, that your fields are fertile and the dew falls from the sky.

¹³ People of Judah and Israel, you have been a curse to the nations, but I will save you and make you a blessing to them. So don't be afraid or lose courage.

¹⁴ When your ancestors made me angry, I decided to punish you with disasters, and I didn't hold back.

¹⁵ Now you no longer need to be afraid. I have decided to treat Jerusalem and Judah with kindness.

¹⁶ But you must be truthful with each other, and in court you must give fair decisions that lead to peace.

¹⁷ Don't ever plan evil things against others or tell lies under oath. I, the LORD, hate such things.

¹⁸ The LORD All-Powerful told me to say:

¹⁹ People of Judah, I, the LORD, demand that whenever you go without food as a way of worshipping me, it should become a time of celebration. No matter if it's the fourth month, the fifth month, the seventh month, or the tenth month, you should have a joyful festival. So love truth and live at peace.

²⁰I tell you that people will come here from cities everywhere.

²¹Those of one town will go to another and say, We're going to ask the LORD All-Powerful to treat us with kindness. Come and join us.

²²Many people from strong nations will come to Jerusalem to worship me and to ask me to treat them with kindness.

²³When this happens, ten people from nations with different languages will grab a Jew by his clothes and say, Let us go with you. We've heard that God is on your side. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken!

9¹This is a message from the LORD: His eyes are on everyone, especially the tribes of Israel. So he pronounces judgment against the cities of Hadrach and Damascus.

²Judgment will also fall on the nearby city of Hamath, as well as on Tyre and Sidon, whose people are clever.

³Tyre has built a fortress and piled up silver and gold, as though they were dust or mud from the streets.

⁴ Now the Lord will punish Tyre with poverty; he will sink its ships and send it up in flames.

⁵ Both Ashkelon and Gaza will tremble with fear; Ekron will lose all hope. Gaza's king will be killed, and Ashkelon emptied of its people.

⁶ A mob of half-breeds will settle in Ashdod, and the Lord himself will rob Philistia of pride.

⁷ No longer will the Philistines eat meat with blood in it or any unclean food. They will become part of the people of our God from the tribe of Judah. And God will accept the people of Ekron, as he did the Jebusites.

⁸ God says, I will stand guard to protect my temple from those who come to attack. I know what's happening, and no one will ill-treat my people ever again.

⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem, celebrate and shout! Your king has won a victory, and he is coming to you. He is humble and rides on a donkey; he comes on the colt of a donkey.

¹⁰ I, the LORD, will take away war chariots and horses from Israel and Jerusalem. Bows that were made for

battle will be broken. I will bring peace to nations, and your king will rule from sea to sea. His kingdom will reach from the River Euphrates across the earth.

¹¹When I made a sacred agreement with you, my people, we sealed it with blood. Now some of you are captives in waterless pits, but I will come to your rescue

¹²and offer you hope. Return to your fortress, because today I will reward you with twice what you had.

¹³I will use Judah as my bow and Israel as my arrow. I will take the people of Zion as my sword and attack the Greeks.

¹⁴Like a cloud, the LORD God will appear over his people, and his arrows will flash like lightning. God will sound his trumpet and attack in a whirlwind from the south.

¹⁵The LORD All-Powerful will protect his people, and they will trample down the sharpshooters and their slingshots. They will drink and get rowdy; they will be as full as a bowl at the time of sacrifice.

¹⁶The LORD God will save them on that day, because they are his people, and

they will shine on his land like jewels in a crown.

¹⁷How lovely they will be. Young people will grow there like grain in a field or grapes in a vineyard.

10¹I, the LORD, am the one who sends storm clouds and showers of rain to make fields produce. So when the crops need rain, you should pray to me.

²You can't believe idols and fortune-tellers, or depend on the hope you receive from witchcraft and interpreters of dreams. But you have tried all of these, and now you are like sheep without a shepherd.

³I, the LORD All-Powerful, am fiercely angry with you leaders, and I will punish you. I care for my people, the nation of Judah, and I will change this flock of sheep into charging war horses.

⁴From this flock will come leaders who will be strong like cornerstones and tent pegs and weapons of war.

⁵They will join in the fighting, and together they will trample their enemies like mud. They will fight, because I, the

LORD, will be on their side. And they will crush the enemy cavalry.

⁶I will strengthen the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. And I will show mercy because I am the LORD, their God. I will answer their prayers and bring them home. Then it will seem as though I had never rejected them.

⁷Israel will be like a tribe of warriors celebrating with wine. When their children see this, they will also be happy because of me, the LORD.

⁸I will give a signal for them to come together because I have rescued them. And there will be as many as ever before.

⁹Although I scattered my people in distant countries, they won't forget me. Once their children are raised, they will return

¹⁰I will bring them home from Egypt and Assyria, then let them settle as far as Gilead and Lebanon, until the land overflows with them.

¹¹My people will go through an ocean of troubles, but I will overcome the waves and dry up the deepest part of the Nile. Assyria's great pride will be put down, and the power of Egypt will disappear.

¹² I'll strengthen my people because of who I am, and they will follow me. I, the LORD, have spoken!

11 ¹ Lebanon, open your gates! Let the fire come in to destroy your cedar trees.

² Cry, you cypress trees! The glorious cedars have fallen and are rotting. Cry, you oak trees of Bashan! The dense forest has been chopped down.

³ Listen! Shepherds are crying. Their glorious pastures have been ruined. Listen! Lions are roaring. The forests of the Jordan Valley are no more to be found.

⁴ The LORD my God said to me: Tend those sheep doomed for slaughter!

⁵ The people who buy and butcher them go unpunished, while everyone who sells them says, Praise the LORD! I'm rich. Not even their shepherds have pity on them.

⁶ Tend those sheep because I, the LORD, will no longer have pity on the people of this earth. I'll turn neighbour against neighbour and make them slaves of a king. They will bring disaster on the

earth, and I'll do nothing to rescue any of them.

⁷ So I became a shepherd of those sheep doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep dealers. And I gave names to the two sticks I used for tending the sheep: one of them was named Mercy and the other Unity.

⁸ In less than a month, I became impatient with three shepherds who didn't like me, and I got rid of them.

⁹ Then I said, I refuse to be your shepherd. Let the sheep that are going to die, go on and die, and those that are going to be destroyed, go on and be destroyed. Then let the others eat one another alive.

¹⁰ On that same day, I broke the stick named Mercy to show that the LORD had cancelled his agreement with all people.

¹¹ The sheep dealers who saw me knew straight away that this was a message from the LORD.

¹² I told them, Pay me my wages, if you think you should; otherwise, forget it. So they handed me my wages, a measly thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said, Throw the money into the treasury.

So I threw the money into the treasury at the LORD's temple.

¹³(11:12)

¹⁴Then I broke the stick named Unity and cancelled the ties between Judah and Israel.

¹⁵Next, the LORD said to me, Act like a shepherd again this time a worthless shepherd.

¹⁶Once more I am going to let a worthless nobody rule the land one who won't care for the strays or search for the young or heal the sick or feed the healthy. He will just dine on the fattest sheep, leaving nothing but a few bones.

¹⁷You worthless shepherd, deserting the sheep! I hope a sword will cripple your arm and blind your right eye.

12¹This is a message from the LORD about Israel: I am the LORD! I stretched out the heavens; I put the earth on its foundations and gave breath to humans.

²I have decided that Jerusalem will become a bowl of wine that makes the neighbouring nations drunk. And when Jerusalem is attacked, Judah will also be attacked.

³But I will turn Jerusalem into a heavy stone that crushes anyone who tries to lift it. When all nations on earth surround Jerusalem,

⁴I will make every horse panic and every rider confused. But at the same time, I will watch over Judah.

⁵Then every clan in Judah will realize that I, the LORD All-Powerful, am their God, and that I am the source of their strength.

⁶At that time I will let the clans of Judah be like a ball of fire in a wood pile or a fiery torch in a hay stack. Then Judah will send the surrounding nations up in smoke. And once again the city of Jerusalem will be filled with people.

⁷But I will first give victory to Judah, so the kingdom of David and the city of Jerusalem in all their glory won't be thought of more highly than Judah itself.

⁸I, the LORD God, will protect Jerusalem. Even the weakest person there will be as strong as David, and David's kingdom will rule as though my very own angel were its leader.

⁹I am determined to wipe out every nation that attacks Jerusalem.

¹⁰I, the LORD, will make the descendants of David and the people of Jerusalem feel deep sorrow and pray when they see the one they pierced with a spear. They will mourn and weep for him, as parents weep over the death of their only child or their firstborn.

¹¹On that day the people of Jerusalem will mourn as much as everyone did for Hadad Rimmon on the flat lands near Megiddo.

¹²Everyone of each family in the land will mourn, and the men will mourn separately from the women. This includes those from the family of David, and the families of Nathan,

¹³Levi, Shimei,

¹⁴and all other families as well.

13¹In the future there will be a fountain, where David's descendants and the people of Jerusalem can wash away their sin and guilt.

²The LORD All-Powerful says: When that time comes, I will get rid of every idol in the country, and they will be forgotten for ever. I will also do away with their prophets and those evil spirits that control them.

³If any such prophets ever appear again, their own parents must warn them that they will die for telling lies in my name the name of the LORD. If those prophets don't stop speaking, their parents must then kill them with a sword.

⁴Those prophets will be ashamed of their so-called visions, and they won't deceive anyone by dressing like a true prophet.

⁵Instead, they will say, I'm no prophet. I've been a farmer all my life.

⁶And if any of them are asked why they are wounded, they will answer, It happened at the house of some friends.

⁷The LORD All-Powerful said: My sword, wake up! Attack my shepherd and friend. Strike down the shepherd! Scatter the little sheep, and I will destroy them.

⁸Nowhere in the land will more than a third of them be left alive.

⁹Then I will purify them and put them to the test, just as gold and silver are purified and tested. They will pray in my name, and I will answer them. I will say, You are my people, and they will reply, You, LORD, are our God!

14¹ The LORD will have his day. And when it comes, everything that was ever taken from Jerusalem will be returned and divided among its people.

² But first, he will bring many nations to attack Jerusalem; homes will be robbed, women raped, and half of the population dragged off, though the others will be allowed to remain.

³ The LORD will attack those nations like a warrior fighting in battle.

⁴ He will take his stand on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem, and the mountain will split in half, forming a wide valley that runs from east to west.

⁵ Then you people will escape from the LORD's mountain, through this valley, which reaches to Azal. You will run in all directions, just as everyone did when the earthquake struck in the time of King Uzziah of Judah. Afterwards, the LORD my God will appear with his holy angels.

⁶ It will be a bright day that won't turn cloudy.

⁷ And the LORD has decided when it will happen: this time of unending day.

⁸ In both summer and winter, life-giving streams will flow from Jerusalem, half of

them to the Dead Sea in the east and half to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.

⁹Then there will be only one LORD who rules as King and whose name is worshipped everywhere on earth.

¹⁰From Geba down to Rimmon south of Jerusalem, the entire country will be turned into flat lands, with Jerusalem still towering above. Then the city will be full of people, from Benjamin Gate, Old Gate Place, and Hananel Tower in the north-east part of the city over to Corner Gate in the north-west and down to King's Wine Press in the south. Jerusalem will always be secure and will never again be destroyed.

¹¹ (14: 10)

¹²Here is what the LORD will do to those who attack Jerusalem: while they are standing there, he will make their flesh rot and their eyes fall from their sockets and their tongues drop out.

¹³The LORD will make them go into a frenzy and start attacking each other,

¹⁴until even the people of Judah turn against those in Jerusalem. This same terrible disaster will also strike

every animal nearby, including horses, mules, camels, and donkeys. Finally, everything of value in the surrounding nations will be collected and brought to Jerusalem gold, silver, and piles of clothing.

¹⁵(14: 14)

¹⁶Afterwards, the survivors from those nations that attacked Jerusalem will go there each year to worship the King, the LORD All-Powerful, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters.

¹⁷No rain will fall on the land of anyone in any country who refuses to go to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD All-Powerful.

¹⁸This horrible disaster will strike the Egyptians and everyone else who refuses to go there for the celebration.

¹⁹(14: 18)

²⁰At that time the words Dedicated to the LORD will be engraved on the bells worn by horses. In fact, every ordinary cooking pot in Jerusalem will be just as sacred to the LORD All-Powerful as the bowls used at the altar. Any one of them will be acceptable for boiling the meat of sacrificed animals, and there will no

longer be a need to sell special pots and bowls.

²¹ (14: 20)

Malachi

1 ¹I am Malachi. And this is the message that the LORD gave me for Israel.

²Israel, I, the LORD, have loved you. And yet you ask in what way have I loved you. Don't forget that Esau was the brother of your ancestor Jacob, but I chose Jacob

³instead of Esau. And I turned Esau's hill country into a barren desert where jackals roam.

⁴Esau's descendants may say, Although our nation Edom is in ruins, we will rebuild. But I, the LORD All-Powerful, promise to tear down whatever they build. Then everyone will know that I will never stop being angry with them as long as they are so sinful.

⁵Israel, when you see this, you will shout, The LORD's great reputation reaches beyond our borders.

⁶I, the LORD All-Powerful, have something to say to you priests. Children respect their fathers, and servants

respect their masters. I am your father and your master, so why don't you respect me? You priests have insulted me, and now you ask, How did we insult you?

⁷You embarrass me by offering worthless food on my altar. Then you ask, How have we embarrassed you? You have done it by saying, What's so great about the LORD's altar?

⁸But isn't it wrong to offer animals that are blind, crippled, or sick? Just try giving those animals to your governor. That certainly wouldn't please him or make him want to help you.

⁹I am the LORD God All-Powerful, and you had better try to please me. You have sinned. Now see if I will have mercy on any of you.

¹⁰I wish someone would lock the doors of my temple, so you would stop wasting time building fires on my altar. I am not pleased with you priests, and I refuse to accept any more of your offerings.

¹¹From dawn until dusk my name is praised by every nation on this earth, as they burn incense and offer the proper sacrifices to me.

¹²But even you priests insult me by saying, There's nothing special about the LORD's altar, and these sacrifices are worthless.

¹³You get so disgusted that you even make vulgar signs at me. And for an offering, you bring stolen animals or those that are crippled or sick. Should I accept these?

¹⁴Instead of offering the acceptable animals you have promised, you bring me those that are unhealthy. I will punish you for this, because I am the great King, the LORD All-Powerful, and I am worshipped by nations everywhere.

2¹I, the LORD All-Powerful, have something else to say to you priests.

²You had better take seriously the need to honour my name. Otherwise, when you give a blessing, I will turn it into a curse. In fact, I have already done this, because you haven't taken to heart your duties as priests.

³I will punish your descendants and rub your faces in the manure from your animal sacrifices, and then be done with you.

⁴I am telling you this, so I can continue to keep my agreement with your ancestor Levi.

⁵I blessed him with a full life, as I had promised, and he kept his part of the agreement by honouring me and respecting my name.

⁶He taught the truth and never told lies, and he led a lot of people to turn from sin, because he obeyed me and lived right.

⁷You priests should be eager to spread knowledge, and everyone should come to you for instruction, because you speak for me, the LORD All-Powerful.

⁸But you have turned your backs on me. Your teachings have led others to do sinful things, and you have broken the agreement I made with your ancestor Levi.

⁹So I caused everyone to hate and despise you, because you disobeyed me and failed to treat all people alike.

¹⁰Don't you know that we all have God as our Father? Didn't the one God create each of us? Then why do you cheat each other by breaking the agreement God made with your ancestors?

¹¹ You people in Judah and Jerusalem have been unfaithful to the LORD. You have disgraced the temple that he loves, and you have committed the disgusting sin of worshipping other gods.

¹² I pray that the LORD will no longer let those who are guilty belong to his people, even if they eagerly decide to offer the LORD a gift.

¹³ And what else are you doing? You cry noisily and flood the LORD's altar with your tears, because he isn't pleased with your offerings and refuses to accept them.

¹⁴ And why isn't God pleased? It's because he knows that each of you men has been unfaithful to the wife you married when you were young. You promised that she would be your partner, but now you have broken that promise.

¹⁵ Didn't God create you to become like one person with your wife? And why did he do this? It was so you would have children, and then lead them to become God's people. Don't ever be unfaithful to your wife.

¹⁶ The LORD God All-Powerful of Israel hates anyone who is cruel enough to

divorce his wife. So take care never to be unfaithful!

¹⁷ You have worn out the LORD with your words. And yet, you ask, How did we do that? You did it by saying, The LORD is pleased with evil and doesn't care about justice.

3¹ I, the LORD All-Powerful, will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then suddenly the Lord you are looking for will appear in his temple. The messenger you desire is coming with my promise, and he is on his way.

² On the day the Lord comes, he will be like a furnace that purifies silver or like strong soap in a washbasin. No one will be able to stand up to him.

³ The LORD will purify the descendants of Levi, as though they were gold or silver. Then they will bring the proper offerings to the LORD,

⁴ and the offerings of the people of Judah and Jerusalem will please him, just as they did in the past.

⁵ The LORD All-Powerful said: I'm now on my way to judge you. And I will quickly condemn all who practise witchcraft or cheat in marriage or tell

lies in court or rob workers of their pay or ill-treat widows and orphans or steal the property of foreigners or refuse to respect me.

⁶Descendants of Jacob, I am the LORD All-Powerful, and I never change. That's why you haven't been wiped out,

⁷even though you have ignored and disobeyed my laws ever since the time of your ancestors. But if you return to me, I will return to you. And yet you ask, How can we return?

⁸You people are robbing me, your God. And, here you are, asking, How are we robbing you? You are robbing me of the offerings and of the ten per cent that belongs to me.

⁹That's why your whole nation is under a curse.

¹⁰I am the LORD All-Powerful, and I challenge you to put me to the test. Bring the entire ten per cent into the storehouse, so there will be food in my house. Then I will open the windows of heaven and flood you with blessing after blessing.

¹¹ I will also stop locusts from destroying your crops and keeping your vineyards from producing.

¹² Everyone of every nation will talk about how I have blessed you and about your wonderful land. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken!

¹³ You have said horrible things about me, and yet you ask, What have we said?

¹⁴ Here is what you have said: It's foolish to serve the LORD God All-Powerful. What do we get for obeying him and from going around looking sad?

¹⁵ See how happy those arrogant people are. Everyone who does wrong is successful, and when they put God to the test, they always get away with it.

¹⁶ All those who truly respected the LORD and honoured his name started discussing these things, and when God saw what was happening, he had their names written as a reminder in his book.

¹⁷ Then the LORD All-Powerful said: You people are precious to me, and when I come to bring justice, I will protect you, just as parents protect an obedient child.

¹⁸Then everyone will once again see the difference between those who obey me by doing right and those who reject me by doing wrong.

4¹The LORD said: The day of judgment is certain to come. And it will be like a red-hot furnace with flames that burn up proud and sinful people, as though they were straw. Not a branch or a root will be left. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken!

²But for you who honour my name, victory will shine like the sun with healing in its rays, and you will jump around like calves at play.

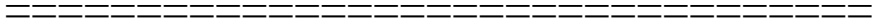
³When I come to bring justice, you will trample those who are evil, as though they were ashes under your feet. I, the LORD All-Powerful, have spoken!

⁴Don't ever forget the laws and teachings I gave my servant Moses on Mount Sinai.

⁵I, the LORD, promise to send the prophet Elijah before that great and terrible day comes.

⁶He will lead children and parents to love each other more, so that when I come, I won't bring doom to the land.

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